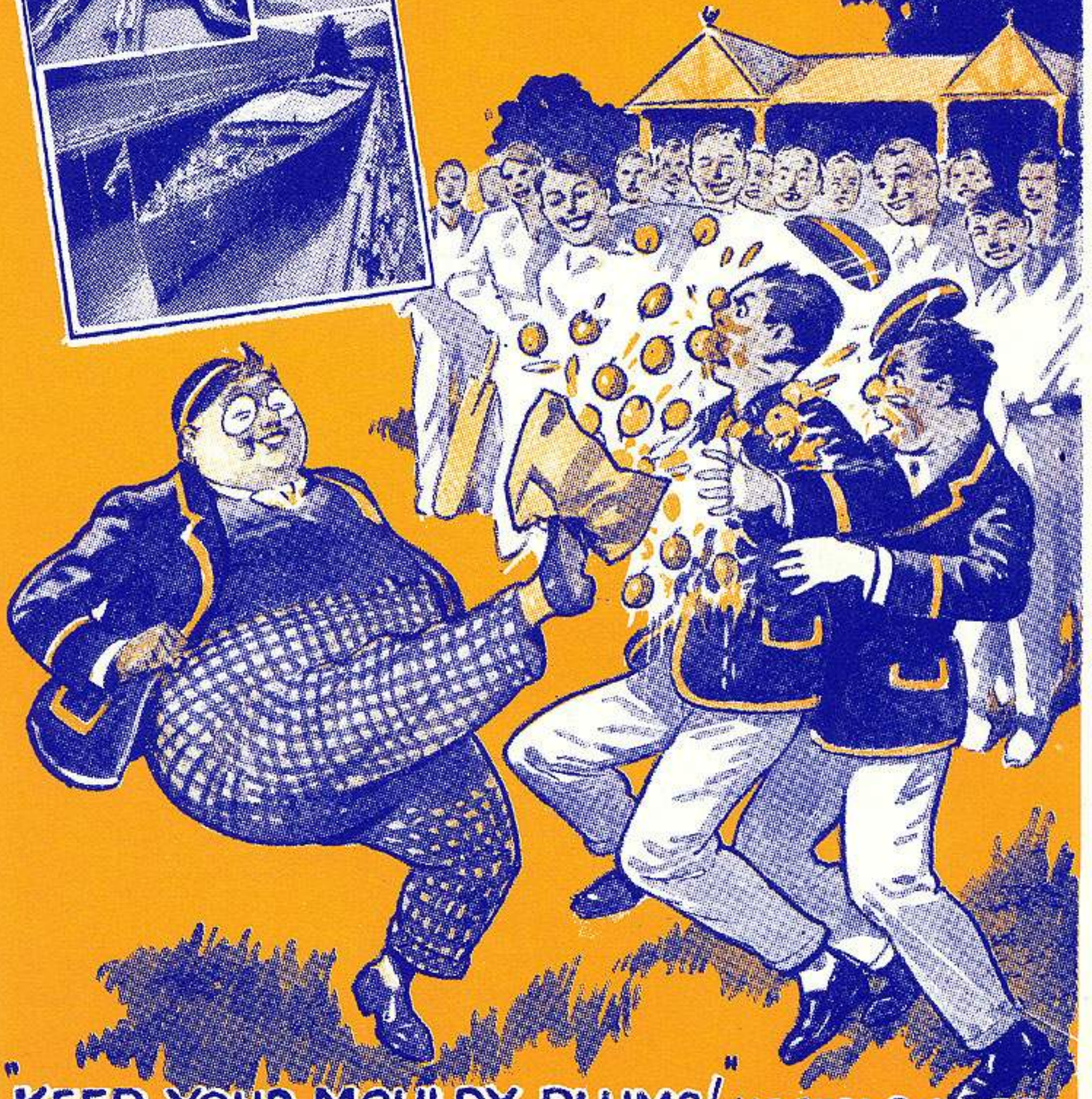
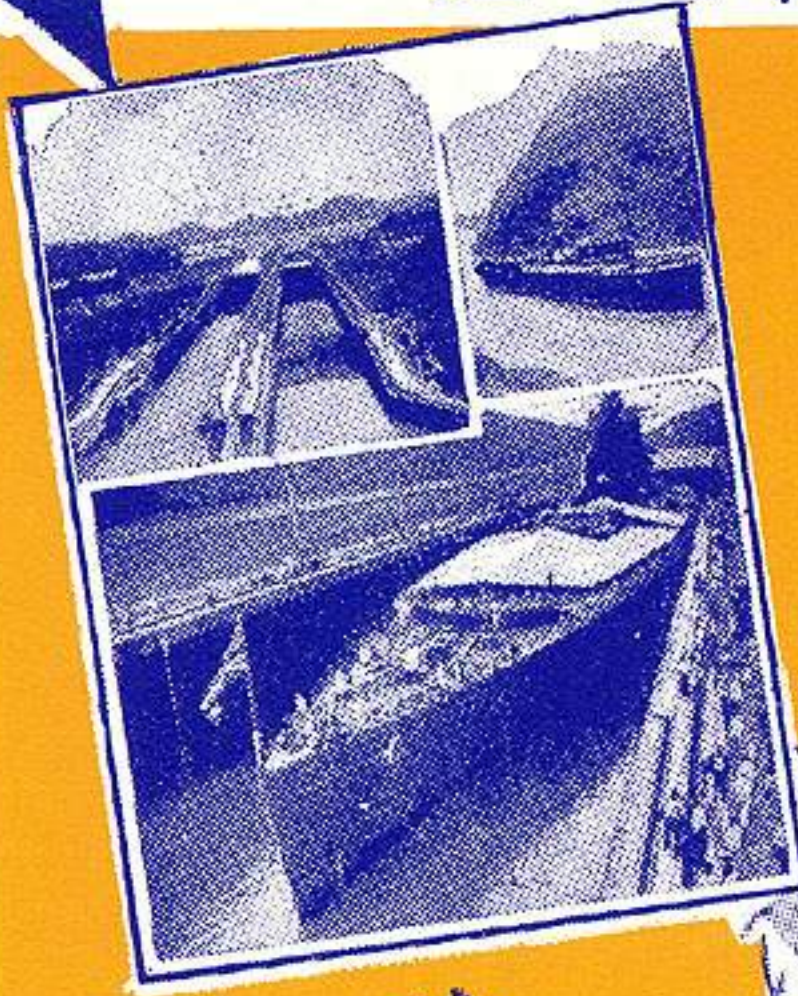


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The MAGNET²



"KEEP YOUR MOULDY PLUMS!" HOOTED BUNTER.

THE WORST BOY IN THE SCHOOL!



BY FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Look Before You Leap!

TROT!" said Bob Cherry.

"Too jolly warm!"

Bob, as usual, was brimming with energy. But on a hot June afternoon his comrades did not want to trot in the blaze of summer sunshine on Courtfield Common; walking was good enough for them.

"My dear men, trot!" said Bob. "It will do Bunter good. Bring down some of his fat."

"Bunter?" repeated Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, was not with Harry Wharton & Co. They had, in fact, rather carefully avoided catching his eye when they walked out of the school gates after class. They were going on a ramble across the common, and down the river, ultimately arriving at Cliff House School for tea. Bunter was superfluous, though it would have been difficult to convince him that that was the case.

"Look back, old bean!" said Bob.

The chums of the Remove looked back. Flashes of bright light caught their eyes on the white country road in the direction of Greyfriars. They came from the big spectacles that adorned the fat countenance of Billy Bunter, flashing back the rays of the summer sun. Billy Bunter, warm and perspiring, was plugging along in the rear, panting as he plugged. He looked as if he was on the point of melting. And he felt like it. As the juniors looked back, grinning, the fat

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Owl of the Remove waved a fat, damp hand and squeaked.

"I say, you fellows, hold on! Wait for me!"

"I don't think!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The don't thinkfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"The trotfulness is the proper caper."

And the Famous Five trotted.

"I say, you fellows!" came a despairing wail from behind.

They trotted on.

"Beasts!"

Bob glanced back over his shoulder again, and chuckled.

"My hat! Bunter's trotting, too! This will do him a lot of good! He's melting visibly. He can afford to lose a ton or two of fat. It's time he went in for slimming."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was putting it on. He panted, he puffed, and he blew, and perspiration rolled in streams down his fat face. But he stuck gamely to the trail. He knew that the Famous Five were going somewhere to tea, because there was a keyhole in Study No. 1 in the Remove. But he had not heard them mention where they were going. It might be the bunshop at Courtfield, or they might be going to call on their friends at Highcliffe, or they might be taking a roundabout route to Cliff House. Obviously it was necessary to keep them in sight if Bunter was to join up at tea-time. So Bunter trotted.

In a cheery row the Famous Five of Greyfriars swung along the road over the green common. Far from cheery, but determined, Billy Bunter plugged

on behind, his fat little legs going like clockwork.

They turned off into a footpath among the golden gorse, and the road was left behind.

"Now put it on," said Bob. "Race you men to the river."

"Yes, I can see myself racing a mile in this blaze," said Frank Nugent.

"Wash it out, fathead!"

"My dear chap, what's a mile?" urged Bob. "Only one thousand seven hundred and sixty yards. I've had that from Quelch."

"Just one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine too many," said Harry Wharton. "Rats!"

"Oh, you're slackers!" said Bob. "We're playing cricket at Highcliffe to-morrow. I suppose you'll be sitting down in the middle of the pitch to take a rest. Put it on!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, we'd better drop Bunter here, or he will guess where we're going, and roll in after us," said Bob. "We can't inflict that fat boulder on Marjorie and Clara. Jump over this bank, and cut across the common. Lots of time to get clear before Bunter turns the corner."

"Oh, all right!"

Beside the footpath, at a distance from the corner, a grassy bank sloped steeply down to a lower level of the rugged common. It was crowned by masses of gorse.

Bob Cherry led the way.

He took a little run, leaped high over the gorse, and came down on the other side of the bank.

There was a sudden, fearful yell.

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Bob had expected to land on grass. But what he landed on did not feel like grass, and did not sound like it.

Someone was sitting below that steep bank, completely out of sight from the footpath. Bob hadn't thought of that. Really no fellow could have been expected to think of it. It was one of those unexpected things that happen sometimes.

Instead of landing safely on his feet on the grass, Bob landed on the fellow who was sitting there, and that fellow let out a startled yell that awoke most of the echoes in the neighbourhood. Bob rolled over, and landed on his nose instead of his feet, and his yell followed that of the fellow he had dropped on, like an echo.

"Whoop!"
He sat up in the grass rather dazedly. "Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, who was about to jump. He stopped in time. "That fathead's landed on somebody."

"Ow! Oh! You rotter! Yaroooh! Ow! Oh gad!" came a yell from below the bank. "Oooogh! Ow!"

"I know that toot," grinned Johnny Bull. "That's Ponsonby of Highcliffe."

The four juniors clambered down the bank through the gorse instead of jumping. Bob was still sitting and gasping, and staring at the fellow he had landed on. That fellow was Cecil Ponsonby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School. Ponsonby was grabbing at his mouth as if he had a pain there. That was rather odd as Bob certainly had not fallen on his mouth. But it was soon explained. Round about the spot were burnt matches and cigarette ends. Smoking was one of the many shady habits of Cecil Ponsonby, who was known at Highcliffe as the worst boy in the school. The black sheep of Highcliffe evidently had been sitting in that hidden spot to enjoy a smoke. And there had been a cigarette in his mouth when Bob dropped from above.

Ponsonby spluttered and howled and roared. He had had rather a shock, but that had not hurt him so much as the burning end of the cigarette in his mouth. He staggered to his feet and glared at the Greyfriars fellows with furious eyes. Bob picked himself up.

"Sorry!" he gasped. "I hadn't the faintest idea there was anybody under the bank when I jumped—"

"You lyin' rotter!" bawled Ponsonby. "You knew I was there."

"Might have if I'd smelled the baccy," said Bob. "But I didn't—"

"You clumsy fool!"

Bob Cherry's blue eyes glinted. He was sorry for the accident, but he was not disposed to take too much abuse from his old enemy of Highcliffe.

"It was really an accident, Ponsonby," said Harry Wharton soothingly.

Little as he liked the cad of Highcliffe, he did not want a "row" with him just then, at all events. On the morrow the Greyfriars fellows were booked to play Highcliffe, so a row with a Highcliffe man was better avoided, if it was avoidable. But Pon was hurt, and Pon was furious—so furious that he forgot his usual caution. He shook a fist in Bob's face.

"You rotter! You—you—"

"Chuck it!" said Bob quietly. "That will do, Pon! I'm sorry I dropped on you; but if you've burnt yourself with your filthy smokes, serve you jolly well right! Let's go on, you men."

Smack!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob, as the infuriated Highcliffe fellow's hand came across his face in a savage smack.

"Why, you cheeky cad—"

Bob's fist lashed out like lightning.

There was a bump in the grass as Pon went down. Bob stood over him with blazing eyes.

"Now get up, you rotter!" he roared. "Get up and put up your paws! My hat, I'll mop you up till your pals won't know your face again!"

"Hold on, Bob!" exclaimed Wharton hastily.

He grabbed Bob's arm and dragged him back. Pon did not rise. That one hefty knock had reminded him that scrapping was not in his line. He lay where he had fallen, his eyes glittering up at Bob like a snake's.

"Get out, you cad!" he muttered thickly.

"Come on, Bob!" urged Wharton. Bob snorted.

"Well, if the rotter doesn't want any more—"

"He looks as if he doesn't!" grinned Johnny Bull. "The jolly old fighting blood of the Ponsonbys has gone off the boil!"

"Come on, fathead!" said Harry. "After all, you dropped on the fellow's neck!"

"The lookfulness before the leapfulness is an esteemed proverb!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The look before the leap is a cracked pitcher that saves a stitch in time!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Let's cut!" he said.

And the Famous Five went on their

The distinction of being the "worst boy in the school" goes easily to Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe. When you read this powerful story, telling of the rivalry—friendly and otherwise—between Greyfriars and Highcliffe, you will understand why!

way among the gorse, and disappeared from Ponsonby's sight in a few moments. When they were gone, the Highcliffe fellow picked himself up and, with a black and sullen face, clambered up the bank to the footpath.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs For It!

"CATERPILLAR—"

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

"Let's get going, old fellow!"

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

Rupert de Courcy—otherwise known as the "Caterpillar" of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School—yawned deep and long.

The Caterpillar was stretched in the rich, thick grass on the common, his shoulders resting against the trunk of a gnarled old oak. His straw hat was tilted over his face, and under its shady brim he was contemplating the world in general with a sleepy eye. He looked the picture of lazy contentment, and exceedingly disinclined to stir. His chum, Frank Courtenay, stood looking down at him, with just a touch of impatience.

"We've got to get back, old chap!" said Courtenay. "Games practice—"

The Caterpillar groaned.

"We must put in an hour, old fellow. We're playing Greyfriars to-morrow, you know."

"Don't you think," asked the Caterpillar gently, "that there's some danger of overdoin' it? A man gets stale with too much practice."

"That won't happen to you," said Courtenay, laughing. "You're in no danger. Get a move on! You can't sit there for ever!"

"I haven't been sittin' down five minutes—"

"Nearer ten."

"It's a lovely view!" murmured the Caterpillar. "There are times, old bean, when a man should sit down and contemplate the beauties of Nature. Far from the maddin' crowd's ignoble strife—"

"Jump up!"

"Look at the golden gorse and the jolly old oaks and the blue sky!" urged the Caterpillar. "It makes a fellow poetical. What's that verse—"

"Are you coming, fathead?"

"We had it with Mobbs in English Literature once," said the Caterpillar, unheeding. "'Where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile.' That's it! Just like Pon to butt in and disfigure the landscape!"

Courtenay glanced round. The chums of Highcliffe were under a bunch of oaks a little distance from the footpath. They had stopped for a rest—at all events, De Courcy had—and Courtenay had stopped to wait for him to restart after the interval. From the other side of the footpath a Highcliffe junior came clambering up the bank and emerged into view. He stood in the footpath, scowling, and dusting his clothes with a handkerchief, without a glance at the fellows under the oaks on the common. He did not see them, but they looked at him curiously.

"Pon's been diggin' up trouble!" yawned the Caterpillar. "What a man Pon is for diggin' up trouble! I've punched his nose myself in my time, and I'm as peaceable as a sweet little woolly lamb! So have you, and you're peaceabler than I am. Who's been punchin' Pon's nose, Franky? Can't see anybody about?"

Pon dabbed his nose. It was clear that it had been punched. A "thin red line" persisted in oozing from it. A black scowl darkened his face. The dandy of Highcliffe was evidently in a very bad temper.

A fat figure turned off the road into the footpath, and came puffing on at a laborious trot. It was Billy Bunter, still on the trail of the Famous Five. He was warmer and damper than ever, and his breathless grunts could be heard quite a distance across the common.

"Come on, Rupert!" urged Courtenay.

The junior captain of Highcliffe was thinking of games practice and the morrow's match, and was not interested in either Ponsonby or Billy Bunter.

"Hold on, old man!" said the Caterpillar lazily. "Let's watch Bunter a minute or two. I love watchin' that chap!"

"What on earth for?"

"I'm always wonderin' when he's goin' to burst! Looks to me as if he's on the very point of it now."

"For goodness' sake, get a move on!"

"And look at Pon's nose—"

"Blow his nose!" said Courtenay crossly.

"Pon can do that for himself, old bean!" said the Caterpillar mildly. "Hallo, look! Don't go, old tulip! This is goin' to be interestin'. Franky, I insist on watchin' the entertainment!"

And the Caterpillar sat and watched. Courtenay impatiently turned his eyes towards the footpath again. What he saw there caused his brows to darken.

Billy Bunter, rolling up the footpath, arrived at the spot where Ponsonby was standing. Blinking in all directions through his big spectacles, the Owl of the Remove failed to pick up any sign of the Famous Five. Had they been still ahead of him on the footpath, he would have spotted them; so even Bunter's fat brain jumped to it that they had left the path to dodge him. Which way they had gone was a mystery to Bunter. So he thought it was rather fortunate to find a fellow there whom he could ask.

"I say, Ponsonby," squeaked the fat Owl, "have you seen my friends pass this way—Wharton and Bob Cherry, and the other chaps?"

Ponsonby looked at him. He came a little nearer to Bunter, with a deadly gleam in his eyes. Bob Cherry had punched his nose hard, and Pon had let it go at that for reasons good to himself. But he was simply longing for some victim upon whom to wreak his bitter rage and rancour. And here was a Greyfriars fellow, too fat and flabby to be able to take care of himself, fairly walking up and asking for it!

Had the newcomer been Smithy, or Squiff, or Toddy, or any fellow who could hand out a punch, Pon would have walked away. But the newcomer was Bunter—less able to handle Pon than Pon was to handle Bob Cherry. It was really quite a windfall for Pon, the worst boy in the school, in his present savage mood. And if Pon had not been feeling rancorous enough already, the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove proceeded to make him more so.

As Ponsonby approached him, he observed the state of Pon's nose, and gave a fat giggle.

"He, he, he! Knocked your boko on anything, Pon? He, he, he!"

"You Greyfriars cad!" said Ponsonby. "Askin' for it—what? Well, I'll give you all you want, and a little over!"

Bunter jumped back.

"I—I—I say— Here, keep off, you beast! I say— Yaroooooo!"

Pon came at him with right and left. "Whoop!" roared Bunter.

He went down in a sprawling heap, roaring. Ponsonby grinned down at him. This was the sort of opponent Pon liked when he was in a fighting mood. He was not likely to collect much in the way of damage from Bunter.

"Get up, you Greyfriars funk!" snarled Pon.

"Yow-ow-ow! Keep off!" yelled Bunter. "I say, old chap— Keep off, you beast! Dear old Pon— Yah, you rotter— Yarooooop!"

"I'll kick you till you get up, you fat freak!" grinned Pon. "That's one—and that's another—and that—"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Fire! Yarooooop!" roared Bunter.

He did not get up. He was only too well aware that Pon would knock him down again if he did. He stayed where he was. But it did not benefit him much, as Pon evidently intended to kick him till he did get up. And Pon's kicks were not gentle. Pon had quite polished manners—sometimes! But under them he had the nature of a hooligan. It was not a playful kicking such as the fat Owl sometimes received for his sins in the Remove; it was hard and brutal, and it hurt. And Bunter yelled and howled with anguish.

"I told you there was goin' to be an entertainment, Franky!" yawned the Caterpillar, under the oaks. "Dear old Pon's passin' it on. Why doesn't that fat frump get up and punch him? Pon would sprint at one punch! If he goes on kickin' him like that, there's not the

slightest doubt that Bunter will burst! I almost think I ought to get up an' stop him!"

Courtenay did not answer. He was already running towards the footpath, his eyes glinting and his hands clenched. The Caterpillar picked himself out of the grass, with a lazy smile. He had an idea that the "entertainment" was soon going to be still more exciting.

Courtenay ran swiftly, but his footsteps made no sound on the thick grass. He reached the footpath before Pon saw him or knew that he was coming. Bunter, squirming and yelling, did not see him at all. Another kick was landing in Bunter's fat ribs when the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth ran on the footpath, grasped Pon by the collar, and dragged him back.

"You rotten cur!" shouted Courtenay, and with a swing of his arm he sent Ponsonby stumbling and crashing to the ground.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tit For Tat!

BILLY BUNTER squirmed and roared.

The Caterpillar, sauntering up with his hands in his pockets, stood regarding him with an amused smile, as if he were some queer zoological specimen. Courtenay was more actively engaged. He stooped over the sprawling Ponsonby, grasped his collar again, and jerked him to his feet. His handsome face was dark with anger and scorn. Ponsonby struggled savagely in his grasp. He had been taken quite by surprise when the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth appeared so suddenly on the scene. He would hardly have ventured to treat Bunter as he had done had he known that there were witnesses at hand.

"Let go my collar, you cad!" hissed Ponsonby as he struggled. "You rotter, you dare to lay your paws on me—"

"You cur!" snapped Courtenay. "I've a jolly good mind to give you the thrashing of your life!"

"I'll hold your jacket, old bean," cooed the Caterpillar. "Jolly good exercise, scrappin'—quite as good as games practice, and more interestin' to watch! Go it!"

"Let me go!" yelled Ponsonby.

Unheeding either his yelling or his struggling, Courtenay dragged him by main force towards Bunter. The fat Owl gave a yell as they approached.

"Keep off, you beasts! Oh lor'! Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, keep off! Ow! Wow! Lemme alone! Oh dear!"

"It's all right, Bunter," said Courtenay soothingly. "Nothing to be afraid of!"

Bunter set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked up at him. Then he recognised Courtenay; and realised that that youth was holding Pon safe in a grip of iron.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He staggered to his feet. He knew that he was safe now. "I say, hold that beast! Kicking a chap—"

"I'm holding him!" said Courtenay grimly. "I'm sorry that you've been used like that by a Highcliffe man, Bunter."

"We apologise!" said the Caterpillar gracefully, taking off his hat and making Bunter a bow.

"Oh, really, you know—" Bunter blinked at him.

"Ponsonby's going to have a lesson," said Courtenay. "He was kicking you. Now you are going to kick him."

He twisted Ponsonby over, with a

strength that could not be resisted. Bunter blinked at him in astonishment for a moment or two; then he grinned. Ponsonby writhed with rage.

"You—you dare—" he panted.

"A Daniel come to judgment!" said the Caterpillar admiringly. "Makin' the punishment fit the giddy crime, what? Franky, old bean, you're a genius! Go it, Bunter—free kicks galore!"

"You dare—" screamed Ponsonby.

Bunter dared! Bunter was as bold as a lion when there was no danger. And there was none now—now that the elegant bully of Highcliffe was held in a grip like a steel vice.

Biff! Bump! Crash! Billy Bunter put his beef into it; and Bunter had plenty of beef. All the fat Owl's weight went into that kicking; and Cecil Ponsonby wriggled and writhed and roared and yelled and struggled desperately—but all in vain. Courtenay held him fast; and the cad of Highcliffe had to have it—and he had it!

Kicking Bunter had been quite amusing to Pon. Being kicked by Bunter was quite a different proposition. A kicking was undoubtedly one of those things which it is more blessed to give than to receive. Bunter had had it hard from Pon—Pon had it harder from Bunter! Billy Bunter almost forgot his own damages in the satisfaction of handing out the same to his enemy. Indeed, Bunter, though usually a fat slacker, seemed tireless now. He developed amazing energy. He kicked and he kicked and he kicked! He looked as if he might have gone on kicking for ever and a day; but Courtenay decided that Pon had had enough—and he gave the signal to stop.

"Just a few more—" said Bunter.

"That will do, I think!" said Courtenay, laughing.

"Look here, it jolly well won't!" exclaimed Bunter. "I'll give him a couple of dozen more! He hasn't had enough yet!"

"It's a disputed point," said the Caterpillar gravely. "Let's refer it to Pon, as the person principally interested. Is it your opinion, Pon, that you have had enough—or would you like the extra couple of dozen as suggested by our mutual friend Bunter?"

"Will you let me go?" shrieked Ponsonby.

"That isn't an answer to my question, dear boy!" chided the Caterpillar gently. "To kick or not to kick, that is the question—"

Courtenay, laughing, threw the dandy of Highcliffe aside. Ponsonby collapsed in the grass, gasping and groaning. The captain of the Fourth looked down at him.

"If you want this to go any further, Ponsonby, you're welcome—with or without gloves!" he said quietly.

Ponsonby made no answer but a groan. Courtenay turned to the Owl of Greyfriars.

"You'd better cut, Bunter," he said.

Bunter was of the same opinion. He blinked uneasily at the cad of Highcliffe now that he was no longer held.

"I'm not afraid of the fellow, of course," he said. "For two pins I'd pitch into him now and give him a jolly good licking! Still, perhaps he's had enough."

"Perhaps he has!" said the Caterpillar gravely. "I wouldn't give him any more, Bunter! In the circumstances, it's really up to you to control your ragin' fury, and let him off!"

"Hardly worth soiling a fellow's hands on," said Bunter loftily.

"And you seem to have soiled them on somethin' else already!" murmured the

Caterpillar, with a glance at Bunter's grubby paws.

"Oh, really, you know! I say, you fellows, have you seen my friends?" asked Bunter. "My pals came this way and I happened to drop behind, and seem to have lost them. Wharton and his lot, you know."

"Ah!" said the Caterpillar. "We haven't seen them—but I can guess now where Pon picked up that nose!"

"Well, I'd better look for them," said Bunter. "Dodging a chap, the beasts—I mean, they'll be rather anxious when they miss me. I shall see you fellows to-morrow—I'm coming over with the team."

"The game's up, Franky, if Bunter's

Ponsonby made a movement. He rose to his feet, eyeing the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth with bitter animosity. The Caterpillar smiled. He did not need telling that, as soon as he and his chum had gone, Pon intended to follow Bunter for vengeance. But that fact was equally clear to Courtenay.

"You will walk back to Highcliffe with us, Ponsonby!" he said curtly.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" hissed Pon.

"Take his other arm, Caterpillar."

"Any old thing!" yawned De Courcy.

Ponsonby's face was white with rage as he walked away between the two chums, each of them holding an arm. It would have been some satisfaction

and a fellow whose uncle was a marquis could do no wrong in his eyes. So Mr. Mobbs bore down on the three, frowning; Pon immediately beginning to struggle at sight of him.

"What—what is this—what does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs. "Ponsonby—what—what— Release Ponsonby immediately!"

Pon was released at once.

"What does this mean, Courtenay?" demanded Mr. Mobbs.

"Ponsonby can tell you, sir!" answered the captain of the Fourth drily.

"My dear Ponsonby, you appear to have been injured—"

"I was set on by some Greyfriars



Bob Cherry took a little run, leaped high over the gorse, and came down on the other side of the bank. Instead of landing safely on his feet, however, he dropped on top of Cecil Ponsonby, who was sitting in that hidden spot, enjoying a smoke. "Ow! Yarooooh!" roared the Highcliffe junior, as the burning end of the cigarette came in contact with his mouth.

playin' cricket against us!" said the Caterpillar solemnly. "May as well throw up the sponge and have done with it."

"Oh, I'm not in the team," said Bunter reassuringly. "Wharton's rather jealous of my form—"

"There's such a lot of it!" murmured the Caterpillar.

"I mean my form at cricket, you ass! He won't play a man who can play his head off—too jolly swanky," explained Bunter. "They're all the same—they don't want a first-class cricketer to put them in the shade. So I shan't be playing!"

"I breathe again!" said the Caterpillar.

"Well, see you to-morrow," said Bunter, evidently with the impression that that was a great treat in store for the Highcliffe fellows. And he rolled away in the rather hopeless search for the five vanished Removites.

to him to go after Billy Bunter and smite that fat youth hip and thigh. But that satisfaction was denied him. Twice he attempted to wrench his arms away and cut; but he wrenched in vain. After which, he walked quietly between the two, simmering with hatred and fury.

Highcliffe School was in sight when a little, squat gentleman, with a thin, acid face and greenish eyes came in sight. This was Mr. Mobbs, master of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. He came rather suddenly on the three, round a clump of trees, and stared at them in great surprise. Although Ponsonby was the worst boy in the school, he was Mr. Mobbs' favourite in the Fourth. Pon was the happy possessor of an uncle who was a marquis; and Mr. Mobbs had had the honour and glory of spending a week-end at the marquis' place—and lived in happy anticipation of another! Mr. Mobbs was of the snobs, snobbish;

fellows, sir," answered Ponsonby. "These fellows seemed to think that I was goin' to hurt one of their Greyfriars friends, and they dragged me away!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured the Caterpillar.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs. "I am shocked to hear this! Courtenay; De Courcy, you will take one hundred lines each; and go to your study and write them out."

"Ponsonby is not telling the truth, sir," said Courtenay, calmly.

"What—what? I saw you dragging him along with my own eyes! I suppose I can believe my own eyes! Obey my order at once."

"We're going in to games practice, sir."

Mr. Mobbs raised a bony forefinger. "You are going to your study to write out your imposition, Courtenay! I shall return from my walk shortly; I shall return from my walk shortly;

and if I find that you have disregarded my order, I shall take you to Dr. Voysey. Go!"

Courtenay compressed his lips as he walked on to Highcliffe with the Caterpillar. The latter smiled.

"Nice little man, Mobby," he remarked. "Goin' to do the lines, Franky?"

"I suppose so."

"Look here, I'll cut them, if you will! Dash it all, we're bound to slog at games practice, with a cricket match comin' off to-morrow," said the Caterpillar, virtuously. "I'm just yearnin' to handle a bat! What about it?"

Courtenay smiled, but he shook his head. And the chums of the Highcliffe Fourth went in to lines.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Not a Kicking!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came back from Cliff House in time for call-over. As they came sauntering up to the school gates, they spotted a fat figure ahead of them, plugging along in the same direction.

They smiled as they spotted it. It was the plump and podgy figure of William George Bunter, rolling home after a long and weary pilgrimage. Bunter apparently, had been on his travels all the while the Famous Five had been "teasing" at Cliff House with Marjorie & Co.—seeking the elusive tea-party and finding them not. Coming along behind the tired and crawling fat Owl, the chums of the Remove listened to his grunting as they followed him in at the gates. Billy Bunter plugged on wearily across the quad to the House, unaware that the smiling five were just behind him. Outside the House were a group of Remove fellows—Vernon-Smith, Redwing, Peter Todd, Squiff, Wibley, and two or three others; and they grinned at Bunter as he came up. The fat junior came to a halt and blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows!" he moaned, "any of you got any toffee about you? I say, I haven't had any tea!"

"Packet of butterscotch any good?" asked Smithy.

"Oh, yes, rather! Thanks, old chap!"

Bunter extended a fat paw.

"Sure you'd like it?"

"What-ho!"

"Well, you can get it at the tuckshop! It's not closed yet."

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Peter Todd, grinning, extracted a stick of toffee from a packet and handed it to the hungry Owl. Bunter's capacious mouth enclosed it at once.

"I say, you fellows, have you seen those beasts?" asked Bunter. "I mean Wharton and his crew—those sneaking, measly rotters."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. As "Wharton and his crew" were coming up just behind the fat Owl, the question struck them as funny.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter, happily unaware of the proximity of the Famous Five, who halted just in the rear. "Those rotters wanted me to go out to tea with them—but I had to turn them down. Can't stand them you know—that stuck-up dummy, Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that hooligan Bob Cherry, all hands and feet, and a voice like a megaphone—and that lout Bull—"

"Go it!" chuckled the Bounder. "This is interesting, Bunter!"

"And that mooning milksop Nugent, and that cheeky nigger, Inky," went on Bunter. "I simply can't stand that crew. I was rather a fool to agree to go out to tea with them. But I had to turn them down—a mob like that. Have the sneaking rotters come in yet?"

"I fancy they're not far away," said Tom Redwing, laughing.

"Well, I hope they'll be late for calling-over, and get a jaw from Quelch," said Bunter. "Dodging a chap, you know, and giving him miles and miles to walk—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle," hooted Bunter. "I've walked miles and miles and miles over Courtyard Common. And I've hurt my toe, too, kicking that cad Ponsonby!"

"Kicking Ponsonby!" ejaculated the Bounder. "Yes, I think I can see Pon lettin' you kick him."

"Well, I jolly well did!" said Bunter. "Kicked him right and left! Somebody punched his nose, and he was in a fearful temper, and he set on me. I gave him a jolly good kicking! He hadn't the pluck to put up his hands—afraid of me, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors, and the Famous Five, behind Bunter, grinned. Pon of Highcliffe was no hero; but they could not quite imagine him afraid of Billy Bunter.

"I let him have it," said Bunter. "I fancy Pon will want a new pair of bags. I can tell you I gave him the kicking of his life."

"And he let you?" grinned Toddy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you can ask them at Highcliffe to-morrow, if you can't take a fellow's word," said Bunter. "Courtenay or the Caterpillar will tell you—they saw it all."

"Gammon!"

"Well, ask them!" said Bunter. "I jolly well gave him more than he gave me. Knocking a chap down and kicking him, you know, just because some fellow had punched his nose. But I gave him plenty back. That fellow Courtenay is as strong as a horse—Pon simply couldn't get loose while he was holding him—"

"Oh!" ejaculated the Bounder, "Courtenay held him while you kicked him—is that it?"

"Eh? Oh! No! I mean, Courtenay

wasn't there," said Bunter hastily. "That is, he came up afterwards. He never chipped in while Pon was kicking me and dragged him off! Nothing of the kind. I handled Pon entirely on my own!"

"I can see you doing it!" grinned Wibley.

"Well, I did it!" said Bunter. "Left him squirming and groaning like—like anything. I fancied he might have come after me again when they were gone, but I didn't hide in the gorse—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should have been glad if he'd come after me—I'd have given him some more. But he knew better than that! Afraid of me, you know. I say, you fellows, that's the bell for call-over. Those rotters will be late—I hope they'll get lines all round. I've a jolly good mind to kick them when they come in, the same as I did Ponsonby! It would do Wharton good to be kicked. Too jolly swanky, in my opinion."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. It really was entertaining to hear Bunter run on like this, in happy ignorance of the fact that Harry Wharton & Co. were just behind him.

"And that lout Cherry," went on the happy Bunter. "I believe it was Cherry put them up to running when they saw I was coming after them. I've a jolly good mind to kick him from one end of the Remove to the other. That's what he wants."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They're a measly, rotten crew," said Bunter. "Ungrateful and all that, after all I've done for them. Look at the way Wharton's leaving me out of the cricket! I told Courtenay that I was left out because Wharton was jealous of me, and he was very sympathetic."

"Oh crikey!"

"He said, 'Just like that cad'—his very words," said Bunter, "and the Caterpillar said, 'Why don't you lick him, Bunter? You could.' I said he wasn't worth licking—but I might kick him. Kicking is the sort of thing he wants for his swank! And you can cackle, but if he was here now, I'd jolly well tell him so, too!"

"Go it, then!" said a voice behind Bunter.

Billy Bunter spun round like a fat humming-top. His little round eyes almost bulged through his big round spectacles as he blinked at Harry Wharton & Co.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"So I want kicking for my swank, and you're going to do it, what?" asked the captain of the Remove. "Ready? Get on with it."

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean—what I really meant to say, old chap, was that you—you—you don't want swanking for your kick—I mean, kicking for your swank—oh lor'!"

"And I'm a hooligan, what?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Oh crikey! Nunno! I mean—"

"And I'm a mooning milksop?" inquired Nugent.

"Oh crumbs! Yes—I mean no—no—nunno—"

"And I'm a lout?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh lor'!"

"And I am a cheeky nigger, my esteemed fathheaded Bunter?" inquired Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh scissors!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is where the kicking begins," said Bob Cherry. "Here we are, Bunter, all ready to be kicked! Give us the same that you gave Pon!"

Billy Bunter blinked at them. He backed away. The Bounder gave him a shove towards the Famous Five. He

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backed away again, and Peter Todd gave him another shove forward.

"We're waiting, old fat bean," said Wharton. "The bell's going for call-over, and we can't wait long."

"I—I—I say, you fellows—"

"There's going to be a kicking," said Johnny Bull positively. "The only question is, are you going to give it to us, or are we going to give it to you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Are you going to begin, Bunter?" inquired Bob Cherry. "Or shall we begin?"

"I—I—I say, you fellows, I—I never knew you were there! I—I mean, I knew you were there, and was only jig-jig-joking, just to pi-pip-pull your leg, you know!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh! And we're not a measly, rotten crew, after all?" asked Bob.

"Nunno! You're awfully nice fellows—really nice! Nicest chaps in the Remove!" groaned Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn round!" said Bob Cherry, drawing back his boot.

"Ow! Keep off!" roared Bunter.

He turned—and bolted! He went up the House steps like a fat rabbit streaking for its burrow.

"After him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Kick him!"

"Give him beans!"

"Give him terrific beans!"

"Boot him!"

The Famous Five shouted with one voice; but they did not stir from the spot! They stood and watched Bunter. But the fat Owl had no doubt that they were coming on behind with deadly intent. He tore up the steps, and bolted into the House. Coker of the Fifth had just gone in—at a more leisurely pace. Billy Bunter did not even see him. He hit Coker in the back like a cannon-ball.

"Oooogh!" gasped Bunter, reeling from the shock.

"Oh crumbs!" roared Horace Coker, as he staggered forward and landed on his hands and knees. "Whooh! What the thump—oooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a howl from the juniors outside the door.

Bunter sat down! Coker jumped up! He turned on Bunter.

"Why, you—you—you—" gurgled Coker. "Barging over a Fifth Form man from behind! Why, you cheeky tick, I—I—I'll—" He jumped at Bunter.

"Yaroo! I say, you fellows—help—yoop—rescue!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites rushed in, and dragged the indignant Coker off. Billy Bunter wriggled away, and left Coker to them.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Scratched!

B UZZZZZZZZZ!
Mr. Lascelles, the games master of Greyfriars, was speaking when the telephone bell rang in his study. He was speaking to Billy Bunter—and Billy Bunter, therefore, was rather glad when the telephone-bell rang.

Mr. Lascelles was maths master as well as games master—and it was as maths master that he was speaking to Bunter at the moment. Bunter loathed work in any shape or form—but in the form of geometry he loathed it most of all. Geometry, according to Bunter, was more putrid than deponent verbs—which came next.

Bunter had come to Lascelles' study to explain why he hadn't done an impot, and he explained that he had got lost on

Many and varied were the difficulties that confronted the British engineers when they attempted the colossal task of

LINKING UP TWO OCEANS

This wonderful feat of engineering forms the subject of our grand photo-gravure plate this week.

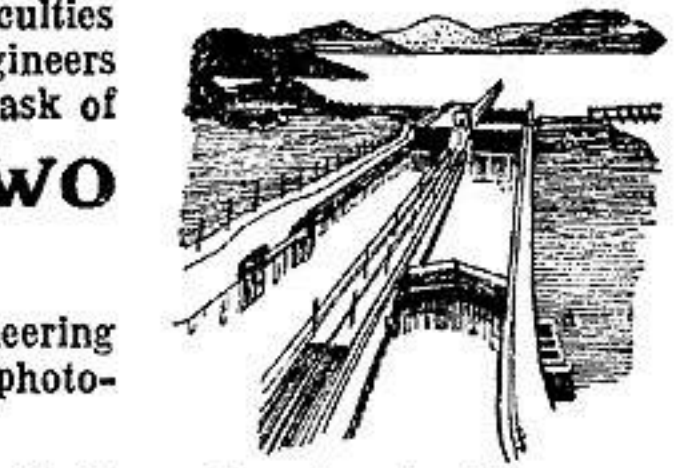
Linking Up Two Oceans!

IT would be an appalling sort of job to cut a channel fifty miles long through ordinary level country, and then regulate the water in it so that great ships could pass through. What about doing the same job through mountains and swamps? That's what had to be tackled before the Panama Canal came into being. They had to dig out 360,000,000 tons of material from first to last! Digging through the mighty Culebra Mountain was a specially tough job. They had to shift over 100,000,000 tons of rock and earth there, and it took 1,000,000 cartridges to blast the rock away before the seven-mile-long cutting through that mountain was complete.

Combating Disease!

Then the mosquitoes! They took a hand in it, too. In fact, they nearly put a stop to this stupendous engineering job altogether. They killed off men by the hundred, millions and millions of mosquitoes bringing yellow fever and malaria to the 50,000 labourers and their families who were engaged on the task. To conquer the disease-carrying mosquito, the breeding-places of the vicious pests had to be drained—big swamps, lakes, ditches, and ponds, which stretched away for miles on all sides of the route of the canal. Where the breeding-waters could not be drained away, oil was poured over the surface. And that beat the mosquitoes! Funny how a little insect can upset man's plans, isn't it?

But, with an army of doctors to restore health and keep the labourers and their families healthy, the work went on again, and now great ships pass constantly from the Pacific to the



Caribbean Sea through this greatest ship canal in all the world, via the Isthmus of Panama. The system of locks which enables ships to be lifted and lowered again where necessary—as is done on small, ordinary canals in England—is amazingly vast. One of these—the great Gatun Lock—has walls 81 feet high, containing 2,000,000 cubic feet of concrete. The lock gates throughout the canal each have two "leaves," and each "leaf" is 65 feet wide and 7 feet thick, the height varying between 47 and 80 feet or more. Imagine the tremendous machinery needed to open and close those locks!

America Steps In!

The man who first undertook to build this tremendous canal had luck all against him; the money of the French company behind him ran short, and the mosquitoes killed off thousands of his workmen who came out to the job from Europe. When the last of the money was gone, it looked as though the great canal, which had been started so enthusiastically, in such high hopes, was doomed to be a failure—a dream which no man could make real.

Then the United States took the scheme over, and it went on to a glorious and triumphant conclusion—clean through the narrow strip of land that joins North America and South America, so that no longer is it necessary for ships that want to go from one side of America to the other to travel round Cape Horn. They take the short cut right through. Whom shall we give chief credit to—De Lesseps, who started the ambitious scheme, to the men who finished it after the first failure, or to the man who found out how to kill all those mosquitoes?

Now take a glance at the small black-and-white reproduction of NEXT WEEK'S FREE PHOTO-PLATE on page 17 of this issue.

Courtfield Common, and so hadn't had time. Finding from Mr. Lascelles' expression that this did not seem to give satisfaction, Bunter further explained that he really had done that geometry, only his study-mate, Toddy, had spilt ink on it and spoiled it.

Either of these explanations might have worked the oracle. But both together seemed to make Larry Lascelles doubt whether Bunter was telling the truth.

He was engaged in giving the fat Owl a "royal and imperial jaw," when the buzz of the telephone-bell fortunately interrupted him. He rose and went to the phone, and Bunter backed to the door. With Lascelles on the phone, Bunter considered that he had a right to regard that "jaw" at an end. But Mr. Lascelles made him a sign to stay. The jaw, apparently, was not over yet.

"Yes—who's speaking?" asked Mr. Lascelles into the transmitter.

"I say, sir, it's nearly time for prep," said Bunter. "I—I like to be rather early for prep, sir—"

"Be silent, Bunter! Yes, Mr. Lascelles, games master of Greyfriars, speaking," said Larry into the phone. "Is that Highcliffe? Well?"

Billy Bunter ceased to edge towards the door. He was rather interested to hear a telephone-call from Highcliffe. Instead of edging to the door, he edged towards the phone, and bent his fat ear to listen, and as the voice came through clearly, he caught what was said as well as Mr. Lascelles. The games master was giving all his attention to the phone, and had his back to Bunter—and the fat junior edged quite near, rather forgetting caution in his curiosity.

"Courtenay speaking—junior captain of Highcliffe. I dare say you remember me, sir?"

"Quite well," answered Mr. Lascelles. "But what—"

"It's about the match to-morrow, sir—of course, you know that the Remove team were coming over to play us. I'm sorry to say that we shall have to scratch."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lascelles rather sharply. As games master, Larry Lascelles took a keen interest in junior games. "This is surely rather late notice, Courtenay!"

"I can't say how sorry I am, sir, but it's unavoidable. There's been an outbreak of influenza. Dr. Voysey thinks it would be rather risky for boys to come over from another school at such a time. I don't see that quite, myself—"

"Your headmaster is quite right, Courtenay."

"Well, it's a disappointment to us, sir. I could make up a team, and we're very unwilling to scratch. Nobody knew it was flu until it was announced at call-over this evening, and the fellows who were seen by the doctor have been taken away to the sanatorium. Only two of my men are down, and I could fill their places easily enough. But—"

"It will be a disappointment to the boys here, too," said Mr. Lascelles. "But your headmaster is certainly right in telling you to scratch. I am sure that Dr. Locke would not care for Greyfriars boys to come over, in the circumstances."

"I fancy they'd be willing to risk it, sir. Still, there's no choice in the matter. Will you give the message to Wharton, sir, and explain to him how very sorry I am I couldn't let him know sooner?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Lascelles.

"I'd have run across to speak to him, sir, only my Form master, Mr. Mobbs, has refused all leave out of gates, since the doctor said it was flu—"

"Very right and proper," said Mr. Lascelles. "One cannot be too careful in such matters I will certainly explain to Wharton."

"Thank you, sir! Good-night!"

"Good-night, Courtenay!"

Mr. Lascelles put back the receiver, and turned from the telephone—and there was a sudden howl. He was unaware, as he turned, that a fat and inquisitive junior was at his elbow, listening with all his ears. But he became aware of it as his elbow jammed on a fat little nose, and Billy Bunter gave a fiendish howl.

"Yow-ow! Wow!"

"Bunter! You young rascal! How dare you listen!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles angrily.

"Ow!" Bunter backed away, rubbing his nose. "Wow! I wasn't! I never heard a word Courtenay said, sir! I never knew it was Courtenay speaking from Highcliffe at all, sir."

Mr. Lascelles' hand strayed to a cane, and Bunter promptly backed to the door again.

"I—I say, sir, c-c-c-can I go now? I—I'm so afraid of being late for prep, sir. And—and Quelch—I mean Mr. Quelch, will be waxy, sir, and—and—"

"You will tell Wharton that I wish to speak to him, Bunter."

"Oh! Yes! Rather, sir!" gasped Bunter.

And he retreated from the study in great relief. It was not yet time for prep, and Bunter rolled along to the Rag in search of the captain of the Remove.

IMPORTANT NEWS.

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He found a cheery group of the Remove cricketers in the Rag talking over the prospects of the morrow. Bunter's little round eyes twinkled behind his big round spectacles as he joined them.

"I say, you fellows—" he began. "I say, I'm sorry—he, he, he!—I've got rather rotten news for you."

"Keep it!" suggested Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy! It's a message from Lascelles," said Bunter. "You won't be going over to Highcliffe to-morrow, after all!"

"What?" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"It's washed out," said Bunter cheerfully. "They've got an outbreak of measles at Highcliffe—"

"You fat owl!"

"Or smallpox—I forget which! They're most of them in sanny—doctors and nurses sent for—and I think the undertaker—"

"What is that fat idiot babbling about?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Courtenay is laid up—had to be carried to the sanatorium on a stretcher—"

"Courtenay?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes—he's got scarlet measles—I mean rheumatic smallpox! They hope he will survive the night. You're to go to Lascelles' study, Wharton!"

The Remove fellows stared at Billy Bunter. Bunter, as usual, could not be satisfied to tell a plain, unvarnished tale. He had to pile it on.

"And the Caterpillar's laid up, too," said Bunter. "Speechless, you know! Lots of them laid up! I think only a few have died so far. But they expect a lot more to go to-morrow! Regular epidemic! Dying like flies! It seems that Highcliffe is going to be closed down for the rest of the term, and the survivors will go home—if there are any! Awful, ain't it?"

Certainly the juniors would have considered it awful if they had believed a word of it. But they didn't!

"Any more?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That's all, I think, only Courtenay had to phone and tell Lascelles the game was scratched—"

"Courtenay phoned—"

"Yes, I heard what he said—Lascelles asked me to listen, too—"

"Courtenay phoned—after he'd been carried to the Highcliffe sanny on a stretcher!" said Harry Wharton.

"Eh?" Bunter started. "Oh, yes! Exactly! Phoned from his bedside, you know! The nurse held the phone for him. After phoning, he fell back exhausted, with a deep groan. I heard him groan. I say, you fellows, ain't it awful?"

"Frightful!" said Nugent. "Beats Ananias hollow! What are you telling us this funny story for, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Kick him!" said the Bounder.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Now, you fat worm, does Lascelles want to see me or not?" asked Harry. "If I go there for nothing, I shall kick you when I come back. That's a tip!"

"Ow! Beast! You've got to go to Lascelles at once!" howled Bunter. "You'll jolly well see! They've got influenza at Highcliffe, and the match is off! And serve you jolly well right! Yah!"

"Kick him again!" said Smithy.

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Whooop!" roared Bunter, as several fellows did. And while Bunter roared, Harry Wharton proceeded to the games master's study in a rather anxious frame of mind.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Caterpillar Takes a Hand!

C ECIL PONSONBY, of Highcliffe, and the worst boy in the school, put up the receiver in Mr. Mobbs' study at Highcliffe School with a cheery grin on his face.

He turned from the instrument and met the eyes of Gadsby and Monson, his knutty pals, who were waiting in the study while he phoned. They were almost breathless—as if Pon's cool nerve and impudence had taken their breath away. Pon was cool as ice. Lying came as naturally to Pon as breathing.

"What price that?" he asked.

"Priceless!" gasped Gadsby.

"Absolutely priceless!" said Monson. "It's a spoke in their wheel, and no mistake, if you get by with it."

Ponsonby laughed.

"I've got by with it," he answered. "Lascelles took it down like milk! Why shouldn't he? He hadn't the faintest idea that it was not Courtenay phoning."

"Well, I suppose he wouldn't dream of tumblin'," agreed Gadsby. "Nobody would dream of a game like that!"

"It's great!" said Monson.

Pon laughed again. It was "great"—he felt very pleased with himself. The thing had been easy, successful, because it was so simple. How was the games master of Greyfriars to suspect, to dream for one moment, that the Highcliffe fellow who had rung him up was not Courtenay—that it was Frank Courtenay's enemy, doing him an ill-turn? Mr. Lascelles' replies had shown quite clearly that he had no suspicion.

The three young rascals chuckled.

They had the run of Mr. Mobbs' study without fear of Mobby that evening. Mr. Mobbs was dining with Dr. Voysey, the headmaster of Highcliffe. He was safe away for hours. Not that it would have mattered if Mobby had caught Pon in his study. Pon, his master's favourite, was allowed the free use of the phone—though not, of course, for such scurvy tricks as the one he had just played on Greyfriars. Had Mobby come in, Pon would have explained that he had been phoning to one of his noble relatives, and would have invented a polite message from the marquis to Mobby, which would have made Mobby purr with pleasure. But there was no danger of Mobby coming in; he was safe with the Head.

"They keep us out of the cricket," said Ponsonby. "They don't give us a chance in the games—and I was junior captain before that cad Courtenay came. Well, they won't get their game to-morrow."

"What the thump will they do when Greyfriars don't turn up?" asked Gadsby, with a whistle. "It will be a facer for them—chummy as they are with those Greyfriars cads! Expectin' them at eleven-thirty—"

"They won't expect them," answered Pon.

"Eh? Why not?"

"Because Mobby will get a telephone call in the mornin', with a message that the match is off, because—"

"Why?"

"Outbreak of influenza at Greyfriars—"

"Oh gad!"

"Why shouldn't they have the flu there, too?" said Pon cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Gadsby and Monson.

Evidently Pon had thought it out. Pon was not the man to do things by halves! If a thing was worth doing, it was worth doing well! Pon was doing this thing well.

"I've got it all cut and dried," Ponsonby chuckled. "The same tale will work at both ends. Mobby will be glad—he doesn't like those Greyfriars cads any more than we do—they've checked him more than once—he would be glad really if the fixture was washed out. Mobby won't have a suspish! He will simply pass on the message that Greyfriars ain't comin'."

"But how'll you get a phone call through from Greyfriars?" asked Gadsby.

"I shall use one of the school phones here. Mobby won't know! How could he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pon, old man, you're a giddy genius!" said Monson.

"I fancy I'm keen enough to put a spoke in their wheel," said Pon complacently. "I'll take care that Mobby doesn't know my voice on the phone. The match is off—and when they find out, on both sides, that there isn't any flu in either school, I fancy the jolly old friendship may be off, too—each set of rotters will think that the other set of rotters has played a rotten trick, lettin' them down—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!" came a deep, prolonged yawn in the study; and Pon & Co. gave a sudden, convulsive jump. They stared round them in utter amazement.

Someone was in the study!

They had supposed that they had the room to themselves! They had watched Mr. Mobbs go to the Head's house. It was not Mobby! Who was it?

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw-aw!"

The yawn came again.

It proceeded from beyond the high back of Mr. Mobbs' armchair. Someone, evidently, was sitting in that chair, and the high back had screened him all the time from the three young rascals. Whoever it was, it was evident that he must have heard every word spoken in the study, on the telephone and off; for he must have been there before Pon & Co. arrived.

The three stood rooted to the floor. They were not laughing now. Their faces were startled and terrified.

Whoever was in the armchair did not rise. He was still unseen. He simply sat there and yawned.

Ponsonby made an effort at last, moved across the study and round the armchair, and looked.

A handsome, elegant junior was reclining in Mobby's armchair, a sleepy smile on his face. He gave Pon a cheery nod. Ponsonby, with black rage in his heart, stared at Frank Courtenay's chum, the cheerful Caterpillar!

"You!" he breathed.

"Little me!" assented the Caterpillar. "Got any idea when Mobby's comin' in, Pon? I'm waitin' for him."

"The Caterpillar!" muttered Gadsby.

Gadsby and Monson came across, and joined Pon. All three of them gazed at the smiling, sleepy looking Caterpillar.

"What are you doin' here?" muttered Ponsonby, through his set lips.

"Waitin' for Mobby," yawned the Caterpillar. "You remember the good man gave me lines when I was lendin' a hand at draggin' you along this afternoon? Franky did his lines; I was goin' to, but I didn't. Franky's one of those hard-workin', industrious coves," the Caterpillar went on confidentially. "He knocked off that impot, took it along to Mobby, and went down to games practice before I'd made up my mind to get up and begin. He works, you know—the only man at Higheliffe who does, I verily believe. And I felt

(Continued on next page.)

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HERE.

so tired after watchin' Franky work that I couldn't do any myself."

Pon & Co. gazed at him.

The Caterpillar's manner was so cheery and so chatty that they almost wondered whether he had been asleep in Mobby's armchair and had not heard them at all.

"You may have noticed," continued the Caterpillar, in the same chatty tone, "a vein of artfulness in my nature. Did you ever? Not havin' done my lines, and not feelin' inclined to do any, I came along to talk to Mobby, instead, and get let off."

The Caterpillar made a graceful gesture towards the glass-topped cabinet where Mr. Mobbs, who was a philatelist, kept his collection of stamps.

"You're not the only man who can pull Mobby's jolly old leg, Pon," he explained. "I know that a fellow with an uncle in the House of Lords can do anythin' with him. But there's other ways, old bean—what? Talk to Mobby about his blighted stamps, and he will smile like a good-tempered gargoyle—see? I'm goin' to chat with him about the 1840 issue of Something-or-Other, surcharged Thingummy-bob, and it's a ten-to-one chance that I get off the lines. But you fellows know—you've been there."

Gadsby and Monson grinned. But Pon watched the Caterpillar's face with deep uneasiness.

"But Mobby wasn't here," sighed the Caterpillar. "Seems to be inflictin' his genial society on somebody! So I waited! That was where my artfulness came in. Waitin' here for Mobby, I couldn't reasonably be expected to show up at a games practice—what? Even Franky wouldn't expect it, strenuous sportsman as he is. Owin' to Summer Time Acts, an' things, it keeps light so beastly late that a man's never really safe from Franky till he's tucked up in his little bed. So I waited for Mobby—and haven't really missed the good little man very much! Mobby does himself well in armchairs! Ever tried this one? Quite comfy!"

"Have you been asleep here, Caterpillar?" asked Gadsby.

"Have I?" yawned the Caterpillar. "Sort of noddin' off. It's warm, you know, and I've had a tirin' day—walkin' round on the common with Franky, and watchin' that fat man Bunter kickin' Pon—"

Ponsonby gritted his teeth.

"Sort of noddin'," murmured the Caterpillar. "But not too sleepy to hear a sneakin', cringin' worm borrow my pal's name for a talk on the telephone with a games master at Greyfriars! Borrowin's a rotten habit, Pon! Doesn't jolly old Shakespeare say, 'neither a borrower nor a lender be'? And, really, that applies rather particularly to borrowin' a fellow's name. Don't you really think so, Pon?"

Gadsby and Monson exchanged uneasy glances. The Caterpillar's manner was easy, almost playful; but they could discern a gleam in his sleepy eyes that they did not like at all. Gadsby and Monson backed away, and edged unostentatiously towards the door.

Ponsonby's face was white.

The Caterpillar knew it all. And it was Pon's own doing! He had got De Courcy the lines which had caused him to come to Mobby's study! But for that—

"You rotter!" breathed Pon. "Oh, you rotter! You slackin', rotten blighter! Now you're goin' straight to Courtenay to tell him—"

He broke off, choking with rage and chagrin.

The Caterpillar raised his eyebrows.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,323.

"Why should I tell Franky?" he asked. "Franky has the misfortune to be your cousin, Pon, and he hates bein' told what a rotter you are! I'm not sayin' a word to poor old Franky."

Ponsonby felt a deep sense of relief. He knew that the Caterpillar meant that, though he could not understand De Courcy's motives. The elegant youth in the armchair yawned again and rose to his feet.

"After all, it's only a lark, Caterpillar!" said Gadsby.

"Oh, quite!" agreed the Caterpillar. "The sort of lark that would make old Franky get busy with a lives bat, if he knew. I'm not goin' to bother Franky with it. I'm afraid I shall have to spoil the lark, though," added the Caterpillar regretfully. "The game's goin' to be played to-morrow. I'd rather sit under a shady tree an' eat cherries. But I have to think of Franky! He wants to fag about with a bat, knockin' a ball all over the place—why, I don't know! But I'm givin' him his head. Do you fellows mind if I ring up that games bloke at Greyfriars, an' wash out your merry little jest?"

Pon & Co. did not answer. They backed to the door.

"Hold on a minute," murmured the Caterpillar, with a glint in his sleepy eyes. "It's only a lark, as you say, but it's the sort of lark that musn't happen. I'm goin' to kick you, Pon—hard!"

"Look here—"

"I know what you're goin' to say—"

TO READERS IN THE IRISH FREE STATE.

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you've been kicked to-day already, and you don't want any more. I'm sorry that I must insist."

Gadsby and Monson slipped out of the study. Pon would have slipped out, too, but the Caterpillar, suddenly throwing off his sleepy nonchalance, grasped him by the collar and jerked him back.

Ponsonby turned on him in savage fury.

The Caterpillar smiled at him. But his grip was like iron.

"Let go, you rotter!" panted Ponsonby.

"You cur!" The Caterpillar was still smiling, but it was a deadly smile. "You sneakin' treacherous, poisonous worm! You're goin' to learn not to play your dirty tricks on a fellow whose shoes you ain't fit to clean!"

Ponsonby struggled and struck; but in a moment he was twisted over, and flung with a crash to the floor of the study.

Then the Caterpillar got busy with his boot.

Pon scrambled and squirmed out of the doorway, the Caterpillar behind him, kicking with great vigour.

Gadsby and Monson, waiting along the passage, stared at Pon's exit from the study. He squirmed and scrambled out headlong, and a last vigorous kick lifted him fairly into the passage.

The door closed after him. De Courcy stood breathing hard for a moment or two. Then he smiled, and crossed over to the telephone and took up the receiver.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

HARRY WHARTON entered the games master's study at Greyfriars. He was feeling rather perturbed and anxious. The Highcliffe match was one of the big fixtures, and if anything had happened to wash it out it was a blow to the Remove cricketers. He was anxious to hear the news, whatever it was. Mr. Lascelles gave him a kind glance.

"I am sorry that I have rather disagreeable news for you, Wharton," said Larry Lascelles. "Courtenay has rung up from Highcliffe to say that there is an outbreak of influenza there, and his headmaster has instructed him to cancel the fixture to-morrow."

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton.

His face fell.

"In the circumstances it would, of course, be very injudicious for Greyfriars boys to go over to Highcliffe," said Mr. Lascelles.

"I—I suppose so, sir," said Harry. "I suppose it can't be helped! But it's rather rough luck."

Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

The telephone bell rang sharply.

"Wait a moment, Wharton," said Mr. Lascelles. "If that is Courtenay again you may speak to him."

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Lascelles went to the telephone, and Wharton waited. His face was deeply clouded. For weeks the Remove cricketers had been looking forward to the Highcliffe match, and the team was in first-class form—and they had expected a great game on the morrow. It was cruel luck to have it washed out at the last moment like this.

"Yes—speaking!" said Mr. Lascelles, in answer to an inquiry from the other end. "Is that Courtenay? Oh, De Courcy—yes, I remember you, my boy. What is it?"

"Sorry to bother you, sir," came the Caterpillar's silky voice. "I believe you've just had a call from Highcliffe—"

"Yes; Courtenay rang up about a quarter of an hour ago—"

"He didn't!" drawled the Caterpillar. "It was a funny sportsman workin' off a rotten leg-pullin' joke, sir."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles.

"There isn't any influenza at Highcliffe, sir, and we're expectin' the Greyfriars men to-morrow."

The games master started.

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed, his brows contracting with anger.

"Honest Injun, sir! Just a practical joker, practical jokin'. Luckily, he was caught at it, so I'm ringin' up to put you wise! Awfully sorry you should be bothered like this from Highcliffe—"

"I do not regard such a trick as a joke!" said Mr. Lascelles sternly. "I regard it as an act of unfeeling rascality and treachery."

"I agree, sir! The fellow's been kicked!"

"Kindly give me his name, De Courcy! This is a matter that must be reported to the headmaster of Highcliffe."

"His—his name?"

"Yes; I cannot allow such a thing to pass."

"The fact is, sir, I can't call his name to mind at the moment," murmured the Caterpillar. "I assure you, sir, that he's been kicked frightfully hard, and he won't do it again!"

"I think you could call his name to mind if you desired to do so. De Courcy," said Mr. Lascelles sternly.

"Um!"

"However, I will not press the point. It appears, then, that there is nothing the matter, and the junior match is to take place as arranged?"

"Exactly, sir. I apologise most profoundly for the trouble you've been given—it won't happen again."

"Very well! Wharton is here, and you may speak to him direct."

Mr Lascelles turned from the telephone and handed the receiver to the captain of the Remove.

"It seems, Wharton, that I was deluded by some young rascal who used Courtenay's name on the telephone," he said. "You had better speak to De Courcy."

In blank amazement Wharton put the receiver to his ear. Mr. Lascelles turned away, frowning.

"That you, Caterpillar?" asked Harry.

"Yes, old bean! Wharton speakin'! Sorry, an' all that—but it's all right! You've to come over and be licked at

cricket to-morrow! Pull up your socks—we're in terrific form!"

Wharton smiled. "That's jolly!" he said. "But who—"

"Can't you guess who?" asked the Caterpillar. "The dear fellow is as full of tricks as a jolly old monkey! Can't give him away to the beaks, of course—that's not in the game. But you'll be pleased to hear that he's been kicked! You see, I happened to be in Mobby's study when he phoned, and he did it all only a few yards from me. You should have seen his face when he found me here after he'd finished! Worth a guinea a box!"

"Then it's all right!" exclaimed Wharton. "No flu—"

"Not a single jolly old microbe anywhere."

"I hope you kicked him hard."

"He went out of the study like a stone from a catapult! I believe I've sprained my big toe on him."

Harry Wharton laughed. "Thank goodness you found him out. All serene, then! Expect us at eleven-thirty in the morning."

"Right as rain! Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Wharton put up the receiver. His face was very bright. Mr. Lascelles gave him a nod, and he left the study.

He hurried back to the Rag, in great spirits. Billy Bunter's voice was heard as he arrived there. "I say, you fellows, I tell you it's true! You'll jolly well know when Wharton comes back. They're all laid up with scarlet smallpox—I mean galloping pneumonia—dying like flies, and— If you kick me again, Bob Cherry, you beast, I'll— Yaroooooop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Wharton!"

"What's the giddy news?"

The juniors crowded round the captain of the Remove. The cheery look

(Continued on next page.)



How's THAT Umpire?

In addition to solving cricket problems of general interest, "Umpire" replies to readers' own queries. All letters should

be addressed to: "Umpire," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

IN my letter bag this week there arrived a letter which struck a rather plaintive note. The writer is a growing boy whose cricket ought to be getting better, but who is having the reverse experience. "Last season," he tells me, "I had several wickets in every school match with my slow leg breaks, but this season about the only thing I am doing is building up a terrible average against myself."

I was so much interested in this letter that I wrote direct to the boy asking him what I thought a very important question: Have you changed your style at all? And I got this reply: "No, I haven't changed my style, but

I have been trying to bowl a bit faster this season, as practically everybody said I was bowling too slowly last season."

In that second note I think there is the answer to the question of why this young bowler is not getting so many wickets. While trying to find an extra bit of pace he has probably lost a bit of his spin, and has, without a doubt, lost some of his accuracy of length. It is rather surprising to find that a lot of people thought that a boy who was getting a lot of wickets was bowling too slowly. Why worry, if the wickets are being secured? That, after all, is the thing which tells.

You know that "Tich" Freeman, the Kent bowler, holds the record for the number of wickets taken by any bowler in one season. The total of Freeman's victims in 1928 was 304. But perhaps you did not know this fact about Freeman: that

when he was first put on to bowl in first-class cricket, the spectators laughed.

They did not think it possible that a bowler "tossing them up" as Freeman

was doing could possibly get first-class batsmen out. But the spectators have ceased to laugh at Freeman, and batsmen don't laugh at him, either. They know that there is guile in those seemingly innocent slows; realise that no ball may be quite what it seems.

The batsmen who thought they could treat Freeman with contempt soon found out their mistake. Perhaps you have heard the parody of a nursery rhyme which they sometimes chant in Kent when "Tich" Freeman is getting wickets. It runs like this:

*Three blind swipes,
See how they run.
They all run half-way down the pitch,
And then become victims of Ames and Tich,
Three blind swipes.*

To return seriously to this subject of slow bowling, I want all my young readers who are trying their hand at this type of attack to bear in mind that it is the length which counts. Give the ball a chance to get the batsman out is a good motto, which, being interpreted, means pitch it up to him. The secret of the success of all the slow bowlers is the slight variation of the flight of the ball: of the length.

Slow bowling avails nothing unless the ball is pitched up to the batsman, or, rather, unless the batsman is given the impression that it is being pitched up to him.

Study the batsman: watch what he is doing. If he is coming out to meet the ball, encourage him to do so, but gradually drop them just a little bit shorter and shorter until the batsman is lured out too far and, missing the ball, finds that he is stumped before he can get back.

In making my remarks concerning the lad whose average was getting worse and worse because he was trying to bowl too fast, I do not want to be misunderstood as saying that the faster ball should never be tried. Indeed, the slightly faster ball is a valuable weapon in the hands of the slow bowler. Hedley Verity, the Yorkshireman, who is now considered very near the top of the list of slow bowlers, sends down an occasional faster one which gets him many victims.

Verity is Yorkshire's successor to that other great left-handed slow bowler, Wilfred Rhodes, and I am just wondering if this player is going to follow in the footsteps of Rhodes in another direction.

There was a time in the career of Wilfred Rhodes when he was a bowler purely and simply. He used to go in last for his county, and, of course, went in last for England as well.

This last man in position did not appeal to Rhodes. One day he made a secret resolution. "I will be picked for England for my batting," he said to himself. And it was so. The time came when, as distinct from being sent in last for England, Rhodes opened the England innings in Test matches against Australia, with Jack Hobbs as his partner. That story is a simple cricket illustration of the truth of the proverb—where there's a will there's a way.

There is a question from a Nottingham reader asking if I can tell him a bit more about what the laws of cricket mean when the phrase "finally settled" is used.

In making a catch a player may hold the ball for a fraction of a second and then drop it. Is the batsman out? As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as a time limit in this holding of the ball.

It is entirely for the umpire to decide whether the catch has been properly made.

Here is another query: If a ball which passes the batsman rebounds from the wicketkeeper's pads, and breaks the wicket while the batsman is still out of his ground, what should the verdict be in the score-book? The reply is stumped. There are some people who contend that the decision should be run-out, but I don't see the logic of this. Surely there is no difference, so far as the decision goes, between the wicketkeeper whipping off the balls with the ball in his hand, and the ball going back into the wicket off the wicketkeeper's pads. The batsman is not attempting to run, so how can he be run out?

"UMPIRE."

on his face told that he was not a bringer of bad news.

"All serene," said Harry cheerfully. "A rotten tricky worm rang up Lascelles from Highcliffe, pretending to be Courtenay. De Courcy spotted him at it somehow, and rang up again. It's all right! Only a rotten trick."

"Who——" demanded a dozen voices. "The Caterpillar wouldn't give his name."

"I fancy we can guess it!" growled the Bounder. "If I see Ponsonby at Highcliffe to-morrow I'll kick him across the cricket field!"

"Pon, of course!" said Bob Cherry. "What a rotten trick!"

"Just like Pon!" grunted Johnny Bull. "The justfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, you fellows, I fancy Wharton's got it wrong," said Billy Bunter, shaking his head. "I heard Courtenay on the telephone in Larry's study, and I distinctly heard him say—— Whoop! Yoooop! Leave off kicking me, you beast! Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was all serene, after all. Pon's little scheme had been a failure, and on the morrow morning the Greyfriars cricketers started for Highcliffe in great spirits.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Cricket At Highcliffe!

"FIRST knock to us!" said Frank Courtenay. "You come in with me, Rupert!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured the Caterpillar.

Extended in a long cane chair before the pavilion, Rupert de Courcy did not look like a fellow who was keen on putting up a big game that day.

In his spotless and well-cut flannels he looked the picture of elegance—and laziness. His eyes were half-closed when Courtenay came over to him.

He yawned portentously.

It was a glorious June morning. Fleecy-white clouds speckled a sky of

deepest blue. Shady old beeches cast velvety shadows on level green grass. Third school was going on at Greyfriars and Highcliffe alike, except for the cricketers. Not till the bell rang would there be a crowd round the field.

But the afternoon, which was a half-holiday at both schools, would bring a swarm of Greyfriars men over to see how the team was getting on. Highcliffe was batting first, on a perfect pitch, and hoped to be still batting at lunch-time. Every man was keen—but Rupert de Courcy, if he was keen, did not look it. Some of the Greyfriars men glanced at him, and smiled. Courtenay glanced at him and frowned.

"Come on, fathead!" he said.

The Caterpillar sat up slowly.

"Franky, old bean," he said, "I've got an idea."

"No time for ideas now, if you have any—which I doubt. Where's your bat?"

"I believe I have one, and I've an impression that I stood it somewhere. But let me tell you my idea—it's rather great. There's room for new ideas, even in cricket. Why not make me last man in?"

"I'm likely to make my best batsman last man, fathead!"

"Only second best, old thing," said the Caterpillar. "You're best—I come next—a bad second. But this is the idea—instead of leavin' the finish to the tail, why not leave a good man to the end, and wind up with fireworks—what? Make me the head of the tail, if you know what I mean!"

Whether the Caterpillar meant that bright idea to be taken seriously, or whether he was merely too lazy to lift himself out of the chair, Courtenay did not inquire. He just poked his bat into his chum's ribs, and the Caterpillar gave a gasp and jumped up.

"Come on, old fellow!" said Courtenay.

"What a life!" sighed the Caterpillar. "Anybody seen a bat? If I can't find my bat, Franky, you'd better leave me over! You thunderin' ass, if you jam that wood against my ribs again I'll walk off the field and refuse to play at all, and go back to Mobby and Latin grammar, and send out Pon! Is that my willow, Yates? Thanks! Give me an arm to the wicket, will you?"

"You blithering idiot!" said Yates.

"How well you know me!" said the Caterpillar. "Comin', Franky! Let a man buckle his pads; after all, we've got the day before us. Or would you rather have Yates? I'd really prefer to sit this one out."

Harry Wharton & Co. were already in the field. The round, red ball was in the dusky hand of Hurree Janset Ram Singh. The Caterpillar lounged to his wicket, where he had the bowling, his skipper giving him the start. He loafed there as if rather too tired to live, and much too tired to stand on his feet when he got there. But when Hurree Janset Ram Singh prepared to send the leather down the lounging batsman straightened up alertly, and his eyes were cool and watchful, and all signs of slackness vanished from him as if wiped away with a duster. It was true that the Caterpillar would have preferred to watch the innings from the pavilion. But once at the wickets, he was all life.

And he could bat! The Nabob of Bhanipur was a dangerous bowler, and he varied his bowling amazingly. But the cool Caterpillar stood up to it steadily and efficiently, and the best bowling that the Remove could put up had no more effect on him than water

on a duck. He took a 2 and a couple of 4's in the over, and stole a single at the end, so that he still had the bowling when the field crossed over.

"Up to you, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton.

The Bounder took the ball.

Smithy was as good a batsman as any man in the Remove team—except, perhaps, the captain—but of late he had developed wonderful bowling powers, running Hurree Singh very close. All the Remove knew what Herbert Vernon-Smith could do with the ball, and expected big things from him. There was just a trace of swank in the Bounder's manner when he went on to bowl. He had watched the first over very carefully, and he had a belief that he could do what the dusky nabob had failed to do—put paid to that cool and nonchalant Caterpillar. And a leaning towards swank was one of the Bounder's little failings.

Certainly his bowling was good. It was so good that Frank Courtenay foresaw that it would make hay of the "tail" when the time came. But it did not worry the Caterpillar. Smithy was terribly keen to put Hurree Janset Ram Singh in the shade in the bowling line. Probably the Bounder thought as much of that as of getting his man out. But it booted not. The man at the wicket snicked one away for 2, then another 2, and then came a boundary hit, and the next ball gave him 2 more, and the last ball of the over another 2; so that the Caterpillar had hit a dozen off Smithy's bowling, against 11 off the nabob's. And Smithy, who was rather a bad loser, grunted as he gave it up.

"That man can bat!" said Bob Cherry.

"The batfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Too fast to last," said Ogilvy.

But the pair at the wickets made it last some time. Courtenay put up some hard hitting, and the Greyfriars men had to play hunt-the-leather. The Caterpillar was not sleepy when it came to taking runs. He crossed and re-crossed the pitch like lightning.

Thrice the Bounder bowled to Frank Courtenay, and each over gave the Highcliffe junior skipper runs, and Smithy's face grew more and more discontented. This was not what Smithy had intended to do at Highcliffe on the great day. And when the ball was given to Squiff, after an over by Hurree Singh, the Bounder was seen to scowl. Smithy was one of those cricketers who liked the limelight all the time. He knew that he could bowl, and he wanted all the bowling that the laws of the game could give him. He came over to Wharton.

"Makin' them a present of it?" he inquired.

Wharton looked at him.

"Don't be an ass, Smithy! Hop into your place."

There was often a little friction where the Bounder of Greyfriars was concerned. Sampson Quincy Illoy Field was a good man with the ball, but his good bowling did not damage Courtenay. It was beginning to look as if the batsmen might stay in together till the lunch interval. But the last ball of that over told a different tale. Frank Courtenay knocked it away and ran, and then——

"Oh, good man, Smithy!" roared Wharton.

The Bounder grinned and held up the ball.

"Bravo, Smithy!" chirruped Bob Cherry. "How's that?"

"Out!"

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"Come on, Bunter!" said Courtenay, twisting Ponsonby over with a strength that could not be resisted. "He was kicking you, now you can kick him!" "You dare——" screamed Ponsonby. Bunter dared. He kicked and kicked and kicked, almost forgetting his own damages in the satisfaction of handing out the same to his enemy.

Frank Courtenay had made 30 when he carried out his bat, caught by the Bounder. After that the scowl disappeared from Smithy's face and he smiled again. He was getting the lime-light he loved, and all was calm and bright!

"Hard luck, Franky!" called out the Caterpillar as Courtenay was going off. "All in the game!" answered Courtenay cheerfully.

"I mean hard luck on me; I'm still battin'!"

"Fathead!"

"Some men have all the luck!" said the Caterpillar confidentially to the wicketkeeper. "There's a happy man goin' to sit down in the shade; and look at poor little me, still standin' on my hind legs." Which remark made the wicketkeeper stare.

The Caterpillar continued to stand "on his hind legs," as he expressed it. There was no rest for him that morning. Batsmen came and went, and, as Courtenay had foreseen, Smithy made hay of the weaker players. But neither Smithy nor the nabob could damage the Caterpillar, who looked as cool as a cucumber when he was not out at the end of the innings, having put up 60 off his own bat. And, with Highcliffe at 120 on their first innings, Harry Wharton told his men that they would have to pull up their socks after lunch—and there was no doubt that they would!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Pig in Clover!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Nobody heeded Billy Bunter. Important as William George Bunter undoubtedly was, not a single eye was turned upon him. Bunter granted.

He was warm, he was red, he was perspiring.

A walk from Greyfriars to Highcliffe in a blazing June sun had been neither grateful nor comforting to the fat Owl of the Remove.

Quite a crowd of Greyfriars men were on the ground at Highcliffe early in the afternoon. Most of the Remove had come over on bikes, or on foot, or on the Courtfield motor-bus. Bunter was a rather late arrival. His bike, as usual, was not in a condition to be ridden. Several fellows on bikes had ruthlessly refused to give him a lift behind. Lord Mauleverer had come over in a car with several friends, but somehow his lordship had started when Bunter wasn't on the spot. Even the motor-bus wasn't available, as the conductor would have required Bunter to pay his fare—which Bunter was not in a financial condition to do. So it was walking or nothing—and Bunter walked.

Keeness on cricket, and a desire to see how the champions of the Remove were getting on, would not have made Bunter walk it. It was the prospect of tea at Highcliffe with the cricketers that drew Bunter like a magnet. Study No. 3 in the Highcliffe Fourth on such occasions was a land flowing with milk and honey. Billy Bunter had butted in there more than once, and he knew what the Caterpillar's hospitality was like. He liked the Caterpillar, too. That cherry youth had a solemn way of pulling Bunter's leg—of asking after his titled relations, and the great social stunts at Bunter Court—which made the fat Owl exceedingly pleased with himself. So there was Bunter—fat and damp and crimson. And nobody seemed to care a straw whether he was there or not.

The Greyfriars men were in. Harry Wharton and the Bounder were at the wickets, and they were making the fur fly. Good men had gone in and gone out; Bob Cherry and Squiff and Tom Brown and Mark Linley and Penfold had had rather rough luck—or, rather, the bowling and the fielding had had good luck. The score was not yet where Greyfriars wanted to see it. The batsmen who were out and the batsmen who were not yet in were watching the game with all their eyes, oblivious of William George Bunter.

"Toddy, old chap!" Bunter dug Peter Todd in the ribs with a fat forefinger. "I say, Toddy——"

"Shut up!" said Toddy, without looking round.

"But I wanted to ask you——"

"Five down for 22! Haven't you eyes?"

Snort—from Bunter.

He had not been going to ask about the score; on that subject Bunter, inquisitive as he was, had no curiosity.

"Oh, really, Toddy! I was going to ask you if you'd a stick of toffee about you."

"Oh, lots!" answered Toddy sarcastically, still over his shoulder. "I usually play cricket with my pockets full of toffee!"

"I say, Toddy, I've had a long walk——"

"Don't have a long talk, too!"

"Beast! I say, Bob, old chap——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, Squiff, you might lend a fellow a tanner to get a ginger-pop. I'm dry as the desert," said Bunter. "I say—— Why, you beast, what are you jamming your beastly elbow at a chap for—— Yah!"

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,323.



(Continued from page 13.)

Bunter left the cricketers alone after that. For some reason unknown to him, he did not seem popular! He blinked round and spotted Skinner and Snoop of the Remove at a little distance, sharing a bag of plums.

He rolled over to them at once.

"Get out of the light, fathead!" said Skinner. "Let a man see the game!"

"I say, you fellows, if you don't want all those plums—"

"We do!" remarked Snoop.

"I like plums!" said Bunter, with reproachful dignity.

"Is there anything eatable you don't like?" asked Skinner.

"Yah! I say, how long is it to tea-time here?"

"Oh, hours and hours yet," said Skinner, deliberately inflicting torture on William George Bunter by that reply.

"Oh lor'! I say, are they tea-ing with the mob in Hall, or will there be a spread in Courtenay's study?"

Skinner winked at Snoop.

"No tea here at all, I think," he answered. "They're cutting the tea interval entirely out."

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter gasped—he almost groaned!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop.

"Oh, you beast—pulling my leg!" hissed Bunter. "Look here, are you going to let a fellow have a go at those plums?"

"I don't think!"

"Then you can pick 'em up!" said Bunter. "I don't want your mouldy plums!"

And he took a flying kick at the bag, sending the plums squelching all over Skinner and Snoop.

Satisfied with what he had done, the fat junior hurriedly departed.

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Skinner.

But he did not pursue Billy Bunter. Somebody else might have bagged the plums! Bunter escaped unscathed, leaving Skinner busy sorting plums out of the grass.

"He, he, he!" giggled Bunter, as he hit the open spaces.

But he ceased to giggle. He was thirsty—awfully thirsty—and he was, of course, hungry! The Highcliffe tuck-shop was open; but that was of no use to Billy Bunter, who had been—not for the first time—disappointed about a postal order!

The tea interval was far off—at such a time, seconds seemed minutes, and minutes hours. Other fellows had come over to watch the game, and seemed satisfied to do so. Billy Bunter was hardly aware that the game was going on. His thoughts were concentrated on the requirements of the inner Bunter.

Leaving the cricketers, and the spectators, to their own devices, Billy Bunter rolled away to the House.

On a sunny half-holiday, with cricket going on, that building seemed almost

deserted. Billy Bunter saw no reason why he should not slip up quietly to Courtenay's study. After all, the Greyfriars fellows were guests at Highcliffe; and Bunter was a Greyfriars fellow; and there was no harm in sitting down to rest in a man's study. And if there were any preparations in that study for a spread, a snack or two would not be missed!

Bunter rolled into the House. As it happened, Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Fourth, was just going out, and Bunter almost rolled into him.

Mr. Mobbs stopped, and fixed him with a cold eye. Mobbs did not like Greyfriars men—and Bunter, perhaps, was not a specially attractive specimen of Greyfriars men. Mobbs had seen Bunter before, and remembered him—apparently not with esteem.

"Do you want anything in the House, Bunter?" he asked, in a voice that might have come direct from a refrigerator.

Bunter was equal to the occasion. Seldom or never was the Owl of the Remove at a loss for a fib.

"Courtenay's split his bat, sir—he asked me to fetch his other one from his study."

"Oh, very well!"

Mr. Mobbs grunted, and went out. Billy Bunter winked into space, and proceeded to lift his extensive weight up the staircase. He knew his way well enough, and was not long in arriving at the Fourth Form passage. Not a fellow was to be seen there—but he heard a murmur of voices in Cecil Ponsonby's study.

He tiptoed past that door in considerable trepidation. He did not want to meet the Highcliffe fellow he had kicked so vigorously on Courtfield Common the day before. He was only too well aware of what would happen if he met Ponsonby!

On tiptoe he hurried past! A few moments more, and he was safe in Study No. 3—the study which was shared by Frank Courtenay and Rupert de Courcy.

He shut the door and gasped with relief.

He blinked round the study through his big spectacles. It was a large and roomy study, remarkably well-furnished by the sybaritic Caterpillar. A handsome lacquer screen stood across one corner, where the study cupboard was. Bunter rolled round behind that screen and opened the cupboard door.

Then his little round eyes danced behind his big round spectacles. Good things galore met his eyes.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

He gloated.

"They wouldn't mind if a fellow had a snack!" murmured Bunter. "After all, we're friends! Just a snack—"

Standing at the open cupboard, Bunter took a snack. Then he took another snack! Then he took another! Then another! He favoured juicy and jammy and sticky things chiefly—and he was soon juicy and jammy and sticky himself—and happy! This was life! This was worth the walk from Greyfriars! This was something like!

Snack followed snack! Bunter beamed! How long he stood at the open cupboard, stuffing, he never knew. He was lost to considerations of time! But suddenly he gave a start, as he heard the door handle of the study turn. With a jam tart in one hand, and a cream puff in the other, Bunter turned—only the lacquer screen hiding him from the fellow who had opened the study door.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Plot!

CECIL PONSONBY stood at his study window his hands in his pockets, his brows darkly contracted. His glance was turned in the direction of the Highcliffe playing fields.

The junior cricket ground was at some distance, but he could see the white-clad figures dotting the green—Frank Courtenay and his men in the field, Greyfriars men at the wickets, crowds of fellows watching the game.

It was a happy and pleasant sight on a bright summer's afternoon; but it did not seem to make Ponsonby feel happy or pleasant. His brow was black, and grew blacker as he watched.

Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour were in the study with him. They were getting impatient and irritated. Cricket did not draw them out—they were too slack even to want to play for their School, and had no interest in watching other fellows play.

Bridge in the study was Pon & Co.'s way of passing a happy afternoon, with cigarettes going. Monson shuffled the cards, Gadsby lighted his third cigarette, Vavasour yawned and gaped, and still Ponsonby stood staring from the window, and gave no heed to his knutty pals.

"Well, what about it, Pon?" asked Gadsby at last. "Ain't we makin' a four at bridge this afternoon?"

"No!" grunted Ponsonby.

"Well, what the dooce are we here for, then?" said Monson sulkily. "Might have gone down to the Three Fishers and had some billiards."

"Later!" said Pon.

"What the thump are you starin' at from the window?" asked Gadsby.

"Watchin' for Mobby."

"Mobby! Bother Mobby! What about Mobby?"

"He's goin' out this afternoon—some silly lecture in Courtfield. Ah, there he goes!"

Ponsonby, from the window, spotted the thin, meagre figure of Mr. Mobbs below. The Fourth Form master walked away with his jerky tread, Pon's eyes following him from above. Gadsby and Monson joined Pon at the window, and glanced carelessly after their departing Form master. Pon's interest in Mobby's proceedings that afternoon was a puzzle to them.

"He's clear!" Ponsonby turned from the window at last. "Now we can get down to business."

His comrades eyed him uneasily. They knew that bitter curve to Pon's well-cut lip; that savage glint in his eyes. And it made them rather anxious. Ponsonby & Co. were always "up against" Frank Courtenay and his friends; the warfare generally smouldered, but every now and then it burst into flame.

When Pon's bitter rancour was roused, the worst boy in the school was absolutely unscrupulous, and his friends knew that it was roused now to the point of fury.

That kicking by Bunter on Courtfield Common, while Courtenay's iron grasp held him, should have been avenged by "dishing" the junior captain of Highcliffe over the Greyfriars match; but that little scheme had been knocked on the head by the Caterpillar—with another kicking for Pon! The dandy of Highcliffe could think of nothing at present but vengeance—and the sight of the cricket match going merrily on added to his bitterness. His friends

could see that some scheme of revenge was working in his mind; and they were a little afraid of Pon in this mood.

Vavasour, after a look at Pon's face, ceased to yawn and gape, and rose to his feet. He moved to the door.

"Goin'?" sneered Ponsonby.
 "Absolutely," mumbled Vavasour.
 "I forgot I'd got to speak to Drury." And he went, and shut the door after him.

Gadsby and Monson looked as if they would have liked to follow; but they stayed, uneasy.

"Look here! What have you got on, old man?" asked Gadsby. "I'm dashed if I like the look in your eye, Pon!"

"I've been thinkin' it out," said Pon quietly. "I've tried to put a spoke in their wheel, and failed. That slackin' ass, Do Courey, put paid to that! But there's more ways of killin' a cat than chokin' it with cream. Those two rotters have got to have it!"

"What's the good?" muttered Monson. "We can't handle them. There isn't a man in our crowd that could stand up to either of them."

"I'm not thinkin' of punchin' noses," said Pon scornfully. "Listen to me, and don't jaw. Mobby's gone out. There's hardly a soul left in the House. We've got the place to ourselves. Nobody to spot what we may do."

"But what the thump are you thinkin' of doin'?" asked Gadsby. "I can't see—"

"You will when I tell you. We're goin' to rag Mobby's stamps."

"Mobby!" ejaculated Gadsby.
 "His stamps!" repeated Monson.

"I suppose you know that the little beast is a potty philatelist!" snapped Ponsonby. "Fellows get off lines by pretendin' to be interested in his silly stamps, and askin' him questions about them. What would Mobby feel like if he came in and found his stamps ragged?"

Pon's friends gazed at him, speechless. Mr. Mobbs' hobby was stamp collecting. He had rather a valuable collection in his study, which he often showed to the juniors. And it was the custom of Pon & Co. to affect a deep interest in a subject that bored them almost to tears. Mobby was not an amiable man, but he would develop amiability when he was on the subject of his hobby. His feelings, if he came in and found that a destructive hand had been at work on his collection, could hardly be imagined.

"You potty chump!" gasped Gadsby, at last. "Are you ravin'? Mobby would be as mad as a hatter. He would go to the Head; he would raise the roof. All the fat would be in the fire if any fellow laid a paw on his idiotic stamps. And what do you want to rag Mobby for? What's Mobby done, I'd like to know? The little snob stands by us all along the line."

"Mobby's only a pawn in the game," answered Pon coolly. "Suppose a fellow ragged his silly stamps; say, took them to his study and burned them—"

"Are you ravin'?"

"And suppose it was in Study No 3 that Mobby made that jolly interestin' discovery—"

"Pon!"

"He gave those two cads lines, and kept them away from games practice yesterday. Courtenay checked him at the time. Ho loathes Courtenay. The fellow has a way of lookin' at him that makes him feel small. I don't think he'd be surprised in the least at findin' Courtenay and the Caterpillar playin' a rotten trick on him. I know he'd be glad to nail 'em."

"Pon!"

"We've got a clear run of the House. And there's no time like the present," said Ponsonby. "We get out immediately afterwards. May as well be off the scene when Mobby comes in."

Gadsby drew a deep breath. Gadsby had a very wide limit; but he had a limit, and this apparently was beyond it.

"Pon," he said, in low, distinct tones, "you're a rotter! I'm up against Study No. 3 as much as you are, and I'd land them in the soup if I could. But Mobby; he's a snobby little beast, but he's always been a good friend to us. It's too thick. Why, it would break his heart to lose that rotten set of silly stamps. He dotes on it."

"I've no particular use for sippy jaw," said Pon.

"They're valuable, too," muttered Monson. "Dash it all, Pon, Mobby's spent a lot of money on that set! And he's not a rich man."

"They will have to be paid for if destroyed, by the destroyer," said Pon coolly. "If it's safely landed on Courtenay and the Caterpillar, the bill will go to their people. Mobby will lose nothin'. In fact, he may make somethin'. He's not the man to put the figure for damages too low. He will be compensated all right."

"I've heard Mobby say that that collection's worth hundreds of pounds."

"All the better." Gadsby gave his great chief and leader a look, and marched to the door. He tramped out of the study, and
 (Continued on next page.)

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slammed the door after him. Gaddy, at least, was not going to have a hand in this. Cecil Ponsonby fixed his eyes on Monson with a bitter, sardonic look.

"You got cold feet, too?" he sneered. Monson gave an uneasy wriggle. "Look here, Pon, it's too thick!"

"Are you backin' me up?" "No, I'm jolly well not!" grunted Monson. "Anythin' else you like, but that's too utterly rotten—too thoroughly putrid, Pon! Wash it out, and come along to the Three Fishers and have a hundred up."

"You rotten funk! Leave me alone, then!" "I'll leave you alone fast enough," snarled Monson; and he marched out after Gadsby, and there was another slam.

Ponsonby was left alone. He turned back to the window with a savage face. A glance into the quad showed him Gadsby and Monson walking down to the gates. A bitter sneer curved his lip. The fact that those two hardened young rascals "jibbed" at such a scheme might have given Ponsonby pause. But his rancour was too deep for that. He would have been glad of the help of his associates; but he was prepared to carry out his dastardly scheme unaided.

Quietly he left the study. As he had said, the House was deserted. The Senior Eleven was playing away that day, and almost every junior at Highcliffe was gathered to watch the Greyfriars match, now going strong. Pon did not meet or see a soul as he went down the stairs, and strolled with a casual air to Mr. Mobbs' study.

Once in that study he shut the door. The window was too high from the ground for him to be observed from the quad. His face was a little pale, and his heart beating fast. He would have been glad—very glad—of the encouragement of some other fellow with him, sharing the risk. But he did not hesitate.

The glass-topped cabinet in which Mr. Mobbs kept his collection of stamps was locked. But the lock easily snapped open with a wrench from a pocket knife. Quickly Pon gathered up his plunder. Of the value of the specimens he knew very little. Often enough he had listened to Mr. Mobbs on the subject with a hypocritical air of interest, but he had given no attention. All he knew was that some of them were valuable, and that Mr. Mobbs prized them highly. He felt no compunction for the blow he was dealing at the man who, snob and sycophant as he was, had always been effusively kind to him. Mobbs, as he had said, was only a pawn in the game. Quickly, coolly, he tore out the stamps and crammed them into his pockets.

He was hardly five minutes in the study.

He left as quietly and cautiously as he had entered. No eye fell on him, and he returned to the Fourth Form passage.

It had been easy—so easy, so safe, that he thought with scorn of his friends having "funked" it. He attributed to them no motive but funk. Like most people, Pon found it difficult to believe that anyone was better than himself. He had, in consequence, a very low opinion of human nature.

He loitered about the passage for a few minutes, silent, and listening. But there was no sound from any of the studies. Not a fellow in the Fourth was indoors. Quietly he passed along to Study No. 3, the quarters of Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar, and entered.

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Hidden Witness!

BILLY BUNTER stood rooted to the floor.

With a jam tart in one hand, and a cream puff in the other, Bunter had been taking alternate bites, and enjoying life to the full.

But the sound of the door handle turning gave him rather a shock.

His "snacks" had made a deep inroad into the supplies in the study cupboard—ample as they were. He was sticky and jammy and juicy. At Greyfriars he would have been ruthlessly kicked for such a raid. And he wondered, with deep uneasiness, whether the Highcliffe fellows' good manners would stand such a strain. If the fellows were coming in to tea, he was fairly caught.

But it was not the fellows coming in to tea. Tea was far off as yet. The study door opened quickly and shut again. Only one fellow had entered the study, and Bunter, from behind the screen in the corner, caught the sound of his hurried breathing.

PLEASE NOTE:

All MAGNET readers who entered the recent "Gem Outlines" Competition, in which five "James" bicycles were offered as prizes, should make a point of securing a copy of this week's "Gem," issue dated June 24th, price 2d. In it they will find the correct solution, and full particulars for claiming the prizes offered in this competition.

He heard the fellow, unseen by him, moving about the study. From where he stood behind the screen, Bunter could see little—only part of one wall and the fire-grate and fender. There was, of course, no fire in the study on a hot June day. To Bunter's surprise, he glimpsed a fellow stooping down at the grate.

One glimpse was enough for Bunter. The fellow's face was turned from him; but he knew who it was. It was Cecil Ponsonby.

Bunter's blood almost turned cold. He popped farther back, silently, behind the screen, to avoid Pon's eye, if Pon should happen to look in that direction.

But Pon did not look round. It did not even cross his mind that anyone might be in the study out of sight. Certainly he could never have dreamed that a Greyfriars junior was hidden in a corner of a Highcliffe study.

And Pon was busy. He was transferring stamps into the grate. Two or three crumpled papers, old letters, and discarded exercises, already lay there. Pon added his plunder from Mobbs' stamp-cabinet.

Billy Bunter trembled.

Far from help, shut in a study, escape cut off, he was alone with the fellow he had kicked on Courtfield Common. If Ponsonby discovered him there—

The fat Owl made no sound. He dared not, for his fat life! Only too well he knew what Pon would do if he found him there.

He had only one comfort; Pon, obviously, did not dream that he was there. He was safe so long as he kept quiet.

He kept as quiet as a mouse; but the perspiration ran in streams down his fat face. Every second was an age to him, so long as Pon remained in the study.

Nevertheless, he wondered what Pon was up to.

Pon was not a fellow likely to come to that study; he had no right there; he was far from being a friend of the fellows the room belonged to. Bunter realised that Pon must have come there to play some trick on his old enemies while they were at the cricket. There was no other explanation of his coming. But what was he up to? Bunter could hear a faint rustling sound, as if stirring papers in the grate. Curiosity, at last, made him venture to peer round the edge of the screen. His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles at what he saw.

Ponsonby was taking stamps—what looked to Bunter like a lot of old used stamps—from his pockets, and transferring them to the little heap of waste-paper in the grate.

Bunter could see only his profile; but he saw that Pon's face was pale, his expression fixed and set.

He looked like a fellow engaged in a dangerous task, anxious to be done with it, but savagely determined to carry it through.

Bunter almost forgot his terrors in his wonder.

What it could mean was an absolute mystery to him. He guessed that Pon was going to burn those old stamps—why else should he throw them into a grate? But if he wanted to burn old stamps, why had he come to Frank Courtenay's study to burn them—he had a fire-grate in his own study, Study No. 5 in the Fourth. And where on earth had he gathered such a number of old used stamps, anyhow?

Bunter realised that there was—that there must be—something more than this in it, though he did not know what. The guilt in Ponsonby's face was not to be mistaken.

Bunter gave a frightened start, as the fellow stooping over the grate suddenly leaped up, with a gasping cry. The door-handle of the study had turned again.

Bunter stood palpitating behind the screen in the corner. Ponsonby swung round from the grate, his heart almost dying within him at the terror of being caught in the very act. The study door opened—and Gadsby looked in.

The terror in Pon's stricken face changed to fury. For a moment it had seemed as if an icy hand had gripped his heart.

"You!" he snarled. "You—you fool! You dolt! I—I thought for a second—Oh, you fool!"

"It's all right, Pon—nobody's about," came Gadsby's husky voice. "The coast's clear—"

"Come in and shut the door, you fool." Pon's voice was a shrill whisper. "If anybody comes along—"

"There's nobody in the studies." But Gadsby came in and shut the door. "Look here, Pon, I came back—"

"I don't want your help, you funk."

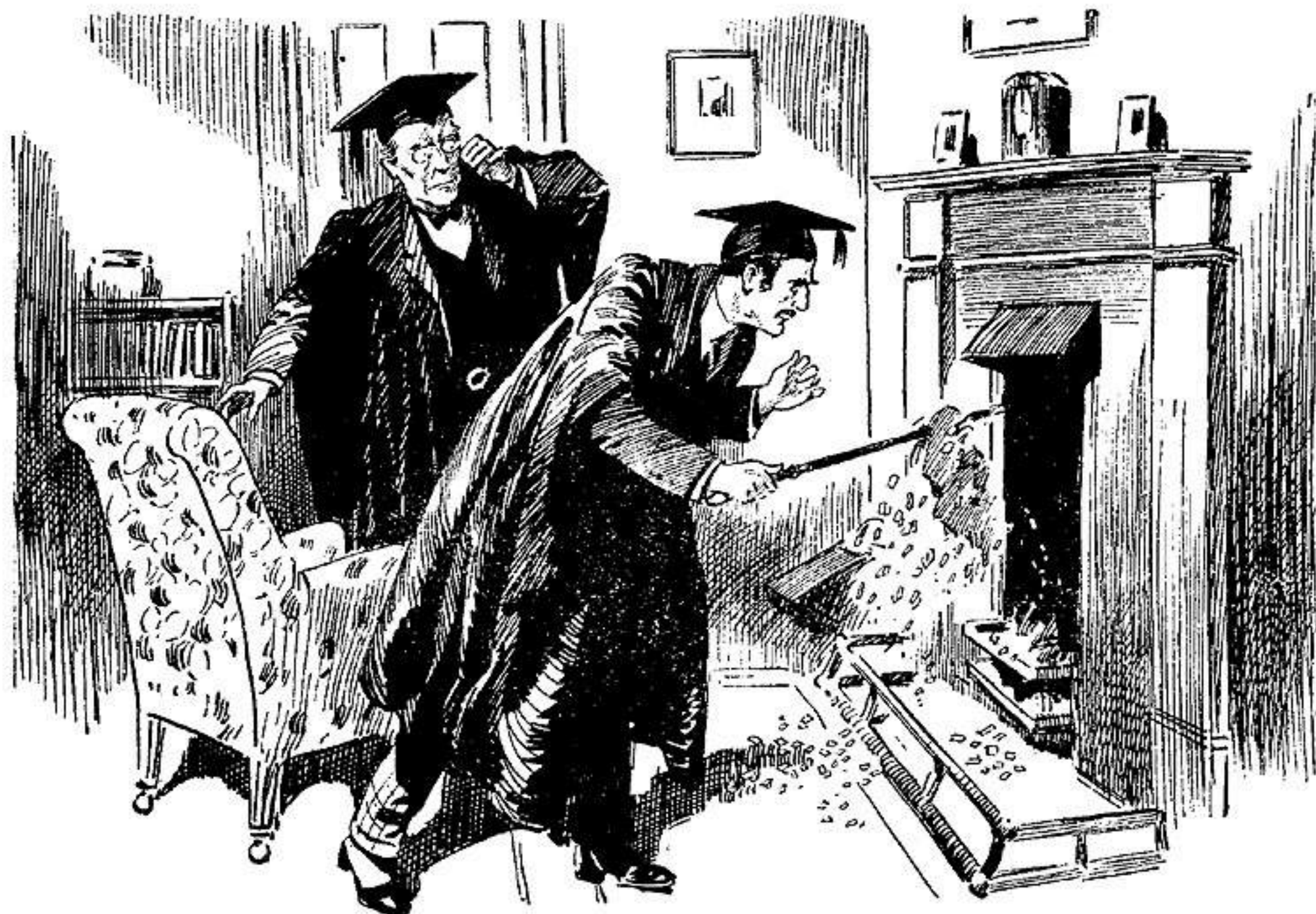
"You looked pretty funky when I looked in," said Gadsby sulkily. "Look here, Pon. I've squinted into Mobbs' study, and I know what you've done. You haven't burned them yet—Chuck it and come along to the Three Fishers now—"

"I'm just goin' to put a match to them," said Pon coolly.

"I've come back to stop you! Pon, old man," Gadsby's voice was husky and pleading. "For goodness' sake, Pon, think! You're wild now—but you'll be cool later—when it's too late! A man might be sacked for this—"

"I hope so!" said Pon, between his teeth. "Are you goin' to weep if Courtenay and De Courcy are kicked out of Highcliffe?"

"It's not only that! But Mobby—"



As Mr. Mobbs picked up a poker and turned over the heap in the grate, stamps galore came into view. The ashes told what had become of the rest. "Are those your stamps, Mr. Mobbs?" asked Dr. Voysey, peering down into the grate. "Oh—ah! Er—yes! Undoubtedly!" gurgled Mr. Mobbs, utterly taken aback.

Pon, you can't be such a beast! Mobby's a little rotter, but he's our friend—he's got you off no end of lickin's you've jolly well asked for. You can't treat him like this, Pon! You can't! Take the stamps back to his study before it's too late—"

"You funky fool!"
 "I'm not the fool, Pon—you are, and you'll know it when you're cool. Take the stamps back—Mobby will find them hooked out of the case, and that will make him mad enough—but so long as he finds them—"

"He will find them here—what's left of them—just enough to put him wise to the man who did it."

"Pon—you know I'm not soft or sappy—we've done some things—a lot of things—but there's a limit! For goodness' sake, Pon, listen to me and hold on—" Gaddy was in almost tearful earnest.

Pon's answer was to scratch a match. With the lighted match in his hand he bent over the grate and applied the flame to the little heap of papers behind the bars.

"Pon!" panted Gadsby.
 There was a licking and dancing of flames in the grate. Ponsonby picked up the poker. He stirred carefully. Many of the stamps were burnt. Others were partly burnt. Others were merely scorched and singed. It was Pon's game to leave plenty of evidence of what had happened in Study No. 3. The brief flame went out—leaving a little heap of burnt paper in the grate, and among the burnt paper, fragments of stamps half-destroyed, and a number of them only scorched. Over these, however, the worst boy in the school stirred the ashes carefully, hiding them from the sight of anyone who might glance at the grate. They were not to be found

till a search was made for Mr. Mobbs' missing property.

Gadsby watched him in terrified silence. Pon laid down the poker. He turned to the unhappy Gaddy with a bitter sneer.

"That's done," he said. "Now cut! The sooner we're at the Three Fishers, the—"

"You've done it," muttered Gadsby hoarsely, "and do you know what you are, Cecil Ponsonby—you're a criminal! That's the right name for you! Don't speak to me—I've had enough of you."

Gadsby left the study and hurried away. Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders and followed. The door closed.

Billy Bunter, behind the screen in the corner, wiped the perspiration from his fat brow. He knew the whole thing now, and he was feeling frightened almost out of his fat wits. It was long minutes before he found his voice, and then he ejaculated:

"Oh lor'!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

King Cricket!

"WELL bowled, Inky!"
 "Good old Jampot!"
 Greyfriars fellows were shouting as Ponsonby strolled down to the cricket field. Gadsby was with him, with a sullen and troubled face; but Pon's face was bright and cheery. His arm was slipped through Gaddy's—perhaps to prevent that worried youth from quitting him. Highcliffe were batting in their second innings now, and Courtenay and the Caterpillar were at the wickets; and the roar of cheering from the Greyfriars mob told that Courtenay had gone down.

Ponsonby grinned as the Highcliffe captain came out with his bat, and Yates went on to join the Caterpillar.

"The great Panjandrum seems to have got it in the neck, Gaddy!" he remarked to his friend.

"Let's get out of this!" muttered Gaddy.

"Where's your bally patriotism? Don't you want to know what margin the jolly old school is bein' licked by?"

Pon joined the cricketers before the pavilion, and Gadsby perforce joined them along with him. Pon gave Courtenay a pleasant nod, rather to the Highcliffe skipper's surprise. It was not Pon's cue to make any display of enmity that day, in view of what had been done in Study No. 3. In the peculiar circumstances, it was more judicious to act like a fellow who had forgotten all personal differences, in keenness about a school match.

"Rough luck!" said Pon. "That nigger can bowl—what? But you had a rather decent knock."

"Twenty," said Courtenay. "The Caterpillar's doing better."

He answered civilly enough. He was glad to see Pon, a slacker of the slackers, taking an interest in the cricket.

"Isn't he rippin'?" said Ponsonby enthusiastically. "I fancy the old Caterpillar's rather an eye-opener for some of these Greyfriars men!"

Courtenay smiled very cordially. He was pleased with his chum, and proud of him, and words of praise for the Caterpillar fell very pleasantly on his ears.

"Best man we've got!" he agreed. And he turned to watch the Caterpillar, who was getting the bowling

now, and dealing with it with a masterly hand.

"How's the game, Benny?" asked Ponsonby, with a cheery smile to Benson, a Fourth Form fellow to whom he hardly spoke once in a term.

"Oh, we're all right!" answered Benson cheerily. "We made 120 in our first knock, and Greyfriars were all down for 99. We shall be still batting at tea-time. I shan't get my knock till after tea. Isn't old Caterpillar a corker?"

"Toppin'!" said Pon heartily. "I've had some rows with the Caterpillar once or twice, but I'd like to thump him on the back now! My hat, there he goes! Bet you that's a boundary! Bravo, Caterpillar!"

It was a boundary, and the Highcliffe crowd roared. Pon's voice was as loud as any—loud and hearty. Several fellows glanced at him, and Courtenay smiled. He had an unsuspecting nature, and he could not help thinking that there must be some good in Pon somewhere when he could cheer like that for a fellow who was rather an enemy than a friend.

Gadsby was miserably silent. Young rascal as he was, he was sickened by this kind of thing. He dragged at his arm.

"Look here, Pon, I'm goin'!" he muttered.

"Oh, dash it all, Gaddy! Hold on a bit, and let's see the old Caterpillar makin' hay of them!" said Ponsonby, loud enough to be heard by a dozen fellows. "We're all friends to-day, old bean!"

"I'm goin'!" snarled Gaddy.

And he jerked his arm away and went. And Pon, who had no intention of wasting his valuable time watching cricket, followed him, though with an air of reluctance.

He overtook him in the quad.

"What's the row, you moonin' ass?" he asked. "Got your silly back up about somethin'?"

Gadsby gave him a black look.

"I can't stand it, Pon, you rotter! After what you've done—"

"I've done nothin'—or, if I have, you'd better forget all about it, Gaddy," said Pon. "You chicken-hearted worm, dig up a little nerve from somewhere! It's goin' to be a Head's floggin' for those two cads, but it's only sense to pull the wool over their eyes a bit; they might smell a rat. Courtenay's a fool; but the Caterpillar will jump to it who burnt Mobby's stamps in his study! Lucky he won't have anythin' to go upon."

"If somethin' came out—"

"How could it?"

"You're always up to some rotten scheme, and nine times out of ten you come a mucker!" answered Gadsby savagely. "There's always a catch somewhere. Crooks are always caught through overlookin' somethin'!"

Pon set his lips hard. He did not like the word "crooks."

"Better chuck it at that, Gaddy," he said, "unless you want me to push your face through the back of your head! Leave off whinin', you fool, and let's hike along to the Three Fishers and join the other fellows. The farther we're off the scene when Mobby gets on the warpath the better!"

Gadsby nodded sullenly, and they went out of gates together. At that delectable resort, the Three Fishers, on the river, they joined up with Monson and Vavasour, and never had Pon been so bright and cheery.

Meanwhile, the cricket was going on cheerily. Harry Wharton & Co., in the

field, were getting all the leather-hunting they wanted, and perhaps a little over. They were keen as mustard. Highcliffe led on the first innings, and at present looked like doing equally well second knock. But soon after Pon's departure there came one of the sudden changes that the great game of cricket so often supplies. Smithy had the ball, and Smithy was in such form that his performance with the same delighted the Greyfriars beholders, and made them yell till they woke every echo of Highcliffe.

One, two, three wickets went down to three successive balls from the Bounder, and the fourth ball gave Harry Wharton a catch. Highcliffe faces grew a little longer, while the Greyfriars men yelled and shouted and clapped, and tossed caps into the air, careless whether they ever came down again or not. Even Skinner and Snoop joined in the cheering, and Lord Mauleverer woke from a gentle doze under a shady tree to contribute a yell.

"Smithy! Smithy! Smithy!"

"Good old Bounder!"

"Well caught, Wharton!"

"Bravo, the Bounder!"

It was meat and drink to the Bounder, and he made no secret of his elation. At such moments Smithy was a wonderful man at the game. Success spurred him on; cheering invigorated him. He was not finished yet. The next ball gave the new man a single, and brought the Caterpillar to the batting end. And the last ball of the over landed fair and square into the hands of Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, and the junior from New South Wales held it up and chirped:

"How's that?"

There was a roar. The Caterpillar was out, caught out by Squiff off Smithy's bowling. Greyfriars men yelled themselves hoarse. Lord Mauleverer thumped Skinner on the back with a thump that nearly doubled up that weedy youth. Harry Wharton's eyes danced.

The Caterpillar walked back to the pavilion, cool and fresh after a slogging innings, with a whimsical smile on his face.

"Sorry, Franky, old bean!" he said. "These things will happen! I ought really to be playin' dominoes!"

"Fathead!" said Courtenay. "You've done magnificently! That was a good catch! That Australian chap's the best man in the field! But, my hat, what a bowler they've got in that man Smithy!"

Benson, after all, had his knock before tea. He was last man in, and captured a duck at the hands of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"All down for 90!" yawned the Caterpillar. "Nothin' to write to the old folks at home about! We shall have to put up some bowlin' stunts somehow when they bat again. Did I see Pon talkin' to you a while ago, Franky, while I was makin' my feeble effort?"

"Yes. He honoured us for a few minutes," answered Courtenay, with a smile.

"What on earth was Pon doin' on a cricket field?"

"Well, I suppose even Pon would be glad to see his school pull off a match like this!" said the Highcliffe skipper, rather sharply.

"Yes; if he was skipperin' the side, not otherwise!" drawled the Caterpillar.

"Oh, rot! He was quite keen, and he was cheering your knock at the top of his voice," said Courtenay reproachfully.

"Dear old Pon! What a jolly old leg-puller he is! I wonder if he's been up to anythin'!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"All serene, Franky! Don't jaw a chap! Pon's burstin' with patriotism—burstin' with it to such an extent that he's forgotten that you held him by the neck while that fat man Bunter was kickin' him! What about some tea? I'm simply dyin' for a drink!"

"But, really, Caterpillar—"

"Don't jaw a chap who's dyin' for a drink! I'm goin' to stagger away to tea!"

And the Caterpillar staggered.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bright of Bunter!

"Oh lor'!" said Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl of Greyfriars emerged from behind the screen.

His jammy and sticky countenance was quite pale.

He listened with his fat ears, but there was no sound in the passage. Pon and Gaddy were gone; it was not likely that they would come back. The fat Owl rolled to the window. He blinked down into the quad, and had the satisfaction of seeing them walk away from the House. Then he moved away from the window, fearful of being spotted there.

He blinked at the heap of ashes in the grate. Hidden in those ashes, he knew, were the remnants of the destroyed stamps—easily to be identified when the heap was sorted over, though now out of sight.

He mopped the perspiration from his fat brow.

"Oh lor'!" he said again.

It was all clear to Bunter.

Pon had not forgotten that kicking on Courtfield Common. Bunter had no doubt, any more than the other Remove fellows, that it was Pon who had played that trick on Mr. Lascelles' telephone. That trick had failed. This was the next move in the game—a still more treacherous and dastardly move. Pon was out for revenge on the junior captain of Highcliffe, and evidently was not particular in his methods.

Bunter remembered having seen the stamp cabinet in Mobby's study. He had heard Highcliffe fellows speak of Mobby's hobby. He knew that a stamp collection had a market value; that Pon had ruthlessly destroyed what had cost Mr. Mobbs probably a large sum of money. And he had done it for revenge on Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar!

It was all clear, even to Bunter's obtuse mind. Mobby would rage when he found what had happened in his study. Investigation would follow relentlessly, that was certain.

Obviously it would be taken as an act of revenge—and certainly he would not possibly suspect his favourite, Pon. He was likely enough, on the other hand, to suspect Study No. 3—and begin his investigations there. There had always been tension between him and Courtenay. Whether he began or ended there, however, came to the same thing. The evidence was there, to prove that his stamps had been burned by the chums of Study No. 3.

Easy enough for either or both of them to slip away from the cricket field for a few minutes while other Highcliffe men were batting, and carry out that act of vandalism.

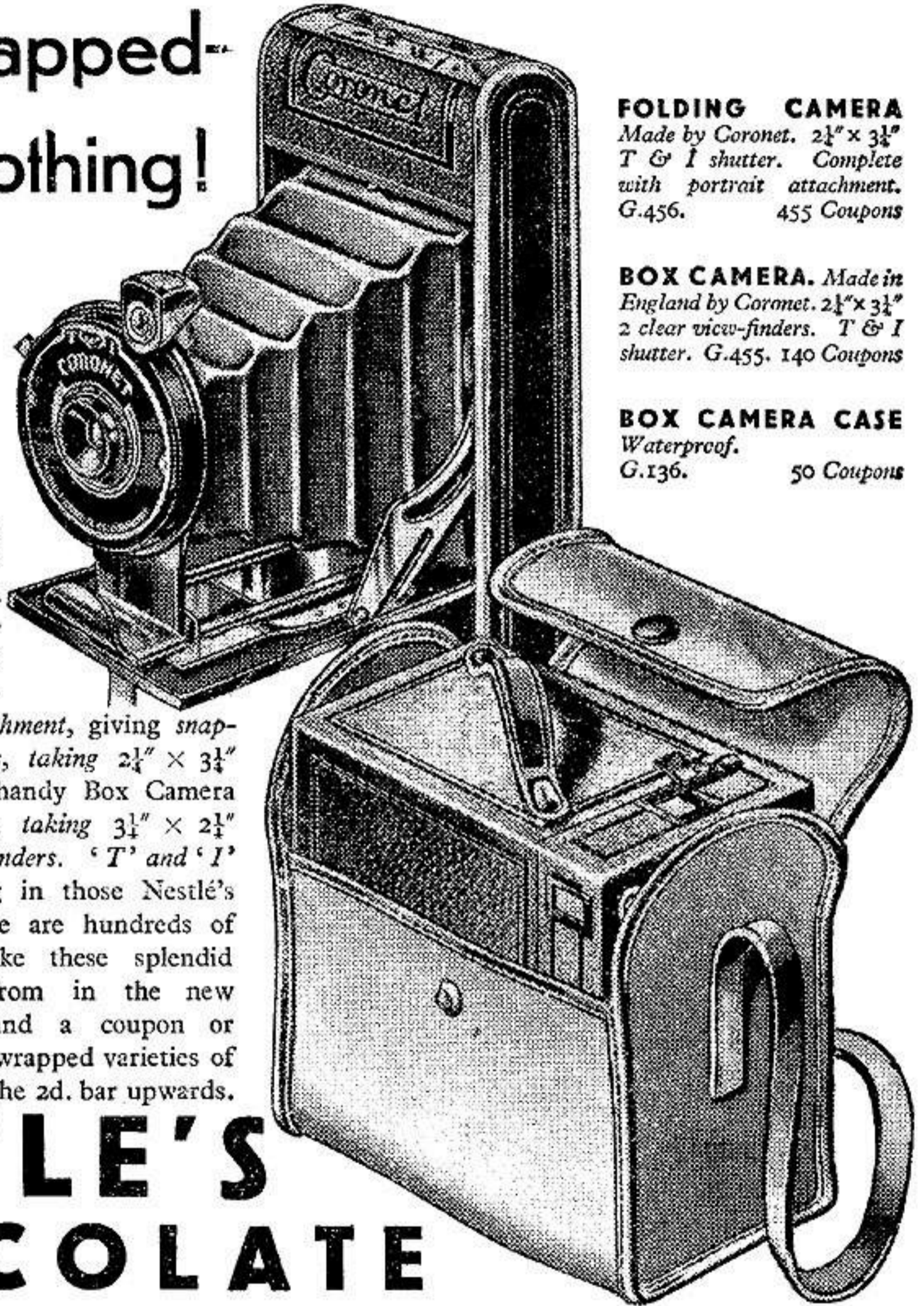
It was a flogging for them—it might even be the "sack."

"Oh lor'!" said Bunter again.

It was Billy Bunter's happy custom to think first, last, and all the time, of

(Continued on page 22.)

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THE WORST BOY IN THE SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 20.)

William George Bunter—the most important person in the universe, from William George's point of view.

His first instinct, therefore, was to roll out of the study, and keep clear of the matter entirely. He did not want to be mixed up in Highcliffe rows—neither did he want to explain what he had been doing in the study.

But he paused.

Courtenay had saved him from Pon's brutality the day before—even Bunter remembered that. One good turn deserved another. And the fellows in Study No. 3 were decent fellows—and Pon was a rotter, a cad, a rank outsider—and Bunter personally loathed him! The fat Owl, unwilling as he was to get mixed up in the affair, felt that he could slip away and leave it where it was.

"Oh lor'!" he mumbled again.

Suppose he told what he knew?

Pon and Gaddy, to save their own skins, would swear black and blue that he was lying. Mobby would want a lot of proof to believe that his darling Pon had inflicted such an injury upon him. Mobby certainly would not believe that if he could help it.

Bunter shivered.

Better to say nothing—safer, at least! Again he made a movement towards the door! Again he paused.

He stepped towards the grate.

At least he could destroy the evidence Pon had left there to incriminate Study No. 3. He stirred over the heap of ashes. Stamps, some of them scorched, some of them half-burnt, turned up to view, among the charred and burned fragments of paper. Some of them, he knew, might be valuable—he had heard of rare stamps worth pounds and pounds. He realised that he could not complete Pon's destructive work. That was impossible! But what could he do?

And then, suddenly, a fat grin overspread Bunter's face.

He knew!

Pon had done this—well, Pon could stand the racket for what he had done! Pon's study was only a few doors along the passage, and there was nobody about.

Once that bright idea entered his podgy brain, Bunter lost no more time. He had to get through before the cricketers came in to tea.

He picked up the shovel from the fender, and carefully lifted out every fragment of burned and scorched paper from the grate. All the ashes, all the damaged stamps, and the few that were undamaged, Bunter transferred, with excessive care, to the shovel. He left not a single fragment in the grate. So careful was he, that he sorted out a duster, and wiped the grate clean, so that no trace of a recent fire was left at all. The duster, finished with, he dropped behind the bookcase, where it was not likely to turn up again in a hurry.

He opened the study door, and blinked

cautiously along the passage. It was quite deserted.

He stepped out on tiptoe.

Carefully, as if he had been carrying pearls of price, the fat junior stepped along the passage to Study No. 5—Pon's study.

The door was half-open, and he rolled in.

He shut the door after him, and rolled across to the fire-grate. There was, of course, no fire there.

In the grate he deposited the shovelful of ashes and scorched stamps.

What the worst boy in the school had left in Courtenay's grate was now in his own grate! Pon was not likely to see it there! Pon was gone to the Three Fishers—and Bunter could guess that he did not intend to return till after Mr. Mobbs had made his discovery. But even if Pon came in, he was hardly likely to notice a few ashes in the grate—any fellow in the study might have burnt wastepaper there. Bunter grinned, well satisfied with his own astuteness.

He blinked out of the study, saw the cloast clear, and stole back to Study No. 3.

Then—being Bunter—he rolled behind the screen again, to the cupboard that he had left open.

A sound of munching and champing followed.

Once more Billy Bunter was jammy and happy and sticky! A deeper inroad than ever was made on that supply of good things.

But even Bunter was satisfied at last. There came a time when even Billy Bunter could hold no more.

He blinked into the cupboard, and was a little alarmed as he noted the extent of his depredations.

Bunter did not want to stay to tea now! There was no room inside Bunter for so much as a single bun!

He rolled out of the study.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Startling!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
 "Woooooh!" gasped Bunter,
 as Bob Cherry clapped him
 on his podgy back. "Ow!
 Wow! Oooh! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come over?" asked Bunter.

"We bat again after tea," answered Harry Wharton, with a smile.
 "Haven't you been spectating?"

"Oh! Yes! I haven't been in the House—I mean, I haven't been up to the studies," said Bunter. "Besides, why shouldn't I look in at a study if I like? We're friends, ain't we, Courtenay?"

"Oh, quite!" said Frank Courtenay.
 "Aren't you staying to tea, Bunter?"

"Do!" said the Caterpillar solemnly.
 Bunter, to the general amazement, shook his head.

"Thanks, no," he answered. "I came over to see the cricket, you know, not to stick you fellows for a tea. It's not much I eat at any time."

"Oh, ye gods!" murmured Johnny Bull.

And Billy Bunter rolled down to the cricket field, which the cricketers had left, selected a shady tree, and disposed himself comfortably in the grass beneath it, for a well-earned rest. And in a few minutes he was happily slumbering, and his deep snore harmonised—more or less—with the creak of the roller going over the pitch.

"Wonders will never cease!" remarked Bob Cherry, as the cricketers went into the House. "What the thump did Bunter come over for, if it wasn't in search of a spread?"

The Bounder chuckled.

"I fancy he's dug up a spread somewhere," he said. "His chivvy looked as if he had just lifted it out of a jar of jam."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anybody left any tuck about?" grinned Bob. "If so, let him make up his mind never to see it again."

It was a cheery crowd that surged into the House. The visiting team had lunched in hall, but they were teasing in studies. The Famous Five went into Study No. 3 with Courtenay and the Caterpillar.

Bunter being on the scene, they had naturally expected Bunter to wedge into that study for tea. But they were not long in discovering why he hadn't! Bunter had wedged—but he had, so to speak, come early to avoid the crush!

The Caterpillar looked into the study cupboard, behind the screen in the corner, and then glanced round.

"Did they deliver the goods from the shop, Franky?" he asked.

"Yes; I saw them put in," answered Courtenay. He pulled the screen aside and stared at the sea of crumbs on the floor. "Oh, my hat! Who's been here?"

"Probably a wolf escaped from a menagerie," answered the Caterpillar gravely. "Only a wolf—a very hungry wolf—could have packed away so much of the provender."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. They knew now why Bunter had been in the House, where he had been, and what he had been up to. It was rather an uncomfortable moment.

"Some cheeky ass has been raiding the grub!" exclaimed Courtenay warmly. "By Jove! I'll jolly well—"

The Caterpillar, catching the expressions of the Famous Five, touched his arm gently. He realised—as Courtenay did the next moment—that the grub-raider did not belong to Highcliffe.

"Oh!" ejaculated Courtenay. "Um! All serene—never mind—"

"It was Bunter, of course," said Harry Wharton. "We'll jolly well kick him all the way back to Greyfriars!"

"The kickfulness will be terrific!"

"My dear men," said the Caterpillar, "don't mench! I wouldn't have menched if I'd guessed a minute sooner that it was our friend Bunter. The dear boy's more than welcome. I thought for a minute that perhaps Pon had been larkin' here."

"It was Bunter," growled Johnny

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 reverse page.



Wharton was running his hardest when the ball came whizzing in, straight for the wicket. Crash! But his bat was on the crease a moment before the bails were sent flying. "Hurrah! Greyfriars wins!" The roar that followed made Highcliffe School ring. "Oh, good man! Good man, Wharton! Hurrah!"

Bull. "That's why he doesn't want tea. I'll jolly well—"

"It's all right," said Courtenay, laughing. "We've asked Bunter to tea—and he was only a little early. You cut down to the shop, Rupert."

"Like a jolly old bird!" said the Caterpillar, and he left the study, and returned laden.

The little incident was washed out—though, privately, the Famous Five kept to their intention of kicking Bunter for his sins.

A cheery party sat down to tea, while tea was going on in other studies along the passage. From half a dozen open doorways cheerful voices echoed.

Everybody was in jolly spirits, as they were entitled to be, on a glorious June day, with a glorious game going on, especially as both sides were going to win that game after tea—according to their own confident belief, at least!

Benson, of the Highcliffe Fourth, looked into Study No. 3 a little later, and his expression interrupted the merry flow of talk.

"Anythin' up?" asked the Caterpillar.

"Mobby's come in," answered Benson.

"Horrid!" said the Caterpillar.

"That's rather rotten news! Still, we couldn't reasonably expect Mobby to stay out for ever, could we? Mobby improves the landscape enormously by keepin' off it—but he doesn't know that!"

"I mean, there's something up with Mobby," said Benson. "He went into his study, and I heard him yell."

"I've never heard Mobby yell!" said De Courcy, with interest. "What was it like—a steamer's syren, I fancy!"

"He came out like—like a tiger!"

"Somebody's been larking in his

study!" yawned the Caterpillar. "Gum in his slippers, perhaps! Or tacks! A man put tacks in his slippers once, and Mobby was cross—distinctly annoyed—when he found 'em unexpectedly!"

"It's worse than that!" said Benson, who looked rather scared. "I say, he bolted for the Head's study, and he's coming with the Head! I—I believe they're coming up to the Fourth—"

"This is where a fellow feels pleased at havin' a perfectly clear conscience," said the Caterpillar, addressing the Greyfriars visitors. "I've often thought of raggin' Mobby, but the little beast never seemed really worth while. Somebody's for it, though."

"I say, here they come!" gasped Benson, and he vanished from the doorway.

There were footsteps in the passage, and the buzz of voices from the crowded studies had ceased.

The Caterpillar smiled gently; but Frank Courtenay looked rather serious. If Mobby was bringing Dr. Voysey on the scene, the matter was undoubtedly a serious one. Still, it could hardly have anything to do with Study No. 3. Courtenay was not a fellow to rag—and the Caterpillar had a clear conscience. Nevertheless, the footsteps approached Study No. 3, and two figures appeared in the open doorway—the meagre little figure of Mr. Mobbs, and the rather stately form of Old Dr. Voysey, the headmaster of Highcliffe School.

The juniors jumped to their feet at once. Harry Wharton & Co. had been enjoying tea in Study No. 3, but at that moment they wished themselves anywhere else. But retreat was impossible; the doorway was blocked by the two masters; and, anyhow, they

could hardly make a bolt for it. They rose from the table, and backed away a little—assuming an air of elaborate unconsciousness, which was all that they could do in the circumstances.

Mr. Mobbs' face was startling to see. It was pale with fury; his little greenish eyes ablaze. Even in the presence of his majestic chief it was plain that Mobby found it hard to keep himself under control. He was not a good-tempered man at the best of times; but nobody had ever seen him in this state of hardly suppressed rage before. Only too clearly there had been, some very serious happening.

Mobby was almost trembling. Dr. Voysey looked stern—and intensely irritated. The venerable Head of Highcliffe generally left things to his staff, and hated to be disturbed. Only a real catastrophe could have caused Mobby to drag him into the matter. Even the Caterpillar ceased to smile now.

"Courtenay," Dr. Voysey spoke. "Mr. Mobbs believes that what has happened in his study—er—may be—er—traced here. Is that so, Mr. Mobbs?"

"I have no doubt of it, sir," said Mr. Mobbs, in a trembling voice. "At least, I think there can be little doubt of it. Only yesterday I had occasion to punish these two juniors, for rough usage of another boy—"

"If you know anything of this, Courtenay?" the Head ruthlessly interrupted Mobby.

"I have no idea what has happened in Mr. Mobbs' study, sir!" answered Courtenay quietly.

"An outrage," said Dr. Voysey, while Mr. Mobbs looked at the captain of the Fourth as if he could have bitten him.

"Mr. Mobbs' stamp collection has been—er—disturbed—did you say removed, Mr. Mobbs?"

"The cabinet has been broken," said Mr. Mobbs. "Nearly all the stamps have been taken away. Many of them are very valuable. Either it is a theft, or an act of wanton destruction—"

Courtenay's eyes gleamed.

"I know nothing of it, sir," he said, addressing the Head. "I have been playing cricket, and have been nowhere near Mr. Mobbs' study."

"Neither have I, sir!" said the Caterpillar.

Dr. Voysey looked keenly at the two juniors over his glasses. Old as he was, careless as he had grown in his duties, the Head of Highcliffe was a man of very much better judgment than the master of the Fourth. After a long, keen look at the two, he turned to the Form master.

"These boys deny knowledge of the occurrence, Mr. Mobbs—"

"I do not believe them, sir!" gasped Mr. Mobbs, his fury breaking out of control. "I have a very low opinion of these two boys, both of whom are habitually impertinent. Both of them displayed impudent resentment of the light punishment I had to inflict on them yesterday. I believe that my stamps will be found in this study."

"I see no reason to suppose so, Mr. Mobbs!" said the Head tartly. "Obviously the act was committed by some member of your Form. That is all we know for certain. My own impression is that these boys are speaking the truth."

"Thank you, sir!" said Courtenay.

"I have expended, sir, more than two hundred pounds on my collection during the past ten years—" gasped Mr. Mobbs.

"That is beside the point, Mr. Mobbs. The act will be traced to the perpetrator, and full compensation for your loss will be exacted—and the severest punishment will be inflicted."

"The first step is to make a search for the missing—er—stamps, and, if you prefer it, the search may begin in this study."

"I certainly prefer it, sir, as I have little or no doubt—"

"Then let us lose no time, Mr. Mobbs."

Dr. Voysey blinked at the Greyfriars fellows, apparently seeing them for the first time.

"Who are these boys?" he inquired.

"They are not Highcliffe boys, I think."

"Greyfriars, sir," said Harry Wharton, suppressing a smile. "We're here playing cricket to-day."

"Oh! Yes! Ah! Quite so! Perhaps you will—er—remain in the passage while a search is made in the study!" said Dr. Voysey, very courteously. "I regret that this unpleasant affair has happened during your visit here."

The old Head of Highcliffe was long past his best days; but he was still a courteous old gentleman. He stood aside, and the Greyfriars fellows silently filed into the passage. A good many other fellows were there now, in a state of hushed and excited expectancy. The tale of the outrage in Mobbs' study was passing from lip to lip.

Nobody liked Mobbs; but there were few fellows who did not condemn such an act. For once, Mobbs' "tantrums" were justified; though all the fellows thought that it was only prejudice and a suspicious nature which could have caused him to look into Study No. 3 for the perpetrators.

Mr. Mobbs made the search himself.

Possibly he did not care to trust it to lesser hands. He made it thorough; the headmaster standing like a dignified statue in the doorway, and watching him. Thorough as the search was, it did not take long. Not a sign of a stamp was found in the study except ordinary postage-stamps in a desk. Mobbs was gritting his teeth when he finished; but Dr. Voysey only nodded calmly, as if the outcome of the search was exactly as he had expected.

"The—the stamps are not here," gasped Mr. Mobbs. "I have little doubt that they had been destroyed—an act of base revenge—"

"Only one study has been searched so far, Mr. Mobbs. Let us proceed!" said the Head coldly. "I cannot believe that any boy would wantonly destroy property which, you say, was of the value of two hundred pounds. Obviously a theft has been committed. At all events, we shall ascertain. We are finished here."

Mr. Mobbs left the study. The Head followed him to the next. Courtenay and the Caterpillar joined the Famous Five in the passage. The former was crimson with discomfort.

"I'm sorry this has happened while you fellows are here," he said in a low voice. "They'll soon be through, I hope."

"I say, it was a pretty rotten trick on Mobbs," said Harry. "Who could have done it?"

"I can't imagine."

"If Pon wasn't Mobbs' jolly old favourite—" murmured the Caterpillar. But he shook his head, and did not finish the sentence.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Discovery I

DR. VOYSEY stopped at the door of Study No. 5. Several more of the junior studies had been searched—perhaps not so meticulously as Study No. 3. Nothing had been found; and Study No. 5 was next on the list; and Mr. Mobbs seemed disposed to pass that study unsearched. Dr. Voysey, however, halted.

"I hardly think it is necessary to look into that study—Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson—are among the best in my Form—always respectful and dutiful—and it is impossible for me to suspect—"

"The search must be thorough, Mr. Mobbs. Are the boys you name present?"

Mr. Mobbs glanced along the crowded passage.

"No, sir! No doubt they are out of gates on a half-holiday."

"Let us proceed!" said the Head.

They proceeded.

Mr. Mobbs entered the study, not with the intention of making any very careful search there. It was really impossible for Mobbs to suspect his dear Ponsonby of having done him such an injury. Dr. Voysey, standing in the doorway as before, turned a much keener eye than Mobbs' round the study. Behind him, as near as they dared approach, a crowd of juniors watched. Greyfriars fellows as well as Highcliffians were in a state of tense excitement.

Suddenly Mr. Mobbs stood transfixed.

He had noticed—with quite a careless eye—the little heap of burnt ashes in the grate. In Courtenay's study, he would have pounced on it. In Ponsonby's study he did not think of pouncing. But his quick glance, careless as it was, spotted a startling thing. Among the ashes lay a half-burnt stamp!



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He stood staring.

"What is that in the grate, Mr. Mobbs?" came the Head's tired voice. "It appears that someone has been burning something here—and possibly—"

With a shaking hand, Mr. Mobbs picked up a poker and turned over the heap in the grate.

Stamps galore came into view.

Some of them half-burnt, some of them scorched and singed—but two dozen, at least, quite recognisable, stared Mobby in the face. The ashes told what had become of the rest. Pon had been careful to leave plenty of evidence—little dreaming where it would be found.

Dr. Voysey stepped into the study, peering down into the grate over his glasses.

"Are those your stamps, Mr. Mobbs?"

"Oh! Ah!—er—yes! Undoubtedly!" gurgled Mr. Mobbs, utterly taken aback and confounded by that unexpected discovery.

There was a startled buzz in the crowded passage. That unexpected discovery flew like wildfire.

"Pon!" gasped a dozen fellows.

"Pon!" murmured the Caterpillar. "Of course, it's in Pon's line—just in his line—but—why?"

He shook his head in perplexity. Pon, in his opinion, was the only fellow, or almost the only fellow at Highcliffe, capable of such an act. But why? That was a puzzle. Pon despised Mobby—but he had no cause to dislike him—no grievance against him. The Caterpillar was perplexed.

Dr. Voysey's face set grimly.

Mr. Mobbs seemed like a man in a dream. On his knees before the fireplace, he picked out the remnants of his treasures, with shaking fingers. Half his collection, and more, had been destroyed—but it was possible to preserve the remainder, though mostly in a damaged state. But almost worse than the wanton destruction of his prized stamps was the discovery that it was the hand of his favourite that had struck the blow. That fairly knocked over Mr. Mobbs.

"It is now clear," came the Head's cold voice. "This study is occupied by Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of your Form, Mr. Mobbs—these three boys must be found and questioned at once."

Mr. Mobbs was almost haggard.

"I—I—I could not have believed—," he stammered. "I—I—I—I—I cannot believe now—"

"Your property has been found here, sir, in a destroyed, or partly destroyed state," said Dr. Voysey. "It is, after all, not a theft—but an act of malice."

"I—I cannot believe—," Mr. Mobbs' distress was pitiable. "Ponsonby is—is—Ponsonby cannot—Dr. Voysey, I cannot believe that Ponsonby was guilty of this—"

"Indeed!"

"I—I—I think it more probable that another boy may—may have burned my stamps here, in Ponsonby's absence!" stammered Mr. Mobbs, like a drowning man catching at straws.

Dr. Voysey fixed him with a grim eye.

"Indeed, Mr. Mobbs!" His voice was like ice. "Had you made this discovery in Courtenay's study, would you have supposed such a thing?"

"Eh? Oh! No! But—"

"Then why suppose it now?"

Mobby stammered. It occurred to him that Dr. Voysey, old as he was, negligent and tired as he was, was by no means the old fool that his staff considered him. Certainly he intended to see justice done, and had no idea of entering into Mobby's pet likes and dislikes in his Form. Mobby really had nothing to say. In Courtenay's study he would have proclaimed this discovery

as overwhelming evidence of guilt. What else could he say now? He stammered helplessly. In his heart of hearts he knew that Pon was capable of such an act. It was only the absence of the motive that made him feel that there might be a doubt.

"The facts shall be ascertained, if not ascertained already!" said Dr. Voysey. "I shall instruct the prefects to find the three boys, and to bring them to me as soon as found. I shall question them personally. In the meantime, the matter rests here."

Dr. Voysey, openly tired of the whole affair, swept away. Mr. Mobbs stood with his damaged stamps in his hand, looking sick, and feeling sick at heart. He emerged from the study at last, with all eyes on him.

Courtenay made a step forward.

"Mr. Mobbs," he said earnestly, "I am sorry you have had such a loss—I give you my word, sir, that I knew nothing of it. I am ashamed that such a thing should have been done by any Highcliffe fellow."

Mr. Mobbs did not answer. He could not. He gave the captain of the Fourth the briefest nod, and hurried away.

Courtenay and the Caterpillar returned to Study No. 3 with their guests. Tea was resumed in the studies; though as a topic, the cricket match was completely put in the shade by the amazing discovery in Pon's quarters. The Caterpillar was quite worried about it.

"It beats me, you men," he said plaintively. "Of course, when I heard that a dirty, sneakin' thing had been done, I thought of Pon at once. But why the deuce should Pon rag Mobby?"

"I can't make it out," said Courtenay. "Mobby's always stood by Pon through thick and thin."

"A vicious cur will bite the hand that feeds him," remarked the Caterpillar thoughtfully. "But there's a catch in it somewhere. I can't understand Pon not bein' a bit more thorough. If he wanted to burn Mobby's stamps he could have made a job of it. Looks as if he wanted to leave evidence. Not like Pon to be so careless when he's playin' the rascal. My poor old brain won't bite on this."

"This will mean the sack for Ponsonby, I suppose," said Harry Wharton.

"Hardly," smiled the Caterpillar. "Mobby won't go so far as that; if the beak wants to sack him, Mobby will beg him off."

"Why should he?" asked Bob, with a stare.

"Didn't you know that Pon had an uncle in the House of Lords?" yawned the Caterpillar.

"Oh, my hat!"

"A fellow only needs an uncle in the House of Lords to make Mobby feed from his hand," said the Caterpillar gravely. "I fancy Pon will get off with a floggin'—and he wouldn't get that if Mobby hadn't called the Head in. What about gettin' back to the cricket, and takin' the taste of it out of our mouths?"

All the fellows were glad enough to get back to the cricket.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Well Won!

"WELL hit, Wharton!"

"Good man!"

It was a 4, and the Greyfriars fellows gave it a shout. Cricket was the order of the day once more. Greyfriars were taking their second knock, and going strong. Greyfriars and Highcliffe fellows thronged round the cricket field, eagerly watching the great game as it drew to a close.

A fat junior sat up under a shady tree, rubbed his sleepy eyes, blinked, and grunted, and set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose. With another grunt, Billy Bunter detached himself from the grass and blinked in the direction of the pitch, where two white-clad figures were crossing like lightning.

"Oh crumbs!" granted Bunter. "Still going on? When the thump are they going to finish? I jolly well know I'm going to have a lift in the brake going back; I'm not going to walk it again!"

Billy Bunter was not interested in the cricket. He was interested in getting back to Greyfriars on wheels, instead of on his tired little legs. The fact that Greyfriars were now seven down for 100, out of the 112 they needed to win, would not have interested him if he had known it. It was going to be a close finish, victory still on the knees of the gods, and Bunter did not care two straws—or one. He had awakened thirsty—which was a much more important and pressing matter. But Bunter even forgot the demands of the inner Bunter as he blinked round and sighted three juniors at a distance. Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson were coming up from the direction of the gates, and with them was a tall Sixth Form man; Bunter could guess that he was a prefect.

Bunter grinned.

Pon & Co. looked rather alarmed. Why Roper of the Sixth had been waiting for them at the gates, why he was taking them to their headmaster, they did not know—but they feared. Gadsby and Monson were feeling deeply thankful that they had had no hand in Pon's revengeful scheme; and the worst boy in the school was wondering savagely whether it was, after all, possible that something had gone wrong with it. Billy Bunter wasn't interested in cricket, but he was keenly interested in what was going to happen to Pon, and he rolled after them towards the House.

"Look here, Roper—what's up?" he heard Pon ask. "What are you takin' us to the Head for? We've done nothin' that I know of."

"Head's orders," answered the prefect briefly.

"Has—has anythin' happened?" mumbled Gadsby.

"Yes—and pretty serious."

That was all the prefect would say, but it added to Pon & Co.'s deep uneasiness. They followed Roper of the Sixth into the House, where Mr. Mobbs met them in the doorway. Mobby's face was pale and harassed, and, instead of his usual benignant manner to his dear Pon, he gave him a look that alarmed him. Then he gave Bunter a look, as that fatuous youth—curious to see and hear more—ventured in. That look was enough for Bunter; he rolled out faster than he had rolled in. And in grim silence Mr. Mobbs accompanied the three scared juniors and the prefect to Dr. Voysey's study.

"Beast!" murmured Billy Bunter.

Bunter wanted to know. That was always one of Bunter's little weaknesses—and when Bunter wanted to know, he was not easily beaten. On such occasions his fat brain worked at unaccustomed pressure. He grinned and rolled away to the headmaster's study window. That window was wide open in the golden June sunset. Under it, his head just below the sill, Bunter leaned on the wall. Anyone observing him would have supposed that he was taking a rest there. In point of fact, he was listening to what passed in the study

within. Dr. Voysey's tired, high-pitched voice came distinctly to his fat ears.

"... an act of revenge." Bunter was too late to hear the beginning. "One of you three boys, or all of you—as you all belong to the same study. If you have anything to say— Kindly do not interrupt me, Mr. Mobbs. Great damage has been done. Mr. Mobbs states his loss at not less than the large sum of one hundred pounds. It appears that some of the stamps that were burned were—er—rare specimens. This loss will—and must—be fully compensated by the parents of the boys concerned, who will be expelled—"

"We had nothin' to do with it, sir!" panted Gadsby.

"Nothin' whatever, sir!" said Ponsonby. "If Courtenay says we knew anythin', he's lying!"

Dr. Voysey peered at him over his glasses.

"Courtenay is not concerned in the matter," he said. "I am speaking of Mr. Mobbs' collection of stamps, taken from his study and burned—by some boy occupying Study No. 5."

"You mean Study No. 3, sir—"

"I mean what I say, Ponsonby! The outrage was committed by one of you three boys, or by more than one—"

"I—I hardly think it can have been Ponsonby, sir," came Mr. Mobbs' squeak. "I—I think probably Gadsby, or Monson—"

Mr. Mobbs did not really think so, but he was trying hard to think so.

There was a simultaneous yelp from Gadsby and Monson. Naturally, perhaps, they were not going to have it landed on them.

"We never had a hand in it, sir!" exclaimed Monson. "We were against it: we told Pon so plainly—"

"I came back and tried to stop him!" panted Gadsby. "I tried my hardest to stop him—"

"Pon knows we were against it!" gasped Monson. "We were down on it at once; we told him it was rotten—"

"Pon knows I tried to stop him!" Gaddy took up the tale again. "I begged him to leave the things alone. I told him he was nothing better than a criminal to do such a thing—"

Ponsonby shut his teeth hard.

"Do you still deny it, Ponsonby?" asked Dr. Voysey in a grinding voice, while Mr. Mobbs stood dumb.

"I—I—I—"

Ponsonby panted for breath. "I—I never knew the—the stamps were valuable. I—I— It was rather a joke on Courtenay than anythin' else—"

"I fail to see how Courtenay is concerned. Mr. Mobbs, the matter is now clearly established. Full compensation will be claimed from Ponsonby's father. Ponsonby will be expelled from Highcliffe—"

"Oh, sir!" Pon's voice was a husky gasp; he had lost all his coolness and nerve now. "I—I never meant— I—I— Mr. Mobbs, will you speak for me? I'm sorry—awfully sorry! I never knew the stamps were valuable. My father will pay for them gladly. Oh, sir—"

For a moment or two Mr. Mobbs stood grim and silent. But no doubt he had his own reasons for being merciful.

"Dr. Voysey, I—I think that Ponsonby was unaware of the harm he was doing. I am sure he is truly repentant. I think that perhaps a flogging—a very severe flogging—"

Billy Bunter rolled away from under the window, his fat face wreathed in

grins. He had news for the fellows now—if only they had done with that idiotic cricket! With a grinning face the Owl of the Remove rolled on the cricket field. The game was not over yet. Bunter really began to wonder whether it ever would be over.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Nine down for 110," said Peter Todd over his shoulder. "Oggy's last man in. Lucky Wharton's got the bowling!"

"The luckfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and idiotic Caterpillar—"

"There he goes!"

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Nobody heeded Bunter. All eyes were glued on the pitch. Harry Wharton had sent the ball whizzing far and fast, and the batsmen were running. One to tie—two to win! There was a roar as Wharton and Ogilvy crossed—and a breathless hush as they ran again.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Oh scissors! Oh crikey! Oh jumping Jehosaphat! Run, you beggars—run! Who wants a tie? Run, you slackers—run! It's coming in, blow you—run!"

Straight as a die the ball came in for the batsman's wicket. Harry Wharton was running—he seemed like lightning. But the leather was whizzing in from a sure hand—that of Frank Courtenay. A split second seemed an endless age.

Crash!

But the bat was on the crease! The umpire shook his head. Then there was a roar that made Highcliffe School ring again.

"Hurrah!"

"Greyfriars wins!"

"Oh, good man—good man! Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry had already tossed his own cap into the air. He grabbed the nearest fellow's and hurled it skyward. There was a squeak of wrath from Billy Bunter.

"Where's my cap, you beast? I say—"

"Hurrah" roared Bob, thumping Bunter on the back. "Hurrah! Cheer, boys—cheer! Hurrah!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Yell, you fathead—yell!"

Bunter yelled—Bob's thump was enough to make any fellow yell. All the fellows were yelling. It had been a close thing—but a miss was as good as a mile! Greyfriars had won the game, and they rejoiced at the top of their voices. Even Lord Mauleverer was seen waving his hat! Greyfriars had won—and all was happy and glorious!

"I say, you fellows—"

"No room for porpoises!"

"Beast!"

The Greyfriars team, perhaps a little tired, but in joyous mood, were packing in the brake. Courtenay and the Caterpillar were seeing them off, taking it smiling, like true sportsmen. Billy Bunter had been some time finding the cap hurled aloft by the exuberant Bob. Now he was wedging in—or at least, seeking to do so.

"I say, you fellows, I can't walk home!" hooted Bunter. "Make room for a chap! I say, Courtenay, tell 'em to make room for me, will you?"

"My dear fellow—" said Courtenay, with a smile.

"After all I've done for you, said Bunter warmly. "I say, Caterpillar, tell them to let me in!"

"Will the brake stand it?" asked the Caterpillar gently. "Is it guaranteed to carry twenty tons?"

"You funny idiot!" hooted Bunter indignantly. "You can make rotten jokes—and where would you be but for me? Sacked! Yah!"

"Eh?" For once the calm Caterpillar was surprised. "What?"

"You and your pal, too," said Bunter warmly. "Suppose I hadn't been in your study! Not that I touched the grub, you know! If you missed any of the tuck, I know nothing about it. But if I hadn't been there when Pon came in, and burned Mobby's stamps in your grate—"

"What?" yelled Courtenay.

"What?" roared Bob Cherry.

Bunter had the spotlight!

"You see, being behind the screen, he didn't see me!" explained Bunter.

"I didn't keep out of sight because I was afraid of him—nothing of that sort about me. And if I'd left those burned stamps in your grate, where Pon put them, what would have happened to you? Just answer me that!"

"Fan me!" murmured the Caterpillar.

"The burned stamps were found in Ponsonby's fireplace!" said Courtenay, staring blankly at Bunter.

"Of course they were! I shifted them there after he was gone!"

"You did!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"What do you think?" grinned Bunter. "I wasn't going to let him get away with a trick like that—not on pals like these fellows! It was Pon burned them—so I thought I'd let him stand the racket—see? Rather neat—what?"

"Oh, my only summer bonnet!" gasped Bob.

"Oh, my prophetic soul!" murmured the Caterpillar. "I knew that Pon had been up to somethin', when he came down and pulled Frank's leg! Dear old Pon!"

"He's getting a flogging," said Bunter.

"I heard the old bean at it in his study—not that I was listening, you know. You fellows would be getting it, but for me—you can see that! I think it's pretty thick to let a fellow walk home after that! I say, you fellows—"

"Hop in!" said Harry Wharton.

"Make room, you men!"

Bunter hopped in.

Ponsonby was flogged. He was given time to recover from the flogging, and then Frank Courtenay interviewed him. That interview was more painful than the flogging.

It was a long, long time before Mobby was able to take Pon into favour, and it was likely to be still longer before Pon set out on the trail of vengeance again. He was fed-up with that trail. How it had happened that the evidence he had left in his rival's study had been discovered in his own Pon could never make out.

But at Greyfriars every fellow in the Remove had to listen more than once to the story of how Bunter had been—as usual—the right man in the right place, and in how masterly a manner he had put paid to Ponsonby, of Highcliffe, the Worst Boy in the School!

THE END.

(Look out for: "AUNT JUDY AT GREYFRIARS!" in next Saturday's MAGNET. And don't forget that this issue will also contain another handsome Free Photo-Plate.)

ALLISON OF AVONSHIRE!



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Simon Allison, once part-owner of the great Allison Motor Works, invents a powerful supercharger, but fails through lack of funds to put it on the market. An attempt on the part of his rascally nephew, Len Allison—"boss" of the works and a "big noise" in the county cricket team—to terrify the old man into parting with his supercharger at a low price, fails. Shortly after this, Bill Allison, Simon's son, is playing for his school against Avonshire Club and Ground when he is knocked out by one of his vengeful cousin's express deliveries. Regaining consciousness, he returns to the fray, determined to give of his best before asking to be taken on as an Avonshire county professional. Bill's slow bowling lures Len Allison out of his crease, and he is easily stumped. Seething with rage, Len goes to his car, where he finds his partner, Phil Valetti.

(Now read on.)

Len Allison's Decision!

"AH hold your jaw!" Allison snarled.

Then suddenly he leaned closer, gripping Corsica's wrist and staring wildly round to make sure that no eavesdroppers were about. Satisfied, he gave his companion an impatient tug.

"Now, look here, Corsica!" he rapped. "I've joined up with you because you're supposed to be tough—real tough! You've been talking a lot of hot air about grabbing old Simon Allison's new supercharger, too, haven't you? You know we want it darn badly, and the old fool won't sell. Well, my tough, cocky friend, when are you going to do some of your famous grabbing?"

The biting sneer in his tone made Valetti's cat-like eyes open wide. A fiery rush of anger dyed his olive cheeks.

"Why—what— Say, I like that!" he exploded wrathfully at last. "You're rich, you are! Say, haven't I been achin' and plannin' to have another go at that old piker these last two days? And the kid and that hard-boiled mug, Cannonball Mike Doyle? Me, ain't I just burnin' to get square for that punch on the jaw the other day, apart from all else. And who's been stoppin' me? Who's been babblin' about risks an' goin' to gaol? Why, you, you white-livered—"

"Stow it, curse you!"

Shaking with fury, Len Allison turned on Valetti, teeth glimmering beneath his curling underlip.

"All right—perhaps I have been over-cautious!" he snapped. "But that's over now, Phil! Finished, see? By thunder, I'll teach that school kid out there to play the fool with me in public! And I'll stamp on Simon Allison as well, like my father did

before me. Corsica, you go ahead! Do what you like and how you like—I'm with you! But—" His fingers dug into Valetti's wrist until the Corsican winced. "All I ask is that you grab Allison's invention and help me smash the whole poverty-stricken crowd! And, Corsica, set about it right now!"

Council of War!

"YOU mean that?"

Corsica Phil Valetti snatched the cigarette from his lips, hissing out the words fiercely.

His tawny eyes, wide open now, looked more like a cat's than ever. He leaned forward, thrusting his face so close to Len's that the young boss of the Allison Works shrank back an inch.

"You mean you've screwed up enough nerve at last, huh?" continued Valetti, lowering his voice to a whisper. "I can go ahead, can I, in my own style, and get old Simon Allison's new invention that means so much to your firm and us? And you'll be behind me?"

"Yes."

Len clicked his teeth, then turned vindictive eyes on the cricket field again as at that moment a further crash of applause rose from the excited spectators. His scowl deepened.

With his cleverly flighted "hanging" ball Bill had just lured yet another Avonshire Club and Ground batsman out of his crease, and Cooper, the Grammarian 'keeper, had stumped him coolly. The ease with which the young bowler had beaten his fifth victim all ends up reminded Len afresh of his own galling humiliation, and served to strengthen his grim decision to beat his uncle and cousin at all costs.

"Yes," he repeated shortly, turning to the Corsican again. "Phil, you go ahead. I'm with you, and hang the risks! I need the Allison supercharger more than anything, and with it I can knock my trade rivals cock-eyed. The firm's rocky. You know that. And both of us know that the Allison invention will just about revolutionise the small car industry. If we can get hold of it we can clean up; flood the markets with new engines that no one else will be able to touch for power and efficiency. But if we don't get it—"

He bit his lip deeply, and a spasm of nerve twitched his handsome face.

"I just can't afford to think what another year of failure will mean," he confessed. "I'll be ruined, that's all. Maybe worse. So, Phil, it's up to you. Go the limit!"

"Okay!"

Corsica Phil Valetti leaned back, pensively lighted another of his favourite Turkish cigarettes, and half closed his eyes again.

"When we were in your uncle's workshop, two days ago," he went on, sliding the quiet words from the corner of a slit-like mouth, "I had a good look round, savvy? In fact, I've got everythin' set. Th' lock on the door's a good 'un; but I've tackled worse, I guess. And underneath the old sap's bench I jest spotted what looked like a small safe."

He leered significantly at his companion, then became very thoughtful once more. For several minutes he smoked on in brooding silence.

"Yeah, the job o' getting those plans'll be a cinch. But there's one thing that's still got me guessin' a bit," he said at last, yet in such a curious manner that Len looked at him askance. "Old Simon an' that fool kid yonder won't trouble me a cent, see? But where does that hound, Cannonball Mike Doyle, figger?"

"What?"

At Len's exclamation his tough partner shook a doubtful head.

"Makes you sit up, huh? So it did me when I found him there, rot him!" he growled. "That guy Cannonball was once th' finest racer in Ireland and the U.S.A., Len. Now he's content to work as mechanic for your uncle in a sleepy English village, helpin' him on one of the greatest motoring inventions of the day. What's more, he must be workin' for mighty poor wages, too, seein' that your uncle's on'y jest keepin' his head above water. Funny, ain't it? What's his game?"

Valetti rapped out the last question sharply, and a startled curse of dismay was Len's reply. In an instant he saw what the shrewd rogue was driving at.

"Gosh!"

He jerked upright, fists tightly clenched, eyes burning with sudden suspicion.

"I never thought of— D'you mean this Doyle might be on the same stunt as us—after the invention, once my uncle's completed it properly? My stars! Blame it, why didn't I think of that before?"

Frankly alarmed by Valetti's sober shrug, Len considered this new and surprising problem from every angle. In the end he gave vent to another anxious oath.

"By thunder, you may be right, man! Yes, of course! Why should an ace like Cannonball Doyle bury himself in Kelsey village, come to think of it? Even if you did spoil his racing career, plenty of big firms would be glad to pay high wages for such an expert. My uncle and that cub out there mean nothing to him, as far as I know. But he must have wheedled his way in with them pretty well, because both of 'em trust him solidly. You bet he knows what that invention's worth! And," Len snarled viciously, "you bet he's not working there on a pittance for nothing! No man would."

"Well, you wouldn't, anyway," was Valetti's brutally candid retort. "Never judge others by yourself, Leonard!" he added mockingly.

"Oh, tripe! No man does anything for nothing," repeated Len, voicing his own selfish outlook on life emphatically. He gave his leering companion a glare. "And you know it, too. You're suspicious of this Cannonball Doyle, now, aren't you?" he demanded. "You think he's up to the same game as us all right?"

"I do."

Valetti spoke with sudden crispness, and opened the door of the car. A savage gleam lurked in the man's yellowish eyes.

"But," he snapped, "even if he ain't, I'm takin' no more chances, Len. Now you've given me the word to go ahead, I'm going. And to-night's the night!"

"Good!" Len caught his breath. "You want my help, too?" he whispered. Whereupon Valetti sneered.

Descending from the car he slammed the door and leaned over it, grinning at Len's drawn face.

"Feller," he drawled, "believe me, I've got all the help I need to deal with an outfit like your uncle's!" Then his grin widened, and he asked a peculiar question. "Say, d'ye ever hear o' Joe the Hump?"

"Joe the—?" Len shook his head slowly. "No-o. Who is he? Never heard of him."

Valetti gave a reminiscent chuckle. "Waal, you will, boy—you will! 'Cos Joe the Hump was the slickest guy at this sorta game in the United States." The soft chuckle swelled to a harsh laugh. "An' I know him all right. Yeah, I sure do. An' he's my helper to-night."

Abruptly the queer, sinister mirth ceased. Valetti reached in and tapped Len's arm hard.

"As for you, you stay where everyone c'n see you—savvy? And after this fool game's over, go home and let your servants see you, too. But keep close to the telephone, and answer it smart when I call, 'cos we've both gonna need cast-iron alibies after to-night. Meanwhile, the less we're seen together now, the better. S'-long!"

He waved a mocking hand. "An' the next time I see you, Len, we'll go into the Allison plans together."

With that, and a last throaty chuckle, Valetti swaggered behind the car and was gone.

But Len remained, sitting perfectly still and staring unseeingly at the white-clad figures, moving on the greensward before him. Suddenly, now that Valetti, with his strong, masterful personality had left him, he felt almost sick with funk.

The die was cast; the great gamble had begun. To him the next few hours meant success, or a prison cell, perhaps. As the realisation of that fact burned itself deeper into his brain, the young motor magnate shivered as with ague.

Deliberately, and with malice aforethought, as the lawyers say, he had turned a wolf of the underworld loose on his uncle. No; wolves, he corrected

himself, as he thought of his unknown newcomer into the business, Joe the Hump. Who was he? One of Valetti's criminal pals, of course. The very name conjured up ugly visions in Len's mind.

And by employing these thugs he had made himself a criminal, too.

A criminal! Torn by panic and doubt Len half rose then, with the idea of running after Valetti, and calling the night's job off. Beads of sweat broke out on his forehead, and his hand groped for the door. But even as he unfastened the catch—

"Caught him! Well held, Terry! Bowled, Bill!"

"Well played youngster! Go it! You've got 'em on the run now!"

Once again the Avonport Grammar School ground resounded to a burst of clapping and cheers as another batsman turned away from the wicket, caught Mason, bowled Allison. And there and then a fresh gust of jealous rage swept Len's fears away for good.

Viciously he slammed the door shut again.

"Hang the pup and his old man, too! Hang everything!" he muttered recklessly. "My father never had any mercy on people who stood in his light, and neither will I! They've asked for trouble with me, and, by thunder, they'll get it!"

Shooting a malicious glance at the distant figure of his cousin, he took out his cigarette-case. Smoking helped to steady his nerves still more. He began to take a calmer, clearer view of the situation.

After all, from what he knew of Corsica Phil Valetti, that expert crook could be trusted to handle his end of the plot all right—and leave no traces, either. Then again, assuming that this Cannonball Doyle was really trying to butt in for his own ends, Valetti would also smash him again with pleasure, as he had done years before in America.

Len drew in a deep lungful of smoke, and slowly breathed it out.

A grimly confident smile quirked his lips.

"You just keep yourself cool, old chap, and you'll be on velvet," he assured himself. "Once you've got that old fool's invention and got rid of Valetti, you can go right ahead. Then, by gad, the Allison Works'll show the motor trade something that'll knock their eyes out! And you're the chap to put it through."

Mindful of Valetti's instructions he got out then, and strolled arrogantly back into the pavilion.

His team mates who had thought him gone, greeted his sudden reappearance with looks of surprise. Ignoring them, however, he went up on to the balcony, where anyone who liked could see him plainly.

Then, with cigarette cocked at a disdainful angle, he settled himself down in a deck-chair to watch the final stage of young Bill's triumph.

And a triumph it certainly was!

Bill, bang on the top of his form, and with his great ambition to become an Avonshire professional spurring him on, was bowling with a deadly sting and accuracy that surprised even himself, and kept the onlookers keyed up with enthusiasm.

The youngster seemed to have forgotten his bruised head entirely. Clever, cool, untiring, he had become more like a human machine than the cheery, happy-go-lucky old "Madman" the idol of Avonport Grammar.

By now the effects of the roller had worn off, and the pitch was no longer smooth and firm. Thus practically every spinner he tossed up "bit" and broke on the roughened turf like lightning, keeping the club and ground batsmen constantly on the defensive. Only Conway, the steadiest of all the Avonshire veterans, was able to score off the brilliant young left-hander.

But even his broad bat was beaten at last by Bill's cunning wiles.

Like all the rest, it was a simple-looking ball that did the trick—a ball that Conway thought was going to swerve suddenly to leg, pitch on the treacherous bare spot there, and break back into the wicket as most of the others had done. This time, however, it did exactly the opposite.

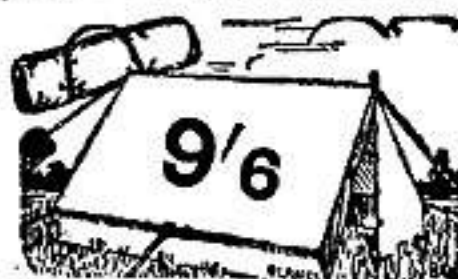
Instead of swinging across Conway's legs, it curled the other way with a bewildering abruptness that tied the veteran into a knot. Too late, he tried to alter his stroke, but the sizzling "fizz" of the ball off the pitch beat his down-swinging bat all the way.

There was a click and a yell as his off-stump kicked back, and delighted Grammarians flung their arms into the air.

"Well bowled! Well bowled, Bill!"

"And jolly well played, Conway!" All round the ground swelled the applause, both for the batsman who had played a grand, stout-hearted knock, and for the smiling lad who had won the long duel in the end.

(Len Allison has taken the bit between his teeth now, and Simon and Bill will have to look out for themselves. More thrills next week!)



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24-6-33

EXPERIENCED HECKLERS WANTED!

For the purpose of wrecking a mass meeting at Courtfield next week, when the Courtfield & District Chicken Farmers' Association will debate a motion "That Master Coker's Motor Bike Be Abolished." Applicants must be proved scoundrels!—Apply H. J. Coker, Fifth Form. N.B.—Free feed afterwards!

THE NEW

Greyfriars Herald

EXTRA GOOD EDITION

No. 38 (New Series)

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

June 24th, 1933.

UNCLAIMED MONEY!

IF HERBERT MONTGOMERY BULL-WINKLE, last heard of in the Courtfield district, will communicate with us, he will hear something to his advantage.—Asst. Secy. DASH & ASTRICK, Solicitors, High Street, Courtfield.

CHANGE OF NAME!

William George Bunter hereby declares that as from to-day's date he wishes to be known as HERBERT MONTGOMERY BULLWINKLE, his previous name having been used to disguise his real identity.

MILLIONAIRE'S SUCCESS AS OTHERS SEE THEM

RECIPE, What I Think of Mrs. Mimble

By Tom Brown



"YOU CAN'T BEAT EDDIFICATION!"

The difficulty about saying "Don't talk nonsense, Master Bunter!" when the Owl explains how great business have been built up by granting extensive credit to customers. Oh, yes, Mrs. Mimble has a personality right enough! Outwardly she's a simple old soul with a great deal of affection for her youthful customers. But she's not always so simple as she looks, and her affection for boys in

firm voice respond with "Don't talk nonsense, Master Bunter!" when the Owl explains how great business have been built up by granting extensive credit to customers. Oh, yes, Mrs. Mimble has a personality right enough! Outwardly she's a simple old soul with a great deal of affection for her youthful customers. But she's not always so simple as she looks, and her affection for boys in

general does, prevent her from discriminating between boys she does like and those she doesn't!

But we all like her—even those who sometimes meet with her disapproval.

"As good as her own jam-tarts" was the way Peter Todd put it the other day—and that's saying something! I should like to take this opportunity of stating my hearty agreement with Todd.

May she continue to gladden our hearts with first-class tuck for many a long day!

(Thanks, Erwin! And now what does Mrs. M. think of YOU? We wonder? The answer will be found in next week's number!—Ed.)

was just sheer rank acting, we yelled! Much to everybody's surprise, the players wore masks; some could only guess who they were. The play opened quite normally and bored us just as much as the average senior performance for the first five minutes.

Then, unexpectedly, the Head and several masters turned up and settled down in front seats. For reasons which nobody could understand, their arrival seemed to cause complete consternation on the stage!

Follows forgot their lines, mumbled and muffed them, bumped into each other, fell off the platform on to the grass, and generally went all goofy!

Night's Dream "soon became 'Midsummer's Night's Scream'" and before the end of the first act the audience was delirious with laughter. So it went on and on. The only people who didn't laugh were the benches. Apparently, they considered that the Senior Dramatic Society's treatment of the Bard of Avon was no subject for mirth, and their expressions portentious every minute!

It was only in the very last moments of the play that we stumbled to the explanation of everything. At that late hour a crowd of Sixth-Formers, headed by Whingate, rushed on the scene, and we realised for the first time that the players had been entirely Fifth-Formers.

Before they had realised that benches were present, the Sixth had invaded the stage and started a furious assault on the actors, and as a climax to a crazy evening we were treated to the amazing sight of a free fight between Fifth and Sixth!

Then the Head rose in wrathful majesty, and, after separating the combatants, instituted a prompt and searching inquiry.

Within five minutes we knew exactly what had happened. The Fifth had kidnapped from the Sixth and had coolly run the play themselves! Unfortunately the unexpected appearance of the benches had ratted them so badly that they were unable to do themselves justice, to the hilarious result which the audience had already seen.

What happened afterwards in the Head's study, we can't tell you. Shame, isn't it?

HALF-HOLIDAY SNAPS

Bunter's Winning Effort

Bunter won the Junior Half-holiday Snaps' Competition, promoted by the Junior Camera Club, with one of the best photographs of the River Sark ever seen. The judges were enthusiastic over it.

Light and shade were admirably distributed over the picture, while a punt in the foreground and the sprays of Greyfriars in the distance gave it a wonderful appearance of depth and realism.

The gleam of sunshine on the rippling waters and the light filtering through the trees on the bank were brought out with remarkable clarity and made the photograph one of idyllic beauty.

The judges had no hesitation whatever in awarding Bunter a prize of a brand new folding camera.

Incidentally, after he had sold the camera to Toddy for ten bob and spent most of that sum in the tuckshop, Bunter was injudicious enough to admit that he bought the winning snap in a Courtfield photographer's shop for sixpence!

Members of the Junior Camera Club are asked to assemble in the dark-room on Monday evening next at 8 o'clock sharp, when Bunter will be ceremoniously drowned in a barrel of hypo!

'Lonzy's Little Letters'

Dear Editor.—It has for a considerable chronological period been my estimation that corporal punishment as a corrective method is antiquarian in its moral and philosophical justification and ineffectual in its resultant sequelae. Today during our antemurian efforts in the acquisition of erudition, by way of illustrative example, an inaccurate responsive assessment on the part of Skinner to an interrogation from Mr. Quelch earned the unhappy juvenile a specimen of that not inconsiderable consonance between manual member and aural appendages colloquially known by the terminological expression "box on the ears."

Had Mr. Quelch restrained his proclivities for recalcitrance in the shape of physical punitive measures and contented himself with the administration of a stern verbal reprimand such as "Dear me, Skinner! Your answer, indelicately, is not strictly accurate, I fear!" indubitably Skinner would have been covered with confusion and stimulated to increased assiduity in his studies.

Yet when I indicated this reasonable and logical proposition to Mr. Quelch at the termination of our academic session, the magisterial official in question responded by the utilisation of that offensive weapon of flagellation known as the cane upon my underswearing anatomy!

I am still wondering why!

Disrespectfully yours,
AUSO TOOD.

(In brief: Lonzy told Quelch he should have tickled Skinner off instead of giving him a clip on the ear. And Lonzy wonders why Quelch was mad! P.W.—Ed.)

PARACHUTIST SPOILS VICTORY

Amazing Cricket Feat

One of the most extraordinary incidents ever known in the history of cricket occurred on Little Side last Wednesday at the end of the Renoway's match with Highcliffe.

Highcliffe were batting, and it was a case of last man in and one run to tie or two for a win. The crowd watched breathlessly as Hurreo Singh prepared to send De Courcy of Highcliffe one of his extra-special "yokers." Even the aerial acrobatics which were going on near by in connection with the Courtfield Air Pageant failed to affect the prevailing enthusiasm for the game.

Inky bowled one of his deadliest and trickiest balls, and the Caterpillar stopped out to it.

Check!

There was a buzz of excitement from the crowd. De Courcy had "skied" it, with terrific force, and the ball was soaring into space. But the spectators were watching Bob Chery, who was waiting in long field ready

to catch it and save the game for Greyfriars. Undoubtedly, Bob would have risen to the occasion. But he wasn't!

At the very moment that De Courcy hit out, a parachutist fell out of the sky and landed in the middle of the field. He was in a crouching position, and he was holding a bat and a ball. He was wearing a dark suit and a white shirt. He was looking at the ball in his hand. He was looking at the bat in his other hand. He was looking at the crowd. He was looking at the field. He was looking at the sky. He was looking at the ground. He was looking at everything. He was looking at nothing.

Nothing was said afterwards to give outsiders the slightest clue to their intentions. It was not till the play was nearly over that the outside world knew of their nefarious plan!

What a play! What acting! At first we thought they must be burlesquing it; but when we realised that it was a real play, we were

Dicky Nugent's Weekly Wisdom

Mr. Lascelles, the maths master, says I'm an absolute duffer at geometry, so I've made up my mind to conquer the subject. But it'll mean a lot of hard work!

Before I can get "all square" with Lascelles, I shall have to look at things from the "try" angle, so to speak!

Young Gents' Cricket Bats

Looked after like as if they were my own. What I says is this ere:—"You oil my palm and I'll oil your bat!"—Apply W.M. GOSLING, Porter's Lodge.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

When a lion escaped from a circus near Greyfriars' everyboddy Master ever invariably takes a dozen or more kunks. Bunter, who frequently "lands" an express locomotive which actually runs!

When travelling in the vac. Lord Donald Givvy, the Scots junior, W. G. Bunter gets through as Sidney James Snop, is so youngster, Diery Nugent keeps a pet rabbit, and stoutly demands it against the dispersing remarks of the other fags.

Although apparently a thoughtless youngster, Diery Nugent keeps a pet rabbit, and stoutly demands it against the dispersing remarks of the other fags.

Major upheld the dignity of the Remove by cutting the fag—hard!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

While Woods were he over-ally paddled.

The parachutist happened to be a cricketer as well, and when the ball came sailing towards him, he found the temptation to catch it too great to be resisted. He reached out, deftly caught it, and, being scared to drop it in case it hit someone on the napper, hung on to it!

By so doing, he unknowingly robbed Greyfriars of victory, for the umpire ruled that it was his ball. In his should have! again with a fresh ball, and on this occasion the Caterpillar was content to snick it neatly aside for the two runs that won the match for Highcliffe!