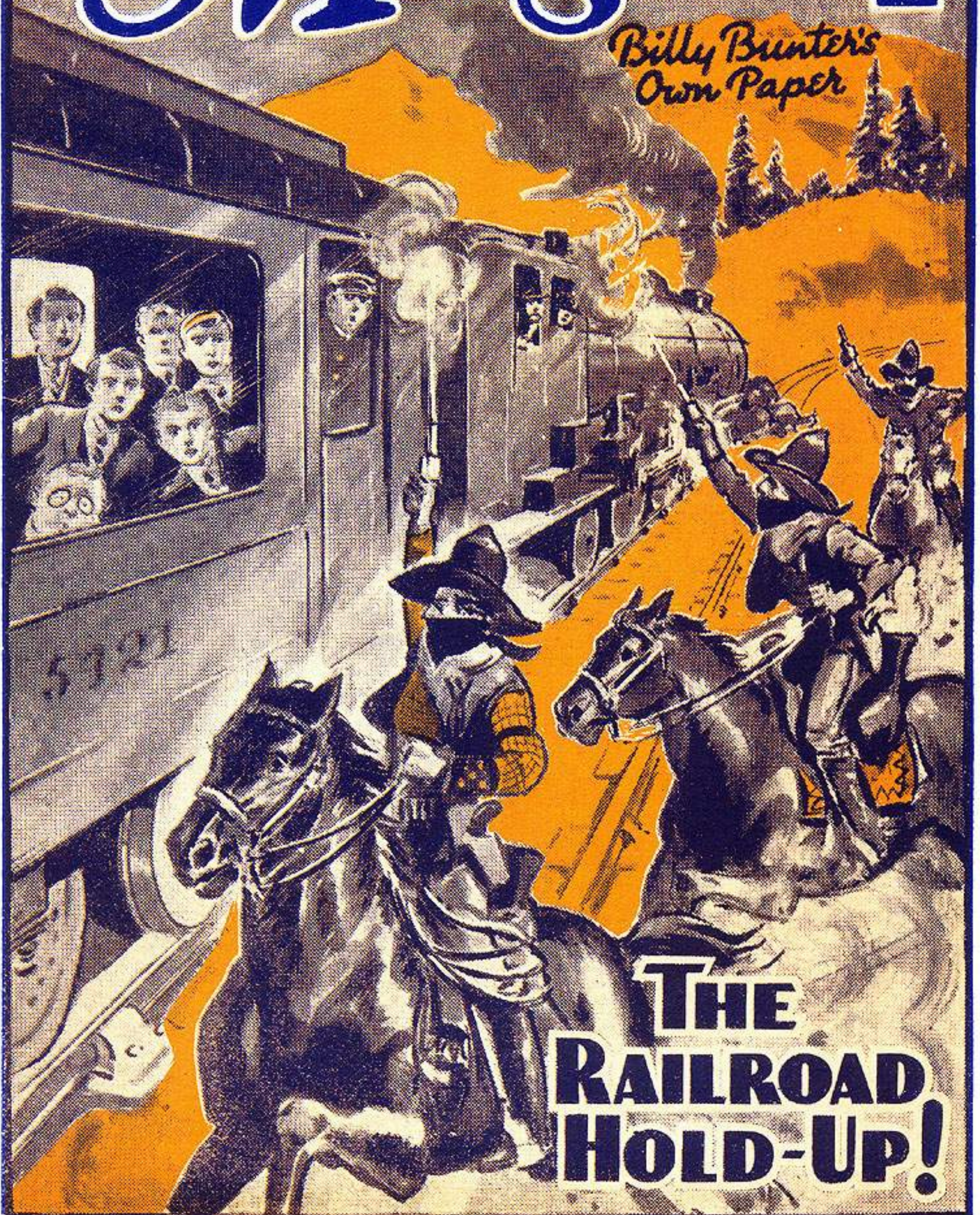


"ON THE TEXAS TRAIL!" Thrilling Wild West Story of Harry Wharton & Co.

# The Magnet 2<sup>D</sup>

*Billy Bunter's  
Own Paper*



## THE RAILROAD HOLD-UP!

## WHAT'S GOING ON AT GREYFRIARS, By—

## The GREYFRIARS GUIDE

## THE DAILY ROUND.

(1)

There are many sad and weary  
In this pleasant world of ours  
Groaning over Euclid's theory,  
Swotting it for hours and hours.  
Shame upon a cad so dirty  
As old Euclid! (Howls of rage!)  
I'll be bald before I'm thirty—  
If I ever reach that age!



## 10.45 a.m. Mathematics.

(2)

Larry Lascelles takes mathematics,  
And we always have to swot;  
There are screws loose in our attics  
As we wrestle with the rot.  
Z 2 A plus X—Oh heaven!—  
6 B squared by H 2 O,  
Multiply the sum by seven,  
And your hair's as white as snow.

(3)

Yet we worry out the answer  
If we stick it long enough.  
Larry doesn't care for "Can't, sir!"  
He will grimly answer, "Stuff!"  
Though we make excuses lamely,  
He inspires us with his plan—  
That the chaps who stick it gamely  
Find "I can't!" becomes "I can!"

A WEEKLY BUDGET  
OF FACT AND FUNBy  
THE GREYFRIARS  
RHYMESTERTHE GREYFRIARS  
ALPHABET

FRANK NUGENT,

Wharton's Chum in Study No. 1.

N is for NUGENT—Frank—  
A fellow who's in the front rank.  
He's Wharton's best chum, as you know.  
Let's hope he will always be so;  
For Frank is as straight as a die;  
A chap on whom one can rely



To stick to his guns and be true  
Whatever the others may do.  
He's only one weakness, in fact—  
His minor, who might have been sacked  
If Frank hadn't kept a sharp eye  
On Dicky's misdoings. But why  
He thinks the young rogue is so good  
Has never been quite understood.  
But, Dicky apart, he's as sound  
As any good chap can be found.

When Inky saw Coker on his motor-  
bike he turned pale with fright. Pale  
black, of course.

A fatheaded fellow named Gwynne  
Can play the piano and grin.  
Because, it appears,  
He has plugs in his ears  
To keep out the terrible din!

AFTER SCHOOL HOURS  
Tour of Terror!

Flying like a fearful phantom,  
Coker comes down Friardale Lane;  
Farmer Piker's special bantam  
Joins the growing roll of slain.  
In a cloud of feathers tangled,  
Coker's motor-bike roars on,  
While a corpse, grotesquely mangled,  
Tells of one more chicken gone.

Courtfield Common, in the distance,  
Soon hears many a startled groan;  
Coker stops the short existence  
Of a rabbit (name unknown).  
On its back a goat is lying,  
Gazing blankly at the sky,  
While a mangled pig is sighing  
For the safety of its sty.

Courtfield staggers back with wonder.  
Has an earthquake come at last?  
There's a sudden roar of thunder;  
Ten close shaves, and Coker's passed!  
In the Redcliff Road he stretches  
Six small fowls among the wrecked,  
While the farmers—senseless wretches—  
Try to stop him and object!

Farmer Cobbett's sheep are scattered,  
Leaving casualties and slain;  
While a donkey, badly battered,  
Hopes he'll meet that thing again!  
Then at last the tour is ended  
In a duckpond, deep and cool;  
And the bike, which can't be mended,  
Coker pushes back to school!

## IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE

This week, by way of a change, what about a few puzzles of the "it doesn't seem possible" kind?

Two office-boys, Brown and Smith, joined a firm at an annual salary of £50, payable half-yearly, with a yearly rise of £10. Smith said he didn't want a rise of £10 a year; he'd rather have £2 10s. 0d. every half-year. The boss naturally jumped at it.

And in five years he was already £12 10s. 0d. up on Brown, and still going strong. It doesn't seem possible, but work it out for yourselves.

Once Brown asked the boss for a day off; and the boss replied: "You work 8 hours per day—that is, just one-third of a day. Let's see how much work you do in a year. Since this is leap year, we'll take one-third of 366 days—that is, you work 122 days per year. You have 52 Sundays and 52 Saturdays off; so 104 from 122 leaves 18 days. You have a fortnight's holiday, which leaves 4 days. You have 4 Bank Holidays, which leaves 0 days. In fact, you do no work at all! Good-morning!"

It doesn't seem possible. But where's the catch?

There's an island between England and France which is farther from England than England is from France. It doesn't seem possible; but Guernsey is 80 miles from England, and England (at the Straits of Dover) is only 21 miles from France.

There were seven apple-women in one street. The first had 20 apples, the second 40, the others 60, 80, 100, 120, and 140 respectively. Each sold all her apples at the same price as the rest, and each received the same amount of money.

It doesn't seem possible, but there's a catch in it. They each sold the apples at 10 a 1d., but charged 3d. each for the odd ones left over. And each, therefore, made 1s. 8d.

**NOT WANTED IN TEXAS!** Vernon-Smith has been warned by his enemies not to set foot in the cow country where his millionaire father has recently purchased a ranch. But fear has been left out of the Bounder's composition. Together with his school-fellows from Greyfriars—with burly Buckskin Bill, cow-puncher, "riding herd" over the party—he's keener than ever to get—

# ON THE TEXAS TRAIL!

By **FRANK RICHARDS**



As the Greyfriars juniors gazed into the shop window they saw, reflected in the glass, the hard, cold face of Two-gun Sanders, the gunman from Texas!

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Bed for Bunter!

**R**OLL out, Bunter!"  
"Shan't!"  
Billy Bunter's answer was short, if not sweet.

Bunter was indignant.

He sat up in bed in his room on the seventeenth floor of the Manhattan Hotel, in New York, jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose, and blinked at the five fellows in the doorway with an angry and indignant blink.

It was only nine o'clock in the morning!

At Greyfriars School, certainly, Billy Bunter would have turned out much earlier than that, when the rising-bell clanged in the dewy morn.

But he was far from Greyfriars School now—three thousand miles away from it, in fact.

Billy Bunter did not think much of New York. As a matter of taste, he preferred Margato. He disliked elevated railroads. He had a crick in his fat neck from looking up at skyscrapers. He was willing to walk round and see the sights—such as they were. But he was not going to turn out at the unearthly hour of nine for that purpose. If a holiday meant anything, it meant that a fellow could get up when he liked. Bunter was going to get up when he liked—when he jolly well liked!

The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove looked very merry and bright that morning. Bright April sunshine streamed down on the great city of

Manhattan Island—so far as the cliff-like buildings allowed it to do so. It was only their second day in New York, and the next they were taking the cars for the wild south-west. Harry Wharton & Co. wanted to pack all they could into their brief stay in New York. But they did not want to leave Bunter out, so there they were, waking him from a happy nap!

"We're just starting, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"Start, and be blowed!" answered Bunter.

"Can't wait!" said Johnny Bull.

## A Thrill-Packed Story of Wild West Adventure, Starring HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS.

"Who's asking you to wait?"

"Don't you want to see New York?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I saw it yesterday."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "You can't see New York in a day, Bunter. Even an American couldn't do that. Get a move on, old fat man!"

"Shan't!"

"Look here, you fat ass——" said Harry Wharton.

"Shut that door!"

"Mr. Buck's waiting for us downstairs——"

"Let him wait!"

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

"Will you shut that door?"

"Well, it's a free country," said Bob Cherry. "If Bunter prefers a bedside view of New York, no reason why he shouldn't have his way. Good-bye, Bunter!"

"If you fellows are going out without me——" snorted Bunter.

"Turn out, then, you fat slacker!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You can call me again at ten. Now, shut that door, and shut up!"

At which the chums of the Greyfriars Remove smiled. They were not really likely to spend the next hour sitting about the hotel, waiting for Billy Bunter to turn out at ten o'clock.

"Well, we're going, fathoad!" said Harry Wharton. "Mr. Buck's waiting, and Smithy's waiting, and——"

"I'm getting up at ten," said Bunter. "I shan't be long over brekker when I'm up—perhaps an hour. I'll be ready to start at eleven. I'll make a point of that if you fellows want to start out early. I hope I'm considerate. Now shut up and let a fellow snooze!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, came up the corridor from the lift. He had been waiting downstairs in the foyer for the rest of the party—not patiently. Now he had shot up in the elevator to inquire what the dickens they were dawdling for.

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"You fellows coming?" he grunted, as he arrived.

"Yes; just calling Bunter," answered Bob.

"Isn't that fat fool ready?" The Bounder of Greyfriars stared into Billy Bunter's room. "You lazy, fat, slack-necked snail!" he hooted.

"Beast!" hooted back Bunter. "Cheeky cad! If that's how you're going to talk to a guest, Smithy, I've a jolly good mind to take the next steamer back, and let you get on the best you can without me."

"Oh, stick there and be blowed!" growled the Bounder. "You're safer indoors than out, anyhow. You lost yourself twice yesterday, you blithering, blithering owl!"

"I never lost myself! You fellows lost yourselves, if that's what you mean!" retorted Bunter. "You'd better not go without me, or you'll get lost again, I expect. Anyhow, I'm not going out till eleven. Now, let a chap go to sleep."

"We're going——"

"Who's stopping you?" hooted Bunter. "Think I want your company? Shut that door and let a fellow snooze! I'm going out at eleven—not before. If you like to wait, wait; if not, do the other thing. Now shut up!"

"Are you coming now?"

"No!" yelled Bunter.

"Then you're not going out at all. You'd lose yourself at the end of the first block. We had enough hunting for you yesterday. Either you come with us now, or you stay in till we come back. Got that?" snapped Vernon-Smith.

Billy Bunter, about to lay his fat head on the pillow again, sat up instead, and fixed his eyes and his spectacles on Herbert Vernon-Smith with a glare of wrath and indignation.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood silent.

It was Smithy's party. They were Smithy's guests on that trip out to Texas, as Bunter was. But the difference was, that Smithy wanted the Famous Five, and did not want Billy Bunter. Smithy's manners to that fat guest were not polished; but Bunter, really, was not the sort of guest to put much polish on the manners of a host.

"Understand that!" snapped the Bounder.

"You cheeky ass!" gasped Bunter. "I shall do just exactly as I jolly well like—see? Think you're going to give me orders?"

"Smithy's right!" said Johnny Bull. "You can't wander about a foreign city on your own, Bunter! You know that."

"Can't I?" hooted Bunter. "You mind your own business, Bull! I'm going out at eleven. Hear that? Not before. Clear off as soon as you like—jolly glad to be shut of you for a bit!"

"Look here, Bunter——" urged Bob Cherry.

"Yah!"

"So you're sticking in bed now, and going out later on your own, are you?" said Vernon-Smith. "You're going to get lost again, and give us the job of hunting for you from Harlem to the Battery! I think not! Get out of that bed!"

"Shan't!"

"Then stick there till we come in!" growled the Bounder, and he stepped into the room and collected Bunter's clothes.

"What the thump are you up to?" roared Bunter. "Leave my clobber alone! I say, you fellows, don't let that beast take my clobber away."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five burst into a roar of laughter. Billy Bunter looked on the point of bursting with wrath.

Smithy collected the garments, put them over his arm, and walked out of the room. Billy Bunter, who travelled light, had one suit of clothes on that trip. The Bounder having walked off with it, it looked as if Bunter was booked for bed that morning, unless he walked out to view New York in his pyjamas!

"Good-bye, Bunter!" chuckled Bob.

"I say, you fellows——" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob shut the door, and the chums of the Remove walked away, laughing.

"I say——" roared Bunter.

But answer there came none. Harry Wharton & Co. were gone. The Bounder was gone! Bunter's clothes were gone! And the fat Owl of Greyfriars, instead of settling down for another snooze, sat and snorted with indignant wrath.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Bill's Way!

"GEE-WHIZ!" ejaculated William Buck.

William Buck—known more familiarly on the Kicking Cayuse Ranch, in Texas, as "Buckskin Bill," came to a sudden halt.

Harry Wharton & Co. halted also, wondering what was up.

The Greyfriars party had come downtown on the Elevated Railroad, and now they were walking down the Bowery, quite interested to give that celebrated thoroughfare the once-over.

They had heard of the "Bowery" in New York as a lurid spot—but it did not look very lurid in the bright April morning.

It was a long, busy street, with the elevated railroad buzzing overhead. There were plenty of people about; but if there were "Bowery toughs" in the offing, they did not seem specially in evidence.

Mr. Buck walked with the half-dozen schoolboys, towering about a foot over their heads. The Famous Five looked merry and bright; and the Bounder was in a good humour—perhaps owing to having left Billy Bunter behind at the hotel!

"Anything up, Bill?" asked Vernon-Smith, as the big cowpuncher from Texas came to a halt, a grim expression coming over his rugged, red-bearded face.

"I should smile!" answered Mr. Buck.

At which the Greyfriars fellows smiled! They understood that this was an answer in the affirmative!

"Step this way, and give this here store a peep!" added Mr. Buck.

He turned towards a shop window.

Harry Wharton & Co., in surprise, followed him.

It was a ready-made clothes shop at which Mr. Buck stopped. Within a plate-glass window, suits were arranged on stands to catch the eye of the public. What interest such goods had for Mr. Buck, the juniors could not guess.

But the puncher from Kicking Cayuse stared hard and earnestly in at that window.

Reflected in the glass were the hurrying crowds on the sidewalk.

"What the dickens——" asked Bob Cherry, puzzled.

"I guess we're being trailed!" said Bill.

"Trailed?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Surest thing you know."

"Oh! Followed, you mean?" said Johnny Bull.

"Yep! Don't rubber round none! Jest peep in that winder, and I guess you'll see a frontispiece you seen afore!"

Bill Buck was more used to horses than to street cars, to the rolling prairies than to busy streets. But it was evident that he had not left his wariness behind him in Texas.

Bill was in charge of the Greyfriars party—"riding herd"—as he described it himself.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had trusted his son to the Kicking Cayuse puncher, for safe convoy out to the ranch in Texas, lately purchased by the millionaire.

Harry Wharton & Co. had very willingly joined up with the Bounder for the trip to Texas. The fact that a spot of danger had cropped up rather added to their zest than otherwise.

In their interest in the sights of New York, they had rather forgotten that hostile eyes might be upon them.

But Bill had not forgotten; and they knew now that he had spotted some "guy" following them; and they wondered whether it was Two-gun Sanders—the gunman from Texas.

What the gunman's reason was, the juniors did not know, and could not guess; but they knew that he was determined to prevent Herbert Vernon-Smith from reaching the ranch on the banks of the Rio Frio.

He had warned him, at Greyfriars, before the school broke up for the Easter-holidays, not to undertake the trip. On the day they had landed in New York, he had sent the Bounder a last warning, to take the steamer home. That warning had had no effect whatever on Smithy or the Co.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Look!"

Gazing into the shop window, as if interested in the goods displayed therein, the juniors were able to see the faces of passers-by reflected in the glass, and among them, one face riveted their eyes.

It was a hard, cold, clean-shaven face, with narrow eyes that looked like slits of ice under a black Derby hat clamped down on a bullet head.

All of them knew that hard, cold face—the face of Two-gun Sanders, the gunman from Packsaddle, in Texas.

Evidently the gunman was following and watching the party.

"You spot that hombre?" asked Bill Buck.

"That's the man!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I'll tell a man!" agreed Mr. Buck. "He sure is trailing this bunch, and I'll say that he's got side-kickers around, if he gets a chance to put a cinch on you, big boy!"

The juniors felt a thrill of excitement.

The fact that the gunman was watching them as they walked down the Bowery, showed that Mr. Sanders was looking for a chance to carry out his threats. Now that they had stopped, he had stopped also, at a little distance, affecting to be lighting a cigarette.

In the open street, in the broad daylight, it did not seem likely that he would attempt to proceed to action; probably he hoped to see them turn into a less frequented quarter; and it was quite likely that he had confederates within call, if he needed their aid.

"Hit the trail," said Mr. Buck, "and don't wander out of the herd, you uns!"

The big puncher swung on, and the juniors followed him. They were careful not to look back. Bill, evidently, did not want Mr. Sanders to spot the

fact that he had been observed, and the juniors played up.

They could guess that Bill had some plan in his mind for dealing with the shadower, though they could not guess what it was.

"This way!" said Mr. Buck suddenly, as they reached a corner.

He turned out of the Bowery into a side-street. The Greyfriars fellows followed on.

Suddenly Mr. Buck dropped his tobacco-pouch.

"You, Wharton, pick that up for me," he said, "and squint back while you're picking it up, and see if that guy has turned the corner."

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton stooped and picked up the tobacco-pouch—and shot a swift backward glance as he did so.

Behind the party, a slim, spare figure in a black hat had turned the corner, and was coming on.

"He's following us!" said Harry, as he handed the tobacco-pouch to the big Texan.

"I reckoned so," assented Mr. Buck, "and I sure am giving him a chance! I'll say that guy will be glad to see us wandering off the trail this-way."

The juniors had no doubt about that, and they rather wondered at Bill's tactics. It seemed to them that he was playing into the gunman's hands. He turned another corner, and another, and each street that he entered, was rather shabbier, dirtier, and more disreputable than the last.

Shabby tenement houses, rough-looking men, and slatternly women, were to be seen around them—one of the sights of New York, no doubt, but not one of the attractive sights!

"What's this game, Bill?" asked the Bounder at length. "If that blighter is looking for a chance at us, you're giving him one."

"You said it!" agreed Mr. Buck.

"He may be in touch with some rough gang hereabouts—"

"Bet on it!" assented Bill.

"Well, look here, what's the game, then? There's no policemen about here—and do you think any of that rough lot would interfere if there was a shindy?" exclaimed the Bounder impatiently.

"Not in your lifetime!" said Bill. "That's why."

He turned another corner into what looked more like an alley than a street. The juniors followed him, but they could not help feeling uneasy.

A walk into the slums of New York, with the gunman following behind, did not seem to them quite a sensible proceeding. They were in a quarter now where no help was to be expected in case of trouble. It was easy to guess that Two-gun Sanders was glad enough to see them taking such a route. What Bill Buck had in his mind, was a mystery to them.

"Pull in your horses!" said Bill, having passed the last corner.

He halted, and the juniors halted.

A minute later, the slim gunman in the black Derby hat came swinging round the corner.

Bill Buck's next proceeding startled the juniors. Probably it would have startled Two-gun Sanders as well, if he had had time to be startled. Bill made a sudden rush, and, before Mr. Sanders knew what was happening, a gigantic fist hit him on the point of the jaw.

One gasp escaped the gunman—and then he crashed.

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Great pip!"

The juniors stared blankly at Two-gun Sanders, stretched on the unclean sidewalk, motionless. That one terrific blow had knocked him senseless.

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated the Bounder.

"So—so that's the game?"

"I guess," said Mr. Buck, gazing down at the senseless gunman, "that that guy won't trail this bunch no farther. What you reckon?"

The Bounder chuckled. The Famous Five could only stare.

They understood Mr. Buck's tactics now!

He had led the shadower on, into a spot where no interference was to be expected if a man was knocked out in the street! Then he had turned on the shadower and knocked him out! It was a simple method—but certainly not one that the Greyfriars juniors had expected.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Frank Nugent, "I—I say—"

"Bill, old man, you're the goods!" chuckled the Bounder, "I'll bet that whatever that blighter was expecting, he wasn't expecting that!"

"Hardly!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"I guess we want to beat it out of here," said Mr. Buck, calmly. "Mebbe some guy will mosey along and pick up that galoot—but I'll tell a man, he won't trail this bunch no farther! Not so's you'd notice it."

There was no doubt about that! Three or four tough-looking "guys" gathered round the senseless gunman, as Mr. Buck led his charges away. They left a gathering crowd behind them—and were rather glad to leave it, and get back to the Bowery.

Bill Buck's method of dealing with the shadower startled the Famous Five. But they had to admit that it was efficacious! Whatever happened to the man left senseless in the alley, he did not shadow the Greyfriars party any farther.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Beastly for Bunter!

**B**ILLY BUNTER opened the door of his room in the Manhattan Hotel a few inches, and peered out into the corridor, through his big spectacles.

His eyes gleamed through those spectacles.

Like most plump people, Bunter was generally good-tempered. But he was not good-tempered now. He was in a state of boiling wrath.

The wrath of Achilles, to Greece the direful spring of woes unnumbered, had nothing on Billy Bunter's wrath just then.

Bunter was in his pyjamas. Or, to be more accurate, he was in Frank Nugent's second suit of pyjamas. It was Bunter's happy custom to travel light, and borrow what he needed from his pals. This custom did not always make his pals feel very pally—but the fat Owl of the Remove found it convenient.

Still, it had its drawbacks. A fellow who travelled with only one suit of clothes, and who had been deprived of the same, was in rather a difficult position.

Bunter, evidently, could not take walks abroad in New York, clad only in pyjamas. He could not even go downstairs in that light and airy costume. He was unwilling to venture out of his room.

But a fellow had to have clothes!

So the fat Owl of Greyfriars peered

out of his room, to ascertain that the coast was clear, before he made the venture.

The other fellows did not travel so light as Bunter! There were clothes to be had, if he could get at them!

What Smithy had done with his clobber, Bunter did not know! But he knew what he was going to do with Smithy's clobber—if he could get at it! He was going to make a selection from it for his own use!

Luckily, there was nobody about.

Bunter looked this way, and that way, like Moses of old. He saw only a vast corridor with a number of closed doors, and a lift shaft at the end.

The lift was down, at the moment. It might come up, and discharge a cargo of passengers—but Bunter had to risk that. Someone might come up by the stairs—but he had to risk that also.

He crept out into the corridor.

A minute later, he was at the door of Vernon-Smith's room. He turned the door handle.

Then he spluttered with rage.

The door was locked.

Bunter had not expected that! Really, he might have expected it, as it was a common custom, when a fellow went out, for him to lock his door, and leave the key below in the office till he returned. Smithy was not likely to leave his valuables at the mercy of hotel thieves.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He glared at the door, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles! But it could not crack the lock! The door remained immovable.

The fat junior moved along to the other doors. But he knew what to expect now—and he found what he expected! The other fellows, as well as Smithy, had locked their doors before they went out.

Breathing fury, the fat Owl rolled back to his own room.

He had just reached it, when he heard a distant footfall! It was the sound of someone coming up the staircase.

He made a bound for his door! He did not want to be spotted wandering about in his pyjamas! Luckily, the newcomer was not yet in sight.

He bolted into his room, like a fat rabbit into a burrow. He had the door shut by the time the footfall came along the corridor.

It passed his door, went on up the corridor, and stopped. Bunter's fat ears told him that it had stopped at the next door to his own. That was the door of Vernon-Smith's room.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

The Bounder had come back for something—or else it was some hotel attendant with business in the room. In either case, this was a chance for Bunter.

He opened his door a few inches, and peered along the corridor. His eyes, and his spectacles, fastened on a figure at the Bounder's door.

It was not Smithy! It did not look like one of the hotel attendants. It was the figure of a man in a lounge suit and a Derby hat.

Bunter blinked at him.

The lift—or elevator—had not stirred: the man had come up by the stairs. That was a very unusual proceeding, as the corridor was on the seventeenth floor of the Manhattan. Stairs, as a rule, were only used in emergencies.

But it did not occur to Bunter to be suspicious. The man, whoever and whatever he was, was unlocking Vernon-

Smith's door. In what manner he was doing so, the short-sighted Owl could not see.

But that he did so was evident, for he passed into Vernon-Smith's room, and shut the door after him, disappearing from Bunter's sight.

That was enough for Bunter.

The door was unfastened now, and he could enter, as the man in the Derby hat had done. If it was some man belonging to the hotel—as Bunter supposed that it must be—he would no doubt be surprised when he saw Bunter, but that could not be helped!

The fat Owl stepped out of his room, rolled along to the next door, and turned the handle.

This time it opened to his hand. He opened it hurriedly, and to his astonishment it banged against something as he did so.

"Wow!" came a startled ejaculation.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Bump!

Somebody had fallen down, in Vernon-Smith's room.

In utter astonishment, the fat Owl pushed the door farther open, and rolled in! The man who had entered before him, was sitting on the floor. His Derby hat had fallen off, and he was rubbing his head.

The astonished Owl realised that he must have been stooping at the lock inside, and that the door, suddenly and unexpectedly opening, had banged on his head, and knocked him over.

What happened next, made Billy Bunter wonder whether he was dreaming!

He had only one blink at the man sitting on the floor! Then the man bounded up, like a jack-in-the-box. With one hand he clutched Bunter, and spun him across the room. With the other he shut the door.

Bunter went reeling and staggering, till he brought up against Vernon-Smith's bed.

"Ooogh!" gurgled Bunter.

He blinked dizzily at the man—at a face with a square jaw, and a beetling brow, under which two sharp eyes glittered, one of them with a squint in it. That face was dark and threatening.

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

"Pack it up, bo!" It was a sharp, snapping voice. Standing with his back to the door, the squint-eyed man whipped a revolver from the back of his trousers, and, to Bunter's horror, squinted at him over the levelled barrel. "You let out one whisper, big boy, and you get yours, right where you live! I'm telling you to pack it up, Mister Vernon-Smith!"

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Got By the Gangster!

"G OOOOOGH!" gurgled Bunter. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles at the squint-eyed man.

Billy Bunter was not quick on the uptake. But he realised that this could be no hotel attendant.

He could only suppose that the squint-eyed man was some hotel thief, whom he had interrupted in his nefarious occupation.

No doubt the rascal had discovered the number of Herbert Vernon-Smith's room. But though he knew that it was Smithy's room, it was clear that he did not know Smithy himself. From the fact that Bunter had come in, he

supposed that Bunter was the owner of the room.

"Keep it parked!" said the squint-eyed man. "You let out one yelp, and I guess you'll never let out another."

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

"You aim to give trouble?" asked the gangster, with a ferocious squint over the gun.

"Oh! No! But—I say—"

"Can it!"

One look at Bunter, was sufficient to show that he was not going to give trouble. The "gun" would not have frightened the Bounder; but it terrified Billy Bunter almost out of his fat wits.

Reassured on that point, the gangster shifted his gun to his left hand, turned to the door, and, to Bunter's bewilderment, locked it without a key.

That, evidently, was how he had been engaged, when Bunter had suddenly and unexpectedly opened the door, and knocked him over with it!

He turned to Bunter again.

Clearly he was surprised and puzzled to see Vernon-Smith, as he supposed him to be, clad only in pyjamas.

"Say, what's the game?" he grunted. "You been taking a walk around without your rags on, or what?"

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter. "You see—"

"I guess you must sure be locoed, to walk around an hotel in your pyjamas!" yapped the squint-eyed man. "It's got me beat."

"I—I—they—I—"

"Aw, can it! Here you are, anyhow! I sure got you."

"But—I say—"

"The door locked, and all!" went on the squint-eyed gangster. "I'll say it's got me beat! I guess when I found the door locked, I was dead sure you was one of the bunch that went out with that cow-puncher."

"I—I—"

"I ain't asking you to spill anything! I got you!" said the squint-eyed man. "I sure got you, Mister Vernon-Smith, and that's what matters. Get into your rags."

"I—I—" gurgled Bunter.

"I sure said get into your rags!" said the squint-eyed man, in a tone of savage menace. "You don't want to give Mike Gooligan any back-chat! Not if you know what's healthy! Get dressed, you fat gink! Mebbe you've got a fancy for walking round an hotel in your pyjamas, but I guess I ain't taking you for a walk round New York in that style! Nope."

Billy Bunter was glad enough to get dressed, so far as that went. That, indeed, was why he was there!

His own clothes were not in sight—the Bounder, as a matter of fact, had pitched them under his bed. But Billy Bunter rather preferred a selection of Smithy's garments to his own. He had plenty to choose from. And he lost no time.

Whatever it was that the squint-eyed gangster intended, Billy Bunter did not mean to argue with him. Apart from the gun, one squint from Mike Gooligan was enough to enforce obedience.

Bunter was soon dressed—and rather better dressed than usual! A little tightness of fit here and there could not be helped.

"Now, I guess I'll give you the lay-out!" said Mike. "I reckon you're wise to it that I was sent here for you, Mister Vernon-Smith."

"I—I—"

"I'm talking! Sanders is handing out fifty bucks for this, and I'll mention that it's easy money."

"Sanders!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

He understood now!

"Say, ain't you guessed that it was Sanders put me on this?" grunted the gangster. "You sure are some moss-head. You figure that I got any use for you if I wasn't paid to grab you?"

"Oh crikey! I—I say—"

"You needn't spill anything! You listen to me giving you the lay-out. I reckoned you was one of the bunch that went out with that Texas guy, and I was sure going to park myself here, and wait for you to come in. I guess I never expected to see you so soon—"

"You—you see—"

"Moseying round in pyjamas, too—it's got me beat! Loco, I guess! You sure do look the world's prize boob, Mister Vernon-Smith."

"I—I—I say, I—I'm not—"

"Can it! Loco or not, I got you! And I ain't got to wait, you walking into a guy's hands like this! You ready to take a walk with this baby?"

"Oh! No! I—"

"You ain't?" asked Mr. Gooligan, with such a ferocious squint, that the hapless fat Owl gasped with terror.

"I—I—I mean, yes!" gasped Bunter. "Yes! Oh! Yes! N-n-nothing I—I'd like better, Mr. G-g-gooligan."

Mr. Gooligan grinned.

"Freeze on to that!" he said. "I guess I'll put you wise! That guy Sanders is ready to pay to have you parked safe. I ain't wise to his game, but I guess I seen the colour of the greenbacks, and that goes! Fifty bucks to land you in my shebang on the East Side. Got that?"

"Oh crikey!"

"Don't chew the rag! I'm doing the conversation!" said Mike Gooligan. "I'd jest as soon crack your roof with a tap from this here gun! Them's the orders! If you'll walk quiet with a guy, you walk where I want you—if you don't, I hand you a sockdolager that will keep you off your travels for a long time to come. Which you want?"

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter understood the whole scheme now.

How such a scheme would have worked, had Mr. Gooligan, as he supposed, been dealing with Herbert Vernon-Smith, was doubtful. Smithy was not the man to submit quietly, and it was probable that the butt of Mr. Gooligan's gun would have come into play! But Billy Bunter had no use for the butt of the Gooligan gun! Billy Bunter was prepared to agree to everything, and anything, to keep that butt at a safe distance from his fat head!

"You coming quiet?" asked the gangster. "Yep or nope?"

"I—I say—"

"Yep or nope?" snarled Mike.

"Oh! Yes! But I—I say," gasped Bunter, desperately. "You're making a mistake—I'm not Vernon-Smith—"

"Ain't you?" said Mr. Gooligan. "Carry me home to Hanner! You figure that you can put that across Mike Gooligan? Forget it!"

"But I—I ain't—"

"If you ain't," grinned Mr. Gooligan. "I guess you'll do! Yep—I'll tell all New York that you'll do, big boy! Don't spill any more."

"But—I—I—"

"That's the whole piece!" said the gangster. "Can it!"

And his terrifying squint made Bunter can it on the spot! Evidently, the gangster did not believe Bunter's denial of identity!

Really, he was not likely to believe it, when Bunter had rolled into Vernon-Smith's room as if it was his own, and had dressed in Vernon-Smith's clothes. Mike had planned to park himself



Standing with his back to the door, the man whipped out a revolver and, to Billy Bunter's horror, squinted at him over the levelled barrel. "You let out one whisper, big boy, and you get yours, right where you live!" "Oooooogh!" gurgled the fat Greyfriars Removite.

in that room, to wait for Vernon-Smith to come in—and Vernon-Smith had come in; and that was that! It was Vernon-Smith's room—and as he did not know the Bounder by sight, he could only identify him by his coming to that room! That settled it, for Mr. Cooligan! Bunter's denial sounded to him like the thinnest story he had ever heard!

The door was unlocked again—how, Bunter did not know, but evidently Mr. Cooligan had a professional way of doing these things. He slipped his arm through Bunter's, and led him into the corridor; and once more the door was locked on the outside.

Mr. Cooligan's right hand was in his pocket—resting, as Bunter knew, on the gun. He squinted at Bunter.

"I guess we're taking the stairs," he remarked. "I got no use for the elevator with other guys in it. Chew on this, son—you get one guy rubbering at us, you spill one word, and you get such a sockdolager from my gun, that you won't wake up for a week or two! You got that?"

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter. "But—but I say—"

"Park it!"

"But—but, I say—" stammered the fat junior.

"Park it!" thundered the gangster.

And Billy Bunter "parked" it, and rolled down the endless stairs by the side of the gangster.

Under fifty pairs of eyes, downstairs—but not daring to draw the gaze of a single pair of them—the hapless fat Owl walked out of the Manhattan Hotel with Mike Cooligan.

A minute later, he was sitting in a car, with Mr. Cooligan squinting at his side, and the car was threading the traffic of New York, heading for a destination of which Billy Bunter knew nothing—except that he did not want to arrive there!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Missing!

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

He hurled open the door of Billy Bunter's room.

The Greyfriars party had returned to the Manhattan, a little late for lunch, but in cheery spirits, after a ramble up and down New York.

It had been quite an agreeable excursion—untroubled by any further attentions from Mr. Sanders, since Bill Buck had landed him that unexpected and emphatic "sock" on the jaw! Bill's drastic measures had caused the gunman to fade quite out of the picture.

During that ramble the juniors had rather forgotten Billy Bunter; but they remembered him when they came back. Vernon-Smith, grinning, went along to his room to fetch the fat Owl's clothes; and the other fellows looked in for Bunter.

They expected to find him in bed. There did not seem any other likely place for a fellow who had been left without his clobber.

But Bunter was not in bed, neither was he in his room at all.

The Famous Five looked round that room. No fat face was to be seen, no fat and indignant squeak greeted them.

"Where the dickens is Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"O where and O where can he be?" sang Bob Cherry.

"He can't have gone out—"

"Ha, ha! Hardly!"

"Then where the thump—"

"The disappearfulness of the esteemed Bunter is an absurd mystery," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Perhapsfully he is hid-

ing under the bed to pull our estimable legs."

"Bunter!" roared Bob.

"Show up, you fat chump!"

"He's not under the bed." Bob stooped and looked. "He's not anywhere. He can't have melted away, or—"

"Jolly long process if he did."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But what on earth has become of him?"

"Goodness knows!"

It was quite a puzzle. Bunter, certainly, had declared that he was going out at eleven o'clock—and it was now nearly two. But he really could not have gone out in his pyjamas. Any other member of the party, left in such a predicament, might have telephoned to the nearest store for a new supply of garments; but it was improbable that Bunter had done so. They did not give away garments in New York. And Bunter was not in a financial position to pay for them.

The Bounder's voice was heard in the next room, and the Famous Five went along to Smithy's apartment. They found Smithy with an enraged countenance.

"That fat scoundrel!" he hooted.

"He's gone," said Harry. "At any rate, he's not in his room."

"I know he's gone!" howled the Bounder. "He's gone out in my clothes!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"I left my room locked, and the key downstairs. I found it locked when I got here. But he's been in this room."

"Bit stout to get in through the keyhole, Smithy," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head.

"He must have got somebody to unlock the door for him. I'll scrag him!" howled the Bounder.

"But—"  
"Look here!" Smithy held up a pyjama suit. "He's left these here! He's taken my best lounge suit! He will burst all the buttons off it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Oh, cackle!" snorted the Bounder. "I'll jolly well burst him if he's burst my clobber! He must have got into my room somehow, dressed himself in my clothes, and gone out, as he said he would."

"Blessed if I understand!" said Bob. "You can see for yourself, fathhead!"  
"Yes; but I don't understand why he hasn't come in. It isn't like Bunter to be late for lunch."

"I dare say he's in the restaurant downstairs this very minute, spilling gravy over my best clobber!" hooted the Bounder.

"Oh crumbs! Yes, I suppose that's where he is. Better go down and see," said Bob. "How the dickens did he get into your room, though?"

"Some fool opened the door for him, of course. I'll jolly well complain to the manager!" growled Vernon-Smith.

"No good making a row," said Bob. "After all, it was rather tough on the fat ass, leaving him sticking in bed."

"Oh, rats!"  
"Well, let's go down, anyhow," said Harry Wharton.

They went along to the lift, the Bounder frowning, the other fellows smiling.

There was no doubt what had happened—Nugent's pyjamas, borrowed by Bunter, had been found in Smithy's room, and Smithy's best lounge suit was missing! That showed that Bunter had dressed there. And it was like him to help himself to the best things.

Smithy had cause to be alarmed for his clobber. There was no doubt that they would be a tight fit on the fat Owl, and that the buttons would be in danger.

They shot down seventeen floors in the elevator, and rejoined Mr. Buck, who was waiting for them in the restaurant, with lunch already ordered.

"Seen Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Nope," answered Mr. Buck. "Ain't the fat gink in his room?"  
The juniors explained, and Bill grinned. He seemed rather amused by Billy Bunter's device for getting out of the fix the Bounder had left him in.

"But he ain't here," he said. "I guess if that gink has gone out and lost himself, he will want some finding."

Bunter was not in the restaurant. If he had gone out, it appeared that he had not yet come in.

Which could only mean that he had lost himself, so far as the juniors could see. William George Bunter was the last fellow in the world to be late for a meal, if he could help it.

That Bunter, if he had wandered the length of one block from the hotel, had lost himself, was very probable. Having lost himself twice the previous day, he was now repeating that irritating performance.

The Famous Five sat down to lunch; but the angry Bounder walked off to the bureau to lay a complaint about his door having been unlocked in his absence. He was some time absent, and there was rather a curious expression on his face when he rejoined the party.

"I can't make this out," he said, as he sat down. "According to the manager, nobody unlocked my room this morning. But two or three people seem to have seen Bunter going out, and he wasn't alone."

"Not alone!" repeated Bob.  
"No. He went out in company—some hotel acquaintance the fat idiot has picked up, I suppose. Not a man staying in the hotel, from what I can find out—some man in a Derby hat, and with a squint in his eye. What the dickens can he have picked up Bunter for?"

"Blessed if I make it out!" said Bob blankly. "Plenty of people in this city, I suppose, looking for a chance to take the stranger in; but that fat ass isn't worth a confidence-man's while."

"The pesky gink!" grunted Mr. Buck. "I guess we got to trail that fat geck all over Noo York. I'll say he is some bonthead!"

It was a puzzle to the juniors, and a rather annoying one. Billy Bunter was not the fellow to miss any trouble, if there was any lying about. And it looked as if he had picked up some dubious acquaintance, and fared forth with him. However, they finished their lunch, hoping that the fat Owl would blow in later.

Bunter did not blow in, however, and at half-past three a car, ordered by the Bounder for another excursion, was waiting. Harry Wharton & Co. were feeling a little uneasy about Bunter by that time. Still, it did not seem useful to remain in the hotel waiting for him to blow in. They packed in the car, and rolled away, hoping that Bunter would be found at the Manhattan when they came back.

The shades of night were falling when they returned, and their first inquiry was for Bunter.

He had not turned up!  
"Lost!" snapped the Bounder. "Well, if that fat fool thinks we're going to hang on in New York, looking for him, he's mistaken. We're taking the cars in the morning, whether he's turned up or not."

"Rot!" said Bob tersely. "We can't go on and leave Bunter strewn around New York, Smithy."

"He's asked for it, and he can take what's coming to him!" snapped the Bounder. "You fellows can please yourselves. I'm going on to Texas."

"Well, we're not, without Bunter."

"Look here—"  
"He may blow in any minute," said Nugent pacifically.

But Bunter did not blow in. The Famous Five grew more anxious as the evening advanced, and Smithy, whose bark was worse than his bite, said no more about taking the cars in the morning, and leaving the fat Owl behind. It was pretty clear by that time that something had happened to Bunter, though the juniors could not begin to understand what it was. And they were rather relieved when Mr. Buck decided at last to walk round to the police depot, and ask for official aid in tracing the missing fat Owl.

# THE DOWNFALL OF HARRY WHARTON!

by FRANK RICHARDS



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### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

#### A Surprise for Sanders!

"O H lor'!" said Billy Bunter for the umpteenth time.

Billy Bunter could hardly believe that this awful experience was real!



But it was real enough—fearfully, awfully real!

Where he was the fat Owl of Greyfriars knew no more than the fellows who were anxiously awaiting his return at the Manhattan Hotel up-town.

He was sitting at the moment on a truckle-bed in a dismal, half-furnished room with a small, dirty window that looked out on a yard.

He hardly knew how he had got there.

The car had carried him for some distance, with the squint-eyed man sitting by his side, driven by a man whose distinguishing feature was a slanting nose—that organ having been knocked a little sideways in some gang fight on the East Side.

They had left the car in a shabby street; some other man appearing from nowhere to drive it away, while the two gangsters walked with Bunter, one on either side of him.

If the fat junior had not ventured to resist when there was one of them to deal with, he was still less likely to resist when there were two. Between the squint-eyed man and the man with the slanting nose, whom Mike Gooligan addressed as Leary, Bunter went like a lamb.

He was too deeply and painfully occupied with his terrors to notice the route; all he knew was that they turned a good many corners, and that he had a glimpse once or twice of the river.

Then he was walked into a dismal-looking hallway of a house, across it, and pushed into the room that he now occupied.

From sounds that reached his ears he guessed that there were other occupants of the building. But as these were fairly certain to be friends and associates of Mike Gooligan that was no comfort to Bunter.

The door was locked on him.

About an hour later it was opened, and the slant-nosed man brought in a jug of water, a loaf, and a hunk of cheese, which he placed on a rickety table.

Without wasting any words on Bunter, he went out again, locking the door after him.

Since then Bunter had been alone.

Every now and then sounds came to his ears—voices and footsteps in the building; a sound of a voice cursing in a foreign language; and then a trampling and thudding which told of a shindy going on.

They were not reassuring sounds.

He realised that he was in some den in one of the New York slums, and if he had thought of calling for help he very quickly gave up that idea.

A call for help was only likely to reach Mike Gooligan, or Leary, or some gangster of the same kidney.

Once or twice he blinked dismally from the little unclean window. The yard was surrounded by buildings. There was little hope of escape that way. Two wooden rails had been screwed across the window by way of bars, the room evidently having been prepared for a prisoner.

The prisoner for whom it had been prepared was, of course, Herbert Vernon-Smith. Bunter knew that. Two-gun Sanders had meant every word of his threat, that if the millionaire's son did not take the steamer back to England he would get no farther on his journey than New York!

It had been easy enough for the gunman to hire the assistance of the East Side gangsters. That was only a question of money. Mike Gooligan was ready to kidnap a guy, and doubtless to take a guy for a "ride," if he were paid for his services. It was Bunter's

awful luck that they had got him in mistake for Vernon-Smith.

The fat Owl had one hope—that when they learned that he was not the fellow they supposed him to be they would let him go.

But the difficulty was to make them believe it, and Mike Gooligan was fully satisfied that it was Vernon-Smith he had kidnapped. Moreover, they did not seem to want to hear anything from Bunter; no one came to the room during the long and weary afternoon.

Bunter had one comfort—he polished off the bread and cheese to the last crumb. It was quite unlike the fare at the Manhattan Hotel; but it was welcome to a hungry Owl.

After that he sat on the bed and waited till it should please his captors to give him a look in.

Darkness descended. From various parts of the building sounds came to his ears. Somebody was playing a banjo, and two or three voices were singing. They were not pleasant or reassuring voices. That sound died away, and there was silence for a time.

Then at last, to Bunter's great relief, came a sound of footsteps approaching the door and the turning of the key. Bunter was more than tired of the solitude of that dismal room.

The door opened.

Bunter, sitting on the bed, blinked across the room at the doorway.

Outside was a passage, or, rather, entry, that led into the hallway of the

building. From the hallway came a glimmer of light.

It did not penetrate into the room, but it showed a figure standing in the doorway.

It was that of a slim, spare man, dressed in dark clothes, with a black hat clamped down on a bullet head.

The fat junior knew him at once.

He had not seen Two-gun Sanders since the Greyfriars party had left England. But he knew the Texas gunman immediately.

His fat heart gave a jump as Sanders stepped into the room, stopping just inside the doorway, and peering at Bunter with his icy, narrow eyes. In the unlighted room all he could see of Bunter was a dim shadow sitting on the bed, too dim for recognition.

Up to that moment Bunter had been anxious to see Sanders, who, of course, would know at a glance that he was not Vernon-Smith! Now that he saw him, however, his fat heart misgave him.

Sanders, so far, appeared to have no doubt that the prisoner of the East Side tenement was the fellow he wanted. Mike Gooligan had reported his success, and the gunman had come to give the prisoner the "once-over." That he would be enraged when he discovered the mistake that had been made there was no doubt. If his rage turned on the bungling gangster it did not matter. If it turned on Billy Bunter it mattered very much. The fat Owl shivered as he blinked at the figure at the doorway.

He heard a low laugh.

"I guess I warned you, Mr. Vernon-Smith," said Sanders. "You got my billy-doo the day you landed in this little old town! I told you that your

best guess was to hit the steamer again for home. I put you wise that you'd never get any farther than New York on the trail to Texas. Say!"

Billy Bunter opened his mouth—and closed it again!

"You figured you was safe when that Texas bulldozer handed me a sock to the jaw this morning," went on Sanders. His hand went to his jaw as he spoke. There was a bruise there to remind him of the sock handed over by Bill Buck. "I'll say it put me to sleep a few—and I guess I'll get Bill Buck for it, too, when I see him agin at Packsaddle. I sure was looking for a chance to cinch you when you was rubbering along the Bowery with your sidekickers! But I guess I had a guy watching the Manhattan, feller! And that guy sure has cinched you dead to rights."

Again the fat Owl opened his mouth, and again he shut it.

Between his desire to tell Mr. Sanders that he was not Vernon-Smith and his dread of the ruffian's rage when he made the discovery Bunter was in a state of dismal uncertainty.

"I guess Mike was the guy to handle you, Mr. Vernon-Smith," went on the gunman, "though I'll say I was surprised a few to hear that you walked out with him so peaceable. I reckoned you had more sand from what I seen of you over the pond at that school of yours. But I guess you was wise to it that it wasn't healthy to argue with a galoot of Mike's heft."

He laughed again.

"I guess it cuts no ice with me whether he walked you off, Mr. Vernon-Smith, or left you with a cracked nut," he went on. "So long as you don't hit the Kicking Cayuse the boss ain't got no kick coming."

Bunter wondered who the "boss" was.

"Strangers ain't wanted on the Kicking Cayuse—especially when they come from the owner!" chuckled the gunman. "I guess I'm going to leave you safe here, Mr. Vernon-Smith! You was given a chance to hit the home trail—I guess we'd rather have been shut of you without trouble. You've asked for what you've got—and if you get tired of this hyer palatial abode you got yourself to thank. You figure that your friends will find you here?"

For a third time Bunter's mouth opened. For a third time it closed in terrified silence.

"Mebbe later the boss'll send word to let you run, Mr. Vernon-Smith," went on Sanders. "That ain't for me to say. What I got to do is to see that you don't hit Kicking Cayuse. I guess I seen to that. You want to be glad that you ain't dropped into the East River in a sack! That's happened to guys what have horned in where they wasn't wanted!"

Bunter shivered.

"Ain't you got nothing to spill, feller?" added the gunman, evidently perplexed by the prisoner's silence. "You sure blew off your mouth a whole heap that day I seen you at your school over the pond."

He peered across the unlighted room at the dim figure on the bed. Then he gave a sudden start.

Dark as it was, a glimmer from the hallway at the end of the passage caught Bunter's spectacles as he sat facing the door.

A sharp, startled exclamation broke from Sanders. He made a swift stride across the shadowy room.

"What the great horned toad—" he panted.

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#### PLEASE NOTE

that the next issue of **The MAGNET** will be on sale **THURSDAY, April 14th.**

"Ooooh!" gasped Bunter. He knew that it was coming now. "I—I say—"  
Sanders groped in his pocket, and struck a match. He held it up, flickering, and in its glimmer, stared at the fat, terrified face and the glistening spectacles of the fat Owl of Greyfriars.

A furious oath pealed from his lips. The rage in his face, as he discerned that the prisoner was not Herbert Vernon-Smith, struck terror to Bunter's very heart.

"I—I—I say!" he gasped. "I say, I told that beast I wasn't Smithy—oh dear! I told him I wasn't—oh lor!"

"You!" hissed Sanders. "You fat geck! You!"

"I—I—I told him—" wailed Bunter. "I—I—oh crumbs!"

"You!" roared the enraged gunman. Even yet he seemed hardly able to believe it. "You! How'd that dog-goned stiff rope you in for the guy I want? The big bonehead! You! Carry me home to die! You!"

"I—I say, I—I never wanted him to!" howled Bunter. "I—I never wanted to come here! I—I give you my word I didn't! Ow!"

The match went out! Billy Bunter quaked in terror.

But, to his immense relief, the gunman turned from him. He swung round to the door, his narrow eyes blazing with rage, breathing fury. He shouted for "Mike" as he tramped out of the room, and slammed the door after him. And, prisoner as he still was, Billy Bunter gasped with relief as the door slammed after the man from Texas.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Doggo!

**B**ILLY BUNTER sat, gasping, on the edge of the bed. The gunman's angry voice died away—his angry, stamping footsteps faded across the hallway of the building.

In his terror, the fat Owl of Greyfriars sat and gasped; and it was several minutes before he realised that Sanders, in his rage and excitement, had omitted to lock the door after him.

Having discovered that the prisoner of the East Side tenement was not the fellow he wanted, but a "fat geck" with whom he had no concern, the gunman probably did not care what became of him. He had, at all events, slammed the door after him, without turning the key; and stamped away furiously in search of the bungling gangster who had netted the wrong bird.

That fact dawned, after some minutes, on Billy Bunter's fat brain. He had heard the door slam. He had not heard the key click! The door was no longer locked! Any minute, Sanders, or Mike Gooligan, or Leary, might come back—but, for the moment, the door was unfastened! And as Bunter realised that, he dragged himself off the bed and rolled across the room.

His fat knees were knocking together with terror! But this was a chance not to be lost! With a shaking hand, the fat junior opened the door and peered into the entry without.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

He hardly dared make the venture, lest he should run into one of the gangsters before he got clear of the building. But he screwed up his courage and rolled out of the room.

The entry was not more than twelve feet long; beyond lay the open hallway of the house, trodden by all the many disreputable inhabitants of the hive of vagrants, hooligans, and crooks.

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Bunter had to cut along the hallway to reach the street, in the glimmer of the lamp that hung there. He was almost certain to be seen when he did so—though whether other denizens of the place, apart from Gooligan's gang, would interfere with him, he did not know.

But in the hope of discovering a safer way out, he blinked to and fro, in the narrow passage. To his great relief, he discerned a door.

There was a door on one side; and, in the hope that it led to some less conspicuous egress, the fat junior opened it, and peered through.

Blackest darkness met his eyes.

He groped—and felt a wall, on which several articles were hanging—two or three rough coats, and a lantern, and other things.

He gave a groan of disappointment.

It was not a way out. It was a large cupboard, almost filled with lumber of various kinds, chiefly garments hanging on hooks.

Leaving the door open, the fat junior turned once more in the direction of the lighted hallway.

That was the only way out of the building, and he had to take the chance. With palpitating heart, he crept along the passage.

But he stopped suddenly, with a gasp of dismay, as he heard footsteps and voices in the hallway—voices he knew. The sharp, bitter, savage voice of Sanders alternated with the hoarse tones of Mike Gooligan, in angry altercation. They were coming to the prison-room—their voices raised in angry quarrel as they came.

Bunter backed swiftly.

He had delayed too long—his escape was cut off now.

To step out into the hallway was to step into their hands. He had had five minutes in which to get clear—five times as much as any other fellow would have needed—but it was like Billy Bunter to have lost his only chance.

It was useless to remain where he was, they would come along and stumble over him in a few moments. He backed quickly towards the room he had escaped from—and gave a squeak as he bumped against the door of the cupboard in the wall, which he had left open.

Then Bunter's fat brain, for once, acted quickly. That cupboard was a hiding-place—a possible refuge!

He squeezed into it, half-choked by the frowsy smell of the garments hanging on the hooks, and drew the door shut after him.

Gasping for breath, he squeezed himself behind the hanging coats, in the blackest darkness.

Only a few moments later tramping footsteps passed him, and stopped in the doorway of the prison-room.

"I'm telling you—" He heard Mike Gooligan's voice.

"You big stiff, I tell you it ain't the bird!" roared Sanders. "You figure I don't know the bird I want!"

"How come he was in the room, then?" hooted Mike. "I'm telling you, I got the number of his room at the Manhattan, and got inside, and he walked right into my hands! Yep!"

"You pesky bonehead, you got the wrong bird!" yelled Sanders. "A fat geck in spectacles—doggone him! Look at him!"

There was the scratch of a match. Then there was a shout of rage from the gangster.

"Search me! He ain't here! You let him run!"

The match revealed that Bunter was no longer in the prison-room.

"Say, you big stiff, you left the door

unlocked," howled Mike Gooligan. "I guess that guy has beat it!"

"What the thunder does it matter if he's beat it, when he ain't the guy I want?" snarled Sanders. "It cuts no ice."

"Aw, you pesky stiff, you figure I want him to bring the cops here?" howled Gooligan. "Can it! How long since you left him?"

"I guess I was five minutes, or more, finding you in that boot-leg joint! I tell you it cuts no ice—"

"And I'm telling you I ain't letting that fat guy bring the cops here!" roared Gooligan. "Mebbe he's got clear—mebbe he's still in the alley—I guess I'm calling the boys to search for him—"

"I tell you—"

Gooligan did not wait for the gunman to finish. He rushed down the entry into the hallway, shouting for Leary.

Bunter heard his heavy, hurried tread pass the door of the cupboard.

It was a relief to hear it pass!

Evidently it did not occur to Gooligan that the escaped prisoner was still in the building, and close at hand.

Bunter had had ample time to get out and take to flight, if he had had his wits about him. Gooligan had no doubt that he had done so, and he was only in a hurry to call his gang to search for the escaped prisoner, in the alleys and dim streets along the East River, in the hope of yet recapturing him.

His shouting voice died away.

The gunman was left alone. Through the cupboard door his voice came to Bunter's listening ears.

"I got to get him! That big stiff—aw, doggone him! I sure got to get that guy!"

Bunter heard the gunman tramp down the entry to the hallway.

He was gone—and his muttered words told that he was gone to make some attempt to "get" Vernon-Smith, now that he had found that his gangster allies had failed him.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

He wriggled out from behind the coats, opened the door an inch, and peered into the passage. A buzz of voices reached his ears. They came from the hallway, where six or seven "toughs" seemed to be gathering. He heard the loud, angry tones of Mike Gooligan.

"You got to get him! Scatter, and hunt for the fat gink! I guess he ain't got fur—he don't know this part—he can't know much about it—mebbe he ain't more'n a block away! Scatter!"

"Sure!"

"You said it, Mike!"

There was a trampling of hurrying feet. No one came into the entry, or even glanced into it. The mob of toughs were scattering in the alleys outside the tenement, to hunt for the escaped prisoner. That a stranger in New York would not easily find his way out of a network of alleys and narrow, mean streets, was certain, and Mike Gooligan had every hope of recapturing the fat Owl before he reached a safer quarter.

Indeed, it was probable that Billy Bunter's delay had saved him—temporarily, at least; for had he been outside the building, seeking to thread his way out of the slum in the dark, it was extremely probable that he would have been spotted and grabbed.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

For the time, at least, he was safe! He backed into the cupboard again and drew the door shut after him. He realised that it was useless to venture out while a gang of hooligans were scouring the vicinity of the tenement for

him. To venture out was to fall immediately into the clutches of some of the Gooligan gang; that was clear, even to Bunter's obtuse wits.

It was close, uncomfortable, frowsy, and nasty in every way, in that cupboard; but it was safe! Bunter sagely decided to keep "doggo" there till the coast was clear, and he had a chance of getting away. Sooner or later Gooligan and his gang would give up the hunt, and then he might have a chance. In the meantime, Bunter sat on a box in the cupboard, safe out of sight, and listening with all his ears, ready to squeeze behind the frowsy coats on the wall at the sound of a voice or footstep.

**THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.**

**"Getting" Smithy!**

**H**ERBERT VERNON-SMITH, standing on the steps of the Manhattan, glanced up and down the brightly lighted avenue, and scowled.

He turned impatiently to the Famous Five. They were worried and uneasy at Billy Bunter's prolonged and inexplicable absence; but the Bounder seemed more irritated than uneasy.

"The fat fool!" he grunted. "Something must have happened to him, Smithy, to keep him away like this," said Bob Cherry.

"Something was bound to happen to the blithering idiot! Why couldn't he come out with us, or stick where we left him?" growled Vernon-Smith. "I was a fool to let him come on this trip! If he hadn't stepped that brite Sanders cracking my net that day at Greyfriars I—"

"Well, he did, old bean!" said Harry Wharton.

"I shouldn't have let him come, all the same!" growled the Bounder. "Look here, no good sticking here jawing! Let's go round and look for him."

"A bit like looking for a needle in a haystack?" remarked Nugent.

"Mr. Buck's gone to the police, Smithy," said Harry.

"I know that. No good sticking here and wondering what's happened to the fat chump! We may spot him rolling along Broadway."

"Not much chance of finding him," said Johnny Bull.

The Bounder gave an angry, impatient snort.

"More chance of finding him by lookin' for him, than by standin' around like a lot of moultin' fowls?" he asked.

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton. "A walk won't do us any harm. Keep together, though, that rotter, Sanders, might be watching for us, and we can't slog him, as Bill did on the Bowery this morning."

"Come on!" said the Bounder.

The half-dozen juniors walked down the avenue.

Looking for Bunter, in the immense crowds of a vast city, did not seem a very hopeful proposition; but it was, at least, as useful as waiting to see whether he would turn up! Anyhow, action was more welcome than idleness, especially to the irritated, impatient Bounder. There was a sporting chance of spotting Bunter, if he had merely lost his way and was wandering about in search of it.

"That, of course, was improbable. Even Bunter had sense enough to ask his way, and as a last resource he could have taken a taxi to the Manhattan. It was true that he was minus cash, but

Bunter was not the fellow to worry about leaving the fare to be paid by somebody else.

The juniors could not help thinking that something must have happened to Bunter, though they could not imagine what. The fact that he had left the hotel with a stranger made them uneasy. There were plenty of questionable characters in New York on the look-out for "mugs." On the other hand, as Bunter had no money, it seemed probable that any confidence trickster would have dropped him very soon after picking him up.

His absence was, in fact, a puzzle—unless he had been knocked over by one of the innumerable automobiles that careered up and down the avenues.

That possibility worried the Famous Five; perhaps it worried the Bounder. Their feelings were, in fact, mixed. If Bunter was damaged they were sorry and sympathetic; if he wasn't, they wanted to kick him for giving all this trouble. With the Famous Five, anxiety predominated—with the Bounder, the desire to kick Bunter predominated.

"One thing's jolly certain," said Vernon-Smith, as they walked along in the glaring lights of Broadway. "We're chucking the fat fool, after this! I let him join up because he did me that good turn, when Sanders got after me at Greyfriars. I was an ass! This jolly well tears it! Bunter's taking the steamer home, when we go on to Texas."

The Famous Five had nothing to say to that. It was for Smithy to decide whether he would tolerate that troublesome member of the party any longer.

Evidently, the Bounder felt that he had reached the limit of toleration.

Under the brilliant lights of the "Great White Way," the juniors scanned innumerable faces in the hope of spotting a familiar fat face among them.

They turned into Fifth Avenue and followed that immense street for a distance, crossed, and walked back to Broadway on the other side.

Among the thousands of faces that passed them they did not see the fat countenance they were looking for.

Which was not surprising, as Billy Bunter, in those very moments, was tucked away in a frowsy cupboard in a tenement, miles away, on the East Side of New York.

It was, as Nugent had said, like looking for a needle in a haystack. But it was a little better than doing nothing at all, and a walk round New York on a fine April evening was welcome.

They moved along Broadway again and turned into Sixth Avenue. On "Sixth" they missed the thronging crowds of "Fifth" and Broadway.

Looking about them, they noted, without specially heeding, that a bunch of pedestrians were following in the same direction. They glanced at that bunch, only because they were looking for Bunter.

There were seven men in the party, coming along in a little crowd—all with black bowler hats jammed on their heads—or "Derby hats," as they were called in America.

Giving them no heed, after a casual glance, the juniors walked on till they decided, at length, to turn back and return to Broadway.

When they turned back they came face to face with the Derby-hatted bunch. There was nothing about that little crowd to distinguish them from

(Continued on next page.)



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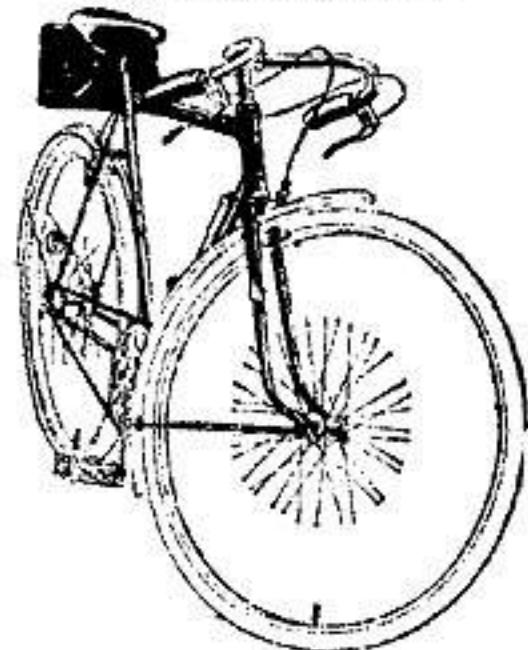
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ten thousand other persons whom the juniors had passed during their walk. That they were specially interested in the Greyfriars party did not occur to one of the juniors. There was no reason why it should.

So, as they walked back and came face to face with the bunch, what happened next took them quite by surprise.

As if moved by the same spring, the seven men made a sudden rush, and in an instant the Greyfriars party were knocked right and left.

The attack was so sudden, so utterly unlooked for, that the juniors had no chance at all. They did not know that anything was happening till they were sprawling right and left on the sidewalk.

There were fifty other people in sight—all of whom turned their heads to "rubber" at the startling scene. From a distance, but swiftly, a policeman came at a run.

"Oh, my hat!"

"What—"

"Look out—"

"Oh crumbs!"

Harry Wharton was the first on his feet. Dazed by the blow that had knocked him over, he stared round him dizzily.

The gang of hooligans were already running. From the sidewalk a closed car shot away.

The juniors had not noticed that car creeping along the sidewalk; and certainly they had never dreamed that the chauffeur's peaked cap hid the hard face and narrow eyes of Two-gun Sanders.

"What—" gasped Wharton. "Bob—Franky—"

"What the thump!" gasped Bob Cherry, as he staggered up, and stared at the running figures vanishing round a corner. "What—why—how—"

"The whyfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Smithy—"

"Where's Smithy?"

"Smithy!"

For the moment the chums of Greyfriars had been utterly astounded by that apparently objectless attack on the part of strangers. Their pockets had not been picked, and the gang of hooligans had darted away, immediately after strewing them on the sidewalk. But as they failed to see Vernon-Smith, they guessed what the meaning was.

The Bounder was gone!

"Smithy!" panted Wharton.

"That car—" yelled Bob.

He pointed at the dark, closed car, already vanishing towards the lights of Broadway.

"But—" gasped Nugent.

A crowd was already gathering—through it the policeman pushed his way. The hooligans had already scattered and disappeared; the whole thing had been a matter only of moments.

"Phwat—" began the policeman, with the accent of nine-tenths of the New York police force.

"They—they've got him!" panted Wharton. "They—they've got Smithy!"

"Sanders!" gasped Bob. "They got him into that car—it must have been Sanders—"

The juniors panted out an explanation to the staring policeman. Other "cops" arrived on the scene; the crowd thickened. Harry Wharton & Co. were the centre of a "rubbering" throng. But the car had

vanished into the endless traffic of Broadway; and the Bounder of Greyfriars at last was in the hands of his enemy.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Caged!

THE Bounder ground his teeth with helpless rage.

Wary as he was, Smithy had been taken as utterly by surprise as his comrades by that sudden attack on Sixth Avenue.

While the Famous Five were knocked right and left, sprawling on the sidewalk, two of the gang had gripped Vernon-Smith, and he was pitched into the car before he knew what was happening.

Crumpled on the floor of the automobile, with the two gangsters kneeling on him, the Bounder was helpless, and too dizzy and amazed to struggle, even had it been possible.

But as the car shot away, he realised what was happening, and strove to throw off his assailants.

It was a futile effort. Mike Gooligan and Leary were too strong for him—either of the hefty ruffians would have been too strong for him. He was crushed down under their weight, in the bottom of the rushing car, and a rug thrown over him to hide him from sight. Then the two hooligans sat down, with their feet resting on the rug and on the schoolboy beneath it.

Something hard touched the Bounder's head as he struggled. It was the butt of a revolver.

"You don't want to yap, bo!" said Mike Gooligan. "You don't want to give any trouble! I'm telling you! You let out a sound, big boy, and you get a sock from this gun—you get me?"

The Bounder did not let out a sound. He ceased to struggle.

He had not seen Sanders—but he knew that the Texas gunman must be behind this attack. No doubt it was the gunman who was driving the car. The gun-butt was ready to stun him with a single blow if he uttered a sound, and, enraged as he was, Smithy understood that clearly enough. He could hardly move, under the enveloping rug, with two pairs of feet planted on it; and he was completely at the mercy of the gangsters.

He ground his teeth.

The car was bearing him away swiftly—where? He could not guess—only that it meant that he was in the hands of the man who was determined to prevent him from setting foot on the wide ranges of the Kicking Cayuse Ranch. Sanders had warned him that he would get no farther on the trip than New York. He had treated that warning with contemptuous disdain; but the Texas gunman was making his words good.

"Keep it parked, bo!" drawled Mike. "I guess we got the right bird this time—we sure have."

"You said it, Mike!" agreed Leary. "He can sure keep that fat geck company at Dutch Sam's."

"Sure!" said Mr. Gooligan.

He gave the Bounder's head a tap with the gun-butt—rather a hard tap, as a hint of what was to be expected if he gave trouble.

But the Bounder was silent and still. His rage was beyond expression; but it was useless to ask for a crashing blow that would have knocked him senseless.

He could have kicked himself for

having fallen into this trap. He had been wary enough—but he had not looked for so desperate a move—yet from its very daring and unexpectedness it had proved a success. Had he waited at the Manhattan until Bill Buck came back, it would not have happened. He knew now that Sanders must have been watching the hotel; and by taking that walk he had given his enemy the chance for which he had been watching.

It would have been a success, had Bill Buck been "riding herd." The Bounder was sure of that. He had his own irritable impatience to thank for it, if that was any comfort.

Half-suffocated under the enveloping rug, almost frantic with rage, the Bounder lay, unable to form even an idea of the direction taken by the car. But from the time that elapsed he knew that it must have covered a considerable distance, when at last it stopped.

The sharp, staccato voice of Sanders came to his ears:

"Get him out!"

The Bounder, rolled in the rug, was lifted out, and felt himself carried swiftly. He could see nothing, for the rug covered his face and head; but he knew that he was in some street and, that the gangsters were anxious to get their burden out of sight as quickly as possible. But resistance was impossible, and he could only submit to his fate.

The pace slackened after a few minutes. No doubt they were now threading some dusky alley, where observation was unlikely—or where it mattered nothing. He was suddenly set on his feet and the rug rolled away. It was a wooden floor under his feet, and he knew that he was in a building of some kind.

He stood unsteadily, panting for breath.

He was in a room, in darkness. From a hallway at the end of a little passage came a glimmer of light, showing two figures in the doorway.

Little as he guessed it, the Bounder was standing in the room in which Billy Bunter had been a prisoner hardly more than an hour ago.

"Get a light!" snapped Sanders.

"Sure!"

It was Mike Gooligan who was with the gunman; Leary, doubtless, had gone back to the car.

The Bounder, panting for breath, clenched his hands desperately.

He was thinking of making a desperate rush for it. But Sanders blocked the doorway; and the burly gangster was behind him. And he caught the glimmer of a weapon in the gunman's hand.

Mike moved a little distance from the door, and opened the door of a wall-cupboard in the passage. He reached into it and drew out a candle, stuck in the end of a bottle, from a shelf.

He struck a match and lighted the candle, and brought it back into the prison-room, setting the bottle on the rickety table.

Then he grinned at the Bounder's white, furious face.

"I guess we got you, bo!" he remarked. "I sure did rope in that fat geck this morning, at the Manhattan, thinking he was you—but I'll mention that there ain't no mistake this time. If there's a mistake this time, Mister Sanders, it's yours! That sure is the guy you pointed out on the steps of the Manhattan."

Sanders gave a curt laugh



"I say, you ain't asleep, are you?" came the anxious whisper. "Quick, Smitty—those beasts may come back any minute, you know!" In the dim glimmer of the hallway, the Bounder of Greyfriars made out the fat, terrified face and glimmering spectacles of Billy Bunter.

"No mistake this time," he said. "That is Vernon-Smith."

Mike Gooligan lounged into the passage. He leaned on the wall there and lighted a cigar, apparently to wait till Sanders left. The gunman stood with his eyes fixed on Vernon-Smith. He could read the desperate thoughts in the prisoner's mind, and he made a significant gesture with the revolver in his hand.

"Better not start anything, feller!" he said dryly.

"You hound!" breathed the Bounder. "You've got me!"

Sanders nodded, with a grin.

"I'll say so!" he agreed. "That big stiff roped in a fat gink by mistake this morning—but I guess there ain't no mistakes when I took the game in hand myself! Nope!"

"Do you mean Bunter?" asked the Bounder blankly.

It dawned on him now what had become of the missing fat Owl.

"Yep—I reckon that's his name," said Sanders, with a nod.

"How could anybody mistake Bunter for me? He's nothing like me!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, in utter astonishment.

"I guess I didn't know your looks, bo', till Sanders pointed you out on the steps of the Manhattan this evening!" came Mike's voice from the passage. "I got into your room at the Manhattan to lay for you—and that fat gink moseyed in as if the room belonged to him—I guess that's how it was!"

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder.

"You'll sure have his company here afore long," grinned the gangster. "That fat bird sure flew out when Sanders left the cage open, but I guess he won't wander fur away with the boys looking for him! Nope!"

"It cuts no ice!" snapped Sanders. "The fat fool is not wanted!"

"I guess I don't want him telling the tale to the cops, bo'!" said Mike. "He might put them wise where to look for this bird."

"Mebbe! If he gets clear, I guess you've got another hide-out where you can park Master Vernon-Smith safe."

"Oh, sure!"

"You fancy you're going to keep me here, you villain?" said the Bounder, between his teeth.

"I reckon," said Sanders coolly, "and I guess I got a few words to spill, to put you wise, feller. I warned you, back at your school, that you wasn't wanted in Texas—and I warned you again, in New York, to take the steamer home! I allow you got sand—you ain't the same left as that gink Bunter. But I guess it won't buy you anything! I got the boss' orders to keep you out of the valley of the Frio. You've asked for this, and you've got it! Chew on it, feller! Keep chewing on it, that if you give trouble, you got it coming to you."

He paused a moment.

"You'd sure be safer at the bottom of the East river!" he said. "Keep chewing on that! Don't try to start anything! I'm telling you! You figure, mebbe, that you'll be able to get out of this! I'm telling you, that if you try to start anything, you'll be put in a safer place! You won't be the first geek to be found drowned in the East river, nor the last! Chew on that, Mr. Vernou-Smith—it's your best guess!"

Without waiting for an answer, the gunman picked up the candle and stepped out into the passage.

The Bounder made a movement—but he checked himself. With all his courage, and all his nerve, the gunman's cold, grim menace had sent a

chill to his heart. His life was spared, so long as he gave no trouble—but he was in lawless hands that recked little of life. The next moment the door shut, and he was left in darkness. Then he heard the key turned in the outside of the lock, and withdrawn—then the receding sound of footsteps; and silence.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### In Hiding!

**B**ILLY BUNTER hardly breathed. At the sound of footsteps, the fat junior had promptly parked himself behind the frowsy coats hanging in the cupboard. But his fat heart almost died in his breast when the cupboard door was jerked open, and Mike Gooligan groped for the candle on the shelf.

The interior of the deep cupboard was intensely dark. But Bunter would hardly have been seen even had the gangster struck a light. The frowsy garments on the hooks hid him, down to the feet—and the box on which he had been sitting shut off his face from view.

He was, in fact, perfectly safe, so long as the cupboard was not searched: but the opening door, and the sound of groping, gave Bunter the impression that it was about to be searched.

In a moment more, however, he knew that Mike had only reached in to take something from a shelf: and the door was shut again, left a few inches ajar, as the gangster intended to replace the candle, when Sanders had finished his talk with the prisoner.

Bunter breathed again—but he quaked. The gangster had been within two feet of him—if only he had

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## ON THE TEXAS TRAIL!



(Continued from page 13.)

suspected that he was there! Still it was clear that Mike had no such suspicion. But it was fortunate for Bunter that it was only the candle he wanted, and not one of the coats!

Listening, with a thumping heart, the fat junior heard the voices from the prison-room close at hand. He knew the voice of Sanders at once—and he gave a jump as he caught the angry, bitter tones of the Bounder.

He realised that the gunman had, after all, "got" Vernon-Smith! It was the Bounder's voice he heard through the doorway of the prison-room.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

The smell of Mike's rank cigar came to him, as he listened to the talk. But it was brief; and he heard the door of the prison-room close at last; and a glimmer told that the lighted candle was near at hand. He heard the key turn in the lock, and then the grating sound as it was pulled out by Gooligan.

Then Sanders' muttering voice reached his fat ears.

"You got him safe this time! Keep him safe!"

"I guess he won't beat it out of here, bo!" answered Mike. "I got him safe so long as his board is paid!" The gangster chuckled hoarsely.

"Your side-kickers ain't rounded up that fat guy, Bunter."

"I guess they'll get him! That fat guy don't know a thing! I guess he's rubbering around trying to find his way."

"Sure! But if he gets clear, there's a chance that he might be able to find the place again—if you don't round him up, you'll have to transfer Mr. Vernon-Smith to another hideout—"

"I guess we'll shift him over to Murphy's joint! But I'm telling you, the boys'll bring in that fat gink!"

Bunter heard a grunt of assent from the gunman. Sanders moved away down the passage. Bunter hoped to hear the heavy tread of the gangster following; but Mike Gooligan stopped at the cupboard door and jerked it open again.

The fat Owl trembled.

The candle, in the bottle-neck, was in the ruffian's hand, the light glimmering in. Had a spot of Bunter been visible, no doubt Mike Gooligan would have made a startling discovery.

But the fat junior was completely hidden from view. He heard a scraping sound, as if something metallic had been hung on a hook.

Then the candle was blown out, the bottle replaced on the shelf, and the door closed.

The heavy tread of the gangster went down the passage at last.

Bunter gasped for breath.

Both of them were gone again—though probably they were still in the building. Whether they were, or not, Bunter could not tell. But at all events, they were not in his immediate vicinity, and they had not discovered him.

He waited five or six long minutes,

and then ventured to emerge from behind his screen of frowsy garments. Then he was able to breathe a little more freely, though it was close and stuffy enough in the cupboard.

From what he had heard, he knew that some of the gang were still hunting for him, in the vicinity of the tenement. It was not safe to venture out—and he wondered dismally what he was going to do. The only thing seemed to be to remain in hiding, where he was, till a late hour.

It was probable that the denizens of such a place kept very late hours—but late in the night there might be a chance of stealing out on tiptoe, unseen.

The prospect of remaining in that dismal recess for long and weary hours was dismaying; but it was better than falling into the hands of the Gooligan gang.

Bunter knew now that the discovery of his identity was not going to lead to his release. If he was recaptured, he would be kept a prisoner, at least so long as Herbert Vernon-Smith was imprisoned in his present quarters. Mike was not going to let him "tell the tale" to the cops if he could prevent it.

Billy Bunter had been very keen to join in that trip to Texas. He knew that some mysterious danger threatened the Bounder; but he had not foreseen that a spot of it might come his way. At the present moment he would have been glad to be on the other side of the Atlantic—even the company of brother Sammy and sister Bessie was better than this.

But it was all Smithy's fault, of course! If that beast hadn't taken away his clobber that morning, Bunter would never have landed in this!

An hour—which seemed to Billy Bunter about a week—crawled by. Then footsteps drove him, palpitating, into deep cover again, squeezing behind the coats.

To his terror, the cupboard door opened. If it was someone coming there for one of those frowsy coats—

But it was not that! He heard a scraping sound as a hand groped in, and that was all.

He could guess what it was. The sound of a key being pushed into the lock of the prison-room followed.

That key, naturally, was not left in the lock when the door was fastened on the prisoner. It was hung on a hook in that cupboard.

Mike had hung it there, after locking in the Bounder. Now someone had come to see the prisoner, and had taken the key.

Bunter heard the door of the prison-room open. The voice of the man Leary came to his ears.

"I guess I've brought you your eats, bo! Mebbe you'll find it a change after the Manhattan!"

"Hang you!" came the Bounder's savage, passionate voice.

"You sure are peeved, a few!" chuckled Leary.

Gooligan's voice broke in.

"Git through, Leary! I guess I ain't standing around while you chew the rag with that guy!"

"You said it, Mike!"

Leaving whatever he had brought on the rickety table in the prison-room, Leary stepped out again. Gooligan, evidently, was there, to make sure that the prisoner made no desperate attempt to escape while the door was open.

The door was shut, the key turned in the lock again.

Bunter's fat heart palpitated, as an unseen hand groped into the dark cupboard, and hung the key on the hook there.

Then the two gangsters went down the passage. Evidently they had only come there to bring the prisoner his "eats," as they called it; and it was probable that now they were gone for good.

Silence followed.

What time it was, Bunter did not know; but he knew that it must be getting late. It seemed to him that he had been hours and hours and hours hidden in that dismal, stuffy recess.

He ventured, at last, to open the cupboard door an inch or two, and peer out. The glimmer from the hallway met his peering eyes; but no one was in sight. The fat junior hesitated long.

But he stirred at last.

He groped for the hook on which he had heard the key placed. A large, heavy, iron key met his groping fingers.

Bunter had made up his fat mind to make the venture. He was, as usual, thinking chiefly of his fat self. But even Bunter was not thinking of going without unlocking the door of the Bounder's prison-room, and giving Smithy a chance, too. The key was there, ready to his hand; and his fat fingers closed on it.

Key in hand, the fat junior waited a few more minutes, hardly daring to venture out of his hiding-place. But he moved out at last, on tiptoe, crept to the door of the prison-room, and slipped the key into the lock. He turned it as softly as he could, pushed the door open a few inches, and whispered:

"I say, Smithy!"

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

## Escape

THE Bounder paced the narrow limits of the prison-room, unresting, his rage growing deeper and more bitter, with every weary passing minute.

Only a dim glimmer came in at the little barred window; but his eyes were used to the gloom by that time, and he could dimly discern his surroundings.

The "eats" that Leary had brought lay unregarded on the rickety table. The Bounder was not thinking of food—neither was a coarse loaf, a hunk of cheese, and a jug of water, tempting fare to the millionaire's son.

His face was pale with rage; his eyes glittering. He clenched his hands till the nails dug into the palms.

He was a prisoner—a hopeless prisoner, unless they chose to let him go. That was not likely to happen. For some mysterious reason—some reason at which he could not begin to guess—his presence was not wanted at the ranch his father had bought on the banks of the Frio in Texas. Someone at whose identity he could make no guess, but to whom Sanders alluded as "the boss," wanted to keep him away—and this was the means. Sanders, as he had already suspected, was only an agent in the matter—carrying out the orders of the unknown man.

Whatever the game was, they were prepared to take trouble, to spend money, and to run risks, to keep him away from Kicking Cayuse. That they were willing to avoid the extreme of crime, was plain, from the fact that he was a prisoner, and had not been knocked on the head and dropped into the East river.

But Sanders had evidently meant every word he uttered; his life hung on a thread, while he was in such lawless hands. If there was risk of escape, risk of rescue, risk of danger to themselves, he knew what to expect from

such callous ruffians as the New York gangsters.

And if his safety depended on submission to his fate, it was worth little—for the Bounder of Greyfriars was the last fellow to submit to his fate in such circumstances.

He had calculated the chance of making a rush, when the door was opened for Leary to bring in the "cats." There had been no chance, with the brawny Gooligan in the passage outside the doorway. Yet already the reckless Bounder regretted that he had not tried it on.

He was going to take the first chance that came his way, whatever the result—he was savagely determined on that!

Tramp, tramp, tramp, went his un-resting footsteps, up and down the narrow limits of his prison, in the gloom.

Again and again he stared from the little, unclean, barred window. There was no escape—he could not move the screwed wooden bars. He was cornered like a rat in a trap.

His friends could not help him! Long ago they must have warned the police of what had happened on Sixth Avenue; but what could the police do? They could not track a fleeting motor-car through the streets of New York.

He was miles from Sixth Avenue; he had no doubt of that. He was hidden in some dismal slum on the East Side. There was no clue to the den—unless—

The thought of Bunter came into his mind. He knew now that the fat Owl had fallen into the hands of the gangsters, by a mistake made by the thick-witted ruffian Mike—and he had got away, out of that very room, when Sanders had left the door unlocked. As he had not been brought back, it looked as if he might have got clear.

But there was no hope in that! Ten to one, a hundred to one, the fat-headed Owl was wandering, utterly lost, and would be snapped up by the gangsters who were looking for him. Even if he did get clear, it did not mean hope for Vernon-Smith—it was not likely that he would be able to guide rescue to this den; and even if he could, the gangsters were ready to transfer their prisoner to some other hidden den, at the first sign of it. That fat fool, whatever became of him, was of no use.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, went his weary footsteps! Desperate thoughts were in his mind. They had left him for the night—but when they came, on the morrow, he would take his chance. A leg broken from the rickety table would serve him as a weapon, in a fierce attempt to fight his way out. Better to fall under a gangster's bullet, than to submit tamely. The Bounder was in a mood for the most desperate action.

Suddenly he ceased his restless pacing, as there was a faint sound from the door. He heard a click of the lock.

Vernon-Smith stood with beating heart, his hands clenched, his eyes burning. He was ready to take the slightest, the wildest chance—and the door was opening!

But the next moment he relaxed; wondering, in utter amazement, whether he was dreaming, as a whisper reached his ears in the darkness.

"I say, Smithy!"

The Bounder fairly staggered! He had taken it for granted that it was one of the gangsters who had unlocked the door. But it was the fat whisper of Billy Bunter that reached his ears!

"I say, you ain't asleep, are you?" came the anxious whisper.

"Bunter!" breathed Vernon-Smith.

"Is—is—is that you, Bunter?"

"Oh! You're awake! Why didn't you answer?" grunted Bunter.

"Think I want to hang about, you fathead?"

"Bunter!" repeated the Bounder. "Oh, gad! You—you've got the key—"

"Yes! Quick, Smithy—those beasts may come back, you know!"

The Bounder, astounded as he was, was cool again in a moment. That Billy Bunter was still on the spot, that he had the key of the prison-room, was so amazing as to be incomprehensible. But it was no time for asking questions. The fact was enough for the Bounder. The door was unlocked—his way of escape was open!

He stepped quickly to the doorway. In the dim glimmer from the hallway, he made out the fat, terrified face and glimmering spectacles of the Owl of the Remove. No one else was to be seen; the gangsters, if they were in the building at all, were not at hand.

"Come on, Smithy!" whispered Bunter.

"Hold on a tick!" breathed the Bounder. "I'll get hold of something—they'll try to stop us, if they spot us—"

"Buck up, then!"

The Bounder grasped the rickety table. It was easy enough to wrench off one of the legs. But the loud crack of the breaking wood, as he wrenched it off, made Billy Bunter utter a squeak of affright.

"I—I say, they'll hear us—"

"Shut up, you fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Quiet, old chap!" Smithy remembered that he owed this chance to Bunter. "Keep behind me, old fat man, and leave it to me if they try to stop us."

"C-c-come on, then!" gasped Bunter.

There was no doubt that Bunter would leave it to Smithy, if there was any scrapping! His fat knees were knocking together, as he followed the Bounder down the passage to the hallway.

But if Bunter was in the throes of terrified apprehension, that was not the case with Smithy! His teeth were set; his eyes gleaming under knitted brows; his grip firm on the bludgeon. He was ready, more than ready, to fight his way out of that den of crooks and desperadoes, now that he had a chance.

At the end of the passage, he stopped to look into the hallway. From an open door, at a little distance, came light, and a sound of voices; but there was no one in sight. The doorway on the dismal street was wide open—it was probably never closed in the tenement that swarmed with disreputable inhabitants like a rabbit-warren. For the moment the coast was clear—and Vernon-Smith had to take his chance of what might lie outside the doorway.

"Come on, Bunter!" he whispered.

"Stick to me!"

"I'm kik-kik-coming!" stuttered the fat Owl, through his chattering teeth.

The Bounder ran swiftly across the hallway, Bunter at his heels. In a moment he was in the street.

The next moment, there was a roar of surprise and rage. Leaning against the front of the building, smoking a pipe, was the man Leary!

For a second he stared at the two escaping prisoners, as if he could not believe his eyes—as probably he hardly could! Then he rushed to intercept them, shouting at the top of his voice.

Billy Bunter had reason to be glad, at that moment, that he had delayed his flight to release the Bounder. Left to himself, the hapless fat Owl would undoubtedly have crumpled up in the

gangster's grip. But Herbert Vernon-Smith was made of sterner stuff.

He sprang to meet the gangster as he rushed, and struck at the same moment, and the heavy bludgeon crashed full across the evil face.

Leary rolled in the mud of the street, yelling and cursing, and the Bounder ran on, the terrified Owl squeaking at his heels.

There was a roar of voices behind them.

A brawny figure leaped out of the shadows, his clutch just missing the Bounder, but closing on Billy Bunter.

A yell of terror pealed from Bunter as he sagged in the grasp of Mike Gooligan.

"Ow! Help! Ooooh!"

The Bounder, panting, turned.

Even as the gangster grasped Bunter, Vernon-Smith struck at him, and the bludgeon crashed on the side of his head. The gangster staggered, and Smithy repeated the blow with lightning swiftness.

"Quick!" he panted.

Mike Gooligan rolled over, half stunned. The Bounder grasped Bunter by a fat arm and raced him onward.

Spluttering and gurgling, the fat Owl ran, his fat little legs fairly twinkling.

Where he was going the Bounder did not know; he turned one corner, and then another, and another, dragging the gasping fat Owl.

He threw away the bludgeon as he emerged into a lighted street; but he still ran hard, dragging Bunter, till lighted shops and a crowded sidewalk assured him of safety. Then at last he stopped for breath in the midst of a staring throng.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Unexpected!

"**D**OGGONE my cats!" growled Bill Buck.

Bill had made that remark about twenty times.

"I'll tell a man!" he growled. The Famous Five were worried and dismayed.

They had returned to the Manhattan Hotel, to find Bill Buck there, waiting for them—with bad news for Mr. Buck. There was still no news of Bunter; but the fat Owl's disappearance troubled them much less than the kidnapping of the Bounder. Bunter might turn up sooner or later, but it was clear that Vernon-Smith had fallen into the hands of the enemy who had been watching for him, and what his fate might be they could not guess.

"You pesky young ginks!" said Mr. Buck. "You couldn't keep in the corral while I was taking a leetle pasear to the police office! Nope! Didn't you know I was riding herd over you? If I'd knowed you was going to break herd while I was gone I'd sure have hog-tied you."

The juniors had nothing to say to that.

Bill was naturally exasperated. He had expected the schoolboys to remain at the Manhattan while he was gone—as, they realised now, they ought to have done! Certainly they had never dreamed of anything like that attack on Sixth Avenue. It was fairly certain, too, that the obstinate Bounder would not have stayed with them had they stayed in; but they did not feel disposed to explain that to Bill. So they said nothing.

The worst of it was that there was nothing to be done. The kidnapping on Sixth Avenue was a matter for the police—it was in the hands of the police

—and Smithy's friends could only wait for news, with little hope of getting good news.

Smithy had vanished into the teeming wilderness of New York—where, there was not the faintest clue.

Sanders had "got" him, with the aid of some gang of East Side toughs. That was all they knew.

Bill Buck, who could have followed the faintest trail, the merest spot of sign, on a Texas prairie, was as helpless as the juniors in the busy streets of a great city.

Bill, like the juniors, had to wait for news, and he waited with little hope. The police might, or might not, discover the Bounder. Waiting for news was a weary business.

It was growing late—past the usual bed-time of the Greyfriars fellows. But they were not thinking of bed.

They could not have slept with that anxiety on their minds. They had gone up to their rooms, but they gathered in Harry Wharton's room in worried and troubled discussion.

Bill, equally unable to rest, was pacing in the corridor outside, every now and then pausing at the doorway to shoot some remarks in at the juniors. His eyes turned on the lift every time it came up. But his hope of getting news from the police depot was very faint.

"Say, you young geeks had better go to roost!" he rapped at last. "Sitting up chewing the rag won't buy you anything!"

"We couldn't sleep!" said Harry. "The sleepfulness would be a terrific impossibility in the idiotic circumstances, my esteemed Buck," murmured Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh.

Snort! from Bill. "You figure on sitting it out till that young gink is rounded up?" he grunted. "I guess you'll sure be tired. I'll say it'll be time for you to go back to your school afore the cops get on the trail of that pesky young stiff."

There was a crash of the elevator at the end of the corridor, and for the tenth or twelfth time Bill turned his eyes on it as it disgorged passengers on the seventeenth floor of the Manhattan Hotel.

Then he jumped. Big and burly and heavy as he was, the puncher from the Kicking Cayuse bounded clear of the floor in his amazement.

"I'll tell a man!" he gasped. The juniors, looking at him through the doorway, wondered what had startled him. From within the room they could not see the cause.

"What's up?" asked Bob Cherry. "Doggone my cats!" yelled Bill. "What the dickens—"

"Carry me home to die!" gasped the Kicking Cayuse puncher.

Harry Wharton & Co. ran to the door. They stared up the corridor. Then there was a yell of amazement. "Smithy!"

"Bunter!" "Great pip!" "The pipfulness is terrific!" "Smithy—Bunter! My hat!"

The juniors could hardly believe their eyes. Bill Buck could hardly believe his. Two passengers had been discharged from the elevator and they were coming up the corridor—Herbert Vernon-Smith and William George Bunter!

It seemed rather like a miracle to the astonished juniors. "I say, you fellows—" squeaked Bunter.

"Is that really the old porpoise?" gasped Bob Cherry. "I say, I'm hungry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I've had practically nothing to eat all day!" howled Bunter.

"Smithy, is that you or your ghost?" roared Bob.

The Bounder chuckled. "Little me!" he said. "And jolly glad to get back!"

"I say, you fellows, we can get supper sent up—"

"I'll tell a man!" gasped Bill Buck. "I'll surely tell a man from Texas! Yep! How'd you get back here, young Vernon-Smith?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Was it Sanders got you, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes; he got Bunter, too!" chuckled the Bounder. "I've been parked in some den, in some mouldy tenement on the East Side of New York! So has Bunter."

"How on earth did you get away, then?" gasped Nugent. Vernon-Smith pointed to Bunter.

"That fat ass—" he said. "Oh, really, Smithy—"

"That blithering clump—" "Beast!" "That beighted bandersnatch—"

"Yah!" "He did it!" said Smithy. "But for that burbling bloater I should be under lock and key this blessed minute! We had rather a run—Bunter isn't a bad sprinter, with a gangster behind him!"

"Look here—" "We got out into the Bowery and picked up a taxi, and here we are!" said the Bounder. "I'll tell you the rest over supper. I'm as hungry as a hunter—or a Bunter."

"Doggone my cats!" said Bill Buck. "Now I got you safe agin, you young gink, don't you break herd no more! You break herd agin, you pesky stiff, and I'll sure take my quirt to you!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry—"

"Speech may be taken as read!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"I'm famished!" wailed Bunter. "I've been hungry all day, really! I wanted Smithy to stop for supper somewhere, but he would come straight here—"

"You fat ass!" "Beast!"

"I guess," said Mr. Buck, "that you'uns ain't hunting for any more trouble in New York! I'm telling you we hit the cars bright and early in the morning! You young ginks have seen all you're going to see of this here burg. I'm telling you!"

"I shan't be able to turn out early, after all I've been through!" hooted Billy Bunter.

"I guess I'll help you!" said Bill.

Over supper it was the Bounder who told the story—Billy Bunter's fat jaws being too busily occupied for speech. And in the morning, a little help from Mr. Buck persuaded Bunter to turn out early for once. The whole party were glad enough to "hit" the cars, and leave New York behind them—though they had little doubt that Two-gun Sanders was not far away, as they rolled onward to the far south-west.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Little Misunderstanding!

"I SAY, you fellows! Is this Texas?"

"No, ass!" "What is it, then?" "Kentucky!"

"Oh! Is Kentucky in the United States?" asked Billy Bunter. "Is it much farther to Texas?"

"About another thousand miles." "Oh crikey! I say, I'm getting tired of this train!"

"Get out and walk!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Yah!" All the Greyfriars party, as well as Billy Bunter, were getting a little tired of the train.

The immense distance of the United States were rather a change, after train trips in their own country.

It was rather a novelty to boom across state after state, hundreds of miles, slipping after hundreds of miles, to eat and sleep, and wake and go to sleep again, on the booming train. But when the novelty wore off, as it soon did, all the fellows would have been glad to get off the railroad. Heavy Wharton & Co. were looking forward, almost as keenly as Bill Buck, to the wide savannas of Texas saddle and bridle in the place of the rocking cars.

Bill was losing no time on that point. Had he consulted Billy Bunter, there would have been a stop for a rest about every hundred miles. But he did not consult Billy Bunter. He had announced that they were not going to stop at all, until they "hit" Texas—

and though a change from the train would have been welcome to all concerned, the juniors admitted that Bill was right.

After what had happened in New York, the sooner they reached the Kicking Cayuse Ranch, the better. Bill was very anxious to land Herbert Vernon-Smith there, under the protection of Barney Stone, the foreman, and the "bunch"; and the Greyfriars fellows agreed that it was only wise.

Nothing had been seen of Sanders since leaving New York; but it was probable, if not certain, that he was on the track. Whatever his motive might be for seeking to keep Smithy away from the ranch, he was not likely to give up the game after his failure in New York.

The juniors were wary; and every now and then Bill walked up and down the train, giving it the "once-over" from end to end, lest the gunman should have boarded it at some point on the journey.

Billy Bunter was less interested in Sanders, and the danger that hung over Smithy, than in other and more important matters. At the present moment he was keeping his eyes, and his spectacles, on the look-out, not for a Texas gunman, but for the candy-boy.

The candy-boy was an institution of which Billy Bunter thoroughly approved. Every now and then the candy-boy came up and down the train with a well-laden tray of all sorts of delightful comestibles. Billy Bunter had been a very good customer to that candy-boy.

This had been made possible by a little loan he had raised from Smithy. Bunter's own supply of cash would not have caused the candy-boy to halt for a moment when passing through the car.

Neither was Smithy, as a rule, an easy fellow to "touch" for a loan. Billy Bunter had tried it on the steamer, he had tried it in New York; and on all occasions, he had tried it in vain. Smithy had a lot of money; but he had a lot of sense in looking after it. But, after the adventure in New York, the Bounder was—for a brief space—a changed Bounder! Bunter, to his astonishment and delight, had succeeded in "touching" him for fifty dollars!

Smithy owed his escape from the





Billy Bunter covered his fat knees and the seat beside him with his many and varied selections of attractive eatables. "I think that will do," he remarked thoughtfully to the candy-boy. "After all, we're going to have dinner on the train, and I don't want to spoil my dinner!"

gangsters in New York to Bunter. For that reason he had said no more of his intention of packing the fat junior back home on the steamer. For the same reason he allowed the fat Owl to extract a loan from him—to be settled later, according to Bunter, when they returned home and he received certain postal orders he was expecting.

With Smithy in this new mood, Billy Bunter felt that the trip would be a good deal more enjoyable. Fifty dollars, though quite a handsome sum, did not last Bunter very long.

There was no need, so far as Bunter could see, for economy. It was a case of easy come, and easy go. When the dollars were gone, he had only to "touch" the Bounder for some more!

Evidently Smithy was not insensible to the claims of gratitude! His gratitude, so far, had been worth fifty dollars to Bunter! The fat Owl expected it to be worth a good deal more than that.

The conductor came along the train, and Billy Bunter gave him a squeak as he passed.

"I say, where's the candy-boy?"

"Next car!" said the conductor, and he passed on.

Bunter blinked along the long car in impatient expectation of seeing the candy-boy appear with his tray. But the candy-boy, no doubt, was doing business in the next car, and he was not in a hurry to appear.

Bunter was impatient. He was hungry. Meals on the train were good and ample, but there was too long a space between them. Billy Bunter's idea of a happy holiday was meals between meals—indeed, as a matter of choice, he would have preferred meals between the meals which were eaten between meals!

"I say, you fellows, can you see him?" he squeaked, at last.

"No; he's not on this train," answered Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five, at the moment, were discussing Mr. Sanders, and Wharton supposed that Bunter was alluding to the person under discussion. The other fellows did not share Bunter's deep and abiding interest in the candy-boy.

"Not on the train!" ejaculated Bunter.

"No; we've seen nothing of him, anyhow."

"What rot! I've seen him, only an hour ago!" yapped Bunter. "He's in the next car now."

"What?"

Remarks from Billy Bunter did not, as a rule, cause the whole party to sit up and take notice. But that remark did. The Famous Five turned to him as one man, with startled faces. The Bounder half-rose from his seat.

Bill Buck, at the moment, was in another car—performing one of his frequent peregrinations up and down the train, or doubtless he would have taken prompt notice also.

"You've seen him?" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Yes, of course I have!" answered Bunter. He was speaking of the candy-boy, few of whose movements escaped his eye.

"Where?" exclaimed Bob. He, like the other fellows, was thinking of Two-gun Sanders.

"He passed along an hour ago," answered Bunter. "Didn't you notice him?"

"Rot!" snapped the Bounder. "We should have noticed him at once."

"Well, we've been looking out of the windows!" said Frank Nugent. "I—I suppose he might have passed. Are you sure, Bunter?"

"Of course I am! Think I don't

know him by sight by this time?" said Bunter. "Of course I saw him!"

"Why didn't you tell us, then, if you saw him and we didn't?" demanded the Bounder.

"How should I know you didn't see him? He was plain enough for anybody to see!"

"Is that fat ass trying to pull our legs?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"If he passed us, which way did he go?" asked the Bounder.

"Down the train! He's in the next car now—the one the conductor came from. I'm watching for him now," said Bunter.

"Bill went up the train!" said Harry. "If this is true, I wish he'd come back. Bill will want to know if that rotter's on the train."

"Eh? What are you calling him a rotter for?" asked Bunter, in surprise. "Isn't he a rotter, fathead?"

"Not that I know of! Jolly civil, I thought him," said Bunter.

"You thought him jolly civil!" exclaimed the Bounder, staring blankly at the fat Owl.

"Well, for an American," said Bunter. "Americans haven't much in the way of manners, of course. But—"

"You burbling owl, shut up, or some American may pull your ear for your cheek!" said Bob. As there were about twenty Americans in the same car, Bunter's remark was not really tactful.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Hallo, hallo; hallo! Here comes Bill!" exclaimed Bob, as Mr. Buck appeared in sight at the upper end of the car.

Bill Buck noted at once the traces of excitement in the looks of his youthful charges, and he made haste to rejoin them.

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"What's biting you'uns?" he asked. "You ain't seen anything of that onery piccan, have you?" Bill, like the juniors, was thinking of Two-gun Sanders.

"Bunter says he's seen him on the train!" answered Harry.

"Search me!" ejaculated Bill. He slid his hand to the back of his belt. The juniors knew what was "packed" there, and they wondered whether the Kicking Cayuse puncher was going to "pull" at the sight of Sanders if he saw him on the train.

"You saw him, you Bunter?" exclaimed Mr. Buck.

"Yes, I saw him all right——"  
"Carry me home to die!" said Bill, "I been up and down this here train, agin and agin, and I ain't seen hide nor hair of him. You're sure, you Bunter?"

"You must be blind, if you haven't seen him," said the astonished Owl. "You were in this car when he passed through."

"Aw, what you giving me?" snapped Mr. Buck. "I'll tell a man, I'd sure have seen him."

"Bunter says he's in the next car, now, down the train," said Harry. "Blessed if I can make it out. He must have mistaken somebody else for him."

"Oh, really, Wharton—why, there he comes!" exclaimed Bunter, as the candy-boy, at long last, entered the car with his wares.

Bunter pointed with a fat finger. The juniors all turned their heads, as if moved by the same spring, and Mr. Buck half-drew the hidden six-gun from the back of his pants. They fully expected to see Two-gun Sanders as the fat Owl pointed. All they saw was a candy-boy with a tray.

"Where——" howled Bob.

"The wherefulness is terrific."  
"Can't you see him?" howled Bunter. "My hat! Talk about me being short-sighted! You fellows want spectacles, and no mistake, if you can't see that candy-boy."

"That what?" shrieked Bob.

"Candy-boy!"  
The juniors stared at Bunter. Mr. Buck hastily slipped the six-gun back into its hiding-place.

"Say," he ejaculated, "is that fat guy loco?"

"You—you—you blithering fat idiot!" hissed the Bounder. "What do you mean? Do you fancy that that candy-boy is Sanders, or what?"

"Sanders!" repeated Bunter blankly. "Who's talking about Sanders?"

"Weren't you?" howled Bob Cherry.

"Eh? No! I said I'd seen the candy-boy—he passed through this car an hour ago——"

"You—you—you were talking about the candy-boy!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes: weren't you?"

"You—you—you blithering, blethering, benighted burler——"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You—you—you——" gasped Johnny Bull. "Oh, there ain't a word for you!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Of all the terrific idiots——"

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Only a false alarm!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We might have guessed that Bunter was thinking of food. Does he ever think of anything else?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I've a jolly good mind to boot him from one end of the car to the other," growled the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Shut up, you fat ass!"  
"I say, Smithy, old chap——"  
"Shut up, I tell you!"  
"But I want you to lend me another fifty dollars!" explained Bunter. Vernon-Smith gave him one look, and walked away up the car.

The Famous Five chuckled. Smithy did not look as if he was in a mood to lend Bunter fifty dollars—or fifty cents! He looked as if he could only barely restrain himself from lending Bunter a boot!

"Here!" said the fat Owl, as the candy-boy came along. And the candy-boy stopped to do a big business.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

### Not So Jolly Civil!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO. watched Bunter, with considerable hilarity, as he made his extensive selections from the candy-boy's tray.

The candy-boy had a cheery smile on his face.

Bunter had, hitherto, been quite a good customer: and now he was as good a customer as ever, if not a little better. It was the candy-boy whom Bunter had considered "jolly civil" for an American: and there was no doubt that the youth was civility itself. He did a fairly good trade up and down the train: but he did not often get such wholesale orders as Bunter's.

Billy Bunter covered his fat knees, and the seat beside him, with his many and various selections of attractive eatables. By the time he had finished he had annexed about half the candy-boy's stock.

"I think that will do!" remarked Bunter thoughtfully. "After all, we're going to have dinner on the train, and I don't want to spoil my dinner. How much?"

The candy-boy seemed quite a good arithmetician. It was a considerable sum, but he did it at once in his head.

"Twenty-three dollars, seventy cents!" he answered.

"Oh, my only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Twenty-three dollars was well over four pounds; which seemed to the Famous Five quite a handsome sum to expend on a meal between meals! Prices were high in the United States: some of the prices made the Greyfriars fellows rub their eyes, after what they were accustomed to on their own side of the Atlantic. Still, Bunter was getting quite a considerable quantity of foodstuffs for that sum.

"I say, you fellows, where's Smithy?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking round through his big spectacles.

"Gone along the train," answered Bob.

"Go and call him, will you?"

"Hardly!"

"I wish he wouldn't walk off, just when I want him," said Bunter peevishly. "I say, you fellows, lend me twenty-three dollars till he comes back, will you?"

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! What are you cackling at, you fat-heads?" demanded Bunter.

"Your little joke, old fat man!" answered Bob.

"Eh? I'm not joking!"

"You are!" chuckled Bob.

"The jokefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Look here, you fellows, I've run out of cash," said Bunter irritably. "I've got only a quarter left!"

"That's about a bob," said Nugent. "Perhaps the candy-boy will take a bob for that lot!"

"The perhapsfulness is preposterous." "Look here, are you going to lend me twenty-three dollars, or are you not?" hooted Bunter.

"Not!" answered the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Beasts! Where's that man Buck? I say, Mr. Buck, lend me twenty-three dollars, will you?"

"Not so's you'd notice it!" answered Mr. Buck. And he walked away.

"I say, you fellows, go and call Smithy! I can't keep these things without paying for them!" exclaimed the fat Owl anxiously.

"I'll say you can't!" remarked the candy-boy. That youth's "jolly civility" seemed to be rather dropping away from him. "And I'll mention that I got to get along the train."

"Well, that's all right," said Bunter. "Remind me about paying you when you come back along this car, will you? You needn't hurry."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at the candy-boy, quite curious to know how he would receive that happy suggestion. He did not receive it in what Bunter would have considered the right spirit!

The remnant of his civility vanished on the spot! Quite an unpleasant expression came over his face. Hitherto a polite and civil candy-boy—jolly civil, in fact—he now seemed, to Bunter's eyes, to resemble, in his looks, one of the gangsters left behind in New York! His jaw jutted, his eyes glinted, and his whole aspect was absolutely disagreeable.

"You figure I'm carrying this here tray for my health?" inquired the candy-boy, in tones as unpleasant as his looks.

"You see——" explained Bunter.

"I don't see twenty-three dollars, seventy cents," interrupted the candy-boy. "That's what I want to see, mister!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"What about a stroll along the train?" asked Bob Cherry. "Let's have a look at Kentucky from the car platform."

"Good egg!"

"I say, don't walk off while a fellow's talking to you!" howled Bunter, in alarm. "I say, I've told you I've run out of money—I say, if you're too beastly mean to lend a fellow twenty-three dollars—— Beasts!"

The Famous Five walked along the car. Without being exactly mean, they did not feel disposed to "blow" the sum of four pounds ten shillings on a feed for William George Bunter! In fact, though they had a good deal more cash than Bunter, they could not afford to spend it at Bunter's rate.

They disappeared, much to Bunter's dismay.

"I—I say——" stammered Bunter, blinking at the candy-boy.

That youth was looking more and more unpleasant. A passenger who cleared half his stock off his tray, and was unable to proffer payment for the same, was really enough to exasperate any candy-boy.

"I guess," said the candy-boy, "that it sets you back twenty-three dollars seventy cents. You parting?"

"You—you see, I—I——"

"You going to pony up, or not?" yapped the candy-boy, clearly in quite a bad temper by this time.

About twenty passengers were staring

round at Bunter, some of them grinning. Bunter's fat face was crimson with discomfort. Bunter was not shy, and as a rule he rather liked the lime-light, but the attention he was getting now was neither grateful nor comforting.

Then, to his immenso relief, he spotted Vernon-Smith coming back into the car. He waved a fat hand to the Bouncer.

"I say, Smithy—"

Smithy had strolled up the train. Now he was strolling down the train. If he heard Bunter's fat squeak he did not heed it.

Bunter clutched at him as he passed.

"Smithy, old chap, I say—"

Smithy, old chap, jerked himself away and walked on.

"I say, will you lend me fifty dollars, Smithy?" gasped Bunter.

"No!" answered the Bouncer over his shoulder.

"I say, lend me twenty-three dollars, then—"

Smithy walked out at the other end of the car.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"I guess," said the candy-boy, "that I ain't on this here train to stand around like a stork. I'll say surely

(Continued on next page.)

# LEARN TO PLAY FOOTBALL!

OUR INTERNATIONAL COACH

**L**AST week we talked about making plans for the winning of football matches before they actually start. I hope you haven't forgotten all I said about the importance of pre-match discussions. At the same time, bear in mind the story I told you to illustrate the fact that the players on the other side may do things to make the plans go all wrong. Both sides in a football match think they have made plans which will enable them to win. But only one of the plans works out right, because only one side can win. Therefore, in every match one set of players gets a surprise.

What happens to the side which finds, after the game has been in progress for some time, that things are not working out as they should? Once on the field, the players have to rely on themselves and their knowledge of each other. There can be no discussion on tactics, and no one to give help from outside. Some people say that first-class teams, even when they are on the field, are kept in touch with the manager, who sends down instructions from his place in the stand. I know that is true to a certain extent. But, anyway, that doesn't concern us, because footballers like you haven't got a manager sitting in the stand. I don't suppose you've even got a stand—have you?

I'm not at all sure whether the managers of these big clubs are right in interfering with the players when they are on the field. A person who is not playing in a game cannot possibly know all that is going on amongst the players. That is why every team ought to have a manager on the field, rather than in the stand.

A "manager" on the field doesn't go by that name, of course. He is called a captain. Whenever you hear about captains being unimportant in first-class football you can take it from me that in the sort of football we are talking about—your sort of football—they are very important.

## A CAPTAIN'S TASK

**T**HE captain must be, first and foremost, a reliable sort—reliable in everyday life and reliable as a footballer. All the members of the side must have faith in his decisions, for some of them will be important. The captain must decide on change of tactics if these are necessary. Sometimes he may even go to the extent of

The most important member of a football team is the "skipper" . . . therefore, have faith in his decisions if you want to win matches!

switching players from one position to another. If the centre-forward, for example, is having a very bad time against the opposing centre-half, it may be a good plan to let another player see what he can do—perhaps a heavier player, or a speedier one.

You probably noticed that in several of Aston Villa's Cup-ties this season Broome and Shell, starting at outside-right and centre-forward respectively, have changed places during the course of the game. In the second re-play against Charlton Athletic, at Highbury, Broome scored three of his side's four goals after he had gone to centre-forward. And the change has been doubly successful because Shell has often played very well at outside-right.

So, you see, a switch of players does sometimes have a good effect. It is not a thing that I strongly recommend to you, however, for mistakes can easily be made. But when the captain does decide on such a course, or on any other tactical change of any sort, it is up to all the players to do their best to fit in with the new ideas.

The job of changing tactics is what may be called the "dictating" side of the captain's task. But that is not the most important side. Much more important is it that the captain should be a "leader"—not so much telling his players how to set about the opposition, but showing them how to do it. Many a match has been won by the captain inspiring his team. When things are going wrong, the game seems lost, and one or two players are losing heart, the whole gloomy atmosphere can be changed by a captain who knows his job setting an example to his colleagues—showing them that he, at any rate, doesn't think their task is hopeless; that he isn't downhearted. Just one extra-special effort by a captain, to show that he is still alive and fighting, can work wonders among players who are beginning to get down in the dumps, as

most of us can't help doing at some time or another.

## KEEP THE PRESSURE UP

**N**OT only when things are going badly must the captain act as an inspiration. There are times when his job is just as important in keeping a winning team going all out. The tendency among many players is to slack off when they feel that they are in a safe position. Believe me, there is no more dangerous practice in football. I could write you out a long list of first-class matches, played this season, which have been lost because the players of a side which appeared to be winning in comfort sat back and took things easily. You just mustn't do that. In boxing you are not allowed to hit a man when he is down, but in football you must do so. When you are beating a team, no matter how easily, keep on going as hard as you can; beat them a bit more, and then still keep on beating them. Never slacken off because you think you have the game in your pocket.

Just as dangerous as a team slackening off when it thinks it is winning is for a side to change its tactics when it has a narrow lead, to concentration on defence. It is a great temptation, I know, when you are a goal up, to feel that so long as you can keep the other fellows out you will be all right. In order to do that you tell your forwards to come back and help the defenders. But what happens? The extra defenders get in the way, the opponents take heart because they find they can keep up a constant attack, and very often a game which was won is lost. If you are down, keep fighting. If you are up, keep fighting just the same. That isn't a bad motto to paint in big letters on the wall of your dressing-room.

It is the major job of the captain of the side to see that his players always bear that motto in mind. Thus the skipper must be a player whom everybody likes and trusts; who never gets downhearted; but is always full of enthusiasm. They are the qualities you should think most about when you are deciding who should captain your side. I'll try next week to give you some more help about coming to this important decision about the fellow most likely to make a good skipper.

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not! I'm worrying you for twenty-three dollars, seventy cents."

"I—I—I haven't any money!" gasped Bunter.

"I sure guessed that one," assented the candy-boy. "And if you ain't got the dust, what yer mean by snooping half my stock? I'm asking you!"

Bunter was unable to satisfy the candy-boy's curiosity on that point.

With a grim brow, the candy-boy packed back on his tray all the varied assortment of comestibles that Billy Bunter had removed therefrom.

Bunter watched them mournfully as they went one by one.

Having reloaded his tray, the candy-boy fixed his eyes on Billy Bunter with a look as utterly unpleasant as Mike Cooligan's.

"You big stiff!" said the candy-boy.

"I—I say——"

"You pie-faced peecan!"

"Look here——"

"You cheap skate!"

Bang!

"Ooooh!" gasped Bunter.

Having knocked Bunter's hat down over his ears, the candy-boy walked on.

Bunter clutched at his hat, spluttering.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl along the car.

"Ooooh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! Oooogh! Wooooh!"

Every face in the car was turned towards Bunter. Every passenger in the car was laughing—with one exception. That exception was William George Bunter!

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Spot of Ventriloquism!

**B**ILLY BUNTER smiled. It was the following morning—and the Greyfriars party were still on the cars, booming on to Texas. And it was the first time that Bunter had smiled since the unpleasant episode with the candy-boy the previous day.

Now he smiled. But it was not a happy smile, it was not a friendly smile, it was not a nice smile at all; it was one of those sardonic smiles.

Billy Bunter was annoyed, he was morose, he was vengeful. He had not been treated in the way that so thoroughly nice a fellow ought to have been treated. He was going to get his own back—if he could. And he fancied that he could.

He was deeply indignant. There was no doubt that Bunter had been extremely useful when Herbert Vernon-Smith had been under lock and key, in the hands of the gangsters, in that tenement by the East River, in New York. Smithy seemed to have priced his usefulness at fifty dollars.

Bunter had quite different ideas. Certainly he took a rather exaggerated view of his services. He had—or he fancied he had—or, at least, he declared that he had—rescued Smithy at the risk of his life. Undaunted by fierce and scowling gangsters, Bunter had rescued Smithy; after which, the very least that Smithy could do—the absolute minimum—was to let Bunter draw upon his ample supplies of cash. That, if there was anything in gratitude, was the very least that Smithy could and should have done.

But it seemed that there was little in gratitude—little or nothing. The Bounder's gratitude went to the extent of fifty dollars—and stopped there. It

did not go a single cent beyond that figure.

Billy Bunter had been looking morose for quite a long time. Now, however, he was smiling—a dark, sardonic smile.

He gave a fat little cough, unnoticed in the buzz of the train and the buzz of talk. Had the other fellows noticed it they might have guessed that the Greyfriars ventriloquist was preparing to get on the warpath.

But they didn't. As they drew nearer and nearer to their destination they were thinking of rolling prairies, bucking broncos, punchers in stetson hats, and whirling lassoes. They had forgotten all about Billy Bunter's weird ventriloquism—indeed, they seemed to have forgotten all about Bunter. The sardonic Owl was going to remind them.

The candy-boy was coming along the car.

Bunter favoured him with an inimical blink. That candy-boy had banged his hat on his head the previous day. Several times Bunter had thought of knocking him down for his cheek; but the candy-boy was about a foot taller than Bunter, and the fat Owl had decided, on the whole, to treat him with contempt.

But it was all Smithy's fault. Even now Bunter would have been prepared to forget and forgive if Smithy would have squeezed out another fifty-dollar bill. He would rather have made a selection from the candy-boy's tray than have knocked the fellow down.

As it was, all that remained to Bunter was vengeance. Revenge is said to be sweet—though certainly it was not so sweet as chocolate creams.

The candy-boy took no heed of Bunter. He had no further use for that particular customer. But he paused in passing the Greyfriars fellows, ready to do business if required.

"Don't stand there!" came a snapping voice. "Get out of the light, you long-legged freak!"

The candy-boy gave quite a jump.

That remark did not appear to come from Bunter; it appeared to proceed from Herbert Vernon-Smith, and it was uttered in the rather strident tones of the Bounder. Bunter was an adept at the trick of imitating a voice for ventriloquial purposes.

"Say, what are you giving me?" ejaculated the candy-boy, staring at the Bounder in angry surprise.

Vernon-Smith was looking round. He had heard the remark, though he certainly did not guess that it was supposed to have proceeded from himself.

"Eh? Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"I sure did!" said the candy-boy. "Say, you're from the Old Country, ain't you?"

"What? Yes!" answered Smithy.

"Mebbe you came across the pond to get your nose pulled," suggested the candy-boy.

Vernon-Smith glared at him. He was quite the last member of the party to take that sort of talk patiently.

"What the dooce do you mean?" he snapped. "Don't be cheeky!"

That was all the Bounder said. But a voice so like his own that few ears could have detected the difference continued immediately:

"You ugly brute, get out of this car, or I'll boot you along to the next!"

"Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, from his seat close at hand. "What the dickens——"

"Smithy, you fathead——" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"You'll boot me out of this car, says

you!" howled the candy-boy. "Why, you pie-faced mugwump, you couldn't boot one side of me!"

"I never said——" gasped the Bounder.

"Boot me!" roared the candy-boy, with all the indignation of a free citizen of a great country, where every citizen was as good as every other citizen, if not a little better. "Search me! Why, you pesky, pie-faced, slab-sided jay——"

"Here, pack that up, George!" called out the conductor, coming into the car.

"Aw, forget it!" howled the indignant candy-boy. "That guy allows that he's going to boot me out of this here car——"

"Say, you want to keep a civil tongue, young man!" said the conductor, staring at Vernon-Smith. "That sort of talk may go where you come from, but it won't do for this country."

"I never said anything of the kind!" yelled the Bounder. "Somebody else was speaking to the silly fool!"

"Aw, didn't all these guys hear you?" snorted the candy-boy. "You can't crawl out of it that-a-way, you big stiff! Boot me, will you, you pie-faced son of John Bull——"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed the Bounder angrily, crimson with annoyance, as the whole car "rubbered" in his direction. "Shut up and clear!"

"Or I'll knock your silly, cheeky head off!" went on a voice that was a twin to Smithy's. "Get out of it, you lout!"

That was too much for the candy-boy. Red with wrath, he made a grab at Vernon-Smith's nose, grasped it, and tweaked it.

The next instant the Bounder was on his feet, with a roar of rage, and hitting out.

His fist crashed in the candy-boy's face, sending him spinning along the car. He tottered backwards five or six feet before he crashed, landing on his back, his tray capsizing, and its contents shooting all over the car, scattering in a shower far and wide.

"Oh, sho!" gasped the conductor.

"Aw, search me!" spluttered the candy-boy. He sprawled on his back for a moment or two, spluttering for breath; then he bounded up, rushed at the Bounder, and fairly hurled himself on him.

There was a roar of excitement from one end of the car to the other, as they grappled, fighting furiously. And from Billy Bunter, grinning from one fat ear to the other, came a cheery squeak:

"He, he, he!"

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Trouble on the Train!

"**S**TOP it!"

"Separate them!"

"Smithy!"

"Here, you, George——"

"Oh, my hat!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Punch, punch, punch! Thump, thump, thump!

Smithy and the candy-boy were going strong, trampling wildly and recklessly over the scattered goods from the tray.

"Stop it, Smithy!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Let up, you, George!" yelled the conductor.

"He, he, he!"

"Collar them!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

All the passengers in the long car were on their feet, staring. The Greyfriars party were the centre of attention.

The Famous Five jumped at Smithy and grasped him, as the conductor threw an arm round George and dragged him



Billy Bunter darted back, Vernon-Smith rushing after him, still kicking. Crash! The conductor was coming through the car, and Bunter met him in full career. The fat Removite smote him rather like a battering-ram, and the conductor staggered backwards.

back. By main force the two exasperated combatants were separated.

The struggle had been brief, but it had done damage. Vernon-Smith's nose was streaming red, and one of his eyes was winking. The candy-boy's nose looked like an over-ripe tomato.

"Let me go, you fools!" howled the Bounder.

"Let up!" yelled the candy-boy. "I'm telling you I'm sure going to break up that gink!"

"You sure ain't!" snorted the conductor. "You're on this train to sell candy, George, not to break up the pesky passengers."

"I'm telling you——" yelled George.

"Aw, pack it up and beat it, you!"

And the conductor, who was a powerful man, hooked the candy-boy along the car and out at the end.

George's voice was heard in loud and angry protest, as he went; but he went, and he disappeared into the next car.

Vernon-Smith dabbed his streaming nose with his handkerchief, panting for breath. His face was crimson under a sea of staring eyes. Smithy was not, perhaps, of a pacific nature, but certainly he did not like being mixed up in a shindy with a candy-boy on a crowded railroad car.

Harry Wharton & Co. gave him expressive looks as they resumed their seats. Billy Bunter grinned cheerily. The Greyfriars ventriloquist had got his own back, there was no doubt about that. Both Vernon-Smith and the candy-boy had suffered for their sins.

The Bounder, gasping for breath, sat down, dabbing his nose.

The conductor, having disposed of George, came back. He collected up the various articles George had dropped in the fray, and then he gave Vernon-Smith a grim look.

"Mebbe you never learned manners in

your own country, young man," he said. "But chew on this—any more rookus from you and you go off this train at the next stop, and you go off on your neck!"

And, without waiting for a reply, the conductor left the car.

The Bounder, with a black brow, dabbed at his nose.

He gave the Famous Five a scowl.

"Does that fool think I was to blame for the row?" he asked.

"Weren't you?" asked Johnny Bull dryly.

"No, you fool!"

Johnny shrugged his shoulders.

"My esteemed Smithy——" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"The silly fool fancied I spoke to him when I didn't!" snarled the Bounder.

"Do you think I wanted to get mixed up in a scuffle on the train?"

"We all heard you!" said Bob.

The Bounder breathed hard.

"I tell you I said nothing to the fool till he spoke to me," he said, between his teeth.

"You know it as well as I do, as you were all near enough to hear every word that was said. So what do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," answered Bob.

"You spoke to that fellow first, when he came along with his tray——"

"I did not!" snarled the Bounder.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently.

"What's the good of saying you never started the row, when every fellow here, and half the passengers in the car, heard you insult the chap?"

"Are you mad? I never said anything! Somebody did—I didn't!"

"That somebody borrowed your voice to say it with, then!" said Johnny, still sarcastic.

"We all heard it!" Vernon-Smith gave a start. Perhaps

the sight of the wide grins wreathing the fat face of William George Bunter helped to enlighten him.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I catch on! Bunter——"

"Bunter!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Bunter had nothing to do with it. He never opened his mouth!"

"Fool!" snarled the Bounder.

"Thanks!" said Harry dryly.

"Bunter, you rotten rascal!"

The Bounder rose, his face quite alarming in its expression.

"You—you——"

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, in alarm.

"I say, I never——"

"Keep quiet, Smithy, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Do you want the conductor to chuck you off the train? I can tell you that the man meant what he said."

"I—I'll smash him!" gasped the Bounder.

"You silly fools, can't you see that that fat fool was playing tricks with his rotten ventriloquism?"

"Oh!" gasped the Famous Five, all together.

"I wasn't!" yelled Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, I never——"

"You fat ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Was it you?"

"No; I never did anything of the kind! I—I wouldn't! Besides, that candy-boy banged my hat in yesterday. Serve him jolly well right to get his nose punched!"

"Then it was you!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, no; nothing of the kind! I say, you fellows, keep that beast off!"

yelled Bunter. Wharton and Bob Cherry grasped the Bounder, just in time. Bunter bounded up and backed away.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Will you let me go?" hissed the

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Bounder. "I'm going to smash that fat scoundrel for playing his rotten tricks—"

"I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never thought of paying you out like that, Smithy! Never dreamed of it! Besides, you let me down, you jolly well know you did, after I saved your wife—I mean, saved your life—in New York!"

The Bounder wrenched furiously at the detaining hands, but Wharton and Bob Cherry held him fast.

Billy Bunter certainly deserved to be booted from one end of the train to the other. But it was no time or place for booting Bunter. There had been, in the opinion of the Famous Five, quite enough in the way of shindies. They did not want the conductor called back to the car by another row.

"Chuck it, Smithy!" snapped Bob.

"I tell you—"

"Oh, be quiet, you ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You can boot that fat chump all over Texas when you get to the ranch. Chuck it, on the train!"

"I'll smash him!"

The Bounder gave another fierce wrench, and nearly tore loose.

Billy Bunter scuttled away down the car, and scuttled out at the end. For the present it seemed judicious to Billy Bunter to give the infuriated Bounder a wide berth. He vanished into the next car.

Vernon-Smith, with an effort, controlled his rage. He realised that he was making an exhibition of himself under the staring eyes of a car-load of passengers. He pitched himself into his seat, and the juniors released him.

Ten minutes later, Bill Buck, who had been along the train, came walking through. He found the Famous Five silent and uncomfortable, and the Bounder dabbing his nose and scowling.

"Say, I hear you been kicking up a rookus with the candy-boy, you young gink!" he grunted. Apparently Bill had been in talk with the conductor.

"Oh rats!" snapped the Bounder.

Bill gave him a long, steady look, breathed rather hard, and walked on to the next car.

The Bounder scowled after him as he went.

## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Left Behind!

"YAROOOH!"

That sudden roar from Billy Bunter woke the echoes of the depot.

The booming train had come to a stop, and Billy Bunter was blinking rather dimly at the station platform.

The fat Owl of the Remove was not feeling bucked.

He did not dare to venture back into the car where the Greyfriars party sat. He had a well-grounded apprehension that trouble would accrue as soon as he established contact with the Bounder.

Had that spot of ventriloquism passed off undetected, it would have been all right, but it hadn't, and it wasn't.

Bunter had "paid out" both the Bounder and the candy-boy. But if revenge was sweet, it left rather an unpleasant flavour behind it, in the circumstances.

The candy-boy had passed him several times, and Bunter drew comfort from observing that his nose was growing more and more like a disused tomato. That was all right; but everything else was all wrong. It was quite awkward for a guest, on a holiday trip, to be unable to venture within kicking distance of his host.

The Famous Five, probably, were going to boot him for his trickery; but they were leaving it for a more convenient and appropriate opportunity. Smithy was likely to take the first opportunity, appropriate or not. Bunter would not have been surprised had the beast come hunting him along the train.

He was thinking these dismal thoughts as he blinked out at the wayside Texas station from the halted train. He was not aware that it was a Texas station—being, in fact, unaware that Arkansas had been left behind by some hundreds of miles. Not that he would have been specially interested had he been aware of it. He was thinking of Smithy's boot; and all of a sudden he let out a terrific yell as the boot materialised.

"Yaroooh! Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter.

Thud!

"Yoo-hoop!"

Smithy had come along. He was, as a matter of fact, walking along the train without specially looking for Bunter. Coming on Bunter, however, he booted him, and, as the fat Owl yelled, he booted him again, and yet again. Smithy seemed to find solace in booting Bunter, though Bunter found none whatever.

"Ow! Leave off, you beast!" roared Bunter, hopping and dodging. "Ow! I'll jolly well punch your head! Wow!"

He darted back into the car. After him rushed the Bounder, still kicking!

Crash!

Bump!

The conductor was coming through the car.

Bunter met him in full career.

The conductor was a hefty man, but he was not able to stand up to that

sudden and unexpected charge. Billy Bunter smote him rather like a battering-ram, and the conductor went over backwards, with a heavy bump.

"Who-ooooop!" roared the conductor, as he landed on his back.

"Yarooop!" spluttered Bunter, as he distributed himself over the conductor's sprawling legs.

"You fat gink!" yelled the conductor.

"Yurroogh!"

The pursuing Bounder halted just in time to save himself from being added to the heap.

The conductor, gasping for breath, hurled Bunter off his legs, and scrambled to his feet. He gave Vernon-Smith quite a deadly look.

"Ow! Help!" yelled Bunter. "Keep him off! Yaroooh!"

"You agin!" hooted the conductor, glaring at Vernon-Smith. "You mixed up in a rookus agin. I guess I told you what to expect."

He grasped the Bounder, and swung him out of the car!

"Let go, you fool!" roared Vernon-Smith, struggling frantically. But he struggled in vain in that brawny grip.

Bump!

"Oh! Oh gad! Ow!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith sprawled, breathless, on the station platform. He sat up, dizzily, blinking back at the train.

The conductor glared down at him.

"That's yourn, I guess!" he snapped.

"I'll say you ain't running this train, big boy! Nope! I guess I put you wise that you'd go off this train on your neck, if you kicked up another rookus! You got it!"

The Bounder, breathless from the fall, sat and panted. A dozen passengers stared out at him, grinning.

"Say, what's this game?" Bill Buck came striding through the car. "Here, you! What you doing with that passenger?"

"I guess I'm putting that doggoned young scallawag off'n this here train, feller, like I told him I would!" retorted the conductor.

"You big stiff!" roared Bill. "I got to land that guy at Kicking Cayuse!"

He jumped to the platform, grasped the dizzy, breathless Bounder, and helped him to his feet.

The cars rocked as the train got into motion. The conductor grinned at them derisively.

Bill, supporting the tottering Bounder with one hand, waved the other in wrathful excitement.

"Say, you pull in your hosses, you!" he roared. "You hear me shout? You big stiff, you hold in a piece!"

"Forget it!" grinned the conductor.

"Aw, carry me home to die!" gasped Bill.

The cars were in motion; the conductor's face, with that derisive grin on it, faded out of sight.

Bill Buck shook a brawny fist after the train as it rocked away. But there was no help for it. He was still "keeping tabs" on Vernon-Smith, so far as that went. But he was left behind with him.

"Search me!" gasped Bill, as the train boomed away down the line. "I'll tell a man!"

"Oh gad!" gasped the Bounder.

He stared after the train; Bill stared after it. But they could do nothing else. With a roar and a rumble it disappeared, leaving them staring.

Billy Bunter, with a backward blink, watched them till they were out of sight, and grinned.

He rolled back to the Greyfriars party, with a fat grin on his face.

Harry Wharton & Co., as yet unaware of what had happened to the Bounder, gave the fat Owl grim looks.

"You fat, foozling, frabjous frump!" said Bob Cherry. "What are you grinning at? You're going to be booted all over Kicking Cayuse, when we get there!"

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"The bootfulness is going to be terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Like the prospect?" asked Frank Nugent.

"He, he, he!" "What is the fat villain sniggering about?" asked Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, you fellows— He, he, he!"

The Famous Five stared at him. Bunter evidently was in a state of great amusement. They could not imagine why. It could not possibly have been the prospect of being booted all over the ranch, when they got there, that amused Bunter.

"I say, you fellows!" chortled Bunter. "Smithy— He, he, he!"

"What about Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton. "He went out of the car when the train stopped."

"He, he, he!" "Has anything happened to Smithy?" exclaimed Harry.

"He, he, he! He's left behind!" chortled Bunter.

Five fellows jumped. "Left behind!" roared Bob.

"He, he, he!" "Did Smithy get off the train at that station?"

"He, he, he! He was chucked off," giggled Bunter. "He kicked up a row with the conductor. He, he, he! And the man chucked him off! Check, of course—just like these Americans! But it serves Smithy right! What?"

Harry Wharton jumped up. "You fat chump! Where's Mr. Buck? He must be told at once, if Smithy's been left behind."

"He, he, he! He's left behind, too!" chortled Bunter. "He jumped out to help Smithy in, and got left behind with him. He, he, he!"

"Oh, my hat!" "They were both standing there. He, he, he! Like cows looking at a train," grinned Bunter. "Serve Smithy right—what? He, he, he!"

"You blithering Owl!" Harry Wharton hurried along the train to find the conductor. He came back in a few minutes with a frowning brow.

"They're left behind," he said. "The conductor seems to have got his rag out, and pitched Smithy off, and Bill jumped after him. I—I suppose they'll come on by the next train. We shall have to wait for them when we get off at Prairie Bend. That's where we leave the train. It's that blithering idiot Bunter's fault—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Boot him!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Beast!"

Billy Bunter sat down, quite merry and bright. Harry Wharton & Co. were worried—but Billy Bunter grinned cheerfully. In Billy Bunter's opinion, it served Smithy jolly well right. And the idea of the Bounder waiting, perhaps several hours for another train, quite bucked Bunter. Bunter, at least, was glad that Herbert Vernon-Smith had been left behind; and, little as they guessed it at the moment, Harry Wharton & Co. were shortly going to be glad, also.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

### "Hands Up!"

**B**ANG!

Crash!  
Clatter!  
Harry Wharton & Co jumped.  
So did about a hundred other pas-

sengers. Billy Bunter, who had nodded off to sleep in the late afternoon, woke up.

The train was rolling westward, over a wide, grassy country. It was "real Texas" now; the land of wide and airy spaces, of vast grasslands and rushing rivers, of scattered towns and far-stretching ranches. That night the Greyfriars party were booked to quit the railroad, leaving the cars to roll on their unending way to New Mexico, and strike off for the Kicking Cayuse. The little railroad town where they were to "quit" was called Prairie Bend; but it was still a long way ahead when, in the golden sunset, came that bang and crash and clatter, followed by the screaming of brakes, the shouting of excited voices, and the slowing-down of the train.

A few moments before all had been quiet, save for the ceaseless boom of the train. Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were playing chess with the nabob's pocket set. Bob Cherry was looking at an American newspaper. Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull were looking out over the plains, interested in some horsemen, riding near the line. Billy Bunter was asleep, and snoring. But the sudden, startling uproar changed all that very swiftly.

"What—" exclaimed Harry.

"We're stopping—"

"I say, you fellows, is it an accident?" squeaked Billy Bunter in alarm.

"I say, don't leave me! I say, I wish I'd stopped behind with Smithy! I say—"

"Shut up, fathead!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I say—"

"It's not an accident!" said Harry.

"Nothing's happened to the train! It sounded like a shot—"

"And a cracked window—" said Nugent.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Some jolly old puncher loosing off his six-gun!" he suggested. "We're in the land of six-guns now, you know."

"But what's the train stopping for?"

The conductor came running through the car. Hitherto, when the juniors had seen him pass, he had passed with a swinging gait, but in quite a leisurely manner. Now he was running, with a wildly excited face.

"What's up?" shouted Bob, as he ran by.

"Hold-up!" the conductor threw over his shoulder, and vanished into the next car.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "Did you hear that?"

"A hold-up!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath.

"I say, you fellows, we shall all be robbed and murdered!" yelled Billy Bunter. "I say—"

"Fathead!"

"I say— Oh lor', I wish I hadn't come! I wish I'd lost the train! I wish I'd stayed in New York! This is worse than the gangsters. I say—"

"yaroooh!" roared Bunter as Johnny Bull, grasping him by both fat shoulders, sat him back in his seat with a bump.

"Now shut up, you fat, funky frump!" hissed Johnny. "You let out another yelp and I'll bang your silly head!"

"Oooogh!" gasped Bunter.

But he did not let out another yelp. He had to get his breath back before he could yelp again.

The news that it was a hold-up passed along the train like wildfire.

Harry Wharton & Co. were serious enough, but they did not share Billy

Bunter's wild alarm. Nobody, so far, seemed to be hurt; the shot that had been fired, and that had smashed a window, had doubtless been loosed off as a warning. But flying bullets were no respecters of persons, and an attack on the train by a bunch of desperate "bad men" of the West was not a light matter.

"Here's where we want Bill!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I kinda guess and calculate that we want Bill with his six-gun."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"There's a crowd of them," he said. "Just as well that Bill isn't on the train. If he tackled that gang he wouldn't have a chance. There's more than a dozen of them. Look!"

Every passenger was staring from the train. On either side of the line horsemen could be seen riding—men in stetson hats, with scarves bound across their rugged, bearded faces to conceal their identity. More than a dozen were in sight, and there were others that the juniors could not see.

Why the train had stopped they did not, at first, understand; for horsemen, of course, had no chance of dealing with a rushing train. But word passed along that rocks had been piled on the line ahead. Evidently the hold-up had been planned well in advance; and it was taking place at one of the loneliest stretches of the line, miles from the nearest habitation of any sort. Unless the passengers could defend themselves, they were at the mercy of the railroad bandits.

"By gum!" said Johnny Bull. He gripped a stick. "If there's a scrap, you fellows—"

"It doesn't look like it!" said Harry.

It did not. There were a dozen other passengers in the car with the Famous Five, and it was probable that some of them "packed" guns; but none seemed to be thinking of resistance.

That was, perhaps, natural enough. Entering into a desperate and deadly affray with a gang of armed bandits was not an attractive idea. Only one shot had been fired, so far, but there was no doubt whatever that lead would be whistling in volleys if the bandits met with resistance.

The train was at a standstill, watched on either side by horsemen with revolvers in their hands. Others of the gang had already stepped aboard.

The juniors waited, with beating hearts, for their car to be visited. They had no doubt that the game was to "go through" the passengers, depriving them of their money and valuables, in the usual manner of a hold-up. It had not occurred to them, so far, that the stopping of the train might be for any other reason.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they come!" murmured Bob.

There was a squeak from Billy Bunter. He blinked in terror at the figure that entered the car by the door at the end.

It was that of a man in "store" clothes—not a wild figure in chaps and stetson, as the juniors had rather expected it to be. Under the brim of his black Derby hat, the upper part of his face was hidden under a cloth mask.

A pair of narrow, icy eyes gleamed through the eye-holes.

"Hands up!" came a sharp snap, and every hand in the car went promptly into the air. Billy Bunter's fat paws were over his fat head with the quickest movement the fat Owl had ever made in his life.

Through the eye-holes of the mask the bandit's eyes flashed along the car. They glittered at the sight of the Greyfriars fellows, standing together with their hands up.

Johnny Bull had dropped his stick. He had strong objections to being robbed by a gang of thieves, but he had too much solid common sense to think of trying his luck with a stick against a loaded revolver.

The masked man came quickly along the car. Behind him, at the end, another of the gang appeared—this time a rough-looking ruffian in chaps and stetson. He swayed a big revolver to and fro, obviously ready to spray the car with bullets at a sign of resistance. But there was no sign of resistance. The passengers stood like lambs with their hands in the air.

The masked man in the Derby hat stopped as he reached the Greyfriars party.

Masked as he was, something familiar in his aspect struck all of them. It seemed to them that they knew the icy eyes that gleamed from the eye-holes of the mask.

Harry Wharton caught his breath at the suspicion that flashed into his mind. That suspicion was confirmed the next moment.

"Where's the other guy?" rapped out the masked man.

He addressed the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, his eyes gleaming at him, the half-raised revolver bearing on him.

"Who?" asked Harry quietly, though his heart was thumping.

He knew now what face was hidden behind the mask.

"Vernon-Smith! Where is he?"

"Oh, gum!" gasped Bob Cherry. He knew now that it was Two-gun Sanders, and why the westbound train had been held up.

"He is not on the train," answered Harry Wharton quietly.

"I guess you want to think again, big

boy!" came the bandit's tones of deep, savage menace. "Where is he?"

"He left the train a hundred miles back," answered Harry. "You can ask the conductor, if you like."

A savage oath pealed from the gunman.

"Left the train! It's a lie! Why did he leave it?"

"He had a row with the conductor, and was chucked off. Bill Buck dropped off at the same time," said Harry.

"By the great horned toad!"

The masked man pushed roughly past the juniors, and tramped into the next car. Evidently he did not believe, or only half-believed, that statement, and was going to satisfy himself.

The juniors exchanged expressive glances.

"Sanders!" breathed Bob.

"Two-gun Sanders—after Smithy?" muttered Nugent. "Oh crumbs! What a bit of luck that Smithy dropped off the train!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I—I—I say, you fellows," stammered Billy Bunter, through his chattering teeth. "I—I say, is—is—is that Sanders?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"Oh erikay!" gasped Bunter.

The juniors waited, with beating hearts. The man in chaps and stetson was still covering the passengers with his revolver. For ten minutes or more they waited, and then Two-gun Sanders came back into the car, gritting his teeth with rage.

## THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

### Drawn Blank!

SANDERS came to a halt, his eyes fixed on the Greyfriars group, gleaming with fury from his mask.

No doubt he had asked questions

farther along the train and learned that he had been told the truth; that Herbert Vernon-Smith and Bill Buck had been left behind. He was plainly in a state of bitter and savage rage.

The hold-up had taken place, as the Greyfriars fellows could guess now, not for purposes of robbery, but to seize Vernon-Smith and keep him away from the Kicking Cayuse Ranch—what the gangsters had failed to do in New York, the gunman had counted on doing with the aid of a bunch of Texas roughnecks.

By sheer chance, his prize had eluded his grasp. Evidently he had known that Vernon-Smith was on that train, and had laid his plans accordingly. But certainly he could not have foreseen that the Boulder would be dropped off after a row with the conductor.

As it was, he was utterly at a loss. The swift wheels had covered more than a hundred miles since the Boulder had left the train—his intended victim was hopelessly out of his reach.

The juniors, still with their hands up, watched him in silence.

In his rage, it almost seemed as if he would use the revolver in his hand; he half-raised it, as he glared savagely at them. Billy Bunter, still with his fat hands up, shut his eyes behind his spectacles. But the Famous Five, though their hearts were beating painfully, eyed the desperado with steady eyes.

They were thankful, from the bottom of their hearts, that Smithy was off the train; almost equally thankful that Bill was off it. Had the two been there, they had no doubt that the Kicking Cayuse puncher would have defended Smithy—and no doubt he would have been riddled with bullets in doing so.

"You've got me beat" again!" Sanders' voice came sharp with rage. "You doggoned geeks, you've got me beat again! That guy ain't on the train! Thunder! I guess I've more'n half a mind to let daylight through the whole bunch of you!"

The juniors stood silent. They were at the gunman's mercy. But they did not think that the ruffian was likely to carry out such a threat—bitterly enraged as he was by his disappointment.

"You—Wharton's your name, I guess—you figure that that young geek will come after you on the next train?"

"I suppose he will follow on," answered Harry. "I have no idea what his plans may be."

"You are aiming to quit the cars at Prairie Bend?"

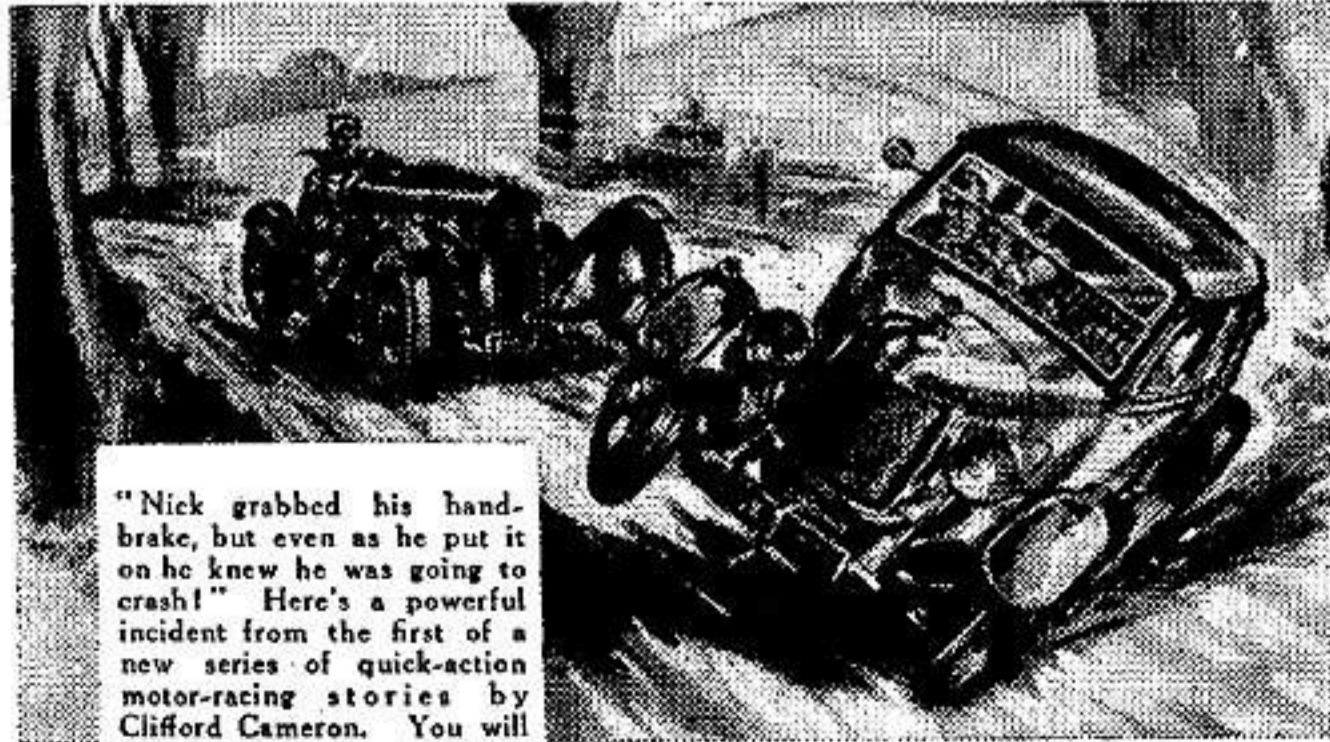
"Yes; that's where we leave the railroad."

"I guess he'll jine up with you there, soon or late!" muttered Sanders. "Yep—he sure will hit Prairie Bend, doggone him! But—"

The juniors could guess the savage, disappointed, enraged thoughts in the gunman's mind. It was futile for the ruffian to think of holding up the next train. Long before the next string of cars came booming along, the news of the hold-up would have spread far and wide, and the bandits would be hunted. Even the space of time that Sanders had spent in searching the train for Vernon-Smith spelled danger to the gang.

"Say, old-timer," the man in the stetson at the door of the car called out to Sanders—"say, I guess we ain't got time to burn!"

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The gunman snarled an angry oath in reply. But he, like his follower, realised that there was no time to "burn," if the gang were to get safe away after the hold-up.

There was a sudden sound of spluttering shots, and a shouting of voices, a jingle of spurs and bridles.

Sanders spat out another oath, and, leaving the juniors, ran along to the end of the car where his follower waited.

The juniors heard him shout from the train:

"Say, what's that rookus?"

"I guess we gotta ride, boss!" shouted back a voice. "That was a coupla punchers—they sure is hitting the horizon hell-for-leather—"

"We're through here!" snarled back Sanders.

The Greyfriars fellows caught their breath. Evidently the hold-up had already been spotted—a couple of cowmen, riding the prairie trails, had seen the halted train and the masked horsemen, and were riding off to give the alarm.

The hold-up gang had no more time to waste. The juniors saw Sanders leap from the train and run to his horse. The man in the stetson, whose revolver had covered the passengers in the car, followed him.

"They're going!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Nugent.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, are they gig-gig-gone?" stuttered Billy Bunter.

"Going, old fat man," said Bob.

"Oh crikey! Oh lor'!"

The conductor came hurrying back through the car.

"I guess you gents can take your seats!" he called out. "We'll be moving on again in a few shakes!"

The juniors looked from the car. In the red sunset they saw the gang of roughnecks at a little distance—mounted now, and riding off in a bunch. Sanders was lost to their view in the crowd of them.

Plainly, the gang were in a hurry, now that they knew that the alarm had been given. They were in haste to get away, and they lost no time. With a clatter of hoofs, the whole bunch of wild-looking horsemen swept away over the plain. A jingle of bridles and spurs came back for a moment or two and died into silence.

"Going—going!" said Bob Cherry. "Gone!"

The hard-riding bunch disappeared from view beyond a fringe of post-oaks in the distance across the plain.

Sanders and his gang were gone.

The train was in a buzz of excitement from end to end. Already the engineer and the brakeman, assisted by some of the passengers, were removing the pile of rocks from the track, which had halted the train.

"By gum!" said Bob. "What a spot of luck for Smithy! If he'd been here, he would be riding off with that gang now, tied on one of their horses! Sanders would have got him this time."

"No doubt about that!" said Harry.

The train got into motion again, and rolled on towards Prairie Bend.

## THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

### Only a False Alarm!

**C**RACK, crack!  
Bang, bang!  
Yell from Billy Bunter!  
"I say, you fellows, they've come back! Oh crikey!"

## COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear fr. m his readers. Write to him. Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**H**OW time flies! It seems but a short while ago we were making merry over Christmas—now we're looking forward to Easter!

Another holiday for you fellows—what? I do hope the weather keeps fine for you all. As I sit down to write this Chat the outlooks is promising. But who knows what it will be like for the holidays? There's only one thing you can be sure about, and that is being able to get a copy of the MAGNET. No matter how dull the weather may be, the Old Paper is always merry and bright.

Every post brings in showers of letters from readers saying how pleased they are with the fine series now running in the MAGNET. For all those ardent readers who would like to show their appreciation, here's something you can do for me. If you have a chum, or know of a boy or girl who does not read the MAGNET, will you lend them this copy so that they can see what the paper is really like? I feel sure that there are still thousands more boys and girls who would take the MAGNET regularly each week if only they had a glimpse of the paper. If you want to please me, find someone who does not read the MAGNET and lend him or her your copy for a day or two. You'll be doing them a good service, and they'll become regular readers right away. And you will earn my grateful thanks.

By the way, have you got your diary handy? Then make a note in it to the effect that the next issue of the MAGNET will be on sale Thursday, April 14th. I strongly advise my regular readers to order their copy in good time!

Harry Wharton & Co. bounded to their feet. In the red sunset, the train was booming down to Prairie Bend, where the Greyfriars fellows had to alight. The prairie town was in sight, ahead, along the line; and the juniors were looking at it with interest, when that sudden alarm made them bound.

Prairie Bend was not much of a town. There was a railway station, or railroad depot, with a long platform of timber planks; an irregular street of frame-houses, and shacks, and zinc-roofed huts; and a larger building, with a wooden veranda in front, which the juniors took to be the hotel where they were to stay for the night.

In the clear air of the Texas plains they could pick out every object clearly, though still at a considerable distance. Horsemen were to be seen on the plain—burly, bronzed-faced men in huge stetson hats—the "ten-gallon" hats of Texas. Suddenly a bunch of riders came galloping for the train, loosing off revolvers as they came.

Talking of this particular issue, the title of the next yarn in our thrill-packed Western series is:

## "HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN TEXAS!"

Vernon-Smith has been lucky enough to escape the clutches of his rascally enemy so far. But will his luck hold good until he reaches Kicking Cayuse? Two-gun Sanders means business; he's bent on keeping the millionaire's son away from the ranch—for what reason is an absolute mystery to the Bouncer and his chums. The rascally bandit has failed both in New York and on the west-bound train to kidnap his victim. But he's not forgotten the fact that the Greyfriars party have yet to travel by stage-coach across unknown, boundless spaces of prairie-land before they reach the ranch. It's another chance to get his man, and a chance Two-Gun Sanders does not let slip through his fingers. I will refrain from telling you more, so as not to spoil the interest of the story for you. I will say, however, that Mr. Frank Richards has given of his best in this thrilling yarn, and I am sure every one of you will thoroughly enjoy every line of it!

Space to answer a reader's letter? Yes, I think so.

Jack Wallace, of Shrewsbury, writes and asks me how he may learn ventriloquism, and in time become an expert like Billy Bunter? Well, Jack, the art of ventriloquism can only be acquired by carefully following the advice of those who are themselves expert ventriloquists. As I am personally not a ventriloquist, the best advice I can offer is to purchase a good book dealing with the subject. Your local newsagent will probably supply you with one for a shilling or thereabouts.

Yes, it's time I called a halt. Meet you all again next week, chums. Till then, cheerio.

YOUR EDITOR.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bang, bang, bang! roared the six-guns. Clatter, clatter! Trample, trample! came the wild riders, letting out their shaggy broncos to a mad gallop, racing beside the track, brandishing revolvers and banging away at a terrific rate.

"It's not that gang again!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"But what—"

"I say, you fellows, we shall all be shot and murdered!" yelled Billy Bunter. "I say, tell the engine-driver to make the train go faster! I say—"

Bang, bang, bang!

Harry Wharton & Co. stared blankly. The wild riders beside the railway track were certainly not Sanders and his gang. They had been left thirty miles or more behind. Neither did it seem likely that they were another gang of hold-up men—attacking the train within sight of the town. Neither, too, did the other passengers in the car seem

alarmed. Most of them were staring out—some of them were laughing.

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet. His eyes popped behind his spectacles at the sight of the wild mob racing beside the train and firing revolvers. He squeaked with terror.

"It's some sort of lark, I suppose!" gasped Bob Cherry. "But what—"

"What the dickens—"

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

One of the galloping broncos stumbled in a prairie-hole, and pitched his rider off. The man sprawled in the grass, yelling, the riderless horse galloping on. The rest of the mob dashed on, unheeding, banging away with the six-guns.

One look at them was enough for Billy Bunter. He stared round wildly for a hiding-place. Every moment he expected some of the whizzing bullets to come crashing through the car.

He grabbed a big travelling-rug, and plunged underneath it, crumpling up beside his seat. There, he hoped, he would remain unseen by that desperate gang when they boarded the train. That he left a foot sticking out from under the rug, Bunter was happily unaware.

Under the enveloping rug the banging of the revolvers came muffled to his fat ears. Every moment he expected the train to halt, and the desperadoes to come swarming through the car.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not! Startled, and rather alarmed as they were at first, they very soon realised that this did not mean an attack on the train—though they could not guess what it did mean!

They saw the conductor, with a grin on his face, lean out of a car and wave his hat to the riders—and some of them waved their stetsons back. They heard the candy-boy yell:

"Hi-yi! Ride it, cowboys?"

"Must be a game of some sort!" said Bob.

"The gamefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Obviously, it was not a hostile attack. At the open end of the station platform, drawing rapidly nearer now, a group of men could be seen, watching the chase, some of them waving their hats. Another and another of the wild riders tailed off. But three were still galloping level, keeping pace with the engine.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the conductor!" exclaimed Bob, as that official came into the car. "I say, what's this game?"

The conductor grinned.

"I guess it's the boys racing the train," he explained. "There sure is generally a bunch waiting for the train, to race it on the last lap into Prairie Bend. You don't want to be skered none!" he added.

But the Famous Five were not scared; they had already realised that the banging of revolvers only indicated exuberance of spirits. Not one of the innumerable bullets came near the train.

Now that they knew what was on, the Greyfriars fellows watched, with as

much interest as the other passengers. Close to the station, another and another rider dropped behind. Only one man was still keeping pace—riding as if for his life, with quirt and spur.

"Go it!" roared Bob Cherry. "By gum, that chap can ride! Keep it up!"

There were cheers all along the train as the cowpuncher rode desperately on. His stetson blew off and hung by its band at the back of his head; the end of his neck-scarf blew out in the wind. The banging revolvers were far behind the train now. The station was close at hand, and for some moments it looked as if the rider might succeed in racing the locomotive.

But he tailed off at last, still riding hard, and was left behind as the train ran into the station and clattered and rocked to a halt. Probably it was not on record that any of the Prairie Bend punchers had succeeded in beating iron and steam.

"Well, that was a spot of excitement while it lasted!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, where's Bunter!"

The juniors had forgotten Bunter in the excitement of watching that thrilling race. They looked round for him now—in vain! Bunter had disappeared!

"Has that fat chump wandered away?" exclaimed Bob. "We've got to get off the train here—"

"The wonderfulness is not terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin, pointing to the foot that exuded from under the travelling-rug crumpled by Bunter's seat!

The juniors stared at that foot. Then they howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently Bunter had not stayed to ascertain that that sudden outbreak was only due to a bunch of festive cowpunchers racing their broncos against the train. Bunter had no doubt that it was an attack by a gang of outlaws, and he had hunted cover.

The fact that the train had stopped did not reassure Bunter. It only meant to the terrified fat Owl that the desperate gang had stopped it and was now coming on board, six-gun in hand. Under the rug, Billy Bunter was shaking like a fat jelly.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "There's Bunter! If they were train robbers I don't think they'd miss him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, you fat ass!"

Bob Cherry stooped over the rug. He lifted his hand and brought it down with a loud smack.

Smack!

"Oooogh!" came a muffled howl from under the rug.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roll out, you fat ass!"

The rug muffled the familiar voices. To Billy Bunter they were the voices of deadly and desperate outlaws.

"Ow! Mercy!" he roared. "D-don't shoot! Oh crikey! Spare my life! Yarook!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come out of it!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ow! All right! D-don't shoot! Oh crikey!"

Bunter realised that he was discovered. He wriggled out from under the rug and tottered to his feet.

"Ow! Mercy! Wow!" he roared.

"You burbling chump—"

"You terrific fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the yelling juniors. He set his spectacles straight on his fat nose and blinked again.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he stuttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where are they?" gasped Bunter. "The train's stopped! Ain't they on the train? Where are they?"

"Where are who, you burbling, blithering bloater?" gurgled Bob.

"Those villains—those train robbers—those cutthroats!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"You howling ass!" roared Bob.

"They were a bunch of punchers racing the train, and there isn't any danger and never was any—"

"Eh? But—but the train's stopped!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha! It's stopped in the station, and if you don't get off you'll go on to New Mexico!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I see! I—I wasn't scared, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. And the Greyfriars fellows gathered their baggage and stepped off the train.

Billy Bunter rolled after them, still blinking round him rather uneasily through his spectacles.

It was the following morning, before Herbert Vernon-Smith and Bill Buck rejoined the Greyfriars party at Prairie Bend. Smithy arrived with the fixed intention of booting Billy Bunter all over the prairie town, if not all over the prairie as well. But he abandoned that intention when he heard of the hold-up on the railroad and of what would have happened to him had he been on the train.

Where the Bounder would have been just then, had Two-gun Sanders found him on the train, nobody knew; but there was no doubt that, wherever it was, he preferred to be at Prairie Bend with Buckskin Bill still "riding herd" over the Greyfriars party on the Texas trail.

THE END.

(Vernon-Smith escaped capture only by the narrowest of margins—what? Will his enemies make another attempt to get hold of the millionaire's son? Bet your sweet life they will! Don't miss: "HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN TEXAS!"—the third yarn in this hair-raising Wild West series. You'll find it in next Thursday's MAGNET.)

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# JACK JOLLY'S HOLIDAY JAPE!

Have a good laugh over this instalment of our comic serial: "THE SWELL WHO HAD TO SWOT!"  
By DICKY NUGENT

Clump! Thud! Wallop!  
The sound of fairylike feet stalking down the staircase fairly awoke the echoes of Fitzboodle Castle.  
It was Jack Jolly, of the St. Sam's Fourth, who was treading the creaking stairs. But nobody who knew the cheery young Fourth Form kaptein could possibly have reckoned him!  
He wore white silk stockings, satin neckerchiefs, emerald robes and a gold coronet. A heavy false mustache adorned his dial and a gold-rimmed monocle gleamed in his eye.  
Fearless and Merry and Bright, and the Honorable Guy de Vere, who were all waiting at the foot of the stairs, fairly gasped as they saw him.  
"My hat! What a topping disguise!" breathed Fearless.  
"How do, boys, what, what!" cried Jack Jolly, in a disguised



# The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 288. EDITED BY DICK RAKE. April 16th, 1938.



# DICK RAKE CALLING!

Owing to the fact that Harry Wharton is a member of Vernon-Smith's holiday party, I have been asked to edit the "Herald" for the time being. As acting-editor, I must therefore say a few words. So here goes.  
The old clock in the tower has moved forward an hour. In other words, Summer Time is here again—though you would hardly have thought it to see the frost on the playing-fields when Bob Cherry and I had our pre-breakfast sprint this morning! Anyway, cold or not, the winter is officially over, and it seems just the right moment to look back and sum up the past season.  
I think it will be generally agreed that we have worthily upheld the sporting traditions of the Greyfriars Remove.

In footer we have been beaten twice only—once by St. Jim's and once by St. Jude's. Two games were drawn and the remaining sixteen we won, mostly by handsome margins. Our goal average—85 for and 19 against—is miles better than that of any other team we have played, so we have every reason to be satisfied.  
Our gym team at the annual display was adjudged the smartest in the school, and in athletics Lord Mauleverer did his bit for the Form by romping home first in the Open Cross-country Handicap. Add to that the fact that several of our men scored over heavier opponents in higher Forms at boxing, and it will be seen that we have excelled in all branches of winter sport.  
We have done pretty well, too, in non-athletic pastimes. Wibley produced two plays which earned high praise from the critics, and our chess team, with Mark Linley and Hurrec Singh as the star turns, came very near to bagging the chess championship from the Sixth. Finally, the Remove Debating Society achieved such a high standard of eloquence that members of the Sixth Debating Club started dropping in to pick up a few tips towards the end of the term!  
Altogether, the winter season has been a great success. Now wait and see what we have up our sleeves for the summer!  
Cherrie till next week, chums!  
DICK RAKE.

"Ten to one in doonuts this is the new staff of servants," said Fearless. "Get ready to play your part, Jolly."  
"Rely on me, old fellow!"  
The Honorable Guy de Vere opened the door. Out on the porch stood a small army of meenials who had obviously come straight from the registry office.  
"Which we're the noo servants, sir!" announced the portly gentleman in front, touching his bowler hat respectfully. "I'm Corkingham, the noo butler."  
"Bai Jove! Pleased to meet you, Corkingham! Prey trot in, everybody. I an the Honorable Guy de Vere, Lord Fitzboodle's son and heir."  
"Eggsactly, sir!" said Corkingham. "And here, I presoom, is his lordship himself. At

your serviss, your lordship!"  
With these words, the new butler dropped a curtsy to the disguised skoolboy, while the other servants made deep, respectful bows.  
It was a very comical spectacle to Jack Jolly, and inwardly he was larling fit to bust. But nobody would have dreamed that to see the hawty way in which he glanced down at the meenials who fawned and grovelled before him.  
"Haw! I hoap you will all be usefule servants, what, what!" he cried, in his most aristocratic voice. "Prey show these people to their quarters, Guy!"  
"Yaas, rathah, patnah!" grinned De Vere. "This way, please!"  
The young nobleman led the new retainers to their quarters below stairs, and Jack Jolly & Co. were left to chortle

loudly over their success.  
"Ha, ha, ha! They all fell for it like lambs!" laughed Frank Fearless. "Mind you keep it up with the Head, old chap!"  
"What-ho!" grinned the bogus lord. "Er—that is to say, yaas, old top!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Then came another serious ringing at the bell. The chums of the Fourth hastily smoothed their lafter, and Fearless went to open the door.  
It was Doctor Birchemall, the revered and majestic headmaster of St. Sam's, who stood on the massive front doorstep. He started violently when his eyes fell on Fearless.  
"Bless my sole! I never knew you had been invited here, Fearless!" he cried, as he hopped across the portal. "Why, there are Merry and Bright, too! Where is your friend Jolly, then?"  
"Ahem! Ho has urgent bizzness to see to just now!" grinned Fearless. "But never mind about that. Here is somebody important waiting to meet you!"  
Then the disguised Jack Jolly stepped fourth out of the shadows with a ruse of his crime robe.  
"Haw! Doctor Birchemall, I presoom, what, what!" he cried, stretching out his hand with a lordly gesture. "Welcome to Fitzboodle Castle, Birchemall!"  
At the site of the magnificently dressed figger before him, Doctor Birchemall soon stopped frowning. A simpering smile appeared on his face, and he doubled up like a jack-nife in a bough of deepest yowmility.  
"Good-afternoon, your lordship!" he cried, in a wining voice that contrasted strangely with his usual boolying tones. "I hoap your lordship is in the pink! Prey axsept the assurance of your humble servant's deepest respect and devotion, your lordship!"  
So saying, Doctor Birchemall seized his bogus

lordship's hand and kissed it. Unforchunitly, he boughed so low in doing this that he stepped on his own beard and tripped himself up; and his courtly effort ended in his hitting the floor of Fitzboodle Castle with a fearful rash.  
"Yaas!" agreed the Honorable Guy. "But regardin' that extra swot, sir, I'm not at all keen on facin' the newswiek!"  
"No discord now, De Vere—no discord!"  
"Hail, De Vere—brightest and bravest of my pawpils!" he cried. "It's simply topping to be spending the vack in your ancestral home, me dear boy. You're looking as fit as a fiddle!"  
"Yaas!" agreed the Honorable Guy. "But regardin' that extra swot, sir, I'm not at all keen on facin' the newswiek!"  
"No discord now, De Vere—no discord!"  
"Sorry and all that, your lordship!" he said, taking good care to hold up his beard as he repeated "though. "I'm afraid my Court manners are a bit rusty. Of course, I don't get much chance to practise them at St Sam's, your lordship."  
"Haw! Don't apologise, my good man," replied the bogus lord. "I don't expect polished manners from commoners, so it's quite all right, what, what!"  
"Oh, thank you, your lordship! Your lordship's kindness is only exceeded by your lordship's jannerosity and good looks!" wined Doctor Birchemall, eringing and fawning as though it would have been a plezzure even to be trodden on by a real live lord. "Mite I take this opportunity of thanking your lordship for your lordship's kind invitation to your obedient servant!"  
"Haw! That's all right, Birchemall," grinned the disguised Jack Jolly. "Here's my young hoapful now. Shake hands with your headmaster, Guy!"  
The Honorable Guy de Vere pulled a rye face. Shaking Doctor Birchemall by the hand gave a fellow the feeling that he was picking up a dead cod fish and in any case the Head had never done anything for De Vere worth a shake of the hand.  
But if De Vere hezzitated, the Head didn't. He was out to make a good impression on Lord Fitzboodle at all costs, and he greeted the young nobleman with grate enthewiasm.

"What-ho—I mean, thanks awfully, your lordship!" he beemed.  
The bogus lordship set his coronet more firmly on his head and led the way to the tea-room.  
"The amount of tuck the Head consumed in the course of the next half hour was simply amazing. The chums of the Fourth watched him, almost mesmerised, as he gobbled away at grate platefuls of ham and eggs room, covered with confusion and perspiration.  
The St. Sam's plotters were left staring at each other with feelings that were too deep for words. The jape was succeeding all right and the Honorable Guy looked like getting out of his holler-day swot. But it seemed that the Head was going to prove a sore trial to them all the same.  
They had pulled the wool over his eyes—but the thought of having to put up with him for the rest of the vack fairly made them knit their brows!  
(More fun in next week's instalment, chums! Don't miss it!)

cried the Head, with a roguish smile. "I am sure I am in complete harmony with your noble father in spending part of the vack in bringing you up to concert pitch. And I am the man to do it, though I do not wish to blow my own trumpet!"  
Jack Jolly thought it was time he put his spoke in the wheel.  
"Haw! Of course, my dear man, you will not overtax the youngster's brane," he drawled elegantly. "My idea is that five minnits swot a day should be suffish, what, what!"  
Doctor Birchemall blinked. His own idea had been at least five hours a day. But he did not dream of going against Lord Fitzboodle's opinion.  
"An eggcellent idea, your lordship!" he grinned. "Your lordship has simply taken the words out of your humble servant's mouth!"  
"Bai Jove!" gasped the Honorable Guy quite feintly.  
"Haw! Well, that settles that, what—what!" grinned the disguised Jack Jolly. "An' now, what about tea, my good man?"  
Doctor Birchemall smacked his lips noisily

and chips, followed by scores and scores of jam tarts and pastries.  
But even Doctor Birchemall's appetite had its limits, and at last he pushed back his chair with a sigh of satisfaction.  
"Thanks for a really ripping tea, your lordship!" he grinned. "That's just the sort of snack I like, to keep the nawing pangs of hunger at bay between luncheon and dinner!"  
"Ye gods—I mean, oh, gad!" gasped the bogus Lord Fitzboodle. "If your lordship will eggscuse his humble servant, I'll trot off and unpack my bag now," went on the Head.  
He rose and boughed; and the eggstent of the greedy old buffer's over-feeding was shown when he straightened up again, for three of his weskit buttons flew off and hit Jack Jolly with the force of machine-gun bullets.  
Plop! Plop! Plop! "Yarooooo!" yelled the kaptein of the Fourth.  
"Ahem! Frightfully sorry, your lordship, I'm sure!" gasped Doctor Birchemall, turning as red as a ripe tomato. Then he turned and galloped out of the tea-



## NEWS in BRIEF

Dicky Nugent is taking up singing during the Easter vac. We understand that he is looking forward very eagerly to his "hollerdays."

Mark Linley has so far overcome his shyness that he is going to a fancy dress ball in the guise of an Easter egg. This seems to us a queer way of bringing him out of his shell.

## ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

"WOULD-BE HUNTER" (Remove). "If Quelchy can remember anything of his young days, surely he will give me back my catapult?"  
Not a chance! His mind is not sufficiently "elastic!"

## Start a Class in Darts!

Says HAROLD SKINNER

To a firm supporter of modern ideas in education like myself, it's really mortifying to see how far Greyfriars lags behind other schools in taking up new subjects.  
You hear of schools where they teach dancing, draughts, and dominoes. More than one school puts whist and bridge in its syllabus. But there's nothing like that about Greyfriars!  
I have an idea, though, that this sleepy old place will wake up one of these days. When it does, I can give the Head a tip for bringing Greyfriars bang up to date with a rush.  
LET HIM START A CLASS IN DARTS!  
Need I enlarge, my dear pals, on the merits of this grand old English pastime? Need I tell you how it quickens the eye, steadies the hand, brightens the brainbox, and adds to the joy of living? I can hardly think it's necessary!  
Among Greyfriars fellows who know what's what I might tell you

it's a hole-and-corner business at the best of times.  
You see odd groups playing in unfrequented spots as though there's something shameful in the game. Only yesterday I came across a little crowd of Upper Fourth chaps in a box-room at the top of the House. If you had judged by the



furtiv' expressions on their faces you would have said they were at the very least conspiring to put a bomb in the Head's desk. But they were only playing darts!  
If I were a beak, I would soon put a stop

to all this rot. "My dear boys," I would say. "There is no need to be ashamed of playing darts. Proficiency in this ancient and honourable game is just as desirable as proficiency in Latin or arithmetic—in fact, a thumping sight more so!"  
Then I would summon the Form-masters to my study and sternly order them to stop teaching one of the more useless subjects—algebra, for instance—and substitute lessons in darts!  
Still, what I would do if I were a beak doesn't cut much ice. The problem is, what is our present Head likely to do about it? Don't you think that if somebody put it to him in the right way he might see sense and make history by starting a darts class? I think he might.  
If any of you sportsmen feel like earning yourself some pocket-money, I'm willing to give five bob to the first man who succeeds in getting the Head to start a darts class at Greyfriars. Go in and win!  
(But if you win a swishing instead of five bob, don't blame us!—Ed.)

that darts is recognised as one of the essential things a man of the world should know. It would warm the cockles of your hearts to see a game in progress in the cramped confines of the Remove study. The breathless hush as each dart pierces the board—the murmur of excitement as the duel reaches its climax! And finally the inquest after the battle has been lost and won; the excited babel of youthful voices raised in argument, followed, perhaps, by the yells and thuds of half a dozen young sportsmen engaged in settling the matter by punching each other on the nose!  
But as things are to-day, old pals, darts fans at Greyfriars are severely limited. Because of some strange prejudice, the beaks frown on the game. So

rhododendrons. That means I have to become a sprint champion to chase 'em off. Occasionally, the young rips climb up into the cimeters and get stranded up there through branches breaking off under their weight. Then it's a case of having to change into a steeplejack to get 'em down!  
But, taking it all round, I wouldn't change my job for something. The boys in this here school are a fine lot, and they like old Mumble for the way he looks after the playing-fields. There aren't many who get the appreciation I get, I know. And, of course, I really come into my own on Sports Day. With my flowerbeds blazing with colour, my trees a picture, and my lawns looking like billiard-tables, I feel my chest puff out with pride to think that it's all my own work.  
I don't think I shall ever want to be anything but the head gardener at Greyfriars School!

## Greyfriars From Fresh Angles

No. 8. The Gardener's Lot.  
By Mr. MIMBLE

It's my job to look after the gardens and playing-fields in this here school, and if you think it's an easy task, I'd like to take you round and show you what it means! They say a woman's work is never done. Well, that goes for a gardener, too—only more so!  
From early morn till sunset you'll find me and my assistants busy. There are flowerbeds, lawns, and shrubs to be tended; trees to be lopped and cricket and football pitches to be kept in condition. There are fruit trees to be nursed, and a big kitchen garden to be looked after. Oh, yes, they keep us busy all the year round, I can tell you!  
I have my trials and troubles in the course of a year's work, too. Now and again I find my flowerbeds trodden on or my tomato-frames smashed. Then I have to turn myself into a blooming Ferrers Locke to find out who's done it. I get boys skylarking about in my