



BILLY BUNTER'S
TREASURE-HUNT

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ONLY THREE WORDS WERE WRITTEN ON THE CARD

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NOT BUNTER'S POSTAL-ORDER

'HALLO, hallo, hallo!'

'What--?'

'Somebody's lost a postal-order! Look!'

'Bag it!'

It was windy in the old quad at Greyfriars.

The morning was bright and sunny. But a strong wind came off the sea, rustling the branches of the old elms, and causing fellows to clutch at their caps.

Harry Wharton and Co. of the Remove rather enjoyed the sea-breeze, gusty as it was, as they trotted in the quad in morning break. It was fresh and invigorating, after the form-room, and Quelch, and the imperishable verse of Virgil!

Leaves were blowing about on the wind. Something larger than a leaf blew past Bob Cherry's nose, and landed on the earth a few yards away.

It was a slip of paper, somewhat crumpled. Bob's eyes were on it only for a moment before it blew away again. But in that moment he recognized that it was a postal-order, and spotted the figures '40/ -'. The next moment it was sailing away on a gust of wind.

'After it!' exclaimed Harry Wharton.

'It's a two-quidder!' said Bob. 'Somebody's in luck--'

'Not if it blows away! Come on.' Five fellows made a rush.

Somebody, evidently, had lost that postal-order. It was up to any fellow, if he could, to recapture it, and restore it to the owner. And the Famous Five of the Remove were all good-natured fellows, willing to render such a little service to the person concerned, whoever he was. So they all rushed after that slip of paper, as it sailed away on the wind.

But it was not easy to capture so light an article in a gusty breeze. Twice they nearly had it, but it flew off again before it could be caught. Then, as it landed once more, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull jumped together, to plant a foot on it before it could fly off.

Johnny was first by a split second. His foot landed on the postal-order, pinning it down. The next second Bob's foot landed-on Johnny's. An almost frantic yell from Johnny Bull woke the echoes of Greyfriars.

'Oh! Ow! My toes! Ow!'

'Oh! Sorry--!' gasped Bob.

'Ow! You clumsy ass! Wow!'

Johnny Bull hopped on one foot. He seemed to have a pain in the other. And the playful wind caught that slip of paper again and whirled it away. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, all made a clutch at it-too late! Away it went on the wind.

'Come on-after it!' panted Bob.

'Blow it!' grunted Johnny Bull. Four fellows resumed the chase, while Johnny concentrated on the foot on which Bob had inadvertently stamped. He seemed to have lost interest in the postal-order, and to be interested wholly and solely in that foot!

High on a gust sailed that elusive slip of paper, with the juniors in pursuit. It landed again, at a distance, almost at the feet of a fat junior who was clutching a cap to keep it on a fat head. Bob Cherry gave a yell: 'Look out, Bunter! Bag it.'

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

He blinked in surprise at four juniors charging towards him breathlessly.

'Eh! Bag what?' he squeaked.

'Fathead!' roared Bob. 'That postal-order-it's right under your silly nose-bag it-quick!'

'Oh!' ejaculated Bunter.

Another gust was just lifting the fluttering slip, when Bunter grabbed. A fat and grubby hand clutched it just in time. Fat and grubby fingers closed on it. In a moment more it would have been gone, before the breathless pursuers could reach it. But it was caught now: safe in the plumpest and grubbiest fingers at Greyfriars School.

'Got it!' gasped Bob. 'Good!'

'Silly ass, to drop your postal-order about!' said Bunter.

'It isn't mine, fathead.'

'Eh! Whose is it, then?'

'Haven't the foggiest! Somebody's dropped it, or let it blow away.'

'Oh! ' Billy Bunter's rejoinder was quite prompt. 'I expect I did.'

'You!'

'There's a hole in my pocket--'

'You fat spoofer,' said Bob Cherry, 'there may be a hole in your pocket, but there wasn't a two-quidder postal-order in it.'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

'We'll ask the fellows who's lost it,' said Nugent.

'That's all very well,' said Billy Bunter, 'but I can jolly well tell you that there are unscrupulous fellows about, who would make out that it was theirs when it wasn't--'

'There's one, at least,' agreed Bob. 'His name's Bunter.'

'I say, you fellows, I jolly well told you I was expecting a postal-order!' exclaimed Bunter. 'You jolly well know I did. I'm pretty certain that this postal-order is mine.'

'Two mistakes! ' said Bob.

'Eh! Wharrer you mean?'

'You're not pretty, and you're not certain.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'If we can't find the owner, we'll take it to Quelch,' said Harry Wharton. 'Hand it over, Bunter.'

Billy Bunter did not hand it over. His fat fingers closed on it more firmly.

'You're jolly well not taking my postal-order to Quelch!' he exclaimed. 'Why, he mightn't believe it was mine--'

'The mightfulness is terrific,' grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'It isn't yours!' roared Bob.

'It jolly well is! I had a letter from my pater yesterday, and I-I must have shoved it into my pocket without noticing it. Then it's slipped out of the hole in my pocket--'

'Is there a hole in your pocket, you fat fraud?'

'Look!' retorted Bunter.

With the postal-order clutched in one fat hand, Billy Bunter turned out the lining of a pocket with the other.

Undoubtedly, there was a hole in that lining: quite a gash, in fact.

Billy Bunter's garments were not infrequently in need of repair. He had only to take that jacket to the House dame for the necessary stitches. Between laziness and forgetfulness, he hadn't. So there was the hole in the pocket, through which almost anything might have slipped. The fat Owl had

forgotten it: but he remembered it now.

Bunter really had no doubts. He had indubitably been expecting a postal-order, for quite a long time. It was improbable, perhaps, that if that long-expected postal-order had arrived, he would have shoved it into his pocket and forgotten it. Still, he might have: and he was quite prepared to believe that he actually had! Billy Bunter had quite a wonderful gift for believing what he wanted to believe. If he had had doubts, the quantity of tuck that could be obtained for two pounds would have carried conviction!

'See that?' said Bunter, triumphantly. 'That's where it must have slipped out! I'd forgotten that I had it--'

'Sort of thing you would forget!' snorted Bob.

'I'm not always thinking about money, like some fellows I could name,' said Bunter, loftily. 'I simply didn't happen to notice it at the time. You fellows needn't worry about it-it's mine all right.'

Johnny Bull came up and rejoined his friends. He was limping a little, from the effect of the impact of one of the largest feet in the Remove.

'Got it?' he asked.

'Bunter's got it,' answered Bob. 'He fancies it's his, because he wants to roll off to the tuck-shop, and blow it on tuck.'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

'Well, that's easily settled,' said Johnny. 'It must have been sent to some Greyfriars chap, as it was blowing about the school: and whoever sent it, would fill it in first, so his name will be on it.' Johnny Bull was a practical youth: and that consideration occurred to his practical mind at once. 'If Bunter's name's on it, it's Bunter's. Let's look!'

'Show up, Bunter!' chuckled Bob.

'I-I say, you fellows--'

'Show up!' roared Bob.

And as Billy Bunter seemed reluctant, for some reason, to 'show up', Bob grasped a fat paw, and hooked the postal-order out from his fat fingers. There was a howl of indignation from Bunter.

'Beast! Gimme my postal-order!'

'If it's yours--' grinned Bob.

'Haven't I told you it's mine? It slipped through that pole in the hocket-I mean that hole in the pocket--'

'Let's see!' said Harry Wharton, laughing.

'It's mine!' roared Bunter.

'Okay, if it's yours,' said Bob. 'Why, you fat villain, is your name Coker?'

'Eh!'

Bob Cherry held up the postal-order for inspection. The name of the payee had been filled in, as Johnny had suggested: and that name certainly was not William George Bunter. It was Horace Coker. The handwriting was somewhat crabbed and tremulous: but it was legible. Evidently, to the Famous Five, that postal-order was the property of Horace Coker, of the Greyfriars Fifth Form: no doubt one of the many remittances which that fortunate youth received from his Aunt Judy.

'Coker's!' said Harry Wharton, with a nod.

'The esteemed and idiotic Coker's!' said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'I-I say, you fellows--'

'Look at it, you fat ass!' Bob Cherry held the postal-order under a little fat nose, 'Look! Does C-O-K-E-

R spell Bunter?'

Billy Bunter blinked at it. He concentrated his little round eyes and his big round spectacles on it. Five grinning fellows watched his fat face. Billy Bunter was extremely reluctant to part with that postal-order, Certainly, even Bunter would not have claimed it if it was not his. But having made up his fat mind that it was his, he was very unwilling to abandon that belief.

'I-I say, you fellows-I-I can't make out that scrawl,' he said. 'Might be anything-I-I fancy it's mine--'

'Oh, my hat!' said Bob. 'He still fancies it's his, with Coker's name on it! Bump him!'

'I say, you fellows-ow! Leggo!' roared Bunter.

Bump!

'Yaroooooh! '

'Still fancy it's yours?' asked Bob.

'Ow! Beast! Yes--'

'Give him another.'

Bump!

'Ow! Wow! Leggo! Tain't mine!' roared Bunter. 'Leggo, will you? Wow!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Well, if you're quite sure it's not yours, I'll take it to Coker,' said Bob Cherry. 'Sure you're sure? We don't mind bumping you till you're quite sure about it!'

'Beast!'

Two bumps on the hard, unsympathetic earth, had apparently convinced Bunter that that postal-order was not his. So Bob Cherry walked off with it, in search of Coker of the Fifth: leaving four fellows laughing, and one sitting on the earth, gasping for breath, and glaring at them with a glare that might almost have cracked his spectacles.

COKER KNOWS BEST

'POPPER'S Island--?'

'Yes.'

'But--'

'Jolly spot for a picnic,' said Horace Coker. 'And jolly weather too-a bit windy, but that won't hurt us.'

'Oh! No! But--'

'We'll run out the boat after tiffin, and pull up to the island,' went on Coker, regardless of interruptions from Potter and Greene. 'Picnic under that old oak there, what? I'll see about the grub--'

'But-- !' said Potter and Greene, together.

'I've just had a tip from my Aunt Judy. It's on the table there-a postal-order for two quid,' said Coker.

'I'm going to blow the lot on the picnic. All right, what?'

'Right as rain! But--'

'Topping! But--'

'For goodness sake,' said Coker, testily, 'don't keep on butting like a pair of billy-goats. What are you butting about, I'd like to know?'

Coker of the Fifth had no use for 'buts'. It was Coker's custom to lay down the law: and when Coker laid it down, it was not for common mortals to 'but'. His friends, Potter and Greene, generally gave Horace his head. But on this occasion they persisted in butting.

'You see, old chap---!' began Potter.

'I don't!' contradicted Coker.

'Popper's Island is a jolly spot for a picnic,' said Greene. 'But--'

'There you go again! But-but-but--' mimicked Coker. 'Any billy-goats in your family, Greeney?'

'But it's out of bounds,' hooted Potter. 'You jolly well know that the Head put it out of bounds, after Sir Hilton Popper kicked up a fuss about Greyfriars fellows landing there.'

'Tell me something I don't know!' suggested Coker. 'Well, we don't want a row,' said Greene. 'Lots of other spots along the Sark for a picnic, Coker! Give Popper's Island a miss.'

'Did I say Popper's Island, or not?' inquired Coker.

'Yes: but--'

'When I say a thing, I mean it,' explained Coker. 'We're picnicking on Popper's Island this afternoon. Who's old Popper? Tain't his island really-everybody knows it's common land-whatever he says about it.'

'But--'

'If you'd give a fellow a chance to speak, instead of keeping on butting in, I'd mention that I've heard that old Popper is away in London now. So he can't be barging in on that island this afternoon.'

'His keepers haven't gone to London with him, have they?'

'I don't care whether they have or not. If you're funky of a keeper--'

'Look here, Coker--'

'Oh, don't jaw so much, old chap,' said Coker. 'That's the worst of you fellows-you're all jaw, like a sheep's head. You don't let a fellow get in a word edgewise. Pack it up, and I'll cut down to the tuck-shop with that postal-order. Mrs. Mible will change it for me.' Coker heaved his long limbs out of the study armchair. 'Look here, if you're afraid of a keeper, I'll ask some other chaps-if you don't want to come--'

'Somewhere else--'

'I said Popper's Island. Coming or not? If you mean no, say no.'

Potter and Greene did not say 'no'. Horace Coker was an open-handed fellow, with the generous tips he received so often from his affectionate Aunt Judy. A picnic on which he was going to expend the noble sum of two pounds was really too good to miss. Potter and Greene wanted to join in that picnic. They would have preferred to join in it at some other spot, to which no risk was attached. But argument rolled off Horace Coker, like water off a duck. In fact only a hint of opposition was needed, to make Coker firm as a rock. What he had said, he had said!

'Oh, we'll come,' said Potter. 'But--'

'But--!' murmured Greene.

'That's that, then,' said Coker. 'Now I'll cut down to the tuck-shop with that postal-order -why-what-where is it?'

He stared over the study table. Several books lay there. But nothing was to be seen of a postal-order. Potter and Greene joined him in staring over the table. But they too stared in vain. There was not so much as the ghost of a postal-order to be seen.

Coker gave an irritated snort.

'Where the dickens is it?' he exclaimed. 'Have you fellows shifted that postal-order I left on the table? I wish you wouldn't always be shifting things the minute a fellow lays them down. A fellow can't find a thing, when some silly ass shifts it--'

'I haven't shifted it!' snapped Potter.

'Haven't even seen it!' yapped Greene.

'Then where is it?' demanded Coker.

'Did you put it in your pocket?'

'Don't be an ass, George Potter, if you can help it. I laid it on the table, while I sat down in the armchair to read my aunt's letter. Now it's gone. Where's it gone?'

'Must have blown off the table, if you left it there--'

Another snort from Coker.

'Yes that's it: blew away when you fellows came in, I suppose-there was no end of a draught from the passage when you opened the door. You wouldn't notice that it was a windy day, and that a draught from the passage might blow a postal-order off the table!' added Coker, sarcastically.

'We never knew it was there, did we?'

'Well, you know now! Look round the study for it, can't you? What's the good of standing there like stuffed dummies, when that postal-order's lying about on the floor somewhere? We've got to find it, if we're going to picnic on Popper's Island this afternoon.'

Coker bent his lengthy form double, scanning the floor.

Potter and Greene also bent and scanned. They looked under the table, under the armchair, and into the corners. But they failed to spot the missing postal-order. That postal-order seemed to have taken unto itself wings and flown away.

'Where the dickens is it?' exclaimed Coker. 'It's in the study somewhere-can't you fellows see it, or are you as blind as bats?'

'Can you see it?' hooted Potter.

'Don't jaw, old chap-just find that postal-order.'

'What about the window?' asked Greene.

'Eh! What do you mean, about the window?' snapped Coker, irritably.

'I mean, it's wide open--'

'I can see it's wide open. I'm not as blind as you fellows seem to be. Why shouldn't it be wide open?'

'I mean, the postal-order may have blown out of it!' shrieked Greene.

'Rot!' said Coker.

'Well, it looks like it,' said Potter. 'The draught must have blown it away, and it doesn't seem to be here-might have blown right out of the window--'

'Rot!' repeated Coker. 'I don't suppose for a moment that it blew out of the window. If it did, it's gone for good, in this wind. For goodness sake, don't fancy that it blew out of the window, because you're too jolly lazy to look for it! Are you going to help me find that postal-order or not?'

Coker resumed the search. Potter and Greene exchanged a glance, breathing rather hard. To both of them, it seemed probable, if not certain, that that vanished postal-order had blown out of the window, and might be anywhere by that time, in the high wind. In which case, it was obviously useless to expend morning break in rooting about the study after it. Coker had no use for that suggestion, not because it was improbable, but because he had not thought of it himself. That postal-order was still in the study, because Coker had said that it was! Coker always knew best!

'Looked under the table, you fellows?' asked Coker.

'I've looked--!' said Potter.

'Well, I expect you'd miss it if it was there. I'd better look.' Coker pushed his head under the table to look.

Crack!

'Oh! ' roared Coker.

'What's the matter--?'

'Wow! Banged my head on the leg of the table-wow!' Coker withdrew that head from under the table, and rubbed it. 'Ow! Wow! Why, what are you grinning at, you dummies? What is there to grin at?'

'Oh! Nothing,' said Potter, hastily. 'Have you found it?'

'No, I haven't found it-I've banged my head! Wow! You look under the table, if you haven't got to stand there grinning like a Cheshire cheese-I mean cat-wow!'

Coker rubbed his head, while Potter looked under the table. There was a step in the passage, and a cheery face, surmounted by a mop of flaxen hair, looked in.

'Hallo, hallo, hallo! You here, Coker?' asked Bob Cherry. 'I've been looking for you. Damaged your nut?' added Bob, as he came into the study.

Coker ceased to rub his head, and gave him a glare. Already exasperated by the vanishing of his 40/-- postal-order, with a crack on the nut added, Coker was in no mood to be bothered by Lower boys. Why that Remove junior had come to his study Coker did not know, and did not want to know. He made a stride at him.

'Get out!' he roared.

'Keep your wool on, old scout! I only came to-oh, my hat! Hands off, you mad ass!' yelled Bob, as the irate Horace grasped him. But it was not a case of 'hands off' -it was 'hands on', hard! Coker, in fact, was in sore need of some object on which to wreak his wrath, and Bob had arrived opportunely.

Coker, as he frequently declared, had a short way with fags. His way with Bob was very short indeed. Bob Cherry was a very sturdy junior: but he was nowhere in the hefty Horace's mighty grasp. He struggled in that mighty grasp, and a crumpled postal-order in his hand dropped to the floor, unnoticed and unheeded. But the struggle was brief. The hapless Bob went whirling through the doorway, tottering across the passage.

He brought up against the opposite wall, gasping: Coker glaring at him from the doorway.

'Now cut!' roared Coker.

'You silly ass!' gasped Bob. 'I tell you I came---' He had no time for more. Coker made a stride out of the doorway: and Bob cut down the passage just in time to escape a lunging foot. In such circumstances, he was not likely to give much more thought to the postal-order he had dropped in the study. The obstreperous Horace could find it there or not, just as he liked. Coker, still happily ignorant why that Remove junior had called, tramped back into the study, and slammed the door. 'Cheeky young swob, butting in,' he growled.

Might have asked him what he came for--' said Potter.

'I don't care what he came for.'

'Might be a message or something--' said Greene.

'Rot!' said Coker. 'If it was a message, he could have said so, I suppose.'

'You didn't give him much time.'

'I've no time to waste on cheeky fags, Billy Greene, if you have. If you've got time on your hands, you might look for that postal-order, instead of standing there talking rot. It's in the study somewhere.'

'Must have blown out of the window,' said Potter.

'I've told you it didn't.'

'Must have, as it's not here,' said Greene.

'It's here somewhere, as it never blew out of the window. Look under that table, Potter.'

'I've looked, I tell you,' yapped Potter.

'Oh, leave it to me,' said Coker. 'You wouldn't see it, if it was a yard long. Fat lot of use you fellows are! I've got to find it, if it's going to be found at all, I can see that.'

Once more Coker bent to look under the table, this time taking a little more care that the thickest head in the Greyfriars Fifth did not contact the table-leg.

'Why, there it is!' he roared.

'What?' ejaculated Potter and Greene, together.

There it was—a crumpled postal-order for 40/-, lying on the carpet just under the edge of the table. That Bob Cherry had dropped it there, when he was grasped, Coker naturally did not know. He held it up, glaring accusingly at his study-mates.

'Is that a postal-order, or isn't it?' he demanded. 'Did I tell you it was still in the study, or didn't I? Look at it. Have I found it or not?'

Potter and Greene looked at it. They had to admit that it was a postal-order, and that Coker had found it.

'Well, I looked under the table--!' said Potter.

With your eyes shut, I suppose?' jeered Coker.

'It wasn't there when I looked--'

'Oh, no! I daresay it was somewhere else, and just walked there after you'd looked,' said Coker, sarcastically. 'Seems likely, doesn't it? Don't talk rot, old chap. I jolly well knew it would never be found unless I found it. Well, now I've found it, I'll cut down to the tuck-shop--not much time left before we have to go in to old Pompous.'

Coker marched out of the study with his postal-order: leaving Potter and Greene puzzled. Coker was not puzzled at all. He had said that the missing postal-order was still in the study. It had been found in the study! So there was nothing to be puzzled about, so far as Coker could see. Quite satisfied that he had been, as usual, right all along the line, Horace Coker marched off to the school shop to expend Aunt Judy's tip on almost a mountain of tuck, to be consumed under the shady branches of

the ancient oak on Popper's Island that afternoon, loftily regardless of the fact that that island in the Sark was out of bounds.

TIT FOR TAT!

'HE, he, he!' chuckled Billy Bunter.

Bunter was amused.

Bunter was leaning on the window of the school shop.

Bunter always leaned, if there was anything at hand on which to lean. Five fellows, who were not given to leaning, were standing in a group near the doorway. They seemed to be waiting for someone to come out. Their remarks, as they waited, reached the fat Owl's fat ears: and seemed to entertain him.

'The silly ass!' Bob Cherry was saying. 'He couldn't let a fellow speak even. Never even knew why I came to his study. Just grabbed me and chucked me out. I think he had banged his silly nut on something-he was rubbing it! But if he thinks he can chuck a Remove man about like a sack of coke--'

'He's got another guess coming!' said Johnny Bull.

'Did you give the fathead his postal-order?' asked Nugent.

'I dropped it when he grabbed me. I don't care a boiled bean whether he picks it up or not. But I expect he did, as he's gone into the shop. Looks as if he's going to blow it.'

'Well,' said Harry Wharton, 'Coker can handle one Remove fellow, but he can't handle five. We shan't have to wait long-the bell will be going in a few minutes now. Collar him when he comes out--'

'And scrag him,' said Nugent.

'Tit for tat!' said Johnny Bull.

'Chucking a fellow out on his neck, when a fellow came to his study to bring him a postal-order he'd lost--' breathed Bob.

'He, he, he!'

Bob Cherry glared round at a fat grinning face. Billy Bunter was amused: Bob was not. He had not found his brief but hectic visit to Coker's study the least bit amusing. 'You fat ass!' he hooted. 'What are you he-he-heing about?'

'He, he, he! Did Coker chuck you out?' chuckled Bunter. 'Serve you jolly well right for butting in. He, he, he! I shouldn't wonder if that was my postal-order all the time! You jolly well know I had a postal-order coming--'

'Boot him!' growled Johnny Bull.

There was a step in the doorway of the tuck-shop.

'Look out-here he comes!' breathed Nugent.

Five fellows turned their attention at once to the doorway. Horace Coker had something coming to him, when he emerged. Coker, probably, had dismissed the incident in his study as a trifle light as air. The Famous Five took a quite different view of it.

But it was not Coker who came out-it was Harold Skinner, of the Remove. Five fellows, about to rush, paused.

'Only Skinner,' grunted Johnny Bull.

Skinner stared at them.

'Waiting for somebody?' he asked.

'Yes: Coker. He's still there, isn't he?'

'Yes: buying up nearly the whole shop,' answered Skinner. 'Mrs. Mible changed a two-quidder postal-order for him. Caked with oof, as usual. What the dickens are you waiting for Coker for?'

'We're going to scrag him. Like to lend a hand?'

'No fear!' answered Skinner, promptly. 'If you want a shindy with senior men, you can have it all to yourselves.'

And Skinner walked away, in the direction of the old Cloisters. There was still time for a surreptitious cigarette in that secluded quarter: and Harold Skinner was more interested in surreptitious smokes than in wild and whirling shindies. Johnny Bull gave a snort as he went.

'Fat lot of use that smoky sweep would be in a scrap!' he said. 'There's enough of us to let Coker know where he gets off.'

'Bother him!' said Bob. 'How long is he going to keep us waiting? We don't want to be late for Quelch.'

'He will come out before the bell goes,' said Harry. 'He won't want to be late for Prout.'

Again there were footsteps in the doorway. Again the chums of the Remove prepared for a rush.

Again they paused, as Temple, Dabney and Co. of the Fourth came out.

'Blow!' said Bob.

The Fourth-formers walked away, and the Famous Five resumed their watch. Morning break was nearly at an end: but it seemed that Coker of the Fifth was still busily engaged in buying up nearly the whole shop, as Skinner had described it. No doubt the expenditure of the sum of forty shillings was taking time. Coker, indeed, was likely to be somewhat heavily laden, when he did emerge at last. But he seemed in no hurry to emerge.

Clang! clang!

'Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the bell.'

'I say, you fellows--'

'Oh, shut up, Bunter.'

'I say, you'll be late---'

'Here he comes!' exclaimed Bob.

It was Coker, at last. No doubt the clang of the bell, the warning of third school, had caused him to get a move on. He came hurriedly out of the tuck-shop doorway, with a parcel under his arm. It was quite a large parcel--indeed, a very large parcel--wrapped in paper and tied with string.

Coker did not even notice the group of juniors by the doorway. Lower boys, in Coker's esteem, were inconsiderable insects, hardly worth a glance from a Fifth-form senior. He started at a stride for the House, with that big parcel under his arm. But if he had not noticed the juniors already, he noticed them the next moment, as they rushed.

Five pairs of hands grasped Horace Coker, before he knew what was happening. In a split second he was up-ended, and came down on the earth with a tremendous bump. The parcel flew from under his arm, and crashed a yard away, bursting as it crashed.

All sorts of good things flew from it as it burst: paper-bags of varied tuck, pots and jars and cartons. But Coker had no leisure to bother about them.

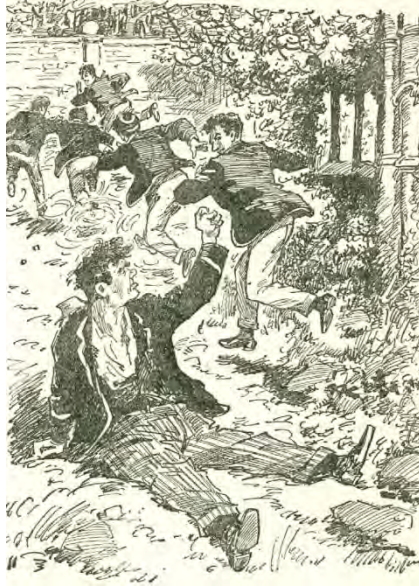
Neither did the Famous Five heed the scattering contents of the parcel. They concentrated on Horace Coker.

'Bag him!'

'Rag him!'

'Scrag him!'

'Scrag him terrifically.'



HE SAT UP, GASPING AND GURGLING

But if Coker and the Co. were too busy to heed the scattering tuck, Billy Bunter was not. One article, a very handsome and attractive box of chocolates, rolled towards Bunter, as it shot out of the bursting parcel, and stopped at his foot. It remained there for about the tenth part of a second! Then it was clutched up in a fat hand, and Billy Bunter was rolling away-and like Iser of old, he rolled rapidly!

Nobody heeded Bunter.

Coker, spluttering for breath, and almost foaming with wrath, struggled frantically. Coker was a big fellow, even for the Fifth: quite an outsize even in Fifth-form seniors. One, or perhaps two, of the juniors, he might have handled. But five in a bunch were many too many for him.

They had little time to spare. The bell was ringing for class: and it was History with Quelch in third school: and Quelch was not a master to tolerate unpunctuality. They did not want to be late for Quelch, with lines to write on a half-holiday as a result. But they gave Coker a couple of minutes, and in that short space of time they packed quite a large amount of activity. Coker, rolled and rumped, dusty and dishevelled, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, sprawled spluttering in the midst of his scattered tuck when they left him.

'Hook it before the bell stops!' gasped Bob Cherry. Leaving Coker for dead, as it were, the Famous Five 'hooked' it: arriving breathless at the door of the Remove form-room just as Mr. Quelch came along to open it for his form.

But Coker did not depart from the spot so hurriedly. He sat up, gasping and gurgling, in quite a dizzy state.

Fellows hurrying from the tuck-shop at the clang of the bell stared at him as they passed, and grinned, and hurried on. For several long minutes Coker sat there, gurgling for breath, till he finally tottered to his feet, still gasping. With the deepest of deep feelings, Coker gathered up his scattered tuck. Harry Wharton and Co. were just in time for Quelch: but it seemed likely that Horace Coker would be very late for Prout.

SKINNER IN LUCK

CLANG! clang!

'Blow!' breathed Billy Bunter.

The sound of the bell, never welcome to Bunter's fat ears, was especially unwelcome just then. In Bunter's fat hands was a large, well-filled box of chocolates: and Bunter's natural desire was to transfer the contents of that box to his own capacious inside.

But there was no time. Bunter, in such matters, was a quick worker: but time was too limited. That those chocs belonged to Horace Coker did not worry Bunter: he did not even think about such a trifling detail as that, when he grabbed up the box, and rolled off with it, leaving Coker in the hands of the Amalekites. All Bunter thought of was getting to a safe distance while Coker was too busily engaged to heed or pursue. He rolled breathlessly into the old Cloisters, where he was safely out of sight: but the clang of the bell followed him. Provisionally, as it were, he grabbed three or four chocolates from the box, and crammed them into a capacious mouth. But he had to realize that there was no time for more.

Clang! clang! clang!

It was annoying. Indeed it was exasperating. But there was only one resource: to conceal that box somewhere in the Cloisters, and leave it till after third school. Then there would be ample time to scoff the contents to the last sticky morsel.

With his mouth full, the fat Owl blinked round him through his big spectacles. A place of concealment was easy enough to find. The old wall which bordered a leafy lane was a relic of the most ancient days of Greyfriars. It had been standing since the times of the Plantagenets, when Greyfriars had been an abbey, and robed and cowed monks had paced where now there were cheery schoolboys. That ancient wall was far from intact. There were many deep cavities in the old stones: some of them probably dating from Tudor days or earlier. All Bunter had to do was to shove that box of chocs into a cavity in the old wall, where it would remain unseen and undiscovered until he had time to deal with it.

He rolled across to the wall, and blinked over it in search of a suitable spot.

He was quite unaware that, from behind a stone pillar at a little distance, a head was projected, and that a pair of sharp eyes fixed on him. He was not thinking of Skinner, and was quite unconscious of the fact that that weedy youth had sought the secluded shades of the old Cloisters to smoke a surreptitious cigarette.

Skinner glared at Bunter's plump back.

A footstep on the mossy old flags had alarmed him in his enjoyment of that surreptitious cigarette. It might have been a prefect, or even a beak, coming: and Skinner, at the sound, had dodged promptly behind that pillar, his half-smoked cigarette in his fingers. 'Smokes' were strictly taboo: and discovery by any person in authority meant a report to Quelch. Very uneasily Skinner peered out of his cover: and it was a relief to see that it was only Bunter. But he was very much inclined to come up behind the fat Owl, and land a foot on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School as a reprisal for having alarmed him.

No doubt he would have done so, but for what he observed the next moment. He found Bunter's proceedings interesting, and he remained where he was, and watched.

Happily unconscious of Skinner, Billy Bunter blinked over the old wall, and groped into a cavity between two ancient stones, the box of chocs in his other hand. It proved to be quite a deep cavity:

just what Bunter wanted, in fact. His groping fat fingers did not quite reach the full extent of it. Satisfied that this was just the spot he wanted, the fat Owl pushed the box of chocolates into it, almost as far as his fat arm would go.

Skinner grinned.

He did not need telling what this meant. Billy Bunter's manners and customs, as a 'snooper' of other fellows' tuck, were well known. To whom that box of chocs belonged Skinner did not know: only that it did not belong to William George Bunter.

'He, he, he!' he heard a breathless chuckle. 'That's all right till after class-he, he, he!'

Skinner popped back behind his pillar, as Bunter turned. But it was hardly necessary. The fat Owl rolled away without a blink round. He disappeared at a trot.

Then Skinner emerged.

Bunter had departed grinning with satisfaction. Skinner also was grinning with satisfaction, as he walked across to the hiding-place in the old wall. He, in his turn, groped in the deep cavity. He did not need to grope far-his lean arm was longer than Bunter's fat one. His fingers contacted a cardboard box, and he pulled it out.

'Ha, ha, ha!' chortled Skinner.

Like Bunter before him, he helped himself to two or three chocs to go on with. But he lost no time. The bell was still ringing: but it was due to stop any moment now. Skinner cut along the old wall, and pushed the box out of sight into a mass of thick old ivy, at a good distance from Bunter's hiding-place. Billy Bunter, certainly, was not likely to find it there, or to think of looking for it anywhere but in the spot where he had hidden it. It was safe till after class: when there was going to be a feast for Skinner and his pals Snoop and Stott.

Grinning. Skinner cut out of the Cloisters. In the quad, he passed a fat figure, panting breathlessly. Billy Bunter was making all the haste he could: but he had more weight to carry than most fellows. Skinner shot ahead of him, and disappeared into the House. The bell had stopped: but he was just in time before the form-room door closed.

It was a minute later that it reopened, and a fat and breathless Owl rolled in. The Remove were all in their places, and Mr. Quelch was all set to enlighten his form upon interesting events in the reign of Henry VIII. But Henry VIII had to wait, while the Remove master fixed a pair of glinting gimlet-eyes on the latecomer.

'Bunter!' rumbled Quelch. 'You are late!'

'Oh! Yes, sir!' gasped Bunter. 'So sorry. sir! I-I-I didn't hear the bell, sir.'

'Are you deaf, Bunter?'

'Eh! Oh! No, sir.'

'Then you must have heard the bell, Bunter!'

'Oh! Yes! No! I-I mean--' stammered Bunter.

It was Billy Bunter's happy way to utter the first excuse that came into his obtuse head. But if one would not do, he was ready with another. 'I-I don't mean that I-I didn't hear the bell, sir-I-I mean that I-I was washing my hands, sir, and I-I couldn't find the towel, sir--'

'Upon my word!'

'I-I was looking for that bell, sir-I-I mean, for that towel, sir, and-and--'

'If you utter another untruth, Bunter, I shall cane you.'

'Oh, crikey!'

'I will not allow unpunctuality in this form. You will take fifty lines, Bunter. Go to your place.'

Billy Bunter rolled to his place. There was an hour of history before him-in which Billy Bunter was not in the least interested-with fifty lines in the offing. But there was comfort in thinking of what was to follow-disinterring Coker's chocolates from their hiding-place in the Cloisters, and revelling in sticky delight. Fortunately, Bunter did not know what had already become of those chocolates! His fat thoughts dwelt on them in happy anticipation, and the minutes of that hour seemed to him to crawl.

BEASTLY FOR BUNTER

'BUNTER!'

'Oh! Yes, sir,' gasped Bunter.

Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, were fixed on the form-room clock. Often and often, in class, did the fat Owl's eyes linger on that clock. A lesson, to Bunter, was something that had to be endured somehow, to the bitter end. But he was always anxious for the end.

But seldom had he been so interested in the passage of time, as on this particular morning. A sweet and sticky feast was to follow that lesson. In an hour there were only sixty minutes: but every one of those minutes seemed, to Bunter, to be prolonging itself unduly. Continually his eyes turned on the clock, and every time he blinked at it, it seemed to him that the hands were crawling more and more slowly. Proverbially, a watched pot is long in boiling: and the oftener Bunter blinked at that clock, the slower and slower it seemed, till he almost wondered whether the history hour would ever end at all.

In such anxious circumstances, Billy Bunter was not likely to absorb much knowledge of the reign of Henry VIII. Never had his interest in the annals of his native land been at so low an ebb. He hardly knew, and couldn't have cared less, whether Henry was a Tudor or a Plantagenet, whether he came before or after Elizabeth the First, whether he had six wives or six hundred or whether he had dissolved the monasteries or dissolved himself. What were such trifles, compared with a box of luscious chocolates with soft centres?

Several times Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes had turned on him, with a glint in them. Quelch did not fail to observe those incessant blinks at the clock.

Other fellows, perhaps, were a little inattentive now and then. It was a lovely summer's day, and the bright sunshine in the quad contrasted favourably with the dusky old form-room. Harry Wharton and Co. were probably thinking as much of a pull on the river that afternoon, as of sixteenth century history. Herbert Vernon-Smith was certainly thinking as much, or more, of the three-thirty at Wapshot! Lord Mauleverer, probably, was not thinking at all. Skinner and Snoop and Stott, who had been whispering, were thinking, like Bunter, about a box of chocolates. But if the juniors' thoughts occasionally wandered from Henry VIII, they mostly contrived somehow to give Quelch sufficient attention to escape the glint of the gimlet-eye.

Not so Bunter! His fat thoughts were far from the sixteenth century. They were concentrated on matters much more contemporary. Indeed Bunter could hardly have said whether Quelch was droning about Henry VIII, or Henry the Fowler, or Henry Irving, or another old Henry. He was blinking at the clock for the umpteenth time when Quelch suddenly rapped.

It was irritating to Quelch. He was on the subject of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. That was, or should have been, interesting to Greyfriars fellows, Greyfriars having been one of the monasteries dissolved by the rapacious Henry. But for Henry VIII, there might have been no cricket-field at Greyfriars for strenuous fellows like the Famous Five, and no tuckshop for Billy Bunter. Moreover, Quelch had touched upon the old legend of the 'lost treasure' of Greyfriars: according to which old tale, Frater Johannes had hidden vast sums of gold, at the order of the Abbot Anselmo, just in time to elude the emissaries of the greedy monarch.

But every Greyfriars fellow had heard that old story before, and their interest in Frater Johannes and Abbot Anselmo was dim.

Billy Bunter, at all events, was not interested in the bygone activities of Frater Johannes, if any. His

interest was wholly and solely concentrated on Horace Coker's chocolates. Quelch droned on unheeded by the fattest member of his form-till, at length, that sudden bark caused the fat Owl to jump, and swivel his spectacles round from the clock to his form-master.

'Are you giving attention to the lesson, Bunter?' Quelch's voice had a deep rumble in it.

That rumble was a warning to the Remove. Harry Wharton and Co. at once dismissed messing about in boats from their minds: the Bounder ceased to ponder on the chances of Bonny Boy in the three-thirty at Wapshot: Lord Mauleverer suppressed a yawn: Skinner and Co. refrained from the faintest whisper: Bolsover major dropped an ink-ball he had intended for the back of Peter Todd's neck: everybody in fact sat up and took notice. Billy Bunter blinked at his form-master in dismay. He had really almost forgotten Quelch's existence, in his deep interest in the clock. Unluckily, Quelch had not forgotten his.

'Oh! Yes, sir!' stammered Bunter. 'I-I wasn't looking at the clock, sir--'

'You have been looking at the clock continually, Bunter.'

'I-I-I mean, I-I think it must have stopped, sir--'

'Do you not hear it ticking, Bunter?'

'Oh! No! Yes! I-I mean, I think it's gone slow, sir--'

'The clock is exactly right, Bunter.'

'Oh ! Yes, sir! Thank you, sir.'

'It appears, Bunter, that you have other matters on your mind, and have no attention to bestow on instruction from your form-master!' Quelch could be ferociously sarcastic.

'Yes, sir! I mean, no, sir! I-I heard every word you were saying about King Anselmo, sir,' stuttered Bunter.

There was a chuckle in the Remove. Bunter, evidently, had not been listening at all, but had caught the name of 'Anselmo' in Quelch's reference to the old legend of Greyfriars. Unfortunately that was all that he had caught.

'Upon my word!' exclaimed Mr. Quelch, 'are you so completely ignorant of the history of your native land, Bunter, as to suppose that there ever was a King Anselmo?'

'Oh! Wasn't there?' gasped Bunter. 'But-but you said, sir--'

'I was referring to Anselmo, Bunter, who was Abbot of Greyfriars at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries!' said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. 'You have not been listening to a word, Bunter.'

'Oh, yes, sir,' groaned Bunter. 'I-I'm very keen on history, sir, especially the-the-the desolation of the monasteries--'

'The what?'

'Dissolution, fathead,' whispered Peter Todd.

'Are you whispering, Todd?'

'Oh! Yes, sir!'

'Take fifty lines! Now, Bunter, if you have been giving attention--'

'Oh, yes, sir! I-I heard all you said about the desolation-I mean the dissolution-of the monasteries-every word, sir--'

'In whose reign, Bunter, did the dissolution take place?' Really, even Bunter should have been able to answer that question, even if he had not heard a syllable from Quelch. But his fat mind was a blank. Odds and ends of historical events were mixed up in the fat Owl's fat mind, but he never seemed to sort them out. However, he had to make an effort, with the gimlet-eye glinting at him.

'Charles II, sir!' gasped Bunter.

'Charles II!' repeated Mr. Quelch, almost like a man in a dream.

'Yes, sir! He was a dissolute monarch--'

'Wha-a-at?'

'And he-he-he dissolved the monasteries, sir--'

'Bless my soul!'

'Ha, ha, ha!' came from the Remove.

'Silence!' barked Mr. Quelch. 'Bunter, you utterly absurd boy--'

'Oh, really, sir--'

'The monasteries were dissolved by King Henry VIII, Bunter!' rumbled Quelch.

'Oh! Were they, sir? I-I mean, I-I meant to say Henry VIII, sir. I-I-I heard all you were saying about Henry VIII, sir.'

'Indeed! And what can you tell me about Henry VIII, Bunter?'

Billy Bunter blinked at him. He had simply nothing to tell Quelch about the eighth Henry. But he had to answer: and he could only draw on the mixed bag of historical fragments that lurked vaguely in his fat head.

'He-he-he sat on the beach, sir, and-and commanded the waves to roll back, and-and they wouldn't--'

'That was King Canute, Bunter.'

'Oh, lor!' I-I mean, in the middle of the battle he shouted "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse"--'

'That was King Richard III, Bunter.'

'Oh dear, was it? Oh! I-I remember, now, sir-he-he said "Kiss me, Hardy!", gasped Bunter. 'And-and-and he never smiled again, sir.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Silence! Bunter, I have already given you fifty lines for unpunctuality. You will also write, a hundred times, the sentence "Anselmo was Abbot of Greyfriars when the monasteries were dissolved by King Henry VIII".'

'Oh, crikey!'

'And if you look at the clock again, Bunter, before the end of this lesson, I shall cane you.'

'Oh, lor!'

For quite a while, after that, Billy Bunter contrived to lend a fat ear to Quelch's drone. It was boring, it was irritating, but Quelch was obviously in a mood to handle the cane or the pointer, for both of which Bunter had a strong dislike. Somehow, with almost superhuman efforts, he contrived to avoid looking at the clock. That clock ticked on, and on, and on, world without end! Even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea: but that history hour seemed to Bunter absolutely interminable. And at length, unable to stand it any longer, the fat Owl ventured a surreptitious blink at the clock. That blink, surreptitious as it was, did not escape a gimlet-eye.

Rap!

'Yaroooooh!'

Bunter forgot the clock, and even the chocolates, as he sucked frantically at fat knuckles on which the pointer had rapped.

'Ow! wow! Ow! wow! yow!'

'Silence! '

'Woooooh! Ooooh! Wow! ow!'

'If you do not cease those absurd noises. Bunter, I shall cane you.'

With a tremendous effort, Billy Bunter contrived to cease those absurd noises. With more efforts, he contrived to refrain from another blink at the clock. And that history hour did come to an end at last. Never, in all his fat career, had Billy Bunter been so glad to roll out with the Remove.

He almost shot out of the House. He whizzed across the quad. Skinner and Snoop and Stott watched him whiz, and grinned at one another. Billy Bunter did not heed them. He whizzed on, and panted into the old Cloisters. He had a hundred and fifty lines to write-he had had his fat knuckles rapped with the pointer-but there was solace in a sweet and sticky feast. And now he was going to enjoy that sticky feast.

Or was he?

LOST – AND FOUND

'OH!'

Bunter gasped.

He was groping in that deep cavity in the old wall in the Cloisters. He naturally expected his fat fingers to contact that box of chocolates he had parked there. He had hidden it there-it was there-it had to be there-it simply could not fail to be there! Only-it wasn't there!

He groped and groped.

Cold rugged stone met the fat fingers. Those fat fingers did not quite reach to the extremity of the cavity. But that cut no ice: for the box had been left within easy reach. And it was not within easy reach-it was not within reach at all!

'Oh!' repeated the fat Owl, blankly.

Where was that box? It had been hidden safely-quite safely-in that remote cavity in the secluded old Cloister. Not for a moment had Bunter doubted that it was quite secure there. How could it fail to be secure in such a hide-out? Yet it was not there-the groping fat fingers contacted nothing but cold stone and ancient dust.

'Oh!' gasped Bunter, for the third time.

It was quite a stunning blow. Nobody-so far as Bunter knew-had been in the Cloisters-nobody could have seen him concealing that booty. That box couldn't have been removed by any nefarious hand. Nobody could have groped in that cavity by mere chance. Why should anyone? Yet the box was gone!

It simply couldn't be gone! Bunter groped and groped, as far as his fat fingers could reach. Then he concentrated his eyes and spectacles on the cavity. But the interior was densely dark. The opening was narrow-hardly more than wide enough to accommodate Coker's box of chocolates. And the old Cloisters were dusky and shadowy. Even with the aid of his big spectacles, Bunter could discern nothing. Having blinked into deep dimness with a concentrated blink, he groped again. But it was of no avail. His frantic groping remained unrewarded.

'Oh, crikey!' gasped Bunter.

He had 'snooped' that box of chocolates, at the risk of trouble with Coker later, if Coker had noticed. He had dwelt on it with anticipation during an almost endless hour in the form-room, at the cost of an imposition and a rap on the knuckles. And now it was gone!

But it couldn't be gone! It just couldn't! Had it somehow slipped farther back into that cavity? Unless endowed with volition of its own, it certainly couldn't have! Still, it had to be there-it couldn't have walked away or flown away. Once more Bunter shoved a fat arm into the cavity, and this time he shoved a fat shoulder after it, squeezing in as far as he possibly could. With a quite herculean effort, he reached as far as a long arm could have reached; and fat finger-tips contacted rough stone at the furthest extremity of that cavity in the wall.

But they did not contact a box of chocolates. Squeaking breathlessly, and squeezing hard, the fat Owl exerted himself, to grope over every inch of space at the dark and dusty extremity. Then something that was not dust or stone contacted his fingers.

It was not a box. It felt like a strip of thick paper.

Whatever it was, the fat fingers closed on it, and drew it out.

Then he blinked at it in angry disgust.

It was a strip of ancient parchment. It was written upon, in ink dim with age-in Latin!

'Silly rubbish!' hissed Bunter.

Bunter was not interested in ancient parchments, and he loathed Latin. What Bunter wanted was a box of luscious chocolates with soft centres: certainly not a dim old Latin parchment left over from the days of the monks.

Having blinked at it, he pitched it away with a disgusted snort. It dropped on the old flags, unheeded further by Bunter.

Then once more he squeezed a fat arm and a plump shoulder into that cavity, for a final desperate grope.

But it booted not! That cavity in the Cloister wall had contained nothing but the dust of ages, and that old parchment, which had probably lain there undisturbed for centuries. Now it contained nothing but dust. The exasperated Owl had to give it up.

Those chocolates were gone! As obviously they could not have departed of their own accord, somebody must have found them and snooped them. Words could not have expressed Bunter's scorn for a fellow who would snoop another fellow's chocolates!

'Beast!' groaned Bunter.

There was not going to be a sticky feast! It was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream! Slowly, sadly, and sorrowfully, the Owl of the Remove turned away. Then he paused, blinking down at the old parchment lying on the mossy old flags. It was, he supposed, some rot in Latin, which some monk or other had scribbled in ancient days, and hidden in that cavity in the old wall, just as Bunter had hidden his booty. But why had he hidden it? Could it possibly be of any value?

The fat Owl stooped, and picked it up.

There were many old parchments in the library, at none of which had Billy Bunter ever thought of blinking. But this particular parchment was, so to speak, a horse of another colour. It could never have been among the ancient records surviving from the days of Abbot Anselmo. Plainly, it had been deliberately hidden away: concealed at the extremity of an old cavity in the Cloister wall, where nobody could ever have thought of looking for anything. Hundreds of years had passed, doubtless, since some old monkish hand had hidden it there, and it had never been found-till now! It dawned on Billy Bunter's fat mind that he had made a discovery. Searching for a quite contemporary box of chocs, he had unearthed a dim old document that had remained concealed from all eyes for centuries.

He blinked at it quite curiously.

The Latin was dim with age, barely decipherable: one word at least wholly indecipherable. But there was one word that struck Billy Bunter, and struck him forcibly.

That word was 'aurum'.

In Latin lessons, it was Billy Bunter's happy custom to give Quelch as little attention as he could: and of what knowledge he had to absorb, he generally forgot the greater part as soon as he was out of the form-room. But something, at any rate, lingered, even in Billy Bunter's fat and obtuse mind. Even Bunter knew that 'aurum' was the Latin word for 'gold'.

'Oh!' breathed Bunter.

He blinked and blinked again at that exciting word 'aurum'.

Aurum-Gold! There was something about gold in that dim old document. Back into Bunter's fat mind came that strange old legend of the 'lost treasure' of Greyfriars: Quelch had been droning about Abbot Anselmo in the history hour. Frater Johannes, according to the old tale, had hidden the golden store of the abbey, by order of the Abbot Anselmo, to preserve it from the greedy clutches of Henry Tudor. And 'gold' was mentioned in this dim old parchment so unexpectedly unearthed by the Owl

of the Remove.

'Oh!' gasped Bunter.

He made out the opening words of the document. 'Ego Frater Johannes.' Even Bunter could construe that. 'I Brother John.' That document, in Billy Bunter's fat fingers, had been indited by Frater Johannes himself-that dim Latin was the 'fist' of Brother John, reputed to have hidden the gold of the abbey.

'Oh, crikey!' gasped Bunter.

His little round eyes bulged behind his big round spectacles.

What was this ancient parchment, written by Frater Johannes, unless a guide, a clue, to the 'lost treasure' of the old abbey? Was it?

For the first time since he had adorned Greyfriars School, Billy Bunter wished that he had given Quelch a little more attention in form. Plenty of fellows could have construed that mysterious document at sight-Harry Wharton, Or Mark Linley, or Nugent-very likely Bob Cherry or Johnny Bull or Inky. But it was beyond the range of Bunter's Latin. If only he had swotted a little more-- But he hadn't! He blinked and blinked again, but was little the wiser.

But he was going to know! If this dim old parchment was a clue to the 'lost treasure' of Greyfriars, Bunter was going to work it out, somehow, and get on with a treasure-hunt. And if he found it--! There were footsteps in the Cloisters. The fat Owl hurriedly thrust the parchment into his pocket. Nobody was going to see that clue to hidden gold-if such it was. He blinked at Skinner and Snoop and Stott as they came sauntering up.

'Looking for anything, Bunter?' asked Skinner blandly, and Snoop and Stott grinned.

'Eh! Oh! No! And I haven't found anything, either,' said Bunter, astutely. 'There wasn't anything to find, and I haven't found it, and I'm not going to show it to you, Skinner, so yah.'

With that, Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving Skinner and Co. staring.

'He can't have found the chocs,' said Skinner. 'The fat ass has found something, but it can't have been the chocs. Let's see, anyway.'

They moved on to the spot where Skinner had hidden the box of chocolates in the ivy. Skinner pulled the ivy aside, and revealed the box. He lifted it out and removed the lid.

'Tuck in!' he said.

Snoop and Stott lost no time in tucking in. As Bunter, obviously, had 'snooped' those chocs, Skinner and Co. had no scruple in 'snooping' them in their turn: and they finished them to the last soft centre. If Coker missed that box of chocs, he never knew what had become of it-and neither did Billy Bunter. But Billy Bunter was no longer bothering his fat head about a mere box of chocs. Billy Bunter was seeing golden visions of treasure: rolling in gold in happy anticipation. With his mind's eye, he saw himself unearthing that golden store hidden centuries ago by Frater Johannes. It remained to transpire whether he would ever see it with any other eye!

AFTER THE FEAST THE RECKONING

'SCARED?' jeered Coker.

He sniffed, sarcastically.

Potter and Greene did not answer that question. They exchanged a glance, as they pulled at the oars. With considerable self-restraint, they refrained from disengaging the oars, and jamming them at Horace Coker.

Several times, since they had pulled out from the school boat-house, they had been tempted so to do. And it would have been quite grateful and comforting, to bowl Horace over, as he sat in the stern with that air of sarcastic superiority. But Coker was standing the picnic—quite a gorgeous picnic—so Potter and Greene had to stand Coker.

Neither were they precisely 'scared', as Coker chose to express it. But they were uneasy.

Many times, as they pulled up the shining Sark, they glanced round, and over their shoulders.

Popper's Island was in sight now: a mass of greenery over-topped by the high branches of a great old oak. It was an attractive spot, delightful for a picnic on a summer's afternoon. But Potter and Greene rather dreaded that one or another of Sir Hilton Popper's keepers might be in sight also. There was likely to be a spot of trouble if picnickers were spotted on that island.

Coker, evidently, did not care: perhaps on the principle that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Coker simply sniffed at those uneasy glances over shoulders.

'Nothing to be scared about!' said Coker. 'Old Popper can call it trespassing, if he likes, but everybody says that that island is common land, and old Popper would be told where he gets off, if anybody stood up to him about it'

'Nobody has,' said Potter.

'Well, somebody should!' said Coker. 'Anyhow, I've told you the old bean is away in London, so you needn't keep on peering over your shoulders as if you expected to see his ghost'

'It's out of bounds, whether it's old Popper's or not,' said Greene.

'I know that! The Old Man put it out of bounds to save argument with Popper, that's all.'

'It's out of bounds all the same,' said Potter. 'Look here, Coker, why not pull on past it, and picnic farther on? What about that jolly meadow by the bridge?'

'Nothing about that jolly meadow by the bridge! Didn't I say we were picnicking on that island?'

'Look here. Coker--'

'Don't jaw, old chap,' said Coker. 'When a thing's settled, what's the good of going on jawing? Jaw, jaw, jaw! You fellows would jaw a chap's head off! I hardly get in a word when you start. Jaw, jaw, jaw!'

Potter and Greene pulled on, in eloquent silence.

Coker, however, went on talking. Horace Coker rather prided himself upon being one of those strong, silent characters. Like so many such characters, he found music in the sound of his own voice. Indeed it often seemed to his long-suffering chums, that Coker, like Callimachus of old, could have 'tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky'.

'Greyfriars men have always landed on that island, till old Popper started making a fuss about it,' went on Coker. 'He lets the island sometimes for fishing, so I've heard. Like his cheek! Catch me taking any notice of old Popper! If you fellows are funky of him, I'm not. I'll jolly well-- Ooooh! You clumsy ass, Potter, you've splashed me with that oar! Oooogh! You fathead, Greene, you've splashed me too! Wooooh!'

Coker was busy for the next few minutes shaking off water like a mastiff. Potter and Greene felt a little better, as they pulled on. The boat ran into the little landing-place on the island, and tied up under the branches of drooping willows.

The three Fifth-formers landed. Coker lifted out a large basket containing the ample supply of tuck for the picnic: while Potter and Greene scanned the river-bank with anxious eyes. Once in the thickly-wooded interior of the little island, they would be safe from observation from the bank. But if they were seen to land, what they had to expect next was a keeper in a boat. Coker, still a little damp from those perhaps accidental splashes, gave them an impatient glare.

'Sister Anne. Sister Anne, do you see old Popper coming?' jeered Coker.

'I believe I saw something move in the trees over there,' muttered Potter, uneasily. 'If there's a keeper about--'

'Oh, come on, and don't be a goat!' yapped Coker.

A scarcely-marked path led up into the interior of the island. Coker, swinging the basket, tramped up that path. Potter and Greene followed on, after carefully pushing the boat out of sight in the willows—a precaution that Coker would probably have scorned.

Trees and bushes were thick in Popper's Island. But in the centre of it was a little open glade, where grew the great oak which was a landmark for a considerable distance on either side of the Sark.

There was a pleasant shade under the wide-spreading branches, and the grass was thick and green. It was undoubtedly a very pleasant spot for a picnic.

'Jolly here, what?' said Coker, glancing round, as he dumped down the basket.

'Jolly enough,' agreed Potter. 'But--'

'But-but-but--!' mimicked Coker. 'There you go again-billy-goating! Chuck butting, and help me unpack this basket.'

The basket was unpacked. The array of good things, on which the open-handed Horace had expended the noble sum of 40/-, had a cheering effect on his friends. After all, they were safe out of sight now, surrounded by walls of greenery: and the irascible old baronet of Popper Court was away in London, too. So Potter and Greene hoped for the best: and they sat down to enjoy that spread: and they certainly did enjoy it, in spite of the fact that Coker talked all the time. They disposed of enticing edibles while Coker talked.

Coker, luckily, did not require much in the way of answers. His conversation was largely a one-way traffic.

All Coker's topics were about Coker. That subject was of inexhaustible interest to him. He expatiated on the unexampled cheek of a gang of Removites in rushing him over at the tuck-shop door that morning: apparently because he had chucked a cheeky fag out of his study. Then there was cricket—and the fatheadedness, the sheer obstinate fatheadedness, of Wingate, the Greyfriars captain, in refusing him a place in the first-eleven. Then there was Prout, his form-master, who had given him lines for being late for third school-lines which Coker had a 'jolly good mind' not to do!

While Coker, like the little brook in the poem, ran on for ever, Potter and Greene packed away cakes, and jam-tarts, and éclairs, and meringues, and quite a variety of other attractive things, washed down by unlimited ginger-pop.

Every now and then they listened, a little uneasily, to the plash of an oar on the river, as some craft passed the island. But there was no alarm: and Potter and Greene began to think that old Horace, was perhaps not such a crass ass they had supposed, in selecting Popper's Island for that picnic.

But--!

'What's that?' said Greene, suddenly.

It was a sound from the landing-place: quite near at hand, though out of sight from the glade. Potter and Greene exchanged a startled glance.

'What's what?' snapped Coker. He was talking, and he did not like interruptions. 'Only the wind! Haven't you noticed that it's a windy day?'

'It's a boat-stopping--'

'Rot!' said Coker.

'I tell you--'

'Somebody else coming for a picnic, perhaps,' said Coker. 'For goodness sake don't jump like frightened rabbits--'

'If it's a keeper--'

'Rot!'

'We don't want to be marched in to the Head, if you do, Coker,' hissed Potter. 'Get into cover, in case--'

'Rubbish!'

'Well, I'm going to. Come on, Greeney.'

That it was a boat that had stopped, and that somebody had landed, was clear even to Coker.

Tramping footsteps and the rustle of thickets could be heard.

Whoever had landed was coming up the path to the glade through the trees.

Potter and Greene had really enjoyed that picnic. It had been quite a gorgeous spread. But it looked as if the reckoning was coming after the feast. The prospect of being 'marched in' to Dr. Locke at Greyfriars was dismaying. It was not a prospect that Potter and Greene were going to face, if they could help it. Cover, luckily, was at hand. Potter made a jump for the lower branches of the great oak overhead. Greene jumped after him. They vanished into foliage like ghosts at cock-crow.

Coker snorted.

'Well, of all the funks--!' he hooted. 'Haven't I told you that it's only some picnicker?'

As Coker had decided that it was only some picnicker landing on the island, of course it was so--or, at least, should have been so! Unluckily, it wasn't so!

Coker, staring in the direction of the approaching tramping feet, discerned a big and powerful-looking man, in gaiters, coming through the trees. He stared at that man in gaiters. Clearly, he was no picnicker. Quite clearly, he was a keeper. Potter and Greene, peering down through interstices in the foliage, were thankful that they had taken cover in time. Coker, who had disdained to take cover, was caught.

'Oh! 'Ere you are, then,' said the keeper. 'Trespassing! You alone 'ere, or anybody else about, young shaver?'

'Find out!' retorted Coker.

'You belong to the school?'

'Find out!' repeated Coker.

'I'll find out fast enough,' said the keeper, grimly. 'I'm taking you to your 'ead-master. That's the master's orders. Schoolboys ain't allowed 'ere, as you know very well, young shaver. You're coming with me, you are.'

Horace Coker breathed hard. He clenched his fists.

Potter and Greene, silent above as mice with the cat at hand, hardly breathed. Was Coker-even Coker-idiot enough to handle that keeper? He had no chance, if he did, for brawny as Coker was, that big keeper was twice as brawny. But it would be like Coker! He was already booked for a row with the Head: but a fight with a keeper would really put the lid on.

For a long moment there was suspense.

But even into Coker's somewhat solid brain it penetrated that fisticuffs would only make matters worse. He breathed hard. He breathed deep. But he did not hit that keeper. In indignant silence, he tramped away down the path to the landing-place, and the keeper followed him. They disappeared from anxious eyes peering down through oak foliage.

'Oh!' breathed Potter.

'Is Coker the man to ask for it?' sighed Greene.

'Isn't he?' said Potter.

From the high oak, they had a view, over lower vegetation, of the channel between the island and the Popper's Court bank. A few minutes later, they discerned the keeper's boat pushing across that channel to the bank, the keeper handling the oars, Coker sitting in the stern with his brows contracted in a deep and indignant frown. Behind that boat was another-Coker's boat, which was being towed away. Potter and Greene, left stranded on Popper's Island, could only continue to watch the river, like two Sister Annes, for some passing craft to give them a lift ashore.

MYSTERIOUS!

'WHAT about Bunter?'

'Oh, bother Bunter.'

'Well, yes, but--!' said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed. Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled. Johnny Bull grunted. Bob, as usual, was all good-nature. The Famous Five were going on the river that afternoon. They were going to enjoy a pull on the sunny Sark in their roomy old boat, tea at the cafe by Courtfield Bridge, and another pull back down the stream in time for 'gates'. Truth to tell, they did not yearn for a fat and lazy passenger in the boat-Bob no more than his comrades. Nevertheless, it was like him to think of Bunter. He had no doubt that Bunter would like a run up the river-so long, of course, as he was not expected to pull.

'Do him more good than frowsting in an armchair on a glorious afternoon like this,' said Bob.

Another grunt from Johnny.

'Are we at Greyfriars specially to do Bunter good?' he inquired.

'Um! Not exactly. But--'

'Too jolly lazy to handle an oar,' said Johnny.

'Well, we wouldn't want him to be catching crabs all the way up to Courtfield, even if he wanted to,' said Bob. 'Still, if you don't want him--'

'No more than you do,' said Johnny, 'but ask him all the same, fathead, if you feel like it.'

And the other three members of the Co. having nodded assent, Bob Cherry tramped up the Remove passage to No. 7 Study, leaving his friends waiting for him on the landing. He gave a cheery bang at the door, which hurled it wide open.

'Hallo, hallo, hallo!' roared Bob.

There was a startled squeak in the study.

Billy Bunter was there. But he was not, as Bob naturally expected, sprawling in Peter Todd's armchair. He was sitting up at the table, a pen in his hand, a Latin dictionary at one fat elbow, and a Latin grammar at the other. Bunter, surprisingly, seemed to be at work!

He blinked round angrily through his big spectacles, as Bob's sudden bawl at the doorway made him jump and scatter blots. Then, with a celerity quite unusual to Bunter, who generally moved to very slow motion, he whipped a blotting-pad over something that lay on the table before him. Bob had only a glimpse of it. It looked like a strip of old discoloured paper. But it was out of sight in a moment.

'You silly ass!' hooted Bunter. 'Making a fellow jump--!'

'Busy, old fat man?' asked Bob.

'Yes! Shut that door.'

'Oh!' Bob remembered that the fat Owl had had an imposition that morning.

'Lines for Quelch?'

'Blow Quelch!' snapped Bunter. 'Think I've got time for lines for Quelch? Quelch can go and eat coke.' Clearly, it was not lines for Quelch!

'You're not swotting!' ejaculated Bob, in astonishment. 'Swotting Latin on a half-holiday! My hat! That's a bit new, for you, isn't it?'

'I'm not a slacker, like some fellows I could name!' retorted Bunter. 'You jolly well shut that door and

clear off, and let a fellow get on with it.'

'You wouldn't like a run on the river?' asked Bob.

'No, I wouldn't! If you want somebody to steer, you can ask somebody else.'

'You fat ass, think I'd let you steer us into the bank, or into some other fellow's boat--'

'Well, if you're too jolly lazy to row, I'm not going to row you--'

'You fat, footling, foozling octopus!' roared Bob. 'Think I'm asking you to come along and catch crabs?'

'Well, what do you want me for, then?' yapped Bunter.

'I don't want you, fathead! I thought you might like a run on the river, that's all!' hooted Bob. 'Jolly glad you won't come. Think we want to lug a ton of tallow up the river? Rats!'

With that, Bob turned in the doorway to depart. Billy Bunter turned back to his task, whatever it was. Then he blinked round at the doorway again, and squeaked: 'Hold on a minute, Cherry.'

'Rats!' repeated Bob, over his shoulder.

'I say, do stop a minute, old chap--' Bob turned back again.

'Well, what?' he asked: not very patiently.

'I-I'm a bit bottled over this,' said Bunter. 'It's a bit of a riddle in places. I've got to work it out--'

'Translation for Quelch?' asked Bob. Bunter's reception of his kind offer of a run on the river had irritated Bob a little. But if the obtuse fat Owl had a difficult translation to do, he was sympathetic.

'Well, not exactly for Quelch,' answered Bunter, cautiously. 'I-I-I'm doing it for amusement, really.'

'Oh, suffering cats!' gasped Bob. The idea of the fat slacker of the Remove working at a Latin translation for 'amusement' was quite overwhelming.

'That's it,' said Bunter. 'Sort of -of pastime, you know. But you might be able to help a fellow--'

'Well, Wharton could handle it better than I could,' said Bob. 'But let's look at it, anyway, and we'll see.' He came across to the table. 'Where is it?' he added, glancing over the table. He expected to see a copy of Latin prose or verse there: but nothing of the kind was visible.

'Tain't under that blotter,' said Bunter, hastily. He clapped a fat hand on the blotter as he spoke. Bob stared at him, blankly. Evidently, Bunter had slipped that spot of Latin under the blotter to keep it out of sight: though why, was quite a mystery.

'You fat chump,' said Bob. 'How can I help you with it without looking at it? What are you hiding it for anyway, blitherer?'

'No need to look at it,' said Bunter. 'Besides, there isn't anything to look at. But I can't make out quite what he means by "domino".'

'He-who?'

'Oh! Nobody,' said Bunter. 'But it's a bit of a riddle -they can't have been playing dominoes here when Henry VIII dissolved the monkeries--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'What are you cackling at?' yapped Bunter.

'Perhaps you mean when old Henry dissolved the monasteries,' grinned Bob.

'I don't care whether they were monasteries or monkeries,' said Bunter, peevishly. 'That's not the point. I don't see where the "domino" comes in. Even if they were playing dominoes, I don't see why he should put it in. I can't find "domino" in the dick--'

'Did you expect to, fathead? You'd better ask Quelch to give you a tip about declensions, ass.'

'Domino' is the dative or ablative, whichever you like, of "dominus". And if you don't know what a "dominus" is, it means a lord or master.'

'Oh, blow their beastly datives and ablatives,' said Bunter, crossly. 'Well, if you're right, "domino

meo" would be either the dative or ablative of "my master". But which?'

'How can I tell, without seeing the rest of the sentence, fathead? Why the dickens can't you show it to me?'

'I'm jolly well not going to show it to anybody, I know that. I-I mean, there's nothing to show-nothing at all! But, I say, what's a "latibulum"?'

"Latibulum"!' said Bob, blankly. 'You could find that in the dick, if you're not too lazy to look. It's a hide-out.'

'Oh! A hide-out! That's all right-that's just what I expected. He would mention a hide-out, of course.' 'Who would?'

'Oh! Nobody! But I say, what's a "humavi"?' 'What's a "humavi"!' repeated Bob. 'If you asked Quelch that, I'll bet he would give you whops. It isn't a noun at all, fathead. It's the perfect tense of "humo", to bury.'

'Oh! ' Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles. 'Of course! He would bury it!'

'Who would bury what?'

'Oh! Nobody! Nothing! "Humo", I bury- "humavi", I have buried-that's it! Of course he would bury it in a hide-out. There jolly well can't be any doubt about it now.'

'About what?'

'Oh! Nothing.'

'Not wandering in your mind, are you, Bunter?'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

'I forgot-you haven't one to wander in,' said Bob. 'But what the holy smoke are you blithering about?'

'Don't you ask any questions, and I won't tell you any crammers,' said Bunter. 'I may have found out something, and I may not. That's telling. But I jolly well knew what it was when I saw the word "aurum"--'

"Aurum"!' repeated Bob.

'Yes-that means "gold"--'

'Thanks,' said Bob, sarcastically. 'I had a sort of faint idea what it meant, but thanks all the same. What the dickens have you got under that blotter?'

'Nothing.' Bunter clutched the blotter with both fat hands. 'You're jolly well not going to see it, besides, there isn't anything to see. You jolly well get out, Bob Cherry, and shut the door after you.'

'Glad to,' answered Bob, and he got out, and shut the door after him with a bang. He tramped away down the Remove passage, leaving the fat Owl to his mysterious occupation.

'Isn't he coming?' asked Harry Wharton, as Bob rejoined his friends on the landing. 'No--he's swotting,' said Bob. Four fellows jumped.

'Bunter swotting!' ejaculated Nugent. 'Gammon!' said Johnny Bull.

'That's a bit new, for Bunter,' said Harry.

'The newfulness is terrific.'

'Blessed if I can make him out,' said Bob. 'He's got something in Latin that he won't let a fellow see, goodness knows what or why. Anyhow, he won't come up the river with us, and we're not going to have his company this afternoon. Think we can survive it?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

The Famous Five went down to the boat-house, feeling that they could not only survive, but actually enjoy, the loss of Billy Bunter's fascinating society. Billy Bunter had been mysterious-very

mysterious. But nobody, as it happened, was interested: and in a very few minutes, both Bunter and his mysteriousness were quite forgotten.

REMOVE TO THE RESCUE!

'HALLO, hallo, hallo!'

'Oh, my hat!'

'That ass Coker--!'

'That fathead!'

'The esteemed and idiotic Coker!'

Five fellows in the boat all exclaimed at once. What they beheld on the tow-path was quite startling. They were pulling up the Sark, heading for Courtfield Bridge: but they were not half-way to Popper's Island, when it happened. That reach of the Sark was bordered by the Popper Court Woods, thick and green and shady, back of the tow-path. Suddenly, from the shady wood, a running figure burst, panting out on the bank. It was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars: red-faced with running, breathless, hatless. He panted and panted as he whizzed out of the wood, and came to a gasping halt on the margin of the stream.

The Famous Five gazed at him, the rowers resting on their oars. Coker, evidently, was in hot haste: and the way he stared back at the wood indicated that he expected pursuit. The next moment, however, he spotted the Remove boat on the river, and waved his hand and shouted:

'Here! Quick!'

They gazed at him. Coker, somehow, always seemed to have the idea that he spoke as one having authority: saying 'Do this! and he doeth it!' But the chums of the Remove were not in the least disposed to jump to orders from Horace Coker. Moreover, after that somewhat hectic encounter at the tuck-shop door that morning, they preferred to keep the aggressive Horace at a safe distance. So they just gazed at him, from the boat, and smiled.

'Do you hear?' bawled Coker. 'Pull in-quick! You silly, grinning young idiots, get a move on, quick.'

'What I like about Coker,' remarked Bob Cherry, 'is his nice, polite, polished way of asking fellows to do things.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'The politeness of the esteemed Coker is terrific,' chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. 'But perhapsfully somebody is after him.'

'Here!' roared Coker. 'Deaf?'

'Not exactly deaf, Coker,' answered Harry Wharton. 'But what do you want?'

'You silly young ass--!'

'Thanks.'

'You cheeky, blithering young idiot--'

'Thanks again! Is that all?'

'Haven't I told you to pull in to the bank?' roared Coker. 'Can't you understand plain English, you dithering young dummy. There's a keeper after me, you dunderheaded young ditherer. Quick!'

'Oh!' said Harry. 'Pull in, you chaps.'

Coker, obviously, had struck trouble. His manners, certainly, were deplorable: but if a Greyfriars man had struck trouble, the Famous Five were quite ready to help him out of it. The boat swerved in to the bank at once, and the moment it was within reach of a jump, Coker made a bound, and landed in it. It rocked wildly as he crashed in, and shipped water: and Coker, stumbling, sat down in the water in the boat.

'Ooooh! ' gasped Coker.

'You clumsy ass!' hooted Johnny Bull. 'Want to capsize us?'

'Shut up! Push off! Do you hear? Push off, you young idiots.'

The juniors pushed off. If there was a keeper after Coker, they certainly did not want trouble with a keeper. They pushed off in haste, and four oars came into prompt action. It was a rather roomy old boat, and not a lightweight: and there was a good current coming down the Sark: but four pairs of strong young arms made good play with the oars, and it almost shot up the stream. Looking back, the rowers glimpsed a big man in gaiters emerging from the wood, close to the spot where Coker had emerged. But a turn of the winding bank hid him the next moment.

Coker scrambled up.

'Better give me an oar!' he said. 'Here, yours, Wharton. You young ass, why don't you hand me that oar when I tell you?'

Harry Wharton laughed.

'Only because I'm not going to,' he said.

'I know how you pull an oar, Coker, and we're not out to catch crabs.'

'If you want me to smack your cheeky head, young Wharton--'

'Oh, do!' said the captain of the Remove. 'That is, if you want to be tipped into the Sark.'

Coker breathed hard. But he decided not to perform any head-smacking, in a boat crowded by five sturdy fellows, all prepared to lend a hand in tipping him into the water. He stared back along the winding wooded bank, and was relieved to see no sign of a pursuer on the tow-path.

'Cheeky rotter!' he remarked.

'Who?' asked Bob.

'That keeper! He had the cheek to make out that I was a trespasser, and was going to walk me back to the school, and land me in a row with the Head. I dodged him in the wood and cut. He doesn't know my name, so it will be all right. Pull in to the island, you kids.'

'Popper's Island?' said Bob, staring.

'You young ass, do you think I mean the island of Madagascar, or the island of Robinson Crusoe?' snapped Coker.

'Popper's Island is out of bounds,' said Nugent.

'I don't need a silly fag to tell me that! Pull in to the landing-place as soon as you get to the island, and don't jaw.'

'The landing-place is out of bounds, as much as the rest of the island,' said Harry Wharton.

'I said don't jaw.'

Popper's Island was looming ahead now. There had been occasions, no doubt, when the Co. had rather overlooked the circumstances that that island was out of bounds. But on the present occasion they were bound for Courtfield, and had not the slightest intention of breaking bounds at the behest of Horace Coker.

'Keep on!' said Harry.

The Famous Five, of course, had no idea that it was upon the island that Coker had been caught by that keeper, and that his friends were still there. It did not occur to Coker's powerful brain to explain how matters stood. Coker, as usual, was content to give orders.

'I said pull in to the island!' he bawled.

'Time you stepped ashore, Coker,' said Harry. 'You're far enough from that keeper now--'

The boat swerved towards the bank. The juniors had been ready and willing to help a Greyfriars man elude a keeper. But Coker was safe from the keeper now: and they had had all they wanted of his company.

Coker's eyes gleamed.

'I said pull into the island!' he repeated.

'You can say it as often as you like, old bean,' said Bob Cherry. 'You can set it to music and sing it, if you like. But we're not going anywhere near that island, and--yoo-hoop!'

Smack!

So far Coker, though with an effort, had refrained from head-smacking. But there was a limit to his patience. He smacked, and there was a roar from Bob.

Coker had time for only one smack. Then an oar jammed into his ribs, and he sat down, rocking the boat.

The next happenings were so swift, that they quite bewildered Coker. The boat bumped into the rushes: hands were laid on Horace on all sides, and he was heaved headlong over the gunwale to the tow-path. He sprawled with his face in grass and his long legs trailing in mud and shallow water.

Leaving him sprawling, the juniors pushed off, and pulled on up the river.

Looking back, they had a last view of Coker, dragging long legs from water and mud.

'Cheeky ass!' said Bob, rubbing his ear. 'Catch us going out of bounds to please him. What the dickens did he want on Popper's Island, anyway?'

That query was unexpectedly answered, a few minutes later, as the boat pulled into the channel between the island and the bank. Two figures appeared, waving excitedly to the Remove crew, from the island.

'This way, you fellows!' shouted Potter.

'Give us a lift across!' shouted Greene. 'We're stranded here.'

'Oh, my hat!' exclaimed Bob. 'That's Coker's pals--out of bounds! Pull in, quick, before somebody spots them from the bank!'

'Oh!' exclaimed Harry Wharton, 'that's why--!'

'If Coker had had sense enough to tell us--'

'Can't expect Coker to have any sense! Pull in.'

The boat shot to the landing-place. Potter and Greene jumped in, and it shot off again. Thankfully, Potter and Greene scrambled out on the tow-path.

'Thanks!' gasped Potter. 'That howling idiot Coker got us stranded on that dashed island--'

'Thanks!' said Greene. 'That blithering idiot Coker got us landed like that!'

'That dithering dummy, Coker--'

'That blithering bletherer, Coker--'

'That footling fathead, Coker--'

'That gibbering idiot, Coker--'

Potter and Greene seemed quite eloquent, on the subject of their great leader. They were still telling one another what they thought of Horace Coker, as Harry Wharton and Co., chuckling, pulled on up the river.

BUNTER'S SECRET

'LATIN with Quelch!' said Bob Cherry, with a grimace.

'All in the day's work!' said Harry Wharton.

'Blow!' said Bob.

Bob Cherry, it appeared, was not keen on Latin with Quelch!

'Good!' said Billy Bunter, brightly: and quite unexpectedly.

That remark, from William George Bunter, drew surprised glances on the fattest and laziest member of the Greyfriars Remove.

After morning break, on Monday, Remove fellows were gathering at the form-room door for third school. Billy Bunter, generally the last to arrive, at the final clang of the bell was one of the first. His fat figure was leaning on the door when Harry Wharton and Co. came along. For once, Bunter was very punctual.

Neither did he look, as usual, as if he considered lessons a form of torture which fellows had to endure as best they could. His fat face was quite alert. For once, it seemed, Latin with Quelch had no terrors for him.

Indeed, he really seemed to be looking forward to it! Which, if it was so, was the most surprising thing that had ever happened at Greyfriars School. For William George Bunter disliked work in any shape or form: and in the shape of Latin he simply loathed it. Bunter's fixed belief was that, as Latin was a dead language, it was time it was buried.

'Getting keen on Latin, you fat fraud?' asked Bob.

'Yes, rather,' answered Bunter.

'Gammon!' grunted Johnny Bull.

'I'm not a slacker, I hope, like some fellows I could name,' said Billy Bunter, loftily. 'I wish now that I'd swotted a bit harder at Latin. But of course a fellow couldn't know that it would ever be of any use, could he?'

'So you've found a use for it, have you?' asked Frank Nugent, staring at the fat Owl.

'Eh! Oh! Yes! No! I mean--'

'Well, what do you mean, you fat ass?'

'Oh! Nothing!' said Bunter, hastily. 'I'm not going to tell you anything about it, Frank Nugent.'

'About what?'

'Oh! Nothing!'

'What on earth use has Bunter found for Latin?' asked Vernon-Smith. 'Is he going to borrow Quelch's Lucretius, for a little light reading?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'You can cackle!' said Bunter. 'But you just wait till I've worked it out.'

'What are you working out?' asked Peter Todd.

'Oh! Nothing!'

'Going to swot for a schol?' asked Skinner, sarcastically.

'Ha, ha, ha!' The idea of Billy Bunter swotting for a scholarship seemed to entertain his form fellows.

'I'll watch it!' said Bunter, disdainfully. 'Something better than that! You just wait a bit, and then you'll jolly well open your eyes, I can jolly well tell you. You just wait till I walk it off, that's all.'

'What are you going to walk off?' asked Bob.

'Oh! Nothing!' answered Bunter. 'I mean, I haven't found anything, and I'm not keeping it dark, or

anything.'

'That means that he's found something, and that he's keeping it dark!' said Bob. 'Now tell us what you've found, you fat chump?'

'Nothing at all,' said Bunter, promptly. 'I wasn't in the Cloisters at all on Saturday, and I never found anything there. It was quite by chance, too--sheer chance! Not that I found anything, you know. There wasn't anything to find. Nobody ever hid anything there, that I know of.'

'This gets curiouser and curiouser, as Alice said in Wonderland,' said Bob Cherry. 'What the dickens did you find in the Cloisters, Bunter?'

'Nothing at all,' said Bunter. 'And it's got nothing to do with Latin, either. But I say, you fellows, do you happen to know what an "abbatiae" is?'

'An "abbatiae"?' repeated Harry Wharton, blankly. 'It's the genitive case of "abbatia", fathead.'

'Well, what's an "abbatia", then?'

'An "abbatia", fathead, is an abbey, and "abbatiae", the genitive case, means "of an abbey" or "of the abbey". What the holy smoke are you burbling about now?'

'Of the abbey!' repeated Bunter. 'Why, of course, that's it. "Abbatiae aurum" -of the abbey the gold--that's the idiotic way it's put in Latin. The gold of the abbey, of course. That's it.'

'That's what?' asked Bob.

'Oh! Nothing! But Greyfriars was an abbey at that time, wasn't it? I mean before Henry VIII dissolved the monkeries--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I expect they had lots and lots,' said Bunter. 'Those old monkeries were jolly rich. That's why Henry got after them. They jolly well buried it to keep it out of his claws.'

'That's the yarn,' said Vernon-Smith. 'But it's only a yarn, fathead.'

'Is it?' grinned Bunter. 'That's all you know, Smithy.'

'Nobody knows anything about it,' said Bob. 'It's just an old legend, as Quelch said in history class the other day.'

'That's all Quelch knows!' chuckled Bunter. 'Perhaps somebody knows more about it than Quelch! He, he, he!'

'Eh! Who, then?' asked Bob.

'That's telling!' grinned Bunter. 'I may know something about it, and I may not. I'm not telling you fellows anything.'

'Oh, my hat!' exclaimed Bob. 'Is that fat ass dreaming that he can spot the Greyfriars treasure, that's been hidden for hundreds of years, if it ever was hidden at all?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Bunter the treasure-hunter!' chuckled Skinner.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Lend me a million pounds when you find it, won't you, Bunter?' chortled Bob.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'You can jolly well cackle!' hooted Bunter. 'But you just wait till I've worked out that Latin--'

'What Latin?'

'Oh! Nothing! It-it wasn't in Latin--' said Bunter, hastily.

'What wasn't?'

'N-n-nothing at all! I never found it in the Cloisters, and-and it wasn't in Latin, and I haven't got it in my pocket now.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Oh, suffering cats and crocodiles!' said Bob. 'He's found some old Latin exercise that some fellow's chucked away, and he fancies it's a clue to that jolly old treasure!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes Quelch.'

Most of the Remove were grinning, as Mr. Quelch let his form in. Billy Bunter was keeping his discovery a deep secret. He had his own inimitable way of keeping secrets! All the Remove knew now that he had found something in Latin which he fancied was a clue to the legendary treasure of ancient Greyfriars.

Nobody, however, supposed for a moment that there was anything in it. If Billy Bunter fancied that he had a clue to that long-lost treasure, he had that fancy wholly to himself.

But if nobody else was taking it seriously, Billy Bunter undoubtedly was. For the first time in his fat career, he was sedulously attentive in class. His deep-seated antipathy to the language of Horace and Cicero seemed to have evaporated. He hung on Quelch's words, as if they were pearls of wisdom falling from his form-master's lips. Quelch, accustomed to idle inattention, and frequent glances at the clock, from that particular pupil, was quite surprised. He gave Bunter several keen but puzzled glances. But on the whole, he was pleased with Bunter that morning--which was rather a record.

When the Remove were dismissed, Billy Bunter did not roll off, as usual, in the direction of the tuck-shop. He did not, as usual, count the minutes till the dinner-bell rang.

He rolled away to a quiet spot, where, leaning on a buttress, he glued his eyes and his spectacles on a dim and discoloured old parchment. One of the words that Brother John had written there was quite obliterated by time. But the rest were decipherable. But alas, they still perplexed Bunter. His recent swotting did not enable him to construe that document. It looked as if Billy Bunter would have to do quite a lot more swotting, before he could lay his fat hands on the 'gold of the abbey'--if any!

A SPOT OF LATIN

'I SAY, you fellows.'

'Too late,' said Bob Cherry. 'Finished, old fat man.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

'And so the poor dog had none!' sighed Bob. 'Try Smithy's study, and give us a rest.'

The Famous Five had tea'd together, in Harry Wharton's study: No. 1 in the Remove. It was not uncommon for Billy Bunter to blink into another fellow's study at tea-time. So when a fat face appeared in the doorway of No. 1 and a pair of little round eyes blinked in through a pair of big round spectacles, the natural assumption was that Billy Bunter had asked himself to tea. In which case, he had certainly missed the bus, on this occasion: five juniors with healthy youthful appetites having cleared the table almost to the last crumb.

'Nothing doing, fatty,' said Harry Wharton, laughing. 'Roll away, barrel.'

But Billy Bunter did not roll away. Tea was over, and the table was bare: so the Co. naturally expected the fat Owl to depart in the hope of better luck elsewhere. Instead of which, he rolled into the study. Having done so, he shut the door carefully after him.

That proceeding caused the Famous Five to stare. 'What's the game?' asked Bob.

'Well, I don't want anybody to hear,' explained Bunter. 'I'm going to tell you fellows, but I don't want it all over the Remove.'

'Some jolly old secret?' grinned Bob. 'Be a good porpoise, and go and tell them in some other study.'

'Buzz off, anyway,' said Johnny Bull.

'I say, you fellows, do listen to a chap. It's pretty important, I can tell you,' said Bunter, impressively.

'You'll be surprised.'

'Will the surprisefulness be terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter?' grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'Well, nobody's ever found a clue to the Greyfriars treasure before, and chance it,' said Bunter.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'You jolly well wouldn't cackle if you knew,' hooted Bunter. 'I've made out enough of it to know that it's a clue to the treasure---'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'But I can't construe it all, and one of the beastly words is blotted out, too. I've been swotting and swotting at it, till I'm jolly sick of swotting. So I'm going to tell you fellows, see?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

It was not surprising to hear that Billy Bunter was 'jolly sick' of swotting. Swotting really was not in his line. Probably Bunter would never have learned anything at all, but for the cane on Quelch's desk. Having tired of that unaccustomed exercise of his fat intellect, Bunter was seeking first-aid, as it were: and he had made up his fat mind, at last, to confide that precious secret to Harry Wharton and Co.

But they were not duly impressed. To Bunter's surprise and annoyance, his impressive communication evoked only merriment.

'I wish you wouldn't cackle every time a fellow opens his mouth,' yapped Bunter. 'Look here, I tell you I've got a clue to the gold of the abbey--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I want you fellows to help me work it out. But it's mine,' added Bunter, hastily. 'Mind, it's mine. I'm not going to be mean about it, of course. Nothing mean about me. If I find that treasure, I may let you fellows have a few hundred pounds each--'

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled the Co.

'Only it's got to be understood that it's mine,' said Bunter, firmly. 'I shan't show you the clue unless you agree that it's mine. That's only fair, as I found the clue. You promise not to bag that treasure, honest Injun, see?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Oh, do stop cackling! Is it honest Injun?' demanded Bunter.

'Yes, if you like,' said Harry Wharton, with a chuckle. 'We won't bag all those stacks of gold you're going to find, Bunter. Honest Injun!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Well, that's all right,' said Bunter.

'Now let's see that old Latin exercise you've picked up somewhere!' grinned Bob Cherry.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Latin exercises ain't written on parchment,' said Bunter.

'Eh! What?' The Famous Five sat up and took notice at that!

'You've found a parchment!' exclaimed Harry Wharton. 'There's a lot of old Latin parchments in the library. If you've been rooting there--'

'Twasn't in the library.'

'Where was it, then?'

'It was jolly well hidden in a hole in the wall in the Cloisters, and I found it by sheer accident. Been there hundreds of years, I expect, ever since the monkeries were dissolved,' said Bunter.

The Famous Five were not laughing now. If Billy Bunter really had found an old parchment in Latin, hidden in a remote recess of the old Cloisters, it was interesting, at least: though whether it was a clue to the legendary treasure of the old abbey of Greyfriars, was quite another matter. At any rate, the fat Owl had succeeded in interesting them: and they were all curious to see that strangely-discovered document.

'Let's see it,' said Nugent.

Billy Bunter shoved a fat hand into a sticky pocket. But he paused, with the fat hand still there.

'Mind, it's mine!' he said. Much as he desired aid in elucidating that document, the fat Owl seemed reluctant to produce it.

'Show up,' said Bob Cherry.

'All right-but you fellows remember it's mine--'

'You fat footling foozler!' roared Johnny Bull. 'Think anybody here is going to pinch it? Boot him out.'

'Oh, go easy,' chuckled Bob. 'Bunter's naturally rather particular about a treasure worth millions and billions and trillions of pounds. Or do you think it will be quadrillions, Bunter?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Well, I jolly well know that it must be thousands and thousands,' said Bunter. 'Mind, it's mine, but I'll let you fellows have some, when we find it.'

'When!' chuckled Bob.

'The whenfulness is terrific.'

'Here it is!' said Bunter, and he drew from that sticky pocket the old parchment that had so long lain hidden in the Cloister wall.

Five pairs of eyes fixed on it.

'It's parchment, no mistake about that,' said Nugent. 'And there's something written on it.'

'Latin,' said Johnny Bull.

'Those old monkeys-I mean those old monks-would write in Latin, of course,' said Bunter. 'They always did. Look here, Wharton, you're rather a dab at Latin-see if you can construe it.'

'I'll try,' said Harry.

There was keen interest in No. I Study now. Obviously, that dim and discoloured old strip of parchment was of great age, and what was written on it was in the Latin language, in which, as even Bunter knew, the ancient monks were accustomed to write. It was, and could only be, some old document left over from monkish days. There were a good many such preserved in the school library, often consulted by Mr. Quelch in the compilation of his *History of Greyfriars*. But if this particular document had been hidden in a secret place, it certainly seemed to be of unusual interest-even if it was not a treasure clue!

'Read it out, old man,' said Bob.

'Go it!' said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton concentrated his gaze on the parchment. The ancient writing was dim: so dim that it had put a severe strain on Bunter's spectacles. The captain of the Remove had to concentrate, to make it out, word by word. And as he did so, the expression on his face was quite startled.

'Make it out?' asked Nugent.

'Yes, except one word, that's quite gone. By gum! This was written by the chap who's supposed, according to the old tale, to have hidden the gold of the abbey---Frater Johannes--'

'Brother John!' said Bob. 'Well, what has Brother John got to say?'

'What does that word "jubilee" mean?' asked Bunter. 'There isn't a word "jubilee", fathead. It's "jubente",' said Harry.

'It looks like "jubilee" to me--'

'Read it out, for goodness sake,' said Bob. 'We're all on the jolly old tenter-hooks.'

'The tenterhookfulness is terrific,' said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. 'Read it outfully, my esteemed chum.'

Harry Wharton proceeded to read it out: all ears in the study on the alert, very much more so than when they had Latin from Quelch! For once the language of Horace was of the keenest interest to every fellow in the study. That strange old document ran:

'Ego Frater Johannes Abbate Anselmo domino mea jubente abbatiae aurum in latibulum secretum humavi ubi emissarii regis nunquam invenient. Quære in -- sub alta quercu. In terram cubita tria procul ab trunco ad occidentem fode, et aurum invenies.'

TREASURE CLUE!

'OH, my hat!'

'Great pip!'

'The great-pipfulness is terrific.'

'This beats Banagher!'

'I say, you fellows--'

'Construe!' said Bob. 'I can't make it all out, if you can. Put it into common or garden English.'

'By gum!' said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath, 'this is it, and no mistake! That fat ass--'

'Oh, really, Wharton--'

'That fat ass had it right-it's a clue to the treasure of Greyfriars, written down by the johnny who buried it--'

'I say, you fellows, I jolly well knew it was,' squeaked Billy Bunter. 'I can't make out what he means by "jubilee"--'

""Jubente", fathead.'

'And then what does he mean about food?' asked Bunter.

'Food!' repeated Harry Wharton, blankly. 'There's nothing about food in it, you dithering owl.'

'What does "fode" mean, then?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Oh, don't keep on cackling,' howled Bunter. 'Those old monks used to do themselves jolly well, but I don't see why he should mention food--'

'He doesn't, ass! Brother John wasn't always thinking about food like a Bunter,' said Harry, laughing.

""Fode" means dig.'

'Does it?' said Bunter, doubtfully.

'Get on with it,' said Bob. 'Let's all tackle it together, and see if we can make head or tail of it. All hands on deck!'

'Many hands make the cracked pitcher go longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks,' agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

""Ego Frater Johannes--"!' said Nugent. 'That's, I, Brother John--'

""Abbate Anselmo domino meo jubente--", ' said Harry. 'That's, Abbot Anselmo my master commanding--'

""Abbatiae aurum--"!' said Johnny Bull. 'That's, of the abbey the gold--'

""In latibulum secretum--"!' said Bob. 'That's, in a secret hiding-place--'

."Humavi"!' squeaked Bunter. 'That's the perfect tense of "humo", to bury-it means, I have buried--'

'I remember telling you so on Saturday,' chuckled Bob.

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

""Ubi emissarii regis nunquam invenient", ' said Harry. 'That's, where the emissaries of the king will never find it.' 'We're getting on,' chuckled Bob. 'Well, if the emissaries of the king didn't find it, we jolly well will, if it's still there.'

'If!' said Johnny Bull.

'Of course it's still there!' exclaimed Billy Bunter, warmly. 'Nobody could have found it without this clue. But I say, what does he mean is queer, in the next line?'

'He doesn't mean that anything is queer, fathead,' answered Harry. ""Quaere" means seek or look for.'

'Sure?' asked Bunter, dubiously.

'Bunter's swotting hasn't done him a lot of good, so far,' chuckled Bob. 'There's nothing queer about this, old fat man, except the fellow who found it.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

""Quaere in--"!' said Bob. 'Can't make out the next word. Seek in-what? Seek in something or some. where. Anybody good at missing-word puzzles?'

Five pairs of eyes scanned the spot where a word was missing. But it was in vain. That word had to be left blank.

'Get on with the rest,' said Bob.

Leaving the missing-word puzzle unsolved, as it were, the Famous Five got on with rest. Never in the form-room, under Quelch's gimlet-eye, had they been so keen on 'con'.

""Sub alta quercu--"!' said Harry. 'Under the tall oak--'

'That's it,' said Bob. 'Brother John buried it under a jolly old oak tree somewhere round about Greyfriars. Lots to choose from.'

'There's that old oak at the corner of the kitchen-gardens, by Gosling's wood-shed!' said Nugent.

'Quite a likely spot. He would bury it somewhere near the place, I expect.'

'And there's another in the Head's garden,' said Bob. 'And a dickens of a lot in Friardale Wood, not far away. But what's the rest? "In terram---"--that's in the ground--'

""Cubita tria"!' said Nugent. 'That's three cubits.'

'How long is a cubit?'

'Ask me another!'

'I believe it's equivalent to an ell,' said Harry.

'Wise as ever!' grinned Bob. 'How long is an ell?'

'Just over a yard,' said Johnny Bull.

""Cubita tria procul ab trunco"!' said Harry. 'That's, three cubits distant from the trunk. Nine or ten feet, perhaps.'

'Good egg! "Ad occidentem"--that's on the west side--'

""Fode" --dig--'

'Sure it doesn't mean food, you fellows?' asked Bunter.

'Fathead!'

'Well, I think--!'

'You don't, old fat man! You never have, and never will.'

'Look here, you beast--'

""Et aurum invenies"!' said Harry. 'And the gold you will find.'

'Hurray!' chirruped Bob.

'I'll write it down in English,' said Harry. 'We shall have to leave out the missing word, whatever it may be. Here goes.'

Taking a pen and a sheet of impot paper, the captain of the Remove proceeded to indite the translation of Brother John's document.

I, Brother John, by command of my master the Abbot Anselmo, have buried the gold of the abbey in a secret hiding-place, where the king's emissaries will never find it. Seek in -- under the tall oak. Dig in the earth nine or ten feet west of the trunk, and you will find the gold.

'Oh, crikey!' said Billy Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles. 'I say, you fellows, that's all right! All we've got to do is to spot that oak tree, and dig up the gold.'

'That's all!' chuckled Bob. 'But which oak tree?

Dozens of them around. Look here, we want that missing word. Search in the something-or-other under the tall oak. Well, in the what?'

'Might be garden!' suggested Nugent. 'It's about the space of a six-letter word.'

'So it is,' said Bob, glancing at the parchment. 'Just about the same space as the word "humavi". Let's see what's a garden in Latin?'

'"Hortus",' said Nugent.

'Well, if it's "hortus" it would fit in, and there's that oak in the kitchen-garden-which I daresay was a garden in Brother John's time just as it is now. Gentlemen, chaps, and fatheads, are we on the track of the jolly old treasure of Greyfriars?'

'Looks like it,' said Harry.

'The lookfulness is truly terrific,' agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'If--!' said Johnny Bull.

'If what, fathead?'

'If it hasn't been dug up long ago,' said Johnny, shaking his head. 'It's over three hundred years since Frater Johannes buried it, and a jolly lot of things could happen in that time.'

'Couldn't find it without a clue!' said Bob.

'The chap who wrote that paper had the clue, and he must have told his boss, the Abbot.'

'Never had a chance, perhaps,' said Bob. 'Suppose they were just going to bag him, and he had just time to stick that clue in the hide-out, for somebody to find later - some pal of his, perhaps. Then suppose he went into exile, or that old Henry chopped his head off-that old ruffian was rather given to chopping off heads! And suppose--'

'Suppose away!' said Johnny. 'But--'

'Oh, bother your butts! You're a croaker, old man,' said Bob. 'That jolly old treasure is buried under a jolly old oak somewhere near this jolly old school, and we're jolly well going to dig it up--'

'You fellows can do the digging,' said Billy Bunter.

'But don't you forget that it's mine-'

'It isn't!' said Johnny.

Yell, from Bunter.

'Why, you beast, if you think you're going to collar my treasure-- I say, you fellows, you jolly well promised, honest Injun--'

'You silly owl!' roared Johnny. 'If it's found, it's what the lawyers call treasure-trove, and the authorities take charge of it.'

'They jolly well won't take charge of my treasure!' howled Bunter, indignantly.

'They jolly well will!' grinned Bob Cherry. 'But don't worry, old fat man, you'll get enough to drown yourself in jam-after a coroner's sat on it--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Beast! Gimme my parchment.' Billy Bunter clutched up Brother John's document, and jammed it back into his pocket. 'I'm going to keep this dark! I wish I hadn't told you fellows now. I know more Latin than you do, anyhow, and chance it. I'm going to handle this, and you fellows can jolly well mind your own business, see?'

And with that expression of gratitude for services rendered, Billy Bunter rolled out of No. 1 Study, with Brother John's parchment in his pocket. Findings, in Bunter's opinion, were keepings: and no coroner was going to sit on Billy Bunter's treasure-when found! True, it was not found yet!

COKER TAKES OVER

'PROUT all over!' said Coker, bitterly.

Potter winked at Greene, with the eye farthest from Coker.

Billy Bunter blinked round irritably.

The fat Owl was seated on a bench under a shady elm, in the quad, his eyes and his spectacles glued on a Latin parchment. His fat intellect was hard at work.

Since the Famous Five had translated that document for him, the Latin no longer perplexed Bunter. It was the missing word that worried him.

Only one word was indecipherable. But that, really, was the operative word.

That document, undoubtedly, was a clue to the hiding-place of the 'gold of the abbey'. Brother John had buried that gold 'under a high oak', no doubt somewhere in the vicinity. The word that had been blotted out by Father Time would have revealed just where to look for that particular oak tree. But not a single letter of that word could be detected by the concentrated gaze of Billy Bunter's little round eyes and big round spectacles.

To locate the buried treasure, that oak had first to be located: and to that oak there was no clue. Unless that oak could be identified, Billy Bunter might really just as well have left the document where he had found it.

There were several oaks in the school grounds. There were dozens quite near at hand. It might be anyone of them. The prospect of digging in the earth, nine or ten feet westward of the trunk, of dozens of oaks, one after another, was not attractive or encouraging.

That wretched oak had to be located! Where was it, and which? Concentrated on his missing-word puzzle, it was annoying and irritating to Bunter, when three Fifth-form men came along under the elms, chin-wagging! He bestowed a morose and impatient blink on Horace Coker.

Coker of the Fifth did not heed Bunter, even if he noticed him there at all. Lower-school fags were as inconsiderable, in Coker's eyes, as the gnats that buzzed in the summer sunshine.

Moreover Coker, as usual, was wholly occupied with the personal concerns of Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form.

His brow wore a frown. His mood was disgruntled.

It was obvious that, at the moment, the universe was not being run to Coker's satisfaction.

'Prout!' he repeated. 'Prout all over.' He leaned on the trunk of an elm, with his hands shoved deep in his pockets, and eyed Potter and Greene gloomily. 'A Georgic - that's Prout.'

'Well, if a fellow breaks bounds--!' murmured Potter.

'If you'd taken cover, as we did--!' said Greene.

'I'm not likely to shin up a tree like a dashed monkey, because of a dashed keeper!' said Coker, disdainfully. 'Besides, I dodged the fellow in the wood, didn't I? I got away all right, and he never knew my name, so of course I thought it was okay. I'd forgotten about the boat--'

'You would!' murmured Potter.

'Eh! What did you say, Potter?'

'Oh! Nothing!'

'Well, don't mumble. I'd forgotten about the dashed boat-a fellow can't think of everything.'

Potter and Greene nodded assent. They agreed that a fellow couldn't think of everything. Privately, they rather doubted whether old Coker could think at all.

'Like his dashed cheek to tie up my boat,' went on Coker. 'But there it is-he did, and he hiked it along

to the school boat-house, and it turned out to be mine, and so it all got to Prout-and Prout gives me a Georgic for going out of bounds. Prout all over.'

'Well, fellows do get lines for breaking bounds,' remarked Greene.

'If you're going to back up old Pompous, Greene--'

'Oh! No! Hard lines, old fellow,' said Greene, hastily.

'I should think so!' growled Coker. 'He jawed me as well-jawed me just as if I was some measly fag in the Remove like Wharton or Cherry or that fat ass Bunter. I didn't mind the jaw so much-but I do mind the Georgic. Why, there's hundreds of lines in a Georgic.'

Potter and Greene looked as sympathetic as they could.

But truth to tell, they were tired of the subject. Coker had been eloquent about Prout and that Georgic ever since class: and, though old Horace did not seem to suspect it, his trials and tribulations were of much less interest to his friends than to himself.

'Is that Wingate calling?' asked Potter, suddenly.

'Eh? I didn't hear him,' said Coker.

'He's expecting us at the nets--!' said Greene, taking his cue from Potter.

'Let him expect!' said Coker. 'I was saying--'

'Well, Wingate's skipper, you know--'

'I know!' said Coker, with a curl of the lip. 'Precious sort of skipper, too! Fat lot he knows about a man's form at cricket. Has he ever played me in the first eleven? Never mind Wingate--'

'Better go, I think,' said Greene.

'Yes, come on,' said Potter.

And they went.

Coker, thus deserted by his pals, was left leaning on the elm, gloomily brooding over the unfortunate outcome of that picnic on Popper's Island on Saturday afternoon. Coker could have gone on, like the little brook, for ever: but lacking auditors, even Coker had to leave off talking.

Billy Bunter, at any rate, was glad that the chin-wag had ceased. Bunter concentrated on that exasperating document.

'Quaere in -- sub alta quercu.' Seek in -- under the high oak! What was that missing word? Clearly, it gave the location of the oak. But what was the beastly word? Not a sign of it remained.

'Blow!' breathed Bunter.

Then came another interruption.

Skinner came strolling along the path under the elms.

That weedy youth was, in point of fact, looking for a secluded spot to smoke a cigarette. But at the sight of Bunter poring over a strip of parchment, he paused, and stared curiously at the fat Owl.

Like most of the Remove, Skinner knew that Bunter had found something in Latin which he fancied was a clue to the long-lost treasure of the old abbey. Not for a moment did he suppose that it was anything but a fatuous delusion. But he could see now that it was an actual parchment in the fat hands, and it excited his curiosity. He came to a halt.

'What's that?' he asked.

'Eh?' Bunter, becoming suddenly aware of Skinner, blinked up like a startled owl. 'Oh! Nothing!' And he hastily put his fat hand behind him, with Brother John's document in it.

'Can't you let a fellow see it?' inquired Skinner.

'No, I jolly well won't!' snapped Bunter.

'I fancy you jolly well will!' grinned Skinner, and grasping a fat arm, he dragged the fat hand into view. With his other hand, he twisted the parchment out of the fat fingers.

Billy Bunter bounded up from the bench. As a rule, Bunter lifted his extensive weight to slow motion. But on this occasion he bounced up almost like an india-rubber ball, and clutched at Skinner.

'Gimme my parchment!' he howled.

Skinner, grinning, fended him off with one hand, and held up the parchment in the other, staring at it.

'Oh, crumbs!' he exclaimed. 'What's this? "Ego Frater Johannes--"'

'Don't you jolly well read it!' yelled Bunter.

'Won't I jolly well just?' grinned Skinner. 'What the dickens is it? "Ego Frater Johannes Abbate Anselmo domino meo jubente"--why, that's what Quelch was chatting about in form the other day--Frater Johannes and Abbot Anselmo--'

'Give it to me!' yelled Bunter, clutching at him frantically.

'Keep off, you fat ass, if you don't want your nose punched.'

Bunter did not want his little fat nose punched: but he did not keep off. He clutched Skinner, and they struggled for possession of the parchment.

Horace Coker glared round at them.

Deep in gloomy meditation on his grievances, Coker was naturally annoyed when a couple of juniors started a row almost at his elbow.

'Stop that!' he rapped.

And as neither of them heeded, Coker resorted to his well-known short way with fags. He strode across to them, grasped Skinner by the collar with one hand, Bunter by the collar with the other, and fairly wrenched them apart. The two juniors sagged helplessly in Coker's mighty grasp. Billy Bunter tottered against the bench, and sat down on it, involuntarily. Coker retained his grasp on Skinner, shaking him.

'You started this,' he snapped. 'I saw you snatch something from that fat smudge.' Shake! shake! shake!

'Ow! Leggo, will you?' spluttered Skinner.

'oooogh!' gasped Bunter. 'I say, Coker, make him gimme my parchment! It's mine.'

'Hand it over,' said Coker, magisterially.

'You mind your own business,' panted Skinner. 'You're not a prefect, Coker, if you fancy you are.'

'I said hand it over.'

'Look here--'

Coker did not 'look there'. He grasped Skinner's arm, and twisted the parchment out of his hand.

'Now you can cut off!' he snapped. 'Look here--!'

Smack!

'Wow!'

One smite from Coker's heavy hand was enough for Skinner. He did not wait for another. He cut off. The disputed parchment was left in Coker's hand. He stared at it.

'What the dickens is this?' he exclaimed.

Billy Bunter heaved himself up breathlessly from the bench and stretched out a fat eager hand.

'It's mine!' he gasped.

'Is it?' said Coker. 'It looks like one of those old parchments in the library. Did you prig it, you young rascal?'

'Nunno! I-I found it--'

'You found it, did you?' said Coker. 'And where did you find it, Bunter?'

'I-I found it in the Cloisters. I say, it's mine, Coker. I-I say, gimme my parchment, Coker.'

Coker did not heed. His eyes were glued on the dim 'fist' of Brother John on that parchment. Coker, in the matter of the classics, was almost the despair of his form-master. But even Coker was rather more useful at Latin than Bunter. His startled eyes grasped the gist of what was written there. And it caused those eyes almost to bulge.

'By gum!' exclaimed Coker. "'Frater Johannes-Abbate Anselmo-abbatiae aurum-humavi--" My hat! Why, this may be important! It may be jolly important.'

Bunter was quite well aware of that!

'Give it to me, Coker--!' he gasped.

'Don't be a young ass!' said Coker, sharply. 'This isn't a matter for a silly fag to deal with. I'll take charge of this.'

'It's mine!' yelled Bunter.

'That will do.'

'Look here, you beast, you gimme my parchment--'

'I said that will do! Cut off.'

'Gimme my parchment, you bully--'

'Bully?' repeated Coker. 'Why, you cheeky little fat slug, did you call me a bully? Me! I'll show you whether I'm a bully or not!'

Smack! smack! smack!

'Ow! Wow! Yowl'

Smack! smack!

'Yaroooooh! Woooooh!'

Having thus demonstrated that he was no bully, Horace Coker walked off with the parchment in his hand, leaving Billy Bunter frantically rubbing two burning fat ears: and in a state of alarm and wrath and indignation that was quite inexpressible.

SHORT WAY WITH FAGS!

'HARRY, old chap--!'

'Scat!'

'But I say--'

'Buzz off!'

'That beast Coker--'

'Get out!'

'He's bagged my parchment--'

'Bother your parchment, and bother you! Hook it!' hooted Harry Wharton.

'The hookfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed idiotic Bunter,' said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'But I tell you--'

'Pack it up!'

Billy Bunter glared at the two juniors in No. 1 Study, with a glare that might almost have cracked his spectacles. They were playing chess: and apparently had no use for Bunter.

After tea, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent had gone down to junior nets. Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had sat down to the chessboard. Neither of them seemed pleased or gratified by a fat Owl suddenly bursting into the study gasping and spluttering.

Chess, to Bunter, was a trifle light as air. He did not know, and did not want to know, that Harry Wharton had opened with the King's Bishop's Gambit, with some hope of carrying it through in the masterly manner of Andersen in the great game celebrated in chess history. Unluckily, Wharton found his progress far from Andersenian. His King was in check from a Bishop, and appeared to have no escape except into the clutches of a Knight. It was not a favourable moment for interrupting a chess-player!



'GET OUT' ROARED WHARTON

That mattered nothing to William George Bunter. He clutched the captain of the Remove by the arm.

'Look here, you can chuck that rot,' he gasped. 'I tell you--'

'Get out!' roared Wharton.

'But I say-yaroooooh!' A sudden shove, on a plump chest, caused Billy Bunter to totter back. He sat down on the study carpet, with a bump that almost shook No. 1 Study. 'Oh! Ooooh! Woooooh!' Regardless of a spluttering Owl, Harry Wharton concentrated on his imperilled King. But there was no escape for that monarch. He had to move: and Hurree Singh, smiling a dusky smile, followed on with his Knight, and the game was up.

'Your game, Inky,' said Harry, ruefully. 'We'll try it again--'

'Urrrgh! Look here, Wharton, you beast-I mean, Harry, old chap--!' came a gasping gurgle from a fat Owl on the carpet.

Wharton glanced round at him.

'You still there, Bunter? Why don't you roll away, like a good barrel?'

'Beast!' Billy Bunter tottered to his feet, but he did not roll away. 'Look here, I tell you Coker's bagged my parchment--'

'What about it?'

'What about it?'' howled Bunter. 'Think I want him after my treasure? You jolly well make him gimme my parchment back.'

Harry Wharton laughed.

'Didn't you tell us to mind our own business?' he inquired.

'Eh? Oh! Yes! No! I-I mean--'

'Well, we're minding it! Shut the door after you.'

'The mindfulness of our own business is terrific,' chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. 'Roll awayfully.'

Harry Wharton began to set out pieces and pawns, for another shot at the King's Bishop's Gambit.

Apparently he was more interested in chess than in William George Bunter and his precious parchment.

'I-I say, I-I didn't mean-I mean I meant-I mean, I-I want you to back me up, old chap!' pleaded Bunter.

'We're playing chess--'

'Chess!' hooted Bunter. 'Bother chess! Blow chess! What does chess matter, I'd like to know! Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while Moscow was burning--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Coker's pinched my parchment--'

'Rubbish!'

'Well, not exactly pinched it, but he said he would take charge of it, and walked off with it--'

'Go and ask him for it back, then.'

'I jolly well did, and he smacked my head. Look here, you beast-I-I mean, look here, dear old chap-you're captain of the Remove, and it's up to you to stand by a man in your form. You ain't going to let that Fifth-form swob bag my parchment, are you, old fellow?'

'Coker wouldn't bag it,' said Harry. 'He's a high-handed fathead, but there's a limit.'

'He jolly well has--'

'Oh, rot!'

'I can't go near him without getting my head smacked--'

'Nothing in it to damage.'

'Beast! I-I mean, you go and get it from him, old fellow. You're captain of the form--'

'Oh, bother,' said Harry. The chess-board was set again, and Harry Wharton wanted another shot at the King's Bishop's Gambit, in the hope of pulling it off a little more like Andersen. But he was, after all, captain of the Remove, and he was not deaf to Bunter's appeal. 'All right-I'll go and see him. Know where he is?'

'He went to his study--'

'All right then! You'd better come-'

'I-I-I'd rather not see Coker--'

'Fathead!'

Harry Wharton left No. 1 Study, leaving Billy Bunter with the Nabob to await his return. A minute later he was tapping at the door of Coker's study in the Fifth.

An irritated voice from within answered that tap. 'Don't come in, whoever you are! I'm busy. Keep out.' Unheeding that injunction, Harry Wharton opened the door. Coker of the Fifth was seated at the table, his head bent over a document that lay thereon, his rugged brow corrugated. He glanced up at the junior in the doorway, with a frown.

'Didn't I say keep out?' he snapped.

'Oh, quite,' agreed Wharton. 'But--'

'Well, get out! Think I want fags butting into my study! Shut that door.'

'Bunter says--'

'Bother Bunter! I said shut that door,' bawled Coker. 'Do you want to be chucked out like Cherry the other day?'

'Do talk sense, Coker,' said Harry, impatiently. 'Bunter says you've got a parchment belonging to him-why there it is!' He pointed to the document on the table, over which Horace Coker had been corrugating his rugged brow. 'That's Bunter's. He found it, and it belongs to him, if to anybody. He wants it back.'

'He can want,' snapped Coker. Harry Wharton stared at him.

'You're not keeping it!' he exclaimed.

'I'm doing exactly that! Now get out'

'But you can't--'

'Don't be a young ass, Wharton. I suppose a kid like you wouldn't understand that this is an important document. I don't mind telling you that it's jolly important,' Coker condescended to explain. 'It looks to me like a clue to the treasure the monks are supposed to have hidden in the reign of Henry VIII. I'm not sure yet, but it looks like it! I suppose even a young ass like you can see that such a thing can't be left to a silly fag. I'm taking it in hand. That's all. Now get out.'

'You silly, cheeky ass!' exclaimed Harry. 'I tell you that it's Bunter's--'

'I said get out!' bawled Coker.

'And you've got to hand it over--'

Horace Coker rose to his feet. He had been quite patient-for Coker! But he had no more patience to waste on a Remove junior. Once more Horace had recourse to his short way with fags.

'Outside!' he rapped.

'Look here, Coker--'

'I said outside!'

'You cheeky fathead--'

That was more than enough for Coker. His grasp was on the captain of the Remove before more could be said. For about a minute, things were quite wild and whirling, in Coker's study. A chair went over-the table rocked-even Coker of the Fifth did not find the captain of the Remove easy to handle. But no junior could hope to match the hefty Horace. That wild and whirling tussle ended with a heavy bump in the passage, as Harry Wharton landed there in a breathless heap. He sprawled and panted.

Coker gave him a final glare, and slammed the door on him.

A breathless and dishevelled junior picked himself up and tottered away. Obviously, it was useless to carry on, at least without reinforcements. Hurree Janset Ram Singh stared at his chum, as he came tottering into No. 1 Study. Billy Bunter blinked at him.

'Got it?' asked Bunter, eagerly.

Wharton shook his head: he seemed to have no breath for speech. There was a howl from Bunter.

'Look here, why haven't you got it? Why didn't you jolly well make him hand it over? Look here, if you're funky of Coker, I can jolly well say-ow! wow! wow! yow! Leave off kicking me, you beast!

Wow!

Harry Wharton had just energy enough left to kick Bunter. The fat Owl departed from No. 1 Study with a yell. Then the captain of the Remove sank into the armchair.

The chess-board was ready. But he seemed to have lost his interest in that great game. The King's Bishop's Gambit no longer attracted him. He sat in the armchair, and gasped and gasped: and it was quite a while before he recovered from Coker's short way with fags.

AN ADVANCE IN FORCE

"QUERCU!" said Coker.

Potter and Greene stared.

They were rather surprised, when they came into their study, to behold Horace Coker studiously occupied. Coker was not, as a rule, a studious fellow. The acquisition of knowledge was not one of his ambitions. Often and often he had a spot of trouble with his form-master, Prout, on that very account.

Yet here he was, knitting his brows over something that looked like a Latin parchment, and mumbling Latin. No wonder Potter and Greene stared.

'Busy?' asked Potter, slightly sarcastically.

'Eh? Yes! Shut up!'

'But what--?' began Greene.

'I said shut up.'

Coker, apparently, did not want to be interrupted in his unusual intellectual activities.

Potter and Greene looked at him, and looked at one another. They had come up for Coker, with the idea of a stroll down to the tuck-shop. It was more than an hour since tea: and slogging at the nets gave a fellow an appetite. They could, of course, have strolled to the school shop without Coker: and it was not, perhaps, the attraction of his company for which they yearned. But on such occasions old Horace's well-filled wallet was distinctly an asset.

Coker, however, did not seem in a mood for a stroll, whether to the tuck-shop or anywhere else.

Coker, amazing to behold, was deep in study.

'Is that something for Prout?' asked Potter, mystified.

'No. Don't jaw.'

'Well, coming out?'

'No! Can't you be quiet?'

Evidently, there was nothing doing. Potter and Greene turned to the door. Refreshments at the tuck-shop, if any, had to depend on their own somewhat limited resources.

'Hold on,' said Coker, suddenly. They held on-hopefully.

'I'm a bit bottled over this dashed word "quercu",' said Coker. 'I don't suppose you fellows could help---'

'We'll try,' said Potter, meekly. 'What's it all about?'

'I may as well tell you,' said Coker, thoughtfully. 'I may want your help in digging up the treasure--'

Potter and Greene jumped almost clear of the expensive study carpet provided for Horace by his affectionate Aunt Judy.

'The-the what--?' ejaculated Potter.

'The which?' gasped Greene.

'I suppose you fellows have heard of the Greyfriars treasure, that was buried by the monks when Henry VIII came snooping after it--'

'Eh! Oh! Yes! Just an old legend,' said Potter. 'Nothing in it.'

'Just an old yarn,' said Greene.

'It's a bit more than an old yarn, Greeney, when I've got a clue to it, and I'm going to locate it and pick it up , said Coker. '

'My dear chap---'

'You needn't dear-chap me, Potter. I've got the clue -here.' Coker tapped the parchment. 'It was found in the Cloisters, and it was written by Frater Johannes who buried the gold.'

'Oh, crumbs!'

'I've made most of it out. It's pretty dim, and one word seems to be quite gone. But that word "quercu"! "Quercus" is an oak, of course--'

'Fourth declension,' said Potter.

'Never mind the declension--'

'But you have to mind it a bit,' urged Potter. 'In the fourth declension the ablative singular is in "u"--'

'Oh!' said Coker. 'I know! I mean, I remember. "Quercu"-ablative singular of "quercus", an oak-that's it. I knew it jolly well meant an oak, of course. It's the ablative singular.'

'That's what I said--'

'You needn't say it again! I don't need you to teach me Latin, George Potter. I get enough of that from Prout. I suppose "alta" is ablative, too. Yes, of course it would be after "sub". "Sub" means under.'

'Does it really?' asked Potter, with almost devastating sarcasm.

Sarcasm was a sheer waste on Coker.

'Yes, it does, Potter,' he answered. 'I'm surprised that you don't know a simple word like that. Better not let Prout hear of it. Look here, look at the thing, and see if you can construe it.'

Potter and Greene looked at the 'thing'.

Their impression, from what Coker had said, was that old Horace had found a mare's nest. But looking at that old parchment, they had to change that view, natural as it was.

'Great pip!' exclaimed Potter.

'Phew!' whistled Greene.

Brother John's Latin, which had sadly perplexed Billy Bunter, and had some snags for Horace Coker, was easy going for Potter and Greene, who were quite average members of Prout's form. They read it off without difficulty: except, of course, for the single word that was obliterated by time. There was a missing-word puzzle for every reader of Brother John's message.

'Think it's only an old yarn now?' asked Coker. Coker could be sarcastic, too.

'By gum!' said Potter. 'This is a jolly old discovery, and no mistake. Why, if we could find out where that high oak is, we could lay our hands on the jolly old treasure.'

'Angels and half-angels and nobles, and things like that, I expect,' said Greene. 'Might be a heap of sovereigns, too.'

'Don't be a goat, Greeney! How could there be sovereigns in Henry VIII's time?' said Coker, witheringly. 'Sovereigns are modern. They used to have guineas before sovereigns, and even guineas don't go back as far as Henry VIII.'

'The first sovereigns were in Henry VIII's time,' said Greene. Greene knew something about numismatics. 'They were worth thirty bob each then--'

'They'd be worth a lot more now,' said Potter.

'Lots more,' said Greene. 'Henry VIII sovereigns--'

'Rubbish!' said Coker, decisively. Coker had never heard of Henry VIII sovereigns, and that settled it!

'You're talking rot, old chap--'

'Look here, Coker, I tell you--'

'Don't go on talking rot,' said Coker. 'Now, if you fellows have been able to construe that Latin--'

'Sort of!' said Potter: sarcastic again.

'Well, then, if you can't make it out, you know that it's a clue to the old Greyfriars treasure: a tip

from the johnny who hid it-straight from the horse's mouth,' said Coker. 'But we've got to locate that dashed oak. I shall have to think that out. We've got the clue--'

'Where did you find it?' asked Potter.

'I didn't find it! A Remove fag found it.'

'And gave it to you?' asked Potter, staring.

'He didn't give it to me. I took charge of it,' explained Coker. 'I had to smack his head--'

'Oh, scissors!'

'This is a jolly important matter, and I shouldn't be likely to leave it to a Lower-school fag,' said Coker.

They gazed at him. They were accustomed, in that study, to Horace Coker's masterful manners and customs. They were aware that, in his own esteem, Coker was monarch of all he surveyed, his right there was none to dispute! But this did seem to them rather the limit, even for Horace Coker.

'I-I-I say, wasn't that a bit high-handed, Coker?' gasped Potter.

'Don't be an ass, Potter.'

'But look here--!' said Greene. 'If that fag found it--'

'Don't be a goat, Greene.'

'Doesn't that fag want it back?' asked Potter.

'I shouldn't wonder! He got young Wharton to come here and ask for it,' said Coker. 'I chucked him out. Now, don't jaw any more, you fellows-I've got to work this out. We've got to locate that oak somehow.'

'Let's talk it over in the tuck-shop!' suggested Greene, brightly.

'Rubbish! Talk-talk-talk-you fellows are always talking! Just keep quiet while I work this out.'

'But I say--'

'I said keep quiet.'

'Look here, Coker--'

'Shut up!'

Coker corrugated his rugged brows over that parchment again. There was a missing-word problem to be solved, and Coker was going to solve it, if he could. Potter and Greene eyed him. Evidently, there was going to be no stroll down to the tuck-shop. And there had to be silence in that study while Coker exercised his mighty intellect. Potter and Greene, restraining a natural desire to collar Coker and jam the parchment down the back of his neck, walked out of the study. On this occasion their own limited resources had to suffice at the tuckshop.

Coker did not heed their departure. The door closed on them, and Coker concentrated on his missing-word problem.

But he was fated to be interrupted.

Suddenly, the door flew open. It crashed open with a bang. Coker glared up, angrily: and then stared at a crammed doorway. Harry Wharton, 'chucked out' half an hour ago, was in the lead. With him were Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. They filled the doorway. But behind them, others could be seen-Herbert Vernon-Smith, Tom Redwing, Peter Todd, Squiff, Tom Brown, Lord Mauleverer: and still others could be heard farther back. It looked as if half the Remove had called on Coker of the Fifth.

SHORT WAY WITH COKER!

'COLLAR him!'

'Bag him!'

Coker leaped to his feet.

The Famous Five marched in. After them crowded the others. The extreme rear was brought up by Billy Bunter. Coker glared at them in astonishment and wrath. Coker was not quick on the uptake: and he did not know why he had received this unusual visit. But he knew that his study was invaded by a mob of juniors: and his wrath boiled up. His glare at the invaders was like that of Roderick Dhu, on the occasion when dark lightnings flashed from Roderick's eye!

'You cheeky young sweeps!' he roared.

'What the dickens--'

That was all Coker had time to utter.

He was going to ask what the dickens they meant by it. The unasked question was answered by action, not by words. The crowd of Removites came at him with a rush and Coker, mighty man as he was, was simply overwhelmed. Innumerable hands grasped him on all sides, his long legs were hooked, and Coker crashed.

Extended on his study carpet, Coker gasped and spluttered wildly. The juniors flowed over him like a sea. One, two, or perhaps three, the hefty Horace could have handled. But there were a dozen of them, more than a dozen of them, swarming in his study. Coker, brawny as he was, was simply nowhere.

He heaved and struggled. But he heaved and struggled in vain. Bob Cherry sat on his chest. Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh, stood on his legs. Tom Brown captured his right arm, Squiff his left. Peter Todd had him by the collar, Smithy by the hair. There were plenty of other hands ready to grasp. But there was hardly room on Coker for more.

Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully shut the door. Interruptions from other members of the Fifth Form were not wanted.

'Urrrgh! Gerroff! I'll smash you-I'll spiflicate you -I'll-I'll-I'll-urrrggh--' Coker heaved frantically. 'Better keep quiet, old boy,' said Bob Cherry, as Coker heaved under him like an earthquake. 'If you don't keep still I shall tap your nose-like that!'

'Ooooh!'

'And like that--!'

'Oooogh! Wow!'

'Keep still,' said Bob. 'With all thy faults we love thee still!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Coker decided to keep still. He was helpless in the hands of the Amalekites, and taps on his rugged nose were neither grateful nor comforting. But his glare at the grinning Removites was absolutely ferocious.

'You young scoundrels!' he gasped. 'What do you mean-ragging in a senior study like this? I'll thrash the lot of you! I'll give you the hiding of your life, young Wharton--'

Harry Wharton laughed.

'You look like it!' he remarked.

'Sort of!' chuckled Bob, settling himself comfortably on Coker's chest.

'Gerroff! Leggo! Oh, crikey! You mad young asses, what do you mean by this?' howled Coker.

'It's a ragging!' explained the captain of the Remove. 'You keep on asking for it, Coker. Now you're getting it. You're going to have a tip not to throw your weight about quite so much, see?'

'I-I-I'll--!' spluttered Coker.

'You see, you're too big for a Remove man to handle on his own,' further explained Harry Wharton, 'so we've called on you in a bunch.'

'The bunchfulness is terrific!' grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'I-I-I thrash the whole gang of you!' roared Coker. 'Oh, do!' said Smithy. 'Get on with it.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Go ahead, Coker!' chuckled Peter Todd.

'Yaas, pile in, old bean,' said Lord Mauleverer.

Gladly would Coker have got on with it, gone ahead, and piled in. But he could do nothing but glare. That he did most expressively.

'Now,' went on Harry Wharton, 'you bagged something belonging to Bunter, and smacked his head, Coker. Bunter's head doesn't matter much--'

'Oh, really, Wharton--'

'But when I called for Bunter's property, you chucked me out. Now you're going to hand it over, and say you're sorry--'

'Why, you cheeky young scoundrel--'

'I say, you fellows, I've got it,' squeaked Billy Bunter.

A fat hand clutched up Brother John's parchment from the table. 'I've got it all right--!'

'Leave that alone!' roared Coker. 'I've told you I'm taking charge of that, you little fat swob.'

'Rats to you!' retorted Bunter. With Coker powerless in the grasp of so many hands, Billy Bunter was full of beans. The parchment disappeared into a sticky pocket. 'You smacked my head, didn't you? Well, now I'm going to smack yours, and see how you like it.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I say, you fellows, lemme get at him! Give a fellow room.'

Smack!

'Whoooo-hooooo!' roared Coker.

Smack!

'Ooooh! Keep that fat lunatic off!' shrieked Coker.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'That will do, Bunter,' said Harry Wharton, laughing.

'It jolly well won't!' hooted Bunter. 'He smacked my head half a dozen times. I'm going to give him a dozen.'

Smack! smack!

'Stop it, you fat ass!' exclaimed Bob.

'Shan't!'

Smack! smack! smack!

It was like an awful dream to Coker. He, Horace James Coker, a Fifth-form man, indeed the most important man in the Fifth, was having his head smacked by a fat junior of the Remove--actually smacked by a fat grubby hand! But it was no dream: it was reality, and quite a painful reality.

Bunter, warming to the work, seemed prepared to deliver unnumbered smacks. But Lord Mauleverer jerked him back.

'That will do, old fat man,' he said.

'Leggo, Mauly, you beast! Leggo! I'm going to give him a dozen--I mean two dozen--'

'Kick him, somebody,' said Bob Cherry.

'Yaroooooh!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Now, Coker, you're going to say you're sorry!' said Harry Wharton. 'Get on with it.'

'I-I-I'll smash you--' gasped Coker.

'That doesn't sound as if he's sorry,' said Bob Cherry. 'But perhaps we can persuade him. Are you sorry, Coker?'

'No!' roared Coker. 'I'll tan you for this.'

'Well, I'm going to pull your nose till you're sorry. Take your time-we're not in a hurry.'

A finger and thumb compressed Coker's nose. It was a somewhat prominent feature and gave a good hold. There was a muffled yell from Coker.

'Oooogh! Led do by dose! Goooooh!'

'Are you sorry?' Bob gave a pull.

'Wurrrrrggh!'

'Say when!' said Bob.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Urrggh! Led do! Oooogh!'

'You'd better be sorry soon, or your boko may come off. Are you sorry?'

'Ooooh! Yes!' gasped Coker. There was no help for it. 'Yes, if you like, you young villain! Let go my nose.'

'Are you terribly sorry?'

'No-urrrggh! I mean yes,' gasped Coker.

'Are you tremendously sorry?'

'You young villain, let go-wow! Yes!' gurgled Coker. 'Well, if he's terribly and tremendously sorry, I think we can let it go at that,' said Bob. 'We'll give him the ink, and say good-bye.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Hand me the inkpot, Mauly.'

Coker made a frantic effort to dodge the inkpot as it poured. But he dodged in vain. A flood of ink descended on his crimson nose, and flowed over his face. There was a wild and frantic spluttering from the hapless Horace.

'Some gone in your mouth?' asked Bob. 'You shouldn't open it so wide, old boy. You open it a lot too much, and too often, Coker.'

'Gurrrrggh !' spluttered Coker.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'We're through now, Coker,' said Harry Wharton. 'But if you want any more, you've only got to ask for it. We'll call again any time.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

The swarm of juniors crowded out of Coker's study, in a hilarious crowd. They left Horace Coker feeling far from hilarious. A dusty, dishevelled, breathless Coker was left sitting on an inky carpet, spluttering ink, gurgling for wind, and clawing and dabbing at ink: in which state Potter and Greene found him when they came back to the study. Sad to relate, Potter and Greene, when they saw him, burst into a roar of laughter, just as if they found something comical in Coker's calamitous state.

CHAPTER 17

TREASURE-HUNTING!

'I SAY, you fellows.'

'Blow away, Bunter.'

After third school, the following day, Harry Wharton and Co., in a cheery group in the sunny quad, were talking cricket. They seemed more interested in that topic than in Billy Bunter: for when the fat Owl rolled up with an excited fat face, they merely bade him blow away, and went on talking cricket.

'That chap Hobson can bowl,' said Bob Cherry.

'But--'

'Will you listen to a chap?' hooted Bunter.

'No! Buzz off.'

'That swob Coker--'

'Bother Coker, and bother you! Mizzle!'

'I say, I heard him telling Potter and Greene--'

'Don't tell us what you heard, you eavesdropping fat foozler!' growled Johnny Bull. 'But I tell you I heard--'

'Pack it up!'

'I heard him say--'

'Put a sock in it.'

'I heard him say--'

'Rats!'

'He's after my treasure!' gasped Bunter. 'I say, you fellows, you don't want that Fifth-form swob to walk off with the treasure, do you?'

'If any!' snorted Johnny.

'He's after it--'

'Well, go and stop him,' suggested Bob. 'Didn't you tell us to mind our own business. Leave us to mind it.'

'I say, he must have read my parchment, while he had it,' wailed Bunter. 'I heard him saying that that oak tree near Gosling's wood-shed is a likely place, and-and they're going there after class today, to dig it up, if it's there--'

'If!' grunted Johnny Bull.

'Well, it may be there,' said Bunter. 'It's buried under an oak tree somewhere. I say, you fellows, there's no time to lose. If it's there, they'll find it, after class. You fellows come and help me dig it up before dinner, see?'

Billy Bunter blinked almost beseechingly at the Famous Five. The previous day, the fat Owl had told them, plainly and categorically, to mind their own business, and walked off with his precious parchment in his pocket. Nevertheless, they had intervened to recover that parchment from the high-handed Horace, and now it was safe again in the sticky pocket-no doubt because it was too bulky to slip through the hole in that pocket which was still unrepaired. But if Coker had construed that document while it was in his possession, evidently he knew as much as Bunter did about Brother John's medieval performances. Certainly, the missing word left him in the same difficulty about the precise location of that "high oak". But if, by happy chance, it proved to be the one that grew by Gosling's wood-shed, it looked as if that treasure-if still in existence-would fall to Coker and Co. In which circumstance, it seemed that Billy Bunter did not want the Famous Five, after all, to

mind their own business-he wanted to enlist their immediate aid, before Coker and Co. got going on the treasure-hunt.

'I say, you fellows, it may be buried six or seven feet down. I-I couldn't manage that on my own. I say, you're going to help, ain't you?' beseeched Bunter. 'There's time before tiffin, and Coker ain't going there till after class-I heard what he said to Potter and Greene -I wasn't listening, of course--'

'You heard without listening?' inquired Johnny Bull, sarcastically.

'I'd just stopped to tie my shoe-lace,' explained Bunter. 'I didn't wonder what they were talking about, and I didn't stop to listen--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I couldn't help hearing what they said, when I'd stopped to pick up a pin-I mean to pin my shoe-lace-I mean to pick up a shoe-I-I mean--'

'Like Coker's cheek to get after it,' said Bob. 'Might as well have a shot at it before he gets going-if Bunter's quite sure that he doesn't want us to mind our own business--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I say, you fellows. I'll let you have a hundred pounds each--!'

'Oh, do!' said Bob. 'I could find a lot of use for a hundred quid! You don't feel like making it a thousand?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

'It's all rot!' said Johnny Bull. 'If that treasure ever was buried it's been dug up long ago, and I told you so--'

'So you did!' agreed Bob. 'So don't waste your breath telling us so again. Come on-a spot of digging won't hurt us-quite a healthy exercise. Fancy Coker's face, if the stuff's really there, and we get it first!'

'You can get spades out of Gosling's wood-shed,' said Bunter. 'Come on.'

'Gosling will kick up a row, if he finds us monkeying about his wood-shed,' grunted Johnny Bull.

'I'll tip him half a crown,' said Bunter. 'That will make it all right with Gosling. One of you fellows lend me half a crown--'

'Look here,' said Johnny Bull, 'we're not going to find anything: but if we do, we can't stick to it. We shall have to hand it over to the head-master, to pass on to the authorities. The finder can put in a claim for finding it. That's the law.'

'Oh, really, Bull--!'

'That's that!' snapped Johnny.

'Look here, findings keepings--' hooted Bunter.

'Chaps who fancy that findings are keepings, generally end up at Borstal,' said Johnny Bull. 'If that's what you want, you won't have our company there.'

'Beast!'

'Johnny's right,' said Harry Wharton. 'Have a little sense, Bunter. If anything's found, we've got to take it to Dr. Locke: and if you don't like the idea, buzz off, and give us a rest.'

'Buzz off anyway,' said Johnny.

'I-I-I say, you fellows, we can settle all that afterwards, after we've dug up the treasure. It-it might not be there after all.'

'The mightfulness is terrific!' grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'Come on, and let's see!' said Bob.

'Oh, let's,' said Johnny. 'And after we've dug up nothing, we can go round to all the other oaks in the

neighbourhood-there are about five hundred, I expect. Lots of healthy exercise for us.'

Johnny, evidently, was sceptical about that treasure! However, he was prepared to take his share of the toil. That toil was not likely to be light, if Brother John had buried the 'gold of the abbey' six or seven feet deep in chalky soil. Certainly such a spot of digging would have been far beyond the powers of the fattest and laziest member of the Remove. The other fellows, luckily, were not lazy: and there was something exciting in the barest possibility of digging up a treasure that had lain hidden in the earth for centuries. There was a general move: except on the part of Johnny Bull, who remained stationary.

'Come on, Johnny,' said Nugent.

'Oh, never mind him,' yapped Bunter. 'You fellows come on. There's not a lot of time before tiffin. We can't be late for dinner.' Even the lure of treasure had not caused the fat Owl to forget dinner!

'More haste, less speed,' said Johnny, sententiously. 'I may be mistaken, of course: but I sort of think that if you want to locate a spot ten feet west of a given object, something like a compass will be wanted. Redwing's got a mariner's compass in his study. Might be a good idea to borrow it. Only a suggestion, of course.' Johnny was sarcastic!

Harry Wharton laughed.

'I'll cut in and borrow it,' he said.

'Hurry up, then,' yapped Bunter.

The captain of the Remove lost no time. In a few minutes, he rejoined his friends, with Redwing's pocket-compass, borrowed from the sailorman's son: and then the whole party moved off. In a few minutes more, they arrived at Gosling's wood-shed, at the corner of the kitchen gardens: a somewhat secluded spot well out of the sight of windows.

Quite near that wood-shed grew an ancient oak.

Whether it had been standing as long ago as the reign of the eighth Henry, the juniors did not know: but it looked like it. Certainly it was very ancient. If it had been a grown tree in Brother John's time, no doubt it was a likely spot.

With the aid of the compass, it was quite easy to pace ten feet in a direct line west of that old oak. Billy Bunter almost gurgled with eagerness, when he stood on the precise spot 'cubita tria' west of the trunk.

'Now for it,' said Bob.

'I say, you fellows, buck up-'

'Here you are, Bunter.' Johnny Bull came out of Gosling's wood-shed, with a spade in one hand, and a garden-fork in the other. 'Get going.'

'Oh, really, Bull--'

Billy Bunter did not seem at all keen to 'get going' with agricultural implements. However, nobody expected Bunter to do any work: that was too much to expect of the fat Owl, even on the track of a treasure. Johnny, having expressed his opinion of the fat treasure-hunter with an emphatic snort, set to work with the garden-fork, turning up earth at a great rate.

Bob Cherry followed on with the spade, putting plenty of energy into it. A pile of earth grew and grew beside the excavation.

For a couple of feet down, the going was fairly easy to strenuous youths who did not object to a spot of work. But then the chalk under the soil thickened and thickened.

Harry Wharton took his turn, then Frank Nugent, then Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. They dug and drove and delved at that obstinate chalk. Deeper and deeper grew the excavation, till it was four feet deep. By that time, five fellows were perspiring freely, and Billy Bunter was almost dancing with

impatience. The digging slacked down-and stopped. Solid chalk, gleaming white in the sunshine, floored the excavation. It looked as if it had never been disturbed since prehistoric ages-as no doubt was the case.

'Nothing doing!' gasped Bob.

'Nothing here,' agreed Harry Wharton.

'If Brother John ever buried that treasure at all, he never buried it here,' said Nugent. 'He couldn't have got through that chalk.'

'I told you so!' remarked Johnny Bull.

'Fathead!'

'Well, I did--'

'I say, you fellows, keep on!' exclaimed Billy Bunter. 'Don't slack, you know. It may be there, six or seven feet down-don't be lazy.'

'You fat ass,' said Bob. 'That chalk's as solid as it was a million years ago. Nobody's ever dug here before. Still, you can carry on, if you like. Here's the spade.'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

Bunter seemed indisposed to carry on. He blinked into the excavation, with a dismal, disappointed blink. Obviously the treasure, wherever it might be, was not there. No doubt it was a likely spot: but it certainly was not the one that Brother John had selected. The gold-diggers had had their labour for their pains!

'Better fill it up, I suppose,' said Bob. 'Wouldn't do to leave it for old Gosling to tumble in. Like to take a turn with the spade, Bunter?'

Billy Bunter did not take the trouble to answer that frivolous question. He rolled away with a disconsolate fat face: leaving Harry Wharton and Co. to deal with the excavation. All of them had had enough spade-work, by that time: but evidently that pit could not be left, at the risk of someone tumbling into it.

'Bother Bunter, and bother his silly treasure!' said Harry Wharton. 'Coker's welcome to anything he can find here after class. Get to it, and have done with it.' He picked up a spade.

'Hold on a minute--' exclaimed Bob. 'The tiffin-bell will be going soon--'

'Yes: but hold on!' chuckled Bob. 'From what Bunter said, Coker is coming along here after class--'

'To find nothing, same as we did!' grunted Johnny Bull.

'Well, why shouldn't he find something?' asked Bob, his blue eyes glimmering. 'We've drawn a blank: but that's no reason why Coker should. Suppose he found a heavy box, all nailed up, what would he think was in it?'

'The gold of the abbey, I suppose,' said Harry, staring. 'But he won't find anything of the kind. What the dickens do you mean?'

'Easy enough to nail up an old box, packed with chalk--'

'Oh!'

'No end of a jest on Coker! Fancy his face when he got it open!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Gosling's wood-shed echoed to a roar of laughter. That excavation was not immediately filled up. The chums of the Remove had certain preparations to make first, for the behoof of Coker of the Fifth. When those preparations were, at last, completed, earth and chalk were shovelled in and stamped down, and the agricultural implements replaced in the wood-shed. Then the Famous Five left the spot, tired but cheerful, as the bell began to ring for 'tiffin'.

TREASURE-TROVE?

'NETS!' said Potter.

'Yes,' said Greene. 'You see--'

'I don't!' interrupted Coker, coldly.

'But--!' said Potter and Greene, together.

'I think I mentioned before dinner today, that we were going after that treasure, after class,' said Coker. 'You fellows seem to forget everything. You'll be forgetting your own names next.'

Potter and Greene, in point of fact, hadn't forgotten.

But they had rather hoped that, when Mr. Prout dismissed the Fifth that afternoon, they would be able to get away to cricket. Both of them hoped to be picked by Wingate for the match with St. Jim's that was coming along. Coker, who had no such hope, dismissed cricket as a trifle light as air.

Certainly, Potter and Greene were mildly interested in the treasure clue. Had it been a little more precise, they might have enthused. They would willingly have headed for Brother John's oak tree, had it been identifiable among the few hundreds that grew within measurable distance of Greyfriars School. But delving in tough chalky soil under any old oak did not appeal to them. Cricket seemed more attractive.

'Tomorrow--!' suggested Potter.

'Never put off till tomorrow what can be done today,' said Coker. 'That's a proverb. Those Remove fags may be getting after the treasure. They're cheeky enough!'

'Well, dash it all, as it was a Remove fag found the clue--'

'Don't talk rot, Potter. A thing like this is a bit too important to be left to silly fags. I've taken this in hand. I shall want your help in digging for it. Come on, and don't waste time.'

'But there's lots and lots of old oaks all over the shop, and--'

'I know that! It's rotten luck that there's a word missing in the clue. But that can't be helped. That old oak by the wood-shed is the likeliest spot, as I've already told you. Just the spot that old monk would have picked on, as it was near at hand--'

'But he mightn't have wanted to park the stuff near at hand,' argued Potter. 'According to the parchment, the King's emissaries were after it. Might have picked out a spot at a distance for that reason.'

'Very likely, I think,' said Greene, with a nod.

If Potter and Greene hoped that that argument, reasonable as it seemed, would enable them to dodge the delving, and get to the cricket nets, they had another guess coming. Coker had already decided that the old oak by the woodshed was the likeliest spot. Argument did not make Horace Coker change his views. It only confirmed them.

'Didn't I say that the oak by the wood-shed was the likeliest spot?' inquired Horace.

'Yes: but---'

'Well, leave it at that! Don't argue: just come on. You're all right for the digging: but leave the thinking to me.'

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. Possibly they wondered what Coker would do the thinking with, if it was left to him.

'Are you coming?' snapped Coker. 'Let's get it through before tea. We've got some shopping to do for tea, too. No time to waste.'

'Oh, we're coming.' Possibly the fact that Coker was going to do shopping for tea helped his friends

to resign themselves to their fate. They came.

Five juniors of the Remove, in the quad, smiled at them as they passed. Coker acknowledged that smile with a thunderous frown. He paused for a moment in his stride, strongly tempted to mop up the quadrangle with Harry Wharton and Co. But no doubt his recent experiences at the hands of those cheery youths recurred to his mind, and had a restraining influence. Having bestowed upon them a frown that the Lord High Executioner himself might have envied, he strode on, and left them grinning.

Happily unaware that treasure-hunters had been on the spot before them. Coker and Co. arrived under the old oak by the wood-shed. Coker produced a pocket-compass, and set it on the ground, close by the trunk. As he waited for the needle to settle, he glanced round at Potter and Greene. 'No need to stand there like a pair of stuffed dummies,' he remarked. 'Get the digging things out can't you?'

Potter and Greene obediently went into the wood-shed, and emerged with a spade and a fork: the same implements that Harry Wharton and Co. had handled in the morning.

The needle had settled: and even Coker was able to plot a straight line to the west of the old trunk. He tramped carefully along that line, measuring paces heel to toe. Having already ascertained that a cubit equalled an ell, Coker had only to pace ten feet to locate the spot 'cubita tria procul ab trunco' - cubits three distant from the trunk. He halted on the spot where, before dinner that day, active juniors had dug an excavation and filled it up again.

'This is it!' said Coker.

'That's it, if that's the right oak tree,' said Potter.

'If!' murmured Greene.

'If-if-if--!' snorted Coker. 'Suppose you start digging, instead of iffing and sniffing.'

'Oh, all right!' sighed Potter. He drove the garden-fork into the earth, and started.

'You going to lean on that spade till tea-time, Greeney?' inquired Coker.

Greene breathed rather hard: and started in with the spade.

Coker watched them impatiently. They were slow workers. No doubt they would have delved with energy, had they believed that Brother John's treasure had been buried under the branches of that old oak. But the missing word in the parchment left the location of Brother John's oak in complete doubt. Potter and Greene really expected to find nothing but chalk.

"Ere, wot's going on 'ere?' a gruff voice suddenly inquired. Potter and Greene paused in their labours, and Coker stared round at Gosling. Gosling, coming down to his wood-shed, was surprised, and not pleased, to find three Greyfriars fellows digging there.

'Don't bother,' said Coker, curtly.

'Wot I says is this 'ere,' said Gosling, emphatically. 'Don't you come larking round my wood-shed. Digging up 'oles for a man to tumble in! You jest chuck it and clear orf, or I'll report yer.'

Which was good news to Potter and Greene. They were not a foot down yet: but they had had enough: and there was still time for a spot of cricket before tea while Coker did the shopping! Potter and Greene were prepared to 'chuck' it at a moment's notice. Coker, on the other hand, was not. But even Coker realized that on Gosling's own domain, it was necessary to placate Gosling. So he restrained his impulse to tell the ancient porter to buzz off, and to help him on his way with a boot on his ancient trousers. Instead of that, he slipped his hand into his pocket, and it came out with a half-crown in it.

'Man might fall into that there 'ole, and break his leg!' went on Gosling, indignantly. 'P'raps you'd think that a lark! Wot I says is this 'ere, you fill up that 'ole, and clear off, or I'll go to Mr. Prout, and--'

At that point in his discourse, Gosling observed the half-crown in Coker's fingers, and paused. The half-crown changed ownership. 'Well, if you young gentlemen feel like a bit of digging, I don't know that I mind,' went on Gosling. 'You fill up that 'ole arter you've finished playing about, that's all.' And Gosling departed, leaving Coker and Co. at liberty to carry on: to Coker's satisfaction, if not to Potter's and Greene's.

They exchanged a sad glance, and went on delving. But the delving grew slower and slower: and Horace Coker more and more impatient. It was Coker's idea to give directions, while lesser mortals did the donkey-work, so to speak. But the donkey-work proceeded at so very moderate a tempo, that Coker's impatience boiled over.

'For goodness sake, hand me that spade. Greene,' he snapped. 'Never saw such a pair of slugs. Stand clear, both of you, and let a fellow get to it.'

Quite willingly Potter and Greene stood clear, while Coker handled the spade. He handled it heftily: putting more energy into it than Potter and Greene combined. Earth and chalk fairly flew all round the deepening excavation.

'This is the right spot, and no mistake!' he said, pausing for a moment in his vigorous delving.

'Found anything?' asked Potter, with a wink at Greene. 'Not yet! But if you had any eyes, you'd see that there's been digging here before this. The chalk is quite broken up, in places. I suppose it didn't break itself up into chunks!' said Coker, sarcastically. 'There's been a spade at work here before, and whose would it be but that old monk's. I'd like to know.'

Coker resumed delving: not merely hopeful, but as good as convinced now. The digging was, undoubtedly, much easier than might have been expected, if that bed of Kentish chalk had never been disturbed before. And if it had been delved into, by whose spade but Brother John's -in those far-off days when he had hidden the gold of the abbey to preserve it from the royal clutches? Even Potter and Greene, dubious as they were, were a little impressed.

Earth and chalk flew faster than ever under Coker's energetic spade-work. Deeper and deeper went Coker: till, all of a sudden, there was a thud as his spade struck something that was not chalk.

'Oh!' gasped Coker.

'Anything--?' began Potter.

'Yes! There's something here! Oh, gum!'

Coker's spade fairly flashed. Chunks of chalk flew on all sides. The shape of a box emerged from dust and fragments. Potter and Greene stared down at it. Coker, in the excavation, his trousers chalky to the knees, threw aside the spade, and clutched at the box. He dragged it up. It was wholly revealed: a wooden box a foot wide, and nearly two feet long, nailed at all points with a quite extensive number of nails.

'Oh!' gasped Potter.

'Oh!' echoed Greene.

Coker chuckled breathlessly.

'Got it! Found it! Did I say that this was the likeliest spot, or didn't I? Here, lend me a hand with it-it's frightfully heavy! By gum, it must be fairly crammed with the stuff! Gold's jolly heavy, you know! Don't stand staring there like a pair of owls-lend me a hand to shift it out.'

Potter and Greene lent two pairs of hands: which, added to Coker's, shifted it out. The heavy box was dumped on the earth beside the excavation. Coker fairly grinned at it in his glee.

'Have we found the jolly old treasure, or haven't we?' he chuckled.

'Looks like it!' admitted Potter. 'But--'

'Well, what are you butting about?' Coker was in no mood for 'buts'.

'It's odd, if that box has been buried there for hundreds of years--'

'What's odd?'

'Well, I should have thought the wood would have mouldered away--'

'Don't you start thinking, Potter, old chap. It's not in your line. I expect the chalk preserved it,' said Coker. 'Might have mouldered away in earth, not in chalk. It's perfectly sound: you can see that. Fresh as paint. Why, some of those nails look as if they'd only just been driven in! By gum, that old monk meant to keep it safe -he's shoved in no end of nails. We shall want my toolbox to get it open! We'll hike it along to the study-lend a hand to heave it up!'

Heavy as that box was, Coker was able to deal with it, when it was heaved up on his brawny shoulder. He marched off with it. Potter and Greene followed: perhaps a little excited, but still feeling some dubiety. Somehow or other, that box did not impress them as having lain under the soil for several centuries on end. Certainly, it must have done so, if it had been buried by Brother John in the reign of the eighth Henry. Nevertheless, there was a lingering doubt in the minds of Potter and Greene. But whatever doubts his comrades might have, Coker had none. Coker marched triumphant.

TRY AGAIN, COKER!

MR. PROUT stared.

And he frowned.

Taking his majestic walk in the quadrangle after class, the Fifth-form master was both surprised and displeased by what he beheld.

It was indeed a somewhat unusual sight in the Greyfriars quad--that of a Fifth-form fellow, his face red and perspiring from recent exertion, his trousers smothered with dusty chalk, almost bending under the weight of a long, heavy, earthy-looking box he was carrying on his shoulder.

'Coker!' breathed Prout. 'That absurd boy Coker.'

Prout was not pleased with Coker. On Saturday he had had to give him lines for being late for third school. On Monday he had had to give him a Georgic for breaking bounds. And now he beheld him, in full view of almost every window at Greyfriars, looking less like a Greyfriars senior than like a weary ploughman homeward plodding his way! Prout, frowning, bore down on Coker.

'Coker!' Prout's voice boomed.

Potter and Greene backed a little, at the sight of Prout.

Coker did not. Coker saw no reason for backing. He came to a halt, shifting a little the heavy burden that was grinding into his collar-bone, and eyed his form-master calmly.

'Yes, sir!' said Coker.

Dozens of fellows were staring at Coker, as well as Prout. What that ass, Coker of the Fifth, fancied he was up to, was a mystery to all--that is, to all but five juniors of the Remove, who grinned as they stared. Harry Wharton and Co. could guess what Coker had been up to, and what he was up to now. Bob Cherry's jape on old Horace had, evidently, worked!

Prout boomed on.

'Coker! What does this mean? Why are you in this state? What is that you are carrying? What do you mean by this, Coker?'

'I've found it, sir--'

'What? What have you found?'

'The Greyfriars treasure, sir.'

'Wha-a-a-t?' Prout seemed afflicted with a stutter.

'Only the Greyfriars treasure, sir,' said Coker, with superb calmness: just as if finding a long-lost treasure was all in the day's work: the sort of thing he might do at any odd moment.

'Bless my soul!' said Mr. Prout. 'Are you wandering in your mind, Coker?' He stared at Coker, and stared at the earthy-looking box. 'What is that box, Coker? What does it contain?'

'The gold of the abbey, sir.'

'Nonsense!' boomed Prout.

'The gold of the abbey!' murmured Bob Cherry. 'Oh, suffering cats and crocodiles! The jolly old gold of the jolly old abbey, my beloved 'earers!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Coker gave the laughing juniors a stern glare.

'You fags can cackle!' he snapped, 'but I've found it, and if you had the cheek to get after it, you're too late. I'm going to hand it over to the head-master, as soon as I get this box open. None of your silly fag findings-keepings! I can tell you--'

'Coker!' Prout was gasping. 'You cannot be serious. Absurd! Where did you find that box, if you

found it?'

'I dug it up, sir.'

'Bless my soul! Where did you dig it up, Coker?'

'Under the old oak by the wood-shed, sir, where Frater Johannes buried it by order of his master the Abbot Anselmo, in the reign of Henry VIII.'

'Bless my soul! It is scarcely possible--yet if you actually dug up a box buried in the earth--'

'It was a good four or five feet down, sir. Potter and Greene were with me--they saw me dig it up---' Prout glanced at Potter and Greene.

'We saw Coker find the box, sir,' said Potter. 'We don't know what's in it--'

'Don't be an ass, Potter,' snapped Coker. 'You know what's in it as well as I do. What do you think that old monk buried it for?'

'It was actually buried, at a depth of four or five feet?' exclaimed Mr. Prout.

'It certainly was, sir,' said Greene.

'Upon my word! This is extraordinary, and most interesting. Obviously the box must contain something, and it cannot have been buried without a reason.' Prout undoubtedly, was interested now. 'The contents must be examined without delay.'

'I'm taking it to my study, sir: I've got a tool-chest there. Perhaps you'll come and see it opened, sir!' suggested Coker.

'I will certainly come and see the box opened, Coker. Whatever the contents may prove to be, they will certainly be of interest, and may be of value! The box could not have been buried four or five feet deep in the earth without a reason--a good reason! This may prove to be a very interesting discovery--very interesting indeed. Proceed, Coker.'

Coker proceeded. The portly Prout rolled by his side.

He was no longer wrathful. Coker's grubby, dusty, untidy state was easily forgiven, if Coker had made an interesting discovery: and it appeared that he had. It was, perhaps, too much to hope that that box contained the legendary treasure of Greyfriars: but obviously, from its weight, it contained something--something very heavy. Mr. Prout was quite eager to learn what that something was. Potter and Greene followed on, and quite a crowd of fellows followed too. There was general and extensive interest in that mysterious box. The Famous Five, however, did not follow on. They only chuckled. They had nothing to learn about the contents of that box.

Coker sagged a little under it, as he marched into the House. Undoubtedly it was very heavy. But he bore up manfully.

Even at the stairs he did not pause for a rest. Breathing hard, he heaved himself and his burden up the staircase. Up went Coker, followed by Prout and Potter and Greene, leaving quite an excited crowd buzzing below.

Brawny as Coker was, he was glad when he arrived in his study, and dumped down his burden on the table there. The table creaked under the weight. Coker leaned on it and panted.

'Get the tool-chest, Potter.'

Potter sorted out the tool-chest: one of Aunt Judy's many gifts to her dear Horace. He took out hammer and chisel. 'I'll open it,' he said.

'Leave it to me,' said Coker.

Coker was a little fagged: and more than a little breathless. But he was still principal boy, so to speak, in this performance. Coker was going to open that treasure-box with his own hands.

It was not easy to open. Whether it had been nailed up by Brother John, or by someone more modern, it had certainly been nailed very securely. Nail after nail had been driven in to the head, all

over that box.

Hammer and chisel banged and clanged. Loosened nails were gripped with the pincers, and wrenched out. But there were nails and nails and nails. With grim determination, Coker dealt with nail after nail after nail.

Potter and Greene watched, wondering what the dickens could be in that box, but still dubious about treasure. Mr. Prout watched, deeply interested, and just a little excited. A discovery had been made-an interesting and perhaps important discovery-and by a boy of his Form! For once-probably for the first time on record-Prout was pleased with that member of his form.

The box was open at last. Innumerable nails having been drawn, Coker was able to wrench up the lid.

As he wrenched it away, all eyes fixed eagerly on what was revealed. Coker fully expected to see the gleam and glitter of gold-stacks of coins of the date of Henry VIII.

But it was not the gleam of gold that met Coker's eager gaze. It was a glimmer of white!

Potter and Greene uttered a simultaneous exclamation: 'Chalk!'

'Chalk!' repeated Mr. Prout, blinking. 'Chalk! Bless my soul, is it chalk? Yes, it appears to be chalk! Amazing! For what reason can anyone have buried a box containing chalk? Extraordinary!'

'Oh!' gasped Coker. 'What the dickens-oh! I-I expect the gold's under it-it-it-it must be there! Frater Johannes couldn't have buried a box with nothing but chalk in it!'

He grabbed at the masses of chalk that packed that long box. There were other things as well as chalk-chunks of earth, and a considerable collection of stones, and several old bricks. Coker, more and more mystified and excited every moment, dragged out those varied contents, in search of the treasure he could not doubt was hidden underneath. Chunks of chalk, stones, and old bricks inundated the study table, and slid off to the floor.

No gold was revealed! But something else was! It was a sheet of cardboard, on which something was written. 'What is that!' exclaimed Mr. Prout.

'What--!' ejaculated Potter and Greene.

Coker clutched out that sheet of cardboard, and held it up. He gazed -at it with unbelieving eyes.

Prout's eyes fairly bulged at it. Potter and Greene stared blankly. Only three words were written on the card:

TRY AGAIN, COKER!

Coker gazed at it. He blinked at it. He almost gibbered at it.

'Oh, scissors!' breathed Potter.

'It's a leg-pull!' breathed Greene.

Coker did not seem to realize it. He was only astounded. But to his friends it was only too clear. That Frater Johannes could have buried a box packed with rubble was improbable. But that he could have left that message for Coker of the Fifth was impossible-quite!

Obviously, it was a leg-pull!

From Prout came an emphatic snort. His plump visage empurpled. Prout had been interested, indeed a little excited, over Coker's discovery. His interest vanished completely, at the sight of the message written on that card. He glared at Coker.

'Absurd!' he snapped. 'You stupid boy, Coker--'

'I-I-I don't get it!' gasped the bewildered Horace. 'I-I-I'

'A foolish practical joke!' boomed Prout. 'Absurd-nonsensical-ridiculous! You are an absurd boy,

Coker! You have made yourself into a disgusting state-a revolting state-you have wasted my time with this nonsense--'

'But I-I-I--!' stuttered Coker.

'Bah!'

'But I-I-I--!'

'Pish!'

Prout was no longer pleased with that member of his form! Indeed, he looked, at the moment, like boxing his ears! However, he refrained from expressing his feelings to that extent. He snorted, and elephantined out of the study: and another angry snort floated back from the passage as he departed.

Coker was left gazing at the box and the 'treasure' it had contained. What had happened was slowly, but surely, dawning on Coker's solid brain. Potter and Greene were grinning. But in Horace Coker's rugged brow, gathered wrath.

'Sus-sus-sus-somebody's been pulling my leg!' Coker had got it, at last! 'Those Remove fags-I remember they were grinning, in the quad. They've done this-done it just to pull my leg! They found out somehow that we were going to dig there, and they planted this rubbish for us to find! I-I thought I'd found the Greyfriars treasure-and all I've found is a box of chalk and old bricks and stones--'

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled Potter and Greene. They really could not help it. Coker's treasure-hunt, and its outcome, undoubtedly had its comic side.

'You silly asses, what are you cackling at?' roared Coker. 'Here I am, smothered with chalk--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'And old Prout's got his back up--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'And the muck from that box all over the study--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'And it turns out that it's only a leg-pull--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'All the fellows will be laughing their heads off--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Think it's funny?' shrieked Coker.

Evidently, Potter and Greene did, for they roared. Coker glared at them with a glare that the fabled Gorgon might have envied.

'If you don't stop cackling--!' he bawled.

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled Potter and Greene.

Coker wasted no more words on them. He made a jump for a cricket stump that stood in a corner. He grabbed that stump, and turned on his hilarious pals: and fairly drove them from the study, still laughing like hyenas.'

BUNTER AS USUAL

'BUNTER!'

Billy Bunter very nearly murmured, 'Beast!'

It was very annoying. And it was just like Quelch!

Bunter had hoped, that morning, to escape the gimlet-eye. In a numerous form like the Remove, there was always a chance of a fellow not being called on for 'con': and Bunter had a hopeful nature. But Quelch had the idea, so common to schoolmasters, that fellows came to school to learn things. Such an idea was not likely to find favour with William George Bunter: least of all when his fat mind was preoccupied with a missing-word puzzle.

Quelch, no doubt, would have found life easier, as Mr. Capper in the Fourth did, had he concentrated on the brighter members of his form, and left the lazy and obtuse to browse undisturbed at the back of the class.

But Quelch was a whale on duty. The mere fact that Bunter was incorrigibly idle, and reluctant to learn, was sufficient to make Quelch remember his existence. Bunter would have been satisfied with a less dutiful beak.

It was specially annoying, on the present occasion: for Bunter had other and more important matters on his fat mind.

He was not, as usual, thinking just how long it would be before the form was dismissed, and just how much longer after that before dinner.

Treasure was in his fat mind.

It was Wednesday morning: and the afternoon was a half-holiday. Other fellows might be thinking of cricket, or of whizzing on bikes by leafy lanes, or of pushing out a boat on the Sark. Bunter's idea was that a half-holiday couldn't be better spent than in digging up the 'gold of the abbey' buried so long ago by Frater Johannes.

But the obliterated word in his parchment was, so to speak, a lion in the path. It was unluckily the operative word!

Where, and which, was the 'high oak' under which Brother John had buried the Greyfriars treasure? Once he spotted that oak, all was plain sailing. The amount of tuck that could be obtained for even a fraction of the buried treasure was dazzling to contemplate.

He just had to spot that oak! And just one word would have given the clue! What was that word? Thinking was not really very much in Billy Bunter's line.

But he had put in quite a tremendous amount of thinking on that problem. In No. 7 Study he had sat in the armchair, while Peter Todd and Tom Dutton did their prep, and pondered over it-not giving prep a single blink, and trusting to luck in the morning. Quelch's sudden bark apprised him that his luck was out!

'Bunter! You will go on.' Bunter breathed very hard.

Quelch was taking his form in the second book of the *Æneid*. They were at the point where the wily Greeks packed armed men inside the wooden horse, for the somewhat gullible Trojans to drag within their walls. If some of the Remove fellows were interested in those artful proceedings, Billy Bunter was not one of the some. He couldn't have cared less.

One fellow after another had been on 'con': and the latest, Harry Wharton, had arrived at Line Twenty, when Quelch signed to him to stop, and turned his attention to Bunter. Had the fat Owl been following the lesson, he would have known where to go on. But his fat thoughts had been on a

missing-word puzzle, and the voices of the juniors on 'con' had been nothing but a disregarded buzz in his plump ears.

'Did you hear me, Bunter?' Quelch's tone was ominous.

'Oh! Yes, sir! I-I-where do I go on, sir?' mumbled Bunter.

'What? You will go on where Wharton left off, Bunter.'

'Oh! Yes, sir!' mumbled the unhappy Owl, wondering dismally where Wharton might have left off. 'I-I can't find the place, sir--'

'Line Twenty-one!' snapped Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter blinked at Line Twenty-one. He read:

'Est in conspectu Tenedos, notissima fama insula'.

Most fellows in the Remove could have told him that that meant that the very famous island of Tenedos was in sight. But few fellows in the Remove would have ventured to impart that information under a gimlet-eye.

'''Est-est-est--!''' mumbled Bunter. Pause!

'Go on!' rapped Quelch.

'''Est-est-est in conspectu Tenedos--''' Another pause!

'Construe!'

'Oh! Yes, sir! I-I--'

'Have you prepared this lesson, Bunter?'

'Oh, yes, sir! I-I was swotting at prep in the study, sir. I wasn't just sitting in the armchair--'

'What?'

'I-I-I wasn't really, sir,' gasped Bunter. 'You can ask Toddy, sir-he saw me--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Silence! Bunter, you have neglected your preparation, as you have very often done before---'

'Oh, no, sir! I-I-I--'

'Then construe at once.'

Gladly would Billy Bunter have construed at once, had it been practicable. But Latin on which he had not bestowed a single blink was a mystery to him. Dismally he blinked at his book, and then, more hopefully, at Peter Todd.

But this time Toddy did not venture to whisper. He had not forgotten the result of whispering in the recent history lesson: and Quelch's ears were almost as sharp as his eyes.

There was no help for the hapless Owl. He had to navigate the uncharted seas of Vergilian verse under his own steam, as it were.

He blinked and blinked. 'Conspectus', he vaguely remembered, had something to do with visibility. Perhaps somebody was viewing something! Even Bunter remembered that 'insula' was an island. So Publius Vergilius Maro must have meant something about viewing, and something about an island. That was as near as Billy Bunter could get.

'I am waiting, Bunter!'

Quelch's voice rumbled; the warning rumble well-known in his form. Quelch did not like waiting. That fat member of his form should have been ready with a construe of some sort-if he had prepared the lesson! Unfortunately, he hadn't! Now he rather wished that he had dismissed buried treasure from his fat mind in No. 7 Study, and given a little attention to Virgil. But it was too late now.

'Bunter! If you do not immediately construe--'

The rumble deepened.

Bunter had to make a shot at it. He proceeded to make that shot, hoping for the best.

"Est in conspectu Tenedos, notissima fama insula" - Tenedos was viewing a famous island--!' ventured Bunter.

'WHAT!'

'Ha, ha, ha!' came from the Remove. They were not unaccustomed to 'howlers' from William George Bunter. But this was an uncommonly rich specimen. There was a chortle all through the form.

'Oh, my hat!' murmured Bob Cherry. 'If Bunter thinks that will do for Quelch--!'

'Silence in the form!' If Billy Bunter's remarkable rendering of Virgil's immortal verse amused his form-fellows, certainly it did not amuse his form-master! Quelch's glare at the fattest member of his form resembled that of the fabled Basilisk. 'Silence! Bunter! What--what did you say?' Quelch almost exploded.

Billy Bunter realized that his shot had missed the mark!

'I-I-I mean--!' he stammered.

'What do you mean, Bunter?'

'I-I-I mean, Tenedos was-was inspecting a famous island, sir!' gasped Bunter. 'That-that's what I meant to say, sir! Tit-tut-Tenedos was-was inspecting a famous island, sir.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Silence! Bunter, are you so obtuse, so incredibly obtuse, as to suppose that Tenedos is the name of a person?'

'Oh! Is-is-isn't it, sir?' stuttered Bunter.

'It is not, Bunter! It is the name of an island!'

'Oh,lor'!'

'You have not prepared this lesson, Bunter. You are an incorrigibly idle boy, Bunter. You will write out, a hundred times, in Latin and English, the sentence: "Tenedos est insula: Tenedos is an island".'

'Oh, crikey!'

'You will bring your lines to my study this afternoon, Bunter, before tea. You will go on, Vernon-Smith.'

Smithy took up the tale, at Line Twenty-two. After which Billy Bunter had a rest from Quelch: and Quelch had a rest from Billy Bunter.

A rest from Quelch was quite welcome to the fat Owl: but a hundred lines to write on a half-holiday were far from welcome. Instead of treasure-hunting that afternoon, Bunter had to get busy in his study, repeating and repeating the utterly uninteresting and unimportant fact that Tenedos was an island and not a person. No doubt that would impress upon his fat memory, for quite a long while to come, that Tenedos was an island. But Billy Bunter attached no value whatever to that addition to his geographical knowledge. It was a disgruntled Owl that rolled out of the Remove room when Quelch dismissed his form.

HARD LINES!

'HALLO, hallo, hallo!'

Mr. Quelch smiled.

That cheery greeting, uttered in a voice that somewhat resembled Stentor's of old, was not, of course, addressed to Quelch. But Quelch heard it. Indeed, anyone within a quite wide radius could hardly fail to hear Bob Cherry, when he was in a cheery and exuberant mood-which was almost always.

Quelch, after dinner, was taking a walk in the Head's garden. It was a bright and sunny afternoon, but very windy: for which reason Quelch had sat down on a rustic seat by the tree-shaded wall. The branches of an ancient oak shaded him from the summer sun, and the massive old trunk was a shelter from the vigorous wind from the sea. It was from the other side of the garden-wall, in the quad, that the cheery roar resounded: apparently addressed to some fellow who had also sought shelter from wind and sun, on the school side of the wall. It brought a smile to Quelch's somewhat crusty countenance: its happy, healthy buoyancy perhaps reminding him of the days, long, long ago, when he had been a schoolboy himself.

'Hallo, hallo, hallo!' came the roar again. 'Enjoying life, old fat man?'

Evidently, the person addressed was Bunter.

Billy Bunter was, in fact, leaning on the old wall, on the school side, in the shade of the branches that overtopped it. Quelch, on his side, was seated. There was no seat on Bunter's side: so he leaned. If there was nothing at hand on which to sit, Bunter naturally leaned.

So there he was, leaning, when the Famous Five came along, and Bob's stentorian roar interrupted his fat musings on the subject of a missing word.

He blinked up at five figures in flannels.

Bob himself looked like enjoying life! Cricket with the Shell was due that afternoon. A summer's day, even a windy one, a half-holiday, and cricket in prospect, made Bob feel, like the sage Pangloss, that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. His comrades were looking quite merry and bright. But the plump countenance of Billy Bunter looked neither bright nor merry. It was, as the poet has expressed it, 'sicklie'd o'er with the pale cast of thought'! His fat mind was concentrated on that elusive word that was missing from Frater Johannes' parchment.

'Slacking, as usual!' grunted Johnny Bull.

'Oh, really, Bull--'

'The slackfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific,' remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'I'm thinking!' said Bunter, with dignity.

'Oh, my hat! Does it hurt?' asked Bob, sympathetically.

'About that dashed missing word--!' said Bunter unheeding that frivolous query. 'I was thinking it out in form this morning when Quelch jumped on me. I haven't got it yet.'

'Not much use swotting over it,' said Harry Wharton, shaking his head. 'We've all had a go, and there isn't a clue.'

'We've had to give it up,' said Nugent.

'Nothing doing!' said Bob.

'Well, you haven't my brains, you know,' said Bunter. 'It needs brains, of course. Still, I haven't got it yet.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Blessed if I see anything to cackle at,' snapped Bunter, peevishly. 'If you fellows had half my brains, you'd be twice as clever as you jolly well ain't, and chance it! I'm going to think the dashed thing out-while you fellows play cricket!' added Bunter, with overwhelming disdain. Evidently, the fat Owl regarded a cricket match as a trifle light as air, in comparison with the problem of that missing word. 'Chuck it, and come along and watch the game,' suggested Bob.

'Blow the game!' was Bunter's reply to that.

'Bunter's got lines,' said Nugent. 'Hadn't you better cut in and get them done, Bunter?'

'Blow the lines!'

'Quelch wants them before tea, you know.'

'Blow Quelch!'

On the other side of the wall, Quelch's smile was replaced by a frown, as he heard that. He made a move to rise from the rustic bench under the oak tree in the Head's garden. But he sat down again. Certainly, it was unheard-of disrespect for a Remove fellow to 'blow' his form-master. But Quelch was not the man to take official note of reckless words uttered inadvertently in his hearing. He frowned: but he did not rise in his wrath and glare over the garden wall. The juniors on the quad side remained blissfully unconscious of the majestic ears upon which their remarks fell.

'Well, you see, you can't blow Quelch, old fat man,' said Bob. 'And he isn't jolly pleased with you already! You couldn't expect to please him by telling him that Tenedos was inspecting that jolly old island--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Taint my fault if Quelch picks on me,' yapped Bunter. 'I believe I had that "con" right this morning all the time. Quelch don't know so much as he makes out. Schoolmasters don't! They're a dense lot, if you ask me!'

A frown deepened on a majestic brow over the garden wall. But still Quelch remained passive.

'Blow Quelch and his lines,' went on Bunter. 'I've no time for his dashed lines! I've a jolly good mind to tell him so.'

'Better have a jollier good mind not to,' chuckled Bob.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Look here, you fat ass,' said Johnny Bull, 'cut in and do your lines, and don't play the goat. It may be whops if you don't take them in on time.'

'Oh, that's all right,' said Bunter, carelessly. 'I can stuff Quelch! Suppose I tell him I did the lines--' Not much use, you fat Ananias, unless you show them up.'

'Suppose the study window was open, and they blew out,' said Bunter, with a fat grin. 'They might, on a windy day, mightn't they? That's good enough for Quelch!'

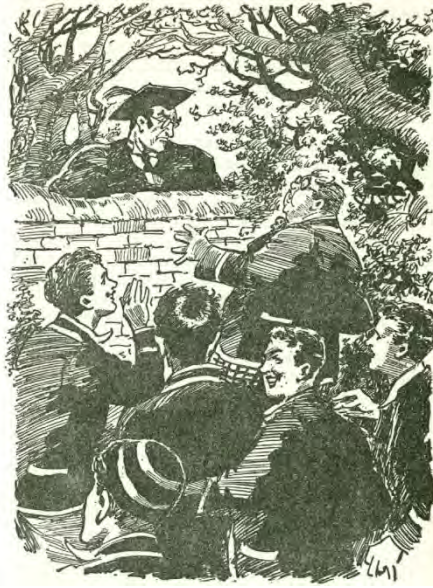
'Oh, scissors!'

The Famous Five stared at the fat Owl. Apparently the episode of Coker's postal-order, a few days ago, had put this bright idea into the fattest head in the Remove. Certainly it was a very windy day, just as it had been on Saturday: and no doubt an impot left near an open study window might-possibly-blowout and disappear! The possibility was good enough for Billy Bunter. He had no use for the facts!

'You fat, frabjous, footling fibber!' said Bob Cherry, in measured tones. 'If Quelch spots you telling him crammers, look out for fireworks.'

'Oh, I can stuff him!' said Bunter. 'All he can do is to give me the lines to write over again, and that won't hurt me, as I haven't done them! He, he, he!'

'I suppose that fat villain couldn't tell the truth, if he tried!' said Johnny Bull.



'BUNTER! GO TO YOUR STUDY IMMEDIATELY'

'Nobody knows,' answered Bob. 'He's never tried yet.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Oh, cackle!' sniffed Bunter. 'You fellows wouldn't have the gumption to think up a yarn like that! It's good enough for Quelch, I can jolly well tell you. Leave it to me to stuff Quelch!'

'BUNTER!'

It was like a clap of thunder!

Up to that point, Quelch had remained passive. He would not take heed of what was not intended for his ears. But there was a limit! And this was the limit! Up rose Quelch from the garden seat. Standing on that seat, he looked-or rather glared-over the garden wall. Never had his speaking countenance been so expressive.

'BUNTER!'

'Oh, crikey!'

At that unexpected and terrifying voice over his fat head, Billy Bunter blinked up in wild alarm. His eyes popped at the face looking over the wall. Harry Wharton and Co. caught their breath as they beheld it. The fat was in the fire now. Quelch did not heed the Famous Five. His eyes fixed on Billy Bunter. They almost bored into him.

'Bunter! You unscrupulous boy! Go to your study immediately and write your lines. You will write two hundred instead of one hundred. Bring them to my study before tea, or I shall cane you. Go!' Quelch's head disappeared again, on the garden side of the wall. Billy Bunter blinked dolorously at the chums of the Remove. Evidently, that masterly scheme for 'stuffing' Quelch was not a practical proposition now!

'Oh, lor!'

Slowly and sadly the fat Owl rolled away to the House.

That missing-word problem had to be dismissed now: while the hapless Owl covered sheets of impot paper with 'Tenedos est insula: Tenedos is an island'--two hundred times instead of one hundred.

'Poor old Bunter!' sighed Bob.

Cricket claimed the Famous Five: when, sad to relate, they forgot all about Bunter and his missing-word problem and his lines. In No. 7 Study in the Remove, the fat Owl scribbled, and smudged and

smear'd, slowly and sadly and sorrowfully: a dismal and dolorous Bunter. Undoubtedly, it was a case of very hard lines!

BUNTER IS NOT BELIEVED

'SKINNER, old chap!'

Harold Skinner stared round. Then he stared up: and grinned, at a fat face looking down from an open study window.

Cricket did not interest Skinner. As a matter of choice, he preferred a cigarette in a quiet corner of the Cloisters. But having run out of smokes, he was loafing idly on the path under the study windows, when the fat voice hailed him from above.

Billy Bunter blinked down at him. It was a weary Owl.

Bunter was a slow worker, when he worked at all: which was not oftener than he could help. A more energetic fellow would have pushed through those two hundred lines, and dashed out into the wind and sunshine, to enjoy what was left of a half-holiday. But energy was not a word in Billy Bunter's vocabulary.

His pen travelled more and more slowly, over those lines: more and more resembling the progress of an old, tired snail. And when, at length, he counted them, after what seemed to him hours and hours and hours, hoping that he was somewhere near the end, he found that after all his weary labour, he had produced only one hundred and sixty. Forty yet remained to be done: which really made the fat Owl feel like Cain of old that his burden was greater than he could bear! He had to have a rest from those lines: so there he was at the study window-- leaning, of course--and blinking dismally down into the quad.

But his dismal fat countenance cleared, just a little, as Skinner came loafing along. Skinner, evidently, had nothing to do: and there was a possibility, if a bare one, that he might lend a hand to a fellow overwhelmed with endless lines.

'I say, Skinner, old fellow--!' squeaked Bunter.

'What do you want?' asked Skinner. 'Old fellow' from Bunter naturally apprised him that Bunter wanted something.

'I say, old chap, I've got a lot of lines for Quelch!

Like to come up and do a few for me?' asked Bunter, hopefully.

'Ha, ha, ha!' chortled Skinner.

'What are you cackling at?' hooted Bunter.

'Your little joke, old fat man.'

'I'm not joking--!'

'You are!' said Skinner: and he loafed on, still laughing.

'Beast!' groaned Bunter.

Evidently, there was no help from Skinner. Forty more lines had to be written, or at any rate scribbled, by Billy Bunter's own fat hand. Remove fellows sometimes helped one another with impots: but with a cricket match going on, most of the Remove were on Little Side. Then suddenly Billy Bunter's glum fat face brightened, as he spotted a sturdy figure in flannels.

'I say, Bob!' he yelled.

Bob Cherry, like Skinner before him, glanced round: and then up, at the fat face at the window. Bob was looking, and feeling, very cheery. He had knocked up thirty for the Remove, before Hobson of the Shell captured his wicket. Now he was taking a stroll till he was wanted in the field. He gave the anxious fat Owl a cheery grin.

'Hallo, hallo, hallo!' he roared. 'How's Tenedos getting on, old fat bean?'

'I say, old chap, come up to the study--'

'What for?'

'I say, I've got a lot more lines to do--'

'Better buck up and do them.'

'Oh, really, Cherry! It was your fault that Quelch doubled my impot--'

'Eh! How's that?' asked Bob, staring.

'If you hadn't started jawing under that garden wall, he wouldn't have heard me! It's all your fault really, and I think you might lend me a hand with the lines. Do come up to the study, old chap.'

'Oh, bother,' said Bob. 'I shall be wanted in the field soon. The innings won't last much longer.'

'Never mind that--'

You fat ass!

'I-I-I mean, do come up to the study, old fellow.'

'I've got forty more, and they've got to go to Quelch before tea,' wailed Bunter. 'Do come up and lend a hand, Bob.'

'Oh, all right.' Bob hesitated: but good-nature prevailed, as it generally did with Bob Cherry. 'I'll come up.' He tramped away to the door of the House.

Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction. Bob was going to lend a hand: and if Bunter could contrive it, he was going to do the whole forty lines before he got out of No. 7 Study again. The fat Owl left the window: but he did not return to the lines on the table. He rolled across to Peter Todd's armchair, and deposited his weight therein. Sprawling in an armchair was ever so much more agreeable than sitting at a table writing lines: and from that coign of vantage the lazy fat Owl hoped to watch Bob Cherry scrawling through the final forty.

A heavy tramp of feet came up the Remove passage.

Bob was coming up to the study.

That tramp stopped at the door of No. 7: which Bob, with his accustomed exuberance, pitched wide open. He tramped in. Following him came not merely a draught, but something like a gale from the passage. Probably other windows were open, into which the wind from the sea was blowing. At any rate, the sudden hurling open of the door let in a gust, blowing across the room from the open door to the open window. There was a sudden rustling of loose papers caught on that gust.

'Oh, crikey! Look out!' yelled Billy Bunter, in alarm.

'Oh, my hat!' ejaculated Bob.

Billy Bunter had intended to remain a fixture in that armchair. Instead of which, he bounded up almost like an india-rubber ball, making a wild rush at sheets of impot paper that were blowing out of the window. But he clutched at them too late. They sailed through the open window, fluttering on the wind, out of the reach of clutching fat fingers.

'Oh!' gasped Bunter. 'Oh! You silly ass--!'

'I couldn't help--'

'You silly idiot!' shrieked Bunter. 'That's my impot! That's my lines! A hundred and sixty of 'em! Oh, crikey!'

Bob ran to the window. Sheets of paper were fluttering at a distance, the sport of the playful wind. One had disappeared into the branches of an elm. Another had dropped near Harold Skinner, who, after staring at it, kicked it along. Others were still fluttering. Bob turned from the window.

'Come on, and get after them, fathead!' he said, and he ran to the door.

'Beast!' gasped Bunter.

However, he followed Bob from the study: and for once, he did not move to slow motion. Bob went down the stairs two at a time: and Billy Bunter rolled after him as fast as his fat little legs could twinkle. The bare thought of having those hundred and sixty lines to write over again, was unnerving. For once the Owl of the Remove, who generally imitated the tortoise, understudied the hare! He was at Bob's heels as they ran out of the House.

But they were too late. It was very windy in the quad: and not a sign of a sheet of impot paper was to be seen under the study windows. Up and down and round about Bob Cherry tramped, and Billy Bunter rolled: but not the ghost of a single sheet met their eyes. No doubt they were still blowing about somewhere: but where, was a question to which neither Bob nor Bunter could guess the answer.

The search was interrupted by Harry Wharton's voice, calling from a distance.

'Bob! What are you up to, you ass? Come on. You're wanted.'

'Coming!' called back Bob.

Evidently, the Remove innings was over, and the Remove were going into the field. A fat hand clutched Bob's arm.

'Don't you go,' howled Bunter. 'We've got to find my lines--'

'Fathead! I've got to field-think I can keep the field waiting?'

'Blow the field! Look here--'

Bob Cherry did not look there. He shook off a fat hand, and departed at a run.

'Beast!' roared Bunter.

Bob Cherry disappeared.

Billy Bunter was left to continue the search on his solitary own. But he continued it in vain. Quite probably, those papers had blown over the school wall, or lodged in the branches of trees. Wherever they were, the breathless and perspiring fat Owl had to give it up at last: and he gave it up, and leaned on a buttress, gurgling for breath after his unaccustomed exertions. He was still leaning there when a bell rang.

It was the bell for tea in hall.

'Oh, crikey!' moaned Bunter.

He was due in Quelch's study with those lines. And he had not a single line to show. There was nothing for it but to present himself to his form-master, and explain what had happened. After all, a fellow couldn't help his lines blowing out of a window, on a windy day, when a silly idiot suddenly opened his study door. Even Quelch couldn't be down on a fellow for what a fellow couldn't help! Anyhow he had to go to Quelch's study: and he went. A fat hand tapped reluctantly at a dreaded door.

'Come in!'

Bunter rolled in. The glance with which Mr. Quelch greeted him was not encouraging. Obviously that member of his form was not in Henry Samuel Quelch's good graces. The gimlet-eyes noted at once that Bunter came empty-handed.

'Your lines, Bunter!' rapped Quelch.

'If-if you please, sir--'

'Your lines!'

'I-I did them, sir!' gasped Bunter. The fact that he had done them minus forty was a trifle not worth mentioning. 'I-I did them, sir, but-but-but--'

'But what?'

'They-they blew out of the window, sir--'

'WHAT!'

'It-it's jolly windy, sir-I-I mean it's very windy, sir, and a fellow opened the study door--'

'Bunter!'

'And-and they blew out the window, sir--'

'Bless my soul!'

'I-I-I've hunted for them everywhere, sir, but I-I can't find them. They-they've blown away somewhere.' Mr. Quelch gazed at Bunter.

Really, his breath was almost taken away. This was the very story that he had heard Bunter propound to the Famous Five, over the garden wall, as 'good enough for Quelch'. And here was the young rascal, spinning that very identical yarn, in spite of what Quelch had heard: as if he fancied that it was still good enough for Quelch! Quelch was not likely to believe it, in the circumstances. He gazed at William George Bunter, in astonishment mingled with wrath: the wrath predominating. 'Upon my word!' Quelch almost gasped. 'Bunter, you utterly unscrupulous and untruthful boy, how dare you?'

'You-you see, sir, the wind was blowing down the passage, and they blewed out of the window-I mean they blowed-I-I mean--'

'Upon my word!' repeated Mr. Quelch. 'This passes all bounds! This is the very story you concocted to deceive me, Bunter, as I heard you telling several other boys-as I heard you, Bunter, with my own ears--'

'Oh! Yes! No! But-but--!' stammered Bunter. 'I-I-I-they-they-they really did blowed--'

'The identical story, as I heard with my own ears! With my own ears!' repeated Mr. Quelch, as if to make it absolutely clear that he had heard it with his own ears, and not with somebody else's. 'With my own ears, Bunter--'

'Oh! No! Yes! But-but-but it really happened, sir-they blowed-I mean blew-out of the study window, and I couldn't find them anywhere, and--'

'Silence!' The thunder rolled. 'Silence! I will not listen to another untruthful word from you, Bunter.'

'But, sir, I-I-they--'

'Silence!' Quelch picked up his cane, and pointed to a chair. 'Bend over that chair, Bunter.'

'Oh, crikey! I-I say--'

'Bend over!' Quelch almost roared.

'Oh, lor!'

A fat figure bent reluctantly over the chair.

Whop! whop! whop!

'Yow-ow-ow!'

Whop! whop! Whop!

'Yaroooooh!'

Quelch stopped at six: though he really looked, at the moment, like making it sixteen, if not sixty! He laid down the cane.

'Now, Bunter, you may go-'

'Wow! ow!'

'You will bring me your two hundred lines after class tomorrow. If you fail to do so, I shall deal with you very severely. Go!'

'Yow-ow-ow-wow!'

'Go!' thundered Mr. Quelch.

A dolorous Owl trailed out of the study, and wriggled down the passage. He rolled into the Rag, and plumped down in an armchair. He reposed in that armchair for about the millionth part of a second!

Then he jumped up again with a howl. Billy Bunter liked armchairs, and sprawling therein: but just then even an armchair had no appeal for him. And when, a little later, he rolled into hall to tea, he did not take a chair at the table, but took his fodder standing up, like a horse.

COKER ASKS FOR IT

"HORTUS"!' said Coker.

'Eh?'

'What?'

"Hortus"!' repeated Coker, positively. 'That's the word.'

Mr. Prout gave quite a start.

Prout was sitting, where Quelch had sat a few hours earlier, on the rustic seat by the wall, in the Head's garden. It was very warm in the summer sunshine, and Prout, leaning back, nodded a little.

The old garden was very quiet and pleasant, with its trim lawn and shrubberies and shady trees.

Prout, reposing peacefully, was a little disposed to slumber.

But he sat up and took notice, as it were, as Horace Coker's voice impinged upon his plump ears from the other side of the wall.

He was surprised, and a little interested. Coker was the very last fellow in his form whom he would have expected to hear taking the slightest interest in Latin out of class. But 'hortus' undoubtedly was a Latin word, and it was Coker of the Fifth who uttered it.

Prout, like Quelch before him, was an unseen and unintentional hearer. Coker certainly was not aware that his beak was within vocal range: neither were Potter and Greene. History, in fact, was repeating itself!

Potter and Greene had been playing cricket. After cricket, they were naturally ready for tea-not so much for tea in hall, as for one of those lavish spreads in the study which helped to cement their friendship with Coker.

So they looked for Coker: and found him in the quad.

Somewhat to their surprise, he led them into the shade of the massive oak branches that overtopped the garden wall. He came to a halt in the shade of those branches, almost on the very spot where Billy Bunter had leaned after dinner. Why he had led them there, and why he pronounced the Latin word 'hortus' in positive tones, they did not know. They could only wonder what he meant if indeed he meant anything at all. Not that they specially wanted to know! What they wanted was tea in the study.

'It's "hortus" all right!' went on Coker. 'That's Latin for garden!' he added, by way of useful information for his friends.

'Oh, quite!' agreed Potter. 'But what have we come here for?'

'Because that's the oak.'

'What oak?' asked Greene.

Coker gave them an expressive look.

'Perhaps you've forgotten that I'm on the track of the Greyfriars treasure,' he snapped.

'Oh, that!' sighed Potter and Greene together. Actually, they had forgotten, or almost forgotten, it. Coker, too, had not had much time for it of late Prout's Georgic having kept him rather busy. But with that Georgic off his hands, at last, it seemed that Coker was getting busy again on the treasure. His powerful brain had been concentrated on the missing-word problem, like Billy Bunter's: but apparently with better results!

'That word is the clue,' said Coker. 'I don't suppose for a minute that those fags will spot it-no danger of that! But I was bound to get it sooner or later. I'd have got it sooner, if Prout hadn't been ragging me for that putrid Georgic. But I've got it now. The word's "hortus" - which means garden. What else

could it be?'

'Likely as not,' said Potter. 'But--'

'Never mind butting! Just listen to me.'

'What about tea?'

'I said listen to me. It's a garden all right,' said Coker. 'You may remember that there was just space for a six-letter word--well, that word was "hortus"! See?'

'But if the word was "hortus"--'

'I've said that it was.'

'But in Latin it would have to be in the ablative,' said Potter. 'Nobody could write "quaere in hortus". It would be in the ablative case--"quaere in horto".

"Horto" is five letters, not six.'

'Oh!' Coker, apparently, hadn't thought of that: though really, even Coker might have. 'Oh! Yes! I suppose it would be "horto". Yes!'

'Only five letters--'

'I don't care how many letters there were. Don't argue so much, old chap. That's the worst of you fellows--always arguing. The word's garden, and that's enough. Now, it's pretty well known that the Head's garden was the abbot's garden, in the old days when this show was a monastery. And look at that oak! It's as old as the hills, and must have been standing before Henry VIII was born! That's the high oak we want! See?'

Prout, on the other side of the garden wall, suppressed a snort. Coker was not, as he had supposed, discussing some point in the Latin grammar. Apparently he fancied that he had some clue to the legendary Greyfriars treasure: that was what he was discussing. Prout had not forgotten the box of chalk. His plump brow knitted in a frown.

'You see, I've worked it out!' went on Coker. 'I thought that oak by Gosling's wood-shed was a likely spot--what are you grinning at?'

'Oh! Nothing! I say, the tea-bell's gone--'

'Never mind that! There's no doubt this time--that's the old oak that the treasure was buried under. All we've got to do is to dig it up.'

Potter and Greene jumped.

So did Prout, on the other side of the wall.

'Oh, my hat!' ejaculated Potter. 'You're not thinking of digging up the Head's lawn, are you?'

'Just that!' answered Coker, calmly.

'The Head would be as mad as a hatter, if you dug up his lawn!' gasped Greene.

'Not if I handed over the Greyfriars treasure. He wouldn't mind a spot of damage to his lawn, if I dug up a stack of gold angels.'

'Nunno! But-but-but suppose it isn't there! There'd be a frightful row about it--'

'Biggest row ever!' said Greene. 'Fellow might be flogged--'

'Or sacked--'

'For goodness sake, Coker--'

'Don't jaw,' said Coker. 'Of course, there's a chance that the treasure isn't there. I've no doubt it is: but there's a chance. If it isn't, I don't want a row with the Head, of course. I get rows enough from Prout. He was ratty over that box of chalk the other day--'

'Ha, ha, ha!' contributed Potter and Greene, involuntarily.

Coker gave them a glare.

'If you're going to cackle over the way young Wharton and his gang pulled my leg--!' he hooted.

'Oh! No! But-but-but--'

'I shall keep the whole thing dark, till the treasure actually turns up!' exclaimed Coker. 'I shall pick a time when there's nobody about. I can get a spade from old Mimble's shed in the garden. Easy enough, if the coast's clear.'

'But--!' said Potter and Greene together.

'You keep on butting,' said Coker, irritably. 'I shall be careful, of course. The Head will be at tea now, in his house, so he won't be in his garden--'

'Some other beak might--'

'I said don't jaw! Give a fellow a bunk up, and I'll take a dekko over the wall. If there's nobody about, it will be all right.'

'You can't muck about with the Head's lawn--'

'Didn't I say don't jaw?'

'But look here--'

'Pack it up, and give me a bunk up. No time like the present, if the coast's clear. Now, then!'

Potter and Greene exchanged a hopeless look, and gave Horace Coker the required 'bunk'. Oak foliage rustled round Coker's head, as he rested his broad chest on top of the wall, and scanned the garden within.

All, at the first glance, seemed solitary. Nobody was walking on the lawn. Nobody was visible in the shrubberies. It seemed quite a favourable moment for Coker's enterprise. Then, rather casually, he glanced downward.

Then he almost fell off the wall.

Below him, staring up, was a plump face, almost purple with wrath. The ghost of Banquo did not startle Macbeth more than that plump purple visage startled Coker of the Fifth! He gazed at it, speechless. He gazed down at Prout, and Prout gazed up at him.

There was a long moment of dreadful silence. Then Prout found his voice. 'COKER!'

'Oh!' gasped Coker.

Potter and Greene exchanged startled looks, as Prout's fruity voice boomed over the wall. It was their first intimation that their form-master was in the offing.

'Coker ! You obtuse, you insensate boy!' Prout boomed on. 'Coker! If you should perpetrate the slightest damage in the garden-if you should ever venture even to enter this garden, Coker-I shall request your head-master to administer a flogging! But for your almost incredible obtuseness, Coker, for which I can make allowance, I should take you to my study now, and cane you. You will write me another Georgic, Coker! Do you hear me, Coker?'

Coker did not reply.

He dropped limply from the wall. Prout was left fuming. Coker looked at Potter and Greene. They looked at him. They tried hard not to grin. But they did not quite succeed. They grinned.

Coker gave them one indignant glare, and stalked away. 'Tea in hall, I suppose!' sighed Potter.

'Looks like it!' sighed Greene.

They drifted away to tea in hall.

Coker was not thinking of tea. Coker, who had finished a Georgic only that afternoon, had another Georgic to write for Prout. The shortest of Virgil's Georgics contained five hundred and fourteen lines. Coker forgot tea. He even forgot the Greyfriars treasure. He no longer cared whether that missing word in Billy Bunter's parchment was 'hortus' or any other word in Dr. Smith's Larger Latin Dictionary. For the time, at least, Horace Coker's horizon was filled up by that Georgic!

A STARTLING DISCOVERY

'I SAY, you fellows!'

'Take it away!'

'But I say--'

'And chuck it away--'

'But look here--'

'And chuck yourself after it!'

It was the following day, after class. After class, on a bright sunny summer's afternoon, Harry Wharton and Co. had plenty of resources for their leisure hours: to which they were not in the least disposed to add a missing-word puzzle. Which, they had no doubt, was in Billy Bunter's mind, when he rolled up in the quad with a fat worried face.

The captain of the Remove, in fact, was about to shepherd his friends off to junior nets for cricket practice. Neither he nor they wanted to see that precious parchment again, or to swot over vain attempts to spot the missing word. They had had to give it up as a riddle without an answer: and if occasionally they gave it a thought or two, they did not want to be bothered with it now--or with William George Bunter.

'But I say, you fellows--!' persisted Bunter.

'Give us a rest!' said Bob Cherry. 'Nothing in it, old fat man--you might as well have left that dashed parchment where you found it.'

'But I say--!'

'Take it away, and chuck it away,' said Nugent.

'But what I mean is--'

'Never mind what you mean, old fat man,' said Bob. 'Just blow away. We're going down to the nets, and--'

'Will you let a fellow speak?' yelled Bunter. 'Tain't the parchment! I say, you fellows, it's my lines for Quelch. Who's going to help me with them?'

Evidently, the Famous Five had misunderstood. This time it was not the missing word that was worrying the fat Owl. An even more urgent matter was on his plump mind.

That day, after class, two hundred lines had to be delivered to Mr. Quelch in his study: or else--!

Bunter, it seemed, had dismissed missing-word problems for the moment. He was seeking a present help in time of need, in the matter of those lines.

But, with the selfishness to which Billy Bunter was sorrowfully accustomed, the chums of the Remove seemed no more interested in his lines than in his parchment and his missing word.

'Bother your lines!' said Johnny Bull.

'I say, you fellows, there's two hundred of them!' wailed Bunter. 'All that rot about Tenedos two hundred times over. I think a fellow's pals might help a fellow out.'

'Jolly good idea!' agreed Bob. 'Go and look for them and put it to them.'

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!' yapped Bunter. 'I say, you fellows, who's going to help?'

'Echo answers who!' said Nugent.

'Esteemed echo answers that the whofulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter,' grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'Anybody keen on sticking in a study writing Bunter's lines for him, so that the fat frump can frowst about doing nothing?' inquired Johnny Bull, sarcastically.

Harry Wharton laughed.

'Not quite!' he remarked. 'Better cut in and get on with them, Bunter. We're not looking for lines this afternoon. Come on, you fellows.'

'I say, don't walk off while a fellow's talking to you!' howled Bunter. 'I say, Bob, old chap, you're going to help, ain't you?'

'Not in these trousers.'

'Look here, it's jolly well up to you!' exclaimed the fat Owl, indignantly. 'Didn't I do the lines yesterday, and didn't you barge into the study, with the wind blowing up the passage like billy-o, and didn't they blowout of the window and get lost, and Quelch wouldn't believe a word of it when I told him, and I've got to do them over again, and it's all your fault--'

'Oh, bother!' said Bob. He paused.

'Rot!' grunted Johnny Bull. 'Want to stick in a study on an afternoon like this?'

'Not exactly!' admitted Bob. 'But--'

'Cricket!' said Harry Wharton. 'Nets, old man.'

'Well, yes,' said Bob. 'But-well, those dashed lines did blowout of the window when I opened that door. I-I think I'll lend Bunter a hand--'

'That's right, old chap,' said Bunter. 'Look here, I'll do fifty myself--'.

'You fat villain!'

'I-I mean a hundred,' amended Bunter, hastily. 'Halves, old fellow! That's fair. Come up to the study now.'

'Oh, all right.'

'Fathead!' said Johnny Bull, sententiously.

'Same to you, and many of them,' said Bob. 'You fellows get along to the cricket, and I'll come down when I'm through. It won't take me long to knock off a hundred. Come on, Bunter, you bothering porpoise.'

Bob Cherry went into the House with the fat Owl.

Billy Bunter's plump visage had brightened considerably. Those lines had to go to Quelch: and Bunter had succeeded in landing half of them on another fellow--and he entertained hopes of landing some of the other half! In fact, if Billy Bunter could contrive it, Bob's contribution to the two hundred lines was likely to be about one hundred and ninety-nine!

In No. 7 Study, they sat down to the table, and lines.

Bob, who was anxious to get through, and join his friends at the nets, dipped a pen in the ink and started. Bunter, who was no doubt anxious for Bob to get through, but not particularly anxious to get through himself, leaned back in his chair and watched, through his big spectacles.

Bob gave him a very expressive look.

'Mind, I'm doing just half!' he said. 'You'd better push on with your half, you lazy fat ass.'

'I-I say, old chap, I-I've got a pain in my wrist.' Billy Bunter gave a grubby right wrist a rub with a grubby left hand. 'I-I knocked it on-on something. It hurts fearfully, old chap. I-I can hardly hold a pen. I-I say, if-if I do the first dozen, you-you wouldn't mind doing the rest, would you, old fellow, when I've got a fearful pain in the wrist?'

'A pain in your right wrist?' asked Bob.

'Yes, old chap-awful-like a-a-a red-hot poker--or-or a burning dagger--' said Bunter, pathetically.

'Then I'll tell you what I'll do.' Bob laid down his pen, and picked up a ruler from the table.

'You'll do the lot?' asked Bunter, eagerly.

'No! If you've got a fearful pain in your right wrist, I'll give another to match in your left wrist.'
Rap!

'Yaroooooh!' roared Bunter.

A grubby right hand clasped a grubby left wrist.

Whether Billy Bunter had a pain in his right wrist or not, he undoubtedly had one in his left!

'Ow! Beast! Wow!' roared Bunter.

'Have another?' asked Bob.

'Wow! Keep that ruler away, you beast! Wow!'

Bob Cherry chuckled, and picked up his pen again.

Slowly, Billy Bunter followed his example. He realized sadly that a pain in his wrist was a chicken that would not fight, as it were. Slowly, very slowly, the fat Owl started on his share of the impot.

'Tenedos est insula: Tenedos is an island!' dribbled from his pen, in the irregular scrawl that was Bunter's 'fist'. Over and over again: 'Tenedos est insula: Tenedos is an island'. There was no doubt that, after this, even Billy Bunter would remember that Tenedos was an island! Robinson Crusoe could not have been more tired of his island than Billy Bunter was of the island of Tenedos. He scribbled dismally on and on.

Bob, who was putting on steam, produced a scrawl very like Bunter's. That, of course, was all to the good, in the circumstances, for if that impot had not looked as if an inky spider had crawled over the paper, it would hardly have passed muster with Quelch as Bunter's handiwork.

'How many have you done, old chap?' asked Bunter, at last, taking a rest.

'Ninety!' answered Bob.

'Oh, crikey! I've done only twenty-five!' groaned Bunter.

'Better push on with them.'

'I-I-I say, old chap, you're not going to stop at a hundred, are you?'

'Where's that ruler?'

'Beast!'

Evidently, Bob was going to stop at a hundred. Billy Bunter resumed his laborious scrawl. Bob's pen raced on. The hundredth line was written. Bob threw down his pen. He looked over the lines he had written, to make sure of the number.

'Finished?' mumbled Bunter.

'Just a hundred.'

'I say, old chap, if you'll do another twenty--'

Bob did not answer. To Bunter's surprise, he sat staring at the lines he had written, with quite a startled look on his face-'Tenedos est insula: Tenedos is an island': endlessly repeated. It was as if something in those lines had struck him, and struck him hard.

The fat Owl blinked at him.

'Bob, old chap-say another ten--'

'By gum!' ejaculated Bob Cherry. He did not heed Bunter: he stared at those lines. 'By gum! Suffering cats and crocodiles!'

'What--?' began the puzzled Owl.

'Great pip!' gasped Bob. 'Have we got it?'

'Eh! Got what?'

'The word.'

'Eh! What word?'

'The missing word!' roared Bob.

'Oh, my hat!

"Insula"!

' "Insula"' repeated Bunter, blankly.

'The missing word in the parchment!' gasped Bob. 'There was the space of a six-letter word--well, "insula" is six letters, isn't it? We've got it!'

'But "insula's" an island--!'

'And isn't there a jolly old island in the Sark, and isn't there a jolly old high oak on it--the one those Fifth-form chaps dodged in, last Saturday, when they were out of bounds and a keeper after them--'

'Oh!' gasped Bunter.

'We've got it!' trilled Bob. 'Isn't that island just the spot old Frater Johannes would pick--safe distance, with the king's emissaries rooting over the place for the gold of the abbey! "Insula"! That's it! That sentence in that jolly old parchment was "Quaere in insula sub alta quercu"! Bet you ten to one in dough-nuts! Bunter, you bloated old porpoise. we've got it--all through you howling that howler in form! Hurray!'

Bob had no doubt about it. The missing word was 'insula'; and it had been discovered, at last, at long last, in Billy Bunter's lines for Quelch!

ON THE TRACK OF TREASURE!

BILLY BUNTER jumped up.

His fat face was excited now. His little round eyes were almost popping through his big round spectacles.

He forgot lines. He forgot even the 'whops' that impended, if those lines were not delivered on time. He forgot Quelch. Quelch, and lines, and whops, vanished from his fat mind. What were Quelch, and lines, and even whops, compared with digging up the Greyfriars treasure, and rolling in gold? Stacks and stacks of gold angels of the reign of Henry VIII, buried centuries ago, waiting in that hide-out under the high oak for a fat treasure-hunter's eager hands! Quelch, at that moment, was not even an also ran! He practically disappeared from existence!

'Oh, crikey!' gasped Billy Bunter. 'If that's the word, Cherry--!'

'That's the word!' declared Bob. 'I'd never have thought of it, only there it was, staring me in the face, over and over again! If you hadn't made that howler in form, and got those lines, we'd never have got it! But we've got it now.'

Billy Bunter hooked the old parchment from his pocket.

He blinked at it with an eager blink. There was no doubt about it-the obliterated space gave just room for a six-letter word. That word had to be in the ablative case. But with a feminine noun of the first declension the spelling of the ablative was, of course, the same as in the nominative. So 'insula' filled the bill!

'"Insula"!' chuckled Bunter. 'That's it! I wonder we didn't think of it before--'

'Well, there was nothing to make us think of it,' said Bob. 'I shouldn't have thought of it, if it hadn't kept popping up in those lines-I don't suppose anybody would have--'

Billy Bunter shook a fat head, at that!

'I expect I should have spotted it pretty soon,' he said. 'You see, I've been thinking and thinking it over--'

'What have you been doing that with?' asked Bob.

'Oh, really, Cherry--'

'This is just a spot of luck,' said Bob. 'I jolly well believe that we've got it now. The jolly old operative word, fatty. I'd bank on it that it's "insula": and if it's "insula", it means Popper's Island-there's no other island anywhere near Greyfriars. Popper's Island or nix! What?'

'It's that island all right. And--'

'Popper's Island is out of bounds, though,' said Bob, thoughtfully. 'We can't be quite sure, till we get to the spot and dig-but--'

'Blow bounds!' yapped Bunter. Billy Bunter was not, as a rule, a fellow to see much attraction in a risky enterprise. But circumstances alter cases. With a buried treasure in prospect, Billy Bunter was recklessly prepared to 'blow' bounds-in fact, to blow them sky-high!

'Blow 'em!' agreed Bob. 'But we shall have to be careful, all the same. Those Fifth-form chaps were copped there last Saturday, and Coker landed in a row with his beak. We don't want a row with Quelch--'

'Blow Quelch!'

'Better not take a crowd,' went on Bob. 'A lot of fellows crowding there might be noticed--safer for one fellow to nip in on his own--'

'Well, yes: but--'

'But what?'

'You'd better come,' said Bunter, blinking at him. 'I'd rather you pulled the boat, old chap! Of course, I could pull up to Popper's Island all right: but--' Even with a golden treasure ahead, it seemed that the fat Owl had not forgotten his constitutional objection to exertion.

Bob stared at him for a moment, and then laughed. 'You fat ass! It would take you till the end of the term, to pull up to Popper's Island! I wasn't thinking of you. I'll go--'

'You jolly well won't go without me!' howled Bunter, indignantly. 'It's my treasure, ain't it? You're jolly well not going to dig up my treasure without me there, Bob Cherry.'

'Fathead! We're not sure it's there, till we find it. I can bag a spade, and get along to the island, and see--'

'Not without me!' said Bunter, firmly. 'Of course, I trust you, old chap--'

'Eh?'

'I know you wouldn't pinch my treasure--'

'Wha-a-at?'

'But I'm jolly well going to be there when it's dug up. I'm going to keep my eye on it, I can jolly well tell you.'

'You fat, footling, foozling frump-!' roared Bob. 'You can call a fellow names, but I'm jolly well going to be there,' said Bunter. 'I'll lend a hand with the digging, if you like! There!'

'You blethering bloater--'

'We're wasting time!' said Bunter. 'Look here, suppose Coker guessed it was that island! There's no time to waste! Let's start now.'

'Oh, all right! But what about your lines?'

'Lines? Blow the lines!' hooted Bunter. 'Fat lot I care about lines, when we're on the track of the treasure!'

'But Quelch--'

'Blow Quelch! Come on, can't you?'

'Quelch will want those lines--'

'He can jolly well want! Think I'm bothering about Quelch now, and his dashed lines? Who's Quelch?' howled Bunter. 'Why, there may be thousands and thousands of quid in that hide-out on the island. Quelch can go and eat coke, and I'd jolly well tell him so, too! Look here, come on.'

Billy Bunter was all breathless eagerness. If that missing word actually had been spotted, and really it looked like it, the legendary treasure of Greyfriars was only waiting to be picked up, under the high oak on Popper's Island. Minutes, indeed moments, were precious now. For once, if for once only, the laziest fellow at Greyfriars, or in the wide world, was prepared to stamp on the gas!

He tore open the door of No. 7 Study. 'Come on!' he squeaked, over a fat shoulder.

He went down the passage at a trot. Bob Cherry followed, but stopped at the door of No. 4. He stepped into that study, to borrow Tom Redwing's pocket-compass. That was needed, to locate the precise spot 'three cubits' west of the oak-trunk.

'Hurry up!' squeaked Billy Bunter, blinking back impatiently.

'Coming!' called back Bob.

Bunter resumed his trot. For once, Bob had to stretch his long legs, to keep pace with the fat Owl. On the Remove landing, Skinner was lounging, and he stared at them, as they cut across to the stairs.

'Hallo! What's going on?' asked Skinner.

'We are!' answered Bob, affably. And they went on, leaving Skinner staring.

In the quad, Bob Cherry paused, to consider where he was going to 'bag' a spade. There was an impatient howl from Bunter.

'Hurry up, will you, and let's get the boat out--'

'BUNTER!'

It was a sharp voice from an open study window. 'Oh, crikey!' gasped Bunter, in dismay.

He spun round towards the study window. At that window sat Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. Quelch, enjoying the balmy summer weather at his open window, had quite a benignant expression on his face--till his eyes fell on William George Bunter. Then the benignant expression changed to a frown, as the gimlet-eyes fixed grimly on the fat Owl.

'Bunter!' Quelch's voice was deep.

'Oh! Yes, sir!' groaned Bunter. 'Apparently, Bunter, you are going out--'

'Oh! Yes, sir! No, sir! Oh, lor!'

'Have you written your lines, Bunter?'

'Oh! Yes, sir!' gasped Bunter.

'Then bring them to my study at once.'

'I-I-I mean, I-I-I've nearly finished them, sir--'

'Go to your study immediately, Bunter, and write your lines. You will hand them to me before you leave the House.'

'Oh, jiminy! I-I-I mean, if-if you please, sir--'

'That will do, Bunter.'

Billy Bunter blinked at him. In the security of No. 7 Study, Bunter had been prepared to 'blow' Quelch. He did not look like 'blowing' him now! Now was his opportunity to 'jolly well' tell Quelch that he could go and eat coke! But he did not seize the opportunity!

With deep feelings, he rolled back into the House. Once more, Billy Bunter sat at the table in No. 7: once more he scribbled, and smeared, and smudged: once more he blinked dismally at endless repetitions of 'Tenedos est insula: Tenedos is an island'. It was Popper's Island, and certainly not Tenedos, in which Billy Bunter was interested: Tenedos he would willingly have consigned to the bottom of the sea! But alas for the fat treasure--he had to scribble and smudge and smear, on and on and on, to the bitter end!

WET!

'THAT ass!' remarked Potter.

'That nitwit!' sighed Greene.

'That fathead--!'

'That chump!'

Potter and Greene exchanged those remarks in their study in the Fifth. Needless to state, Coker was not present. Had Horace Coker been in the study, his friends certainly would not have been expressing their opinion of him so freely.

They were waiting for Coker. After class, Coker had finished his second Georgic, which he had had to take down to Prout. He had asked--or rather, told--Potter and Greene to wait for him. They waited--not patiently.

Truth to tell, Coker's pals had been rather dodging his company of late. Coker, while his Georgic lasted, had been somewhat like a bear with a sore head. Almost every minute of Coker's spare time had been taken up by that Georgic. Really, it was enough to make any fellow snappish, to have a second Georgic following on the heels of the first. Bucolic verse had no appeal whatever for Coker: and two of Virgil's Georgics, one after another, made him feel that life, even at Greyfriars, was weary, stale, flat and unprofitable. However, that Georgic was over and done with now: and Coker's pals were almost as relieved as Coker to see the last of it.

They waited for him to come back from Prout, not wholly and solely because Coker had told them so to do.

There was another consideration. On the study table stood a parcel of considerable dimensions, as yet not unpacked. It was one more of the almost innumerable parcels that arrived from Aunt Judy for her dear Horace. Coker, glued to a Georgic, had hardly given it a thought. Potter and Greene had given it quite a lot. It was hardly to be doubted that that parcel would be unpacked for tea. Tea-time was not due yet: but Potter and Greene were prepared to begin early. So they waited for Coker.

'The fathead!' remarked Potter. 'Anybody would think he liked Georgics, the way he asks for them! Hallo, here he comes!'

There was a heavy tread in the passage, announcing that the largest feet in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars were in the offing. Coker was coming: and Potter and Greene ceased to confide to one another what they thought of old Horace's intellect.

Coker tramped in.

If his friends had hoped to see him taking a more cheerful view of life, now that that Georgic was off his hands, they had another guess coming. Coker's rugged brow was glum and gloomy. He gave them a glance that was almost a glare.

'Prout!' he said. Only that one word: but his tone spoke volumes. Clearly his interview with his form-master had not soothed Coker.

'Prout shirty?' asked Potter.

'I've had a jaw! Sarcastic about my fist!' Coker breathed hard. 'Seemed to think that I'd scrawled that Georgic off anyhow to get it done.'

'Well, you did rush it a bit, old man--'

'If you're going to stick up for old Pompous, George Potter--'

'Oh! No! You-you didn't exactly rush it--'

'I jolly well did! Think I was going to have it hanging about for days on end? Of course I rushed it.'

'Oh! Ah! Um!'

'But I don't want Prout's sarc, all the same. I can tell you I came jolly near chucking that Georgic at his head' Jolly near!'

'Oh!'

'But I didn't!' added Coker.

Potter and Greene could have guessed that one!

'Let's get out,' went on Coker, restively. 'I've had enough of sticking indoors, if you fellows haven't. A pull on the river will do me good, after Prout and his dashed Georgic.'

A suggestion from Horace Coker was equivalent to a Royal invitation: it was tantamount to a command. Nevertheless, Potter and Greene hesitated: their eyes dwelling on the parcel on the table. Little as Coker guessed it, he might not have found them in the study at all, but for that parcel.

'Coming?' snapped Coker.

'Well, what about after tea?' suggested Greene Snort, from Coker.

'If you fellows like frowsting about indoors on glorious afternoon like this, frowst away!' he snapped.

'Please yourselves.'

He picked up the parcel from the table, and turned to the door. Two pairs of eyes followed him--and the parcel. Potter and Greene realized that that parcel was not going to be unpacked in the study.

Naturally they wanted to be on the spot, whenever and wherever it was unpacked.

'We're coming!' said Potter, hastily.

'Jolly on the river,' said Greene.

'Come on, then, if you're coming!' grunted Coker.

They came on. Coker stalked down the passage with the parcel. Potter and Greene, following, exchanged an eloquent glance behind his bulky back. But Aunt Judy's parcel was attractive, if Aunt Judy's nephew was not, and they followed on.

'Picnic?' asked Potter, genially, on the study landing. 'Think I'm taking this parcel out of doors, just to walk it round the quad?' inquired Coker. This, apparently, was an answer in the affirmative.

'Jolly, a picnic on the river,' said Potter, with quite industrious geniality.

'Not on Popper's Island, though,' said Greene, rather hastily: and a little injudiciously.

Coker turned his head, and transfixed William Greene with a freezing stare.

'If I choose to picnic on Popper's Island, I shall jolly well picnic on Popper's Island!' he said, very disdainfully. 'But I don't choose!' he added, much to the relief of his friends. 'Come on, and don't jaw so much.'

The misadventures of the previous Saturday had not been without effect on Coker. Potter and Greene, assuredly, would not have made that venture again, for half a dozen of Aunt Judy's parcels. However, as old Horace did not 'choose' to repeat the performance, it was all right.

They followed him down to the boat-house.

A Remove junior, with a cheery ruddy face and a mop of flaxen hair, was about to step into a boat there. Sunny and cheery as that junior looked, Horace Coker gave him a grim frown. No doubt he recalled how that cheery junior had sat on his chest in his study and spilled ink over his rugged features. Bob Cherry really was quite pleasant to look at: but the sight of him did not seem to please Coker at all.

'That cheeky young smug!' grunted Coker. 'I've a jolly good mind to smack his cheeky head!'

'Let's shove the boat out!' said Potter, hastily.

'Yes, let's!' said Greene.

Coker did not heed them. He was staring into the boat into which Bob was about to step, an oar in

his hand. In the bottom of the boat lay a spade. It was quite an unusual object in a boat. Certainly, unusual as it was, it did not concern Coker of the Fifth. But Coker never was a fellow to limit himself to what concerned him.

'What the dickens is that, you young ass?' demanded Coker.

'Eh?' Bob Cherry glanced round at him. 'What's what, Coker?'

'That spade in your boat.'

'Oh, that?' said Bob, cheerily. 'That's an agricultural implement, Coker.'

That reply caused Potter and Greene to grin. It did not cause Horace Coker to grin. It intensified his frown. Already disposed to smack Bob's head, that reply decided him to do so.

Smack!

'Oh! Ooooh!' gasped Bob. 'You silly, cheeky ass--sit down!' He gave a sudden shove with his oar. It jammed on Horace Coker's broad chest, with a sudden hefty jam, and Coker, quite unintentionally, sat down. He sat down with a bump that fairly shook the planks.

'Woooooh!' gasped Coker.

Bob jumped into his boat. He had sat Coker down: and it was only judicious to get out of reach before Coker got up again. He shoved at the raft with his oar in haste, and the boat shot off.

Coker was not long in resuming the perpendicular. In fact, he bounded up almost like a jack-in-the-box, and rushed. Bob and the boat were already out of reach. Quite a wide space separated them from Coker. But Coker did not even think of stopping. He made a jump across to the boat.

Had he landed in it, probably it would have capsized under the sudden impact. Fortunately, he did not land in it. It was almost within range of a vigorous leap--but not quite.

Splash!

Quite a waterspout shot up behind the boat.

'Oh, gum!' gasped Potter. 'The ass!'

'Oh, crumbs!' ejaculated Greene. 'The dummy.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' floated back from the Remove boat. Bob Cherry, already pulling, grinned back at Horace Coker. Coker, up to his neck in water, clung to the edge of the raft with one hand, and shook the other, clenched, after the boat. Potter and Greene, grinning, came to help him out. Bob Cherry disappeared up the Sark, as Horace Coker, drenched and dripping from head to foot, sprawled gasping on wet planks.

'Oooogh!' gurgled Coker. 'Woooooh! I'll smash him--urrggh! Look at me! Soaked to the skin!

Goooooh! I'll pulverize him.'

'You're wet, old chap-!' murmured Potter.

'Think I don't know that, you silly fathead? Urrggh!'

'You'll want a change--!' said Greene.

'Think I don't know that either, you blithering ass?

Gurrghh!'

Coker dragged himself up. Undoubtedly he was in need of a towel, and a change of garments.

Picnicking with Aunt Judy's parcel was unavoidably postponed.

'Wait here!' he snapped. And he tramped away, leaving his friends to wait for him once more. He disappeared, leaving a watery trail behind him, and Potter and Greene, with considerable self-restraint, did not laugh till he was out of hearing.

BEASTLY FOR BUNTER!

'Two hundred!' gasped Billy Bunter.

It was a gasp of immense relief.

He was through at last. He had written, or at any rate scrawled, a hundred times: 'Tenedos est insula: Tenedos is an island'. Added to Bob's hundred, that 'impot' was now complete. He was done, at last, with the island of Tenedos: and at liberty to concentrate on the much more interesting island in the Sark. Certainly, that impot had been a spot of luck in its way, since it had, by happy chance, furnished a clue to the missing word in the precious parchment. But it was a tremendous relief to have done with it. With unaccustomed energy, the fat Owl had pushed through a hundred lines, with almost as many blots, smudges, and smears. All that remained now was to take the wretched thing down to Quelch: and then, without a moment's delay, to get off after Bob Cherry to Popper's Island and roll in gold!

The fat Owl gathered up his lines, and rolled out of No. 7. He rolled rapidly. Bob might have reached Popper's Island by this time: he might be digging up the treasure buried centuries ago by Frater Johannes--he might already have dug it up! Billy Bunter did not suspect honest old Bob of any design to walk off that treasure. But he wanted to have his own eyes, and spectacles, on it, when at last it gleamed and glistened in the light of day. He wanted to run the streams of gold angels and half-angels through his fat fingers. He wanted to cram as many into his sticky pockets as those sticky pockets would hold. He wanted to make sure, and doubly and trebly sure, of that golden treasure. It was, in fact, simply awful, for an eager treasure-hunter, to be kept off the scene, when his golden treasure was at last unearthed.

However, all was clear now: and the fat Owl fairly skipped down the stairs with his lines for Quelch. He tapped at the Remove master's door, and rolled in, without waiting to be bidden so to do. He had no time to waste on Quelch!

'My lines, sir!' gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch was still seated at his study window. A bulky volume was in his hands. He was reading Lucretius -his favourite author. Deep in majestic hexameters, he did not seem pleased to see Bunter.

'What? What? What is it, Bunter?'

'My lines. sir--'

'Oh! Very well! You may place them on the table.' Gladly Billy Bunter placed them on the table, and bolted. Quelch's eyes returned to his book. Perhaps it was just as well that Quelch was more interested in the lines of Lucretius than in those of William George Bunter. He might have objected to so many blots, smudges, and smears. He might even have told Bunter to write that impot over again in a less slovenly manner--which would have been quite overwhelming. Fortunately, Titus Lucretius Carus absorbed Quelch's attention: and the breathless Owl escaped.

He almost flew out of the House. He arrived at the boat-house puffing and blowing. There he blinked round him anxiously. Pulling a boat up the Sark against the current was a task not, perhaps, beyond Billy Bunter's powers: but it was a long way beyond his inclinations. It would not have taken him, as Bob had playfully declared, till the end of the term to reach the island. But it would certainly have been a long pull for Bunter. But it was likely that a good many fellows would push a boat out on such a golden afternoon, and the fat Owl blinked round eagerly for a possible lift.

But fellows who were going to push boats out, had apparently pushed them out already, while Bunter was busy with lines. Only two fellows were visible on the school raft, and they were Fifth-

form men. Potter and Greene were standing by a boat which was tied up there, with a large parcel on the stem seat. They seemed to be waiting for somebody: and, to judge by their looks and their remarks, they were not waiting patiently.

'That fathead!' Potter was saying, as the Owl of the Remove came into the offing.

'That goat!' agreed Greene.

'He had to get into a shindy with a Remove fag.'

'Of course.'

'How long is the prize idiot going to keep us waiting?'

'Goodness knows.'

'I've a jolly good mind to push off without him.' Greene chuckled.

'I suppose we couldn't bag his parcel! But it would serve him jolly well right! We shan't get far up the river, if he keeps us waiting much longer.'

'What about chucking it, and going down to the cricket?'

'Um!' Greene glanced at the parcel in the boat. 'Um! He can't be much longer now. Bother him!'

'Blow him!'

'I-I say, you fellows.' The two Fifth-form men turned their heads, at a fat squeak from Bunter. 'I-I say, are you going up the river in that boat?'

'Yes, when Coker blows along,' answered Greene.

'I-I say, will you give me a lift in the boat?' It required some nerve, on the part of a Lower-school junior, to ask senior men for a lift in their boat. But the Greyfriars treasure-hunter was desperately in need of a lift.

'You'd better ask Coker, when he comes,' said Greene. 'It's his boat.'

'Better guard with your left when you ask him!' added Potter, laughing.

Billy Bunter realized that asking Coker was not a very hopeful proposition. He had not forgotten--and it was extremely probable that Coker hadn't--the head-smacking in Coker's study. But just then Horace Coker came tramping into view, and the fat Owl resolved to chance it.

'Ready?' rapped Coker, as he joined Potter and Greene: really as if they had kept him waiting, instead of the reverse. 'We've wasted enough time, I think.'

'Ready and waiting,' said Potter, tartly.

'Well, don't hang about, then.'

'I say, Coker--' Billy Bunter did not guard with his left, as Potter had advised: but he kept out of reach, as he squeaked. 'I-I say, old chap--'

Horace Coker fixed him with a glare. 'Old chap' from Bunter was more than enough to rouse his ire, if he had not been ireful already. Which he certainly was! He had towelled himself dry, and changed his garments, after that ducking: and was now, so to speak, newly swept and garnished. But the episode had not improved his temper.

'I say, will you give me a lift up the river? Only as far as Popper's Island!' squeaked Bunter.

'Popper's Island!' repeated Coker. 'That island's out of bounds. Think I'd give you a lift out of bounds, you young sweep?' Coker was quite indignant at the idea--perhaps forgetting that he had picnicked on that very island a few days ago, out of bounds as it was.

'I-I-I say, it's important,' pleaded Bunter. 'Just drop there as you pass, that will be all right.'

'You young ass,' said Potter. 'How would you get off again?'

'Oh, that's all right-Bob's got the boat--'

'Bob!' repeated Coker. 'Do you mean Cherry?' Thunder gathered in Coker's rugged brow. Bob Cherry's name was, to Coker, just then, somewhat like a red rag to a bull. 'Has that young rascal

gone to Popper's Island?'

'Oh! Yes! No! I-I mean, yes. I-I've got to get after him,' gasped Bunter. 'I was going with him, only Quelch made a fuss about lines. I say, Coker, you might give a chap a lift as far as the island. It's important-jolly important, I can tell you.'

'And what's important about it?' demanded Coker. 'What is Cherry up to on Popper's Island?'

Oh! Nothing,' stammered Bunter. 'Nothing at all! It's nothing whatever to do with the treasure--absolutely nothing--'

Coker gave quite a jump. 'The treasure!' he repeated.

'Yes-I mean no! Nothing at all! Bob hasn't gone after the treasure, and he hasn't taken a spade with him, or anything--'

'A spade!' Coker remembered the agricultural implement.

'Yes! No! He's not going to dig up anything--nothing at all! We haven't spotted that missing word--'

'What?'

'Nothing of the kind,' babbled Bunter, quite anxious that his rival in the treasure-hunt should not get wise to what was going on. 'It wasn't in my lines for Quelch, and Bob didn't spot it, and it wasn't "insula "--'

'Wha-a-a-at?' gasped Coker.

'Oh, my hat!' ejaculated Potter.

'Oh, crumbs!' said Greene.

They stared at the flustered Owl. Coker blinked at him.

' "Insula"! ' breathed Coker. 'By gum! That young rascal had a spade in his boat! There's that high oak on Popper's Island--the one you fellows scuttled into to dodge that keeper! By gum! Come on.'

He turned towards the boat.

'I say--!' Bunter clutched his sleeve. 'I say, Coker, if you'll give me a lift, old chap-!'

Coker gave him a lift--not of the kind he wanted. He grasped the fat Owl by a fat neck, swung him off his feet, and sat him down on the planks.

Billy Bunter sat and gurgled for breath. Coker turned away from him. He was done with Bunter!

'Come on, you chaps,' he said, briskly. 'It won't take us long to pull up to the island, and we're not very long after Cherry--the cheeky young rascal can't have done much digging yet. Come on.'

Coker jumped into the boat.

Potter and Greene did not follow. One wild adventure on Popper's Island was enough for Potter and Greene. They were not going to risk a repetition of last Saturday's happenings. Aunt Judy's parcel was attractive: but not so attractive as all that. In fact, all the King's horses and all the King's men would not have dragged them to Popper's Island.

Coker glared back from the boat. 'Coming?' he bawled.

'Not to Popper's Island!' snapped Potter.

'Look here, Coker--'

'No jolly fear!' said Greene, emphatically. 'Look here, Coker--'

'You silly asses!' hissed Coker. 'Can't you see we're on the track? That word wasn't "hortus" as you fellows thought--it's "insula" all right! Are you coming or not?'

'Not!' answered Potter and Greene simultaneously.

'Go and eat coke, then.'

Coker shoved with an oar, and the boat rocked away.

Thus let down by his faithless friends, Coker was quite prepared to 'go it' on his own. He was prepared to revisit Popper's Island, regardless of bounds, regardless of Prout and his Georgics: and

to deal with Bob Cherry, with a heavy hand, if he discovered him there digging up the Greyfriars treasure. Catching innumerable crabs as he went, Coker pulled away up the river.

'The ass!' said Potter.

'The goat!' said Greene.

'Urrggh!' gurgled Bunter.

'No picnic after all!' said Potter. 'I'd give twopence for all the treasure that goat will ever find--not more!'

'Not so much,' said Greene.

'I daresay he'll be copped again,' said Potter. 'It may be another Georgic for him--but let's hope that Prout will make it whops this time!'

'Do him good!' agreed Greene. 'The silly ass!'

'The blithering cuckoo! Let's get down to the cricket.'

And Potter and Greene went down to the cricket, exchanging remarks about Horace Coker as they went. They left Billy Bunter the sole inhabitant of the raft--still gasping and gurgling for breath. It was minutes later that the fat Owl, still gasping, heaved himself to his feet, and rolled away in search of Harry Wharton and Co.

COKER BUTTS IN

BOB CHERRY, like Moses of old, looked this way and that way: as he pulled in to Popper's Island. Any fellow pulling up the Sark to Courtfield had to pass that island: and he could pass it on either side he chose. But the landing-place was in the side facing Popper Court Woods: where there was always a possibility of a keeper materializing at an awkward moment: as had happened to Coker and Co. the previous Saturday. Bob was very keen to ascertain whether he had, after all, spotted that missing word correctly: quite eager to dig and delve under the high oak on the island, with the spade he had 'bagged' and brought along in the boat. But he did not want his excursion to end like Coker's. So he was very wary, wary as a badger, as he pulled into the channel between the island and the Popper Court bank. Had there been a keeper in the offing, or even a pedestrian on the tow-path, he would have pulled on, and postponed his landing till the coast was quite clear.

But the coast was quite clear now. Nobody was coming along the tow-path--nobody was to be seen on the edge of the wood. Popper's Island looked as silent and solitary as Robinson Crusoe's.

With a twist of an oar, Bob shot in to the little landing-place, under the drooping branches of leafy trees. There he did not lose a second. Dropping the oars, and catching at branches, he tooted the boat into the willows, where it was out of sight from the river-bank. He picked up the spade, and scrambled ashore.

Spade on shoulder, he tramped up the tangled track into the interior of the little island.

Summer sunshine streamed down on the little glade in the centre of the island, save where the branches of the great old oak extended and afforded a grateful shade. Bob looked at that old oak, and nodded. It was undoubtedly a 'high oak'--the highest in the locality. And it was old, very old indeed--probably it dated back not merely to the Tudors, but to the Plantagenets before them -- indeed, it might have emerged from its original acorn in the time of the Saxon kings. There was no doubt that it had been standing, a landmark in the vicinity, in the time of Frater Johannes. And how likely it was that the wary old monk had selected that spot, at a safe distance, when the King's emissaries were going to get busy at the monastery! Anyhow, Bob Cherry was not going to ascertain whether this was indeed the 'quercus' referred to in the old parchment.

He leaned the spade on the old trunk, and extracted the compass from his pocket. Carefully he located and measured the spot 'cubita tria procul ab trunco ad occidentem'--three cubits distant from the trunk to the west. Rich green grass covered the spot, as it covered all the little glade: there was nothing to distinguish it to the eye. But no sign of Frater Johannes' delving was to be expected, after the lapse of three centuries! If the 'gold of the abbey' was buried on that island, that was the spot: and Bob fetched his spade, and started.

Green turfs turned up from the active spade, piling in a heap. Then came chalky soil, and the work was a little more strenuous. But Bob Cherry was strong and active, and not in the least afflicted by Billy Bunter's dislike of exertion. He delved away actively and cheerily: and the pile of displaced earth, like the little peach in the orchard, grew and grew and grew. He was cheered on by the happy anticipation of the astonished faces of his friends, when he returned to the school and displayed a handful of gold angels, or nobles, or Henry VIII sovereigns, or whatever it was that Brother John had buried there. Johnny Bull persisted in his belief that, if the treasure ever had been buried at all, it had most likely been dug up long ago. Johnny's face would be worth watching, when he saw that fistful of gold angels! For once, if for once only, Johnny would not be able to say 'I told you so!' However, those gold angels had not yet come to light!

If Frater Johannes had buried them there, he had buried them fairly deep. Two feet down there was still nothing but chalky soil to be seen. Bob, like many wielders of agricultural implements before him, gave himself a respite, and leaned on the handle of the spade for a rest.

He was about to recommence, after that rest, when, instead of doing so, he gave a sudden start and jump.

'Oh, crumbs!' he breathed.

He stared round, startled. From the landing-place, hidden from his sight by trees and thickets, came the sound of a bump. Obviously, a boat had bumped there. It was utterly dismaying.

'Keepers' was the alarming thought that flashed at once into Bob's mind. He was 'copped', as Coker had been copped! He was sure, absolutely sure, that he had not been seen to land: once in the interior of the island, he had felt quite secure. But undoubtedly a boat had bumped at the landing-place-and now a sound of rustling and scrambling revealed that someone had landed, and was coming by the track through the trees to the glade.

Bob dropped the spade, into the excavation he had made. Further excavation, obviously, was impracticable, if a keeper was at hand. But Bob was not going to be caught like Coker if he could help it. He preferred the methods of Potter and Greene. He was about to scramble up into the oak branches, when a powerful voice came booming through the trees.

'Are you there, you young sweep?'

'Oh!' gasped Bob. He knew that voice.

'That ass, Coker!'

It was not a keeper. Evidently, it was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form. Coker had followed him to the island: no doubt for reprisals for that ducking. A visit from Horace Coker, at the moment, was not welcome: but even Coker was preferable to a keeper.

Coker was not visible yet: but his voice was audible: 'I know you're there, Cherry! I know you're on the island! I know what you're after, you cheeky young scug.' Coker emerged into the glade.

Bob watched him warily, prepared for war. Coker stared at him, and stared at the excavation. He grinned. 'So you've found the spot!' he said.

'Eh? What spot?' asked Bob, innocently.

'You young ass, think I don't know? That fat young swab Bunter let it all out. I know what you're after here.'

'No business of yours!' suggested Bob.

'More cheek, what?' said Coker, grimly. 'Well. I'm going to give you something to cure all that. I'm going to give you a jolly good hiding for ducking me. Then I'm going to handle that treasure, if it's there. You can watch me dig it up, if you like! Ha, ha!'

Coker laughed. He seemed amused by the prospect.

Bob, not at all amused, backed round the excavation. Coker followed him round.

'You've got it coming!' he said. 'Perhaps you fancy that you can duck a Fifth-form man--and swamp ink over his face in his own study, too! Now, then!'

Coker rushed.

Bob skipped round the excavation, with Coker at his heels. Single combat with the hefty Horace was not a practical proposition. Bob Cherry made a spring at a low branch of the oak, caught it, and swung up.

But Coker was close behind. He caught an ankle before Bob could whip it out of reach. Bob, clinging to the branch, dragged at that foot. Coker, standing below, and grinning up, dragged the other way. Coker, big and brawny, had a pull rather like that of a cart-horse. Bob would certainly have been

dragged off that branch, had he not brought his other foot into play.

But he did--promptly and vigorously. A heel jarred on a rugged nose, with a sudden painful jar.

'Oooogh!' spluttered Coker.

He released the ankle, clasping his nose with both hands. Evidently there was a pain in the nose.

Coker clasped it and caressed it.

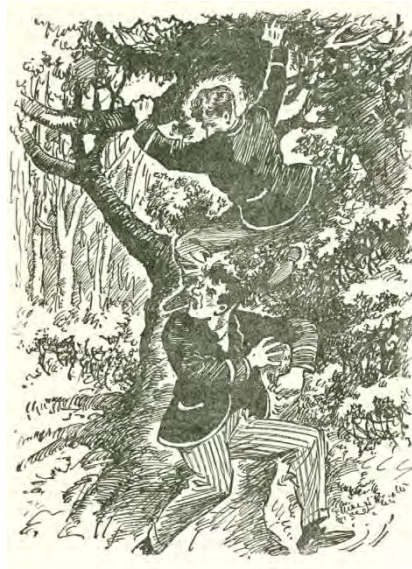
'Ooooh! Oh! Ow! Why, I'll-I'll-oooogh!'

Bob scrambled on the branch, and then to a higher one. He had ample time: Coker's attention being wholly concentrated on his suffering nose. It was in fact several minutes before Horace ceased to clasp and caress that nose. When, at length, that nose felt a little better, and he ceased to clasp and caress, Coker glared up at the junior in the oak, with a deadly glare.

'Come down out of that!' he bawled. Bob grinned down at him.

'Come up and fetch me!' he suggested.

Coker made a stride towards the trunk. Bob prepared for some active foot-work. But Coker paused. He had come to Popper's Island to dig for treasure: not to scramble among branches in pursuit of a schoolboy as active as a monkey. Instead of clambering up the oak, he shook a brawny fist at Bob.



COKER RELEASED THE ANKLE

'You'll keep!' he snapped. 'Wait till I get my hands on you, that's all!'

With that, and another rub at a nose that glowed crimson in the sunshine, Horace Coker turned back to the excavation. He stepped down into the trench Bob had dug, grasped the spade, and started. Chalky earth flew from the spade. That agricultural implement fairly flashed in Coker's hefty hands. Bob, with deep feelings, watched him, from the oak.

Deep as his feeling were, he had to remain simply a spectator. He was strong, he was sturdy, he had unlimited pluck: but he could not have tackled one-half of the burly Fifth-form man with any hope of success. To descend from the tree, and intervene, was simply to ask for the 'hiding' Coker had promised him--after which Horace would resume delving undeterred. Coker laboured in the excavation: earth and chalk and stones flew faster and faster from the spade, and Bob watched--with feelings that grew deeper and deeper and deeper.

TO THE RESCUE!

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

A dozen juniors at the nets stared round, as the fat Owl came bursting on the scene, wildly excited: gasping for breath but yelling with what little remained. What was the matter with Bunter, they did not know. Neither did they want to know. They were interested in cricket: not in Billy Bunter. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was bowling to Frank Nugent: and Frank was keeping up his sticks against the Nabob's deadly skill, with unusual fortune: and Harry Wharton was watching with keen interest, glad to see his chum shaping so well at the wicket. He did not even turn his head, as Bunter charged up yelling.

'I say-I-I-I say--!' Bunter gurgled.

'Buzz off, you fat ass!' grunted Johnny Bull.

'I say--' Bunter clutched at Harry Wharton's sleeve. 'I say--'

'Fathead! Go away.' answered Harry, still without turning his head. Nugent knocked the ball away, and Smithy fielded, and returned it to the Nabob. Harry Wharton shook his arm, to shake off the fat Owl like a fat fly.

'But I say, Harry, old chap--'

'Hook it!' Wharton shook his arm again. But Billy Bunter was not to be shaken off like a fat fly. He hung on like a limpet.

'I say, it's Bob--!' he gasped.

'Oh!' Keen as he was on cricket practice, with Nugent shaping so well, the captain of the Remove did turn his head, at that. 'What about Bob? You fat villain, did Quelch spot him doing your lines?'

'Nunno! I say, Coker's after him--I say, he's after my treasure--I say, he'll cop Bob on the island--I-I say--!' spluttered Bunter. 'I-I say, come on--never mind cricket--I say, you can't leave old Bob in the lurch --I say--'

Harry stared at the fat Owl blankly. Leaving old Bob in the lurch was not, certainly, an idea to be entertained by any member of the Co. But Bunter's splutterings were so much Greek to him. All he knew of Bob's proceedings was that Bob had helped Bunter with his lines for Quelch: and he was expecting him every minute at junior nets.

'You dithering ass, is Bob in a row with Coker? What do you mean about the island, you spluttering gollywog?'

'I tell you Bob's on the island, and Coker's gone after him, after my treasure. I'm awfully anxious about the treasure--I mean about Bob--awfully anxious about poor old Bob--I don't want Coker to dig him up--I mean to dig it up--Bob's gone there to dig up Coker--I mean--' The breathless Owl was getting a little incoherent. 'I mean, he's on the island, and he's gone after him, and he knows where it is, and he will be pitching into him, and he guessed the word, and he will catch him on the island, and very likely him's got he-I mean he's got him--already, and if you don't hurry up he will wallop him and bag my treasure--of course I'm not thinking about the treasure, but only about he--I mean him--poor old he--I mean poor old Bob--can't you understand?'

Really, it was not easy to disentangle that torrent of pronouns. But some meaning seemed to glimmer through Bunter's babblings.

'Has Bob gone to Popper's Island?' asked Harry.

'Yes, yes, yes! You see--'

'Silly ass, to go out of bounds,' said Johnny Bull. 'What has he gone there for?'

'The tut-tut-treasure--'

'Rubbish!'

'Oh, really, Bull--'

'The treasure!' repeated Harry Wharton. 'Oh, my hat! What on earth made him fancy it was there?'

'He guessed the word--'

'Eh! What word? Oh! Do you mean the missing word in that silly parchment?'

'Of course I do!' howled Bunter. 'It was in my lines for Quelch, and that's how Bob spotted it-- "Tenedos est insula", you know--that made Bob think of "insula", and it's the word all right--"insula" means island--that treasure's buried on Popper's Island--and I'd have gone with Bob only that beast Quelch--'

'"Insula"!' repeated Harry. 'By gum! I shouldn't wonder--' He broke off. 'Did you say Coker's gone after him?'

'Yes, yes, yes!' howled Bunter. 'You're jolly dense, Wharton! I tell you Coker's' after my treasure-I mean he's after Bob-and you can't leave poor old treasure--I mean poor old Bob--in the lurch---

'Johnny Bull gave a snort.

'Twopence for the treasure, and dear at that!' he said. 'But if Coker's after Bob, we're going after Coker.'

'I say, hurry up-' gasped Bunter. 'He may be digging it up this very minute--I mean he may be pitching into poor old Bob--I say, you fellows, don't hang about while Coker's pitching into my treasure--I mean while he's digging up poor old Bob-I-I mean--'

'Chuck that ball to Smithy, Inky,' called out Harry Wharton. 'Come off, Franky! We're wanted.'

The Nabob tossed the ball to Vernon-Smith, and Nugent rather reluctantly left his wicket. But cricket practice had to go. If one member of the Co. was in a jam, all the other members had to rally round.

'What's up?' asked Nugent.

'Is the upfulness terrific?' inquired Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'Come on!' howled Bunter. 'My treasure--I mean poor old Bob--' Billy Bunter's anxiety, evidently, was for the treasure: 'poor old Bob' being thrown in as a make-weight, as it were. But it was Bob who weighed with his comrades: and they lost no time. A few words explained matters to Nugent and the Nabob: and the four set off at a trot for the boat-house: Billy Bunter puffing and blowing in the rear. The old boat which was the common property of the Famous Five was gone: evidently, Bob had gone in it. But a much handsomer and more expensive craft that belonged to Lord Mauleverer was available: and for once the Co. adopted Billy Bunter's system of borrowing what was wanted, without the ceremony of leave from the proprietor. Mauly's boat was run out in quick time, and the four jumped into it, and Bunter rolled in after them.

'I say, you fellows, buck up!' gasped Bunter, as he plumped down in the stern seat, with a plump that rocked the boat.

'Like to take an oar?' inquired Johnny Bull, sarcastically.

'Oh, really, Bull--'

Harry Wharton laughed.

'No time for catching crabs!' he said. 'Pull, and put your beef into it.'

The boat shot away, the oarsmen putting plenty of beef into it. That Bob must have been on the island some time was clear: whether Coker had reached it yet, was doubtful. Coker's rowing had often been likened by his friends to frantic attempts to dig up the bed of the river: and it was probable that he had not made rapid progress up the Sark. Still, he had had a good start, and there was no time to lose. The oars flashed in the sunshine, and Mauly's boat fairly flew.

Billy Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, glued on the mass of greenery, as Popper's Island rose to view. Several boats were passed on the stream, but Coker's was not to be seen. Apparently he had already reached his destination. Billy Bunter squirmed in his seat with anxiety. Streams of dazzling gold angels seemed to dance before his eyes--perhaps already in the grasp of his rival in the treasure-hunt! Seldom had the fat Owl been so wildly excited.

'I say, you fellows, put it on!' he gasped.

'Shut up!' grunted Johnny Bull.

'Beast!'

Mauly's boat shot into the channel between the island and the Popper Court bank. Bunter's eyes remained glued on the island: but the other fellows scanned the bank and the woods warily. However, the coast was still clear: and they ran into the landing-place, under the shady branches. A boat was already tied up there. It was Coker's: nothing was to be seen of Bob's hidden in the willows. Coker, evidently, had disdained such precautions.

'He's here!' said Harry.

'Oh, crikey! If he's dug up my treasure--!'

'Hark!' breathed Nugent. From the interior of the island, through the thickets, came a dull thudding sound. Somebody was handling a spade vigorously on tough soil. Bunter emitted a breathless squeak.

'I say, you fellows, he's digging it up--!'

'If that's Coker, where's Bob?' asked Johnny Bull.

'We'll soon see! Shove the boat out of sight--'

'I say, you fellows, never mind that--I say, come on--'

'Shut up, Bunter.'

Billy Bunter scrambled ashore, almost dancing with Impatience. But the Co. stayed to push the boat into cover. They had not forgotten keepers, if the impatient fat Owl had. They were out of bounds now, and fellows out of bounds had to be wary.

The thudding of the spade came continuously, actively at work. Digging was going on, and at a good rate. If the Greyfriars treasure, buried so long ago by Frater Johannes, was under the high oak on Popper's Island, it was in the process of being unearthed. Billy Bunter charged up the track through the thickets, not even waiting for the Co.--apparently prepared even to face the hefty Horace on his own, in his anxiety for that treasure. But the Co. were rapid, and they reached the glade in the centre of the little island as soon as the fat Owl. And there, Coker of the Fifth came into view.

They beheld only the upper half of him. The lower half was out of sight in a deep trench. Coker, with hefty hands, wielded the spade, thudding it into the earth, hurling chalk and stones and soil to right and left. He was too busily engaged to hear or heed the arrival of the Remove party: and he went on slogging with the spade, while they stared at him. They wondered, for a moment, where was Bob Cherry. The next moment they knew, as a joyful roar came from the branches of the high oak.

'Hallo, hallo, hallo!'

They stared up, as Bob swung down. Coker, in the trench, ceased to dig and delve, and looked round. He gave quite a jump, at the sight of Harry Wharton and Co. Bob, grinning, joined his friends.

'Never so jolly glad to see you chaps!' he chuckled. 'Coker had me tree'd, and I can tell you I was tired of that tree. Now we'll jolly well let Coker know where he gets off--what?'

'What-ho!'

'Come on!'

'Collar him!'

And the Famous Five rushed together.

EXIT COKER

HORACE COKER jumped out of the trench. He jumped into five pairs of hands. The Famous Five all collared him together. Horace had had the upper hand, in dealing with a single member of the Co. But the tables were turned now. The Co. had the upper hand--in fact five pairs of upper hands! Often and often did Horace Coker butt in where he was not wanted. On this occasion, he had butted in once too often: and he was in the hands of the Amalekites. This time Coker was going to learn, beyond the possibility of doubt, just where he got off!

'You young sweeps!' he gasped. 'Let go! By gum, I'll smash the lot of you-I'll-I'll-ooooh!'

On the edge of the excavation, Coker swayed and lurched and struggled, grasped on all sides. Coker was big, and he was muscular: in the midst of the juniors, he was almost like Gulliver among the Lilliputians. But they clung to him like cats, and they were too many for him. Nevertheless, for several hectic minutes they had plenty to do. Even five pairs of hands had to be rather strenuous, to hold Horace Coker.

Billy Bunter did not add his own fat paws to the five.

Bunter was not looking for a strenuous struggle. Bunter was thinking of the treasure. Bunter blinked anxiously into the trench, which Coker had deepened considerably since he had taken over from Bob. But only earth and broken chalk met his eyes and his spectacles. If the 'gold of the abbey' was there, the digging had not yet unearthed it. Leaving Coker to the Co., in fact almost forgetting his existence, the fat Owl jumped down into the excavation, and grabbed up the spade. At that eager moment, he even forgot his constitutional objection to work. The treasure--if there--couldn't be much deeper down. Fat hands wielded the spade, and once more earth and chalk and stones flew right and left. The fat Owl panted and puffed, and gurgled and gasped: streams of perspiration ran down his plump features. But he slogged on--every moment in the hope of seeing the gleam of gold. Above him, as he delved, the struggle went on, on the margin of the trench. Coker simply had no chance, in so many hands: but Coker was not the man to give in while he had a breath left. For long, long minutes he resisted, striving to shake off the grasping hands: swaying struggling, lurching to and fro. Then, suddenly, the struggle came to an unlooked-for end, as Coker, stumbling on the edge of the pit, stumbled over it, and pitched headlong in.

'Oh, crumbs!'

'Look out!'

'Oh, my hat!'

The panting juniors released Coker just in time to save themselves from being dragged in after him. They stood panting round the margin, as Coker pitched in.

A frantic yell sounded from the pit. It did not come from Coker, who had no breath left for yelling. It came from Billy Bunter, suddenly flattened out under Horace Coker.

What had happened. Billy Bunter did not know. All he knew was that something frightfully heavy had suddenly crashed on him, and flattened him out. Spreadeagled at the bottom of the pit, his fat face half-buried in chalk, pinned down by a sprawling burly form. Billy Bunter yelled and yelled.

'Yaroooooh! Oh! Ow! Oooogh! Woooooh! Ooooh!'

'Oh, scissors!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Ow! I say, you fellows-yaroooooh! What's that? Gerroff! Ooooh!' shrieked Bunter. 'Wooh! Gerroff! I'm squish-squish-squashed--ow! ow! Ooooh!'

Coker scrambled up. His feet were planted on something fat and soft. It was Billy Bunter. From the fat Owl came a faint squeak, like the last sound from an expiring frog, as the last ounce of breath was driven out of his extensive circumference.

'Woooooh!'

Coker did not heed him. Standing on Bunter, he grasped the margin of the pit to clamber out. Helping hands met him. His collar, his arms, his neck, and his hair, were all grasped at once: and with a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, the Famous Five hooked him out. Coker was landed like a fish, sprawling: and pinned down the moment he was landed.

For a few moments, he struggled: and then even Coker gave it up. Even on Coker's solid brain it dawned that he was done. The juniors hardly needed to hold him now. Coker was through: and he concentrated on gasping and gasping and gasping for breath.

'Ooooh!' came feebly from the trench. 'Wooooogh! I s-s-s-say, you f-f-fellows-woooooh!'

'Poor old Bunter!' said Bob. 'I wonder if Coker's burst him--'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Are you burst, Bunter?'

'Ooooh! B-b-b-beast! Woooooh!'

Bunter, it seemed, was not burst. He sat up at the bottom of the pit, spluttering for wind. For the moment, he had forgotten even the treasure. What he wanted, even more than the treasure, was wind. He spluttered and gurgled for it. The Co. gave their attention to Coker.

'We've got him!' said Bob.

'The gotfulness is terrific!'

'Hike him along to his boat,' said Harry Wharton. 'You're not wanted here, Coker! This way!'

'I'll smash you--the lot of you--!' gasped Coker. 'Leggo my arms, will you? Leggo my collar! Leggo my neck, Cherry, you cheeky young swob! If you don't leggo my hair, Hurree Singh, you dashed nigger, I'll--wow! wow! wow!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Come on, Coker.'

'You cheeky young scoundrels--'

'I'll help him along with my boot!' said Johnny Bull.

'Whooooop!' roared Coker.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Coming, Coker?'

Coker decided to come. With four pairs of hands fastened on him, and a boot behind helping him on, he really had no choice in the matter. In a state of wrath and indignation to which no words could have done justice, Coker was walked away through the thickets to the landing-place. There he was tossed into his boat rather like a sack of coke.

As he sprawled there, Bob Cherry cast loose the painter.

Harry Wharton gave the boat a vigorous shove, and it floated out from under the drooping branches.

'Good-bye, Coker!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Coker sat up. The current caught the boat, and it wobbled away downstream. Coker seized the oars, and steadied his craft. He glared back at the island: tempted, even then, to pull back, and renew hostilities. But even Coker, though a man born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, realized that he did not want any more just then. He did not pull back to the island. He pulled downstream.

'Hi!'

Coker did not heed a shout from the tow-path. It was repeated: 'Hi! You there in that boat!' Then Coker glanced round irritably, as he realized that he was addressed. He stared at a brawny man in gaiters, who had emerged from Popper Court Woods on to the tow-path. He stared at him truculently. He knew that man in gaiters. It was the keeper who had caught him on Popper's Island nearly a week ago. And that keeper, evidently, remembered him.

'You again, you young trespassing rascal! I know you! You've been trespassing again! I saw your boat come out from the island! You've been on that island, again--trespassing! Pull in to this here bank! Do you hear?'

Coker gave him a glare.

'Go and eat coke!' he retorted.

'You young rascal, will you pull in, when I tell you?'

'No, I won't!'

'All right--I'll follow you down, then!'

Coker, sadly, pulled on. On the previous occasion, he had dodged that keeper in the wood. But there was no dodging him now. That keeper tramped along the tow-path, keeping pace with the boat. He was due to arrive at the Greyfriars boat-house, at the same time that Coker did. Which meant another report to Prout: and another Georgic from old Pompous—unless, as Potter had charitably expressed a hope--Prout made it 'whops' this time. Whether it was going to be another Georgic, or whops, either was distinctly unwelcome: and Horace Coker really began to wish that he never had butted into Billy Bunter's treasure-hunt at all.

TREASURE ISLAND?

HARRY WHARTON and Co. gathered round the trench under the high oak on Popper's Island. All of them were a little excited. There was a thrill in treasure-hunting: and it really did seem that, at last, they were on the right track. All agreed that the 'missing word' in that old parchment was most probably 'insula': and if that word was 'insula', it could apply only to the island in the Sark. And there was the 'high oak' spreading its ancient branches above their heads. Bob had located the spot: and between his efforts and Coker's the trench was already deep. All they had to do, now that the ineffable Horace had been disposed of, was to carry on the good work: and then-- 'Then' remained to be seen. Billy Bunter had no doubts. He had crawled out, and was sitting in the grass, still gasping for breath, and rubbing chalky earth from his fat face. Now that Coker had ceased from troubling, Bunter was more than willing to leave the spade-work to other hands: but as he gasped and rubbed, his eyes and spectacles were glued on the excavation. Bunter already saw himself rolling in gold.

Opinion varied among the others. Bob, who always took the brightest view of everything, was as good as certain that they were about to dig up treasure. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were hopeful, but far from certain. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh seemed dubious. Johnny Bull was quite sceptical. Even Johnny admitted that it looked as if they were on the right spot, as described in the Latin parchment of Frater Johannes. But he adhered to his original opinion that, if the treasure actually had been buried in the reign of Henry VIII, somebody or other had most likely disinterred it during the subsequent centuries. And no doubt he was prepared, at a moment's notice, to remark that he had told them so. However, even Johnny was rather eager to discover anything that was to be discovered. The whole party, in fact, were keen and eager.

As there was only one 'agricultural implement', turns were taken with the digging. Johnny took the first turn, and he stepped down into the trench, and delved away industriously. Once more the thudding of the spade, actively wielded, echoed among the thickets of Popper's Island.

Ten minutes of strenuous labour heaped up more and more chalky earth. Then Johnny relinquished the spade to Frank Nugent, who in his turn heaped up more and more. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took the next turn, adding liberally to the heap surrounding the trench. That trench was, by this time, both wide and deep: but still nothing but the glimmer of upturned chalk rewarded the treasure-seekers. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh clambered out, and handed the agricultural implement to Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove jumped down into the pit and started. Billy Bunter blinked anxiously over the margin.

'I say, can't you see anything yet?' he squeaked.

'Lots of chalk,' answered Harry.

'Can't you see anything else?'

'Lots of stones.'

Snort, from Bunter. He was not interested in chalk or stones. What Bunter wanted was a deluge of gold angels turned up by the spade. Bob Cherry chuckled.

'Old Johannes must have gone deep!' he said. 'But we're jolly well going to get to it, if we have to go as far as Australia.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Wharton, suddenly. The spade had struck something that was not earth, or chalk, or loose stones. 'By gum!'

Gasp, from Bunter!

'I say, what have you got?' he gurgled.

'Looks like a bit of old iron.'

'Not gold?' gasped Bunter.

'Look!'

Harry Wharton held up the object the spade had disinterred. It was a fragment of rusty iron. The juniors all scanned it. It was recognizable as the remnant of an old lock, almost eaten away by rust. It was an exciting discovery. It was proof, beyond dispute, that something had been buried at that spot--something that had been under lock and key. There were eager exclamations round the trench.

'That is-or was-a lock!' exclaimed Bob. 'Of course, that jolly old monk would pack the treasure in a chest or something, with a lock on it.'

'Of course!' said Nugent. 'That's the lock all right! Something that was locked up has been buried here-and that--'

'The treasure!' gasped Bunter.

'The esteemed and ridiculous treasure!' agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Bob gave Johnny Bull a thump on the shoulder.

'Do you believe in it now, you old doubting Thomas?' he chuckled.

'Not till I see it,' answered Johnny, stolidly.

'Fathead! Think that old lock walked on to this island and buried itself?' demanded Bob. 'It's rusted off some old chest! We're right on it now.'

'I say, get on with it!' gasped Bunter. 'I say, hurry up! I say--'

Harry Wharton resumed spade-work. Chalky earth flew fast. He gave a sudden shout: 'Look!' They all looked, eagerly. Billy Bunter very nearly toppled in, in his eagerness, his little round eyes bulging behind his big round spectacles. Something dark showed in the chalky soil. It was wood-dark. Solid, strong old oak that had evidently resisted the gnawing tooth of time. Plainly now, to all eyes, an oak chest had been buried deep under the spreading branches on Popper's Island. There could be no doubt now that the right spot had been located. This was the spot where Frater Johannes had buried the 'gold of the abbey' in the far-off days of King Henry VIII.

'Hurray!' roared Bob. 'That's the jolly old treasure-chest!'

'Oh, crikey!' gasped Bunter.

'That's it!' said Nugent. 'And we've jolly well found it.'

'Hurray! Who'd have thought that Popper's Island was a jolly old treasure island?' chuckled Bob.

'Bunter, you old fat porpoise, you're going to wallow in jam-tarts now!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I say, get on with it,' gasped Bunter. 'I say, dig it out! I say, don't waste time-I say--buck up--I say--'

Harry Wharton hacked at the earth round the oak chest.

It emerged more and more into view: a solid-looking chest about eighteen inches by ten or twelve. If that chest was packed with gold, there was a tremendous fortune ahead for somebody. Suddenly, as a spade-full of earth flew, there was a golden gleam in the sunlight.

'What's that?'

'Oh, my hat!'

'Gold!'

Harry Wharton dropped the spade, and caught up the little round object that had suddenly gleamed. All eyes fixed on it. It was a golden coin-smudged with earth, but still easily recognizable as a gold coin. Eagerly the captain of the Remove rubbed it with his sleeve. It gleamed brighter and brighter.

The figure of a knight in armour slaying a dragon was revealed. Obviously it was a very old coin: and the juniors knew what it was--an 'angel' of Tudor times. Billy Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles. This was like a dream come true! The treasure-chest was not opened yet: but here was a sample of the contents--what else could it be? A gold angel of the reign of Henry VII or Henry VIII perhaps dropped by accident by the old monk when burying the treasure—anyhow, here it was--a golden promise of what was to come when the chest was opened!

Harry Wharton handed it up, and it passed from hand to hand, every fellow examining it in turn. It came to rest in the fat fingers of Billy Bunter. He gazed at it--he grinned at it--he gloated over it. The fat treasure-hunter was on top of the world at that moment!

'What about it now, Johnny?' chuckled Bob. Johnny Bull shrugged his shoulders.

'We haven't seen inside the chest yet,' he answered. 'Fathead! That's a gold angel in Bunter's paw--' 'I know that!'

'I say, you fellows, that old monkey--I mean that old monk--must have dropped it when he was packing the gold in the chest--'

'Or somebody else dropped it later!' said Johnny Bull.

Johnny was always slow to change an opinion once formed. He was not accelerating now!

'Oh, rats!' said Bob.

'The ratfulness is terrific.'

'Get that chest open,' exclaimed Nugent. 'The lock's rusted off, so it can't be fastened. Knock up the lid, Harry.'

'Okay!'

Digging out the oak chest, wedged hard in soil that had settled round it for centuries, was slow work, and everyone was too impatient for that. Harry Wharton jammed the spade at it. The old oak was strong. It had resisted Time. But it could not resist hefty crashes of a spade in active hands. Crash on crash, and splinters of wood flew. Wharton dropped the spade, and with his hands, dragged away the broken lid of the chest. The interior was revealed in the sunlight streaming down on Popper's Island. It was revealed to all eyes. And then--!

Then there was a general gasp.

'Oh!'

'Oh, crikey!'

The chest was empty!

They gazed into it. They stared into it. Their eyes almost bulged into it. Once upon a time, no doubt, that chest had been packed with the 'gold of the abbey'. Even Johnny Bull did not doubt that. That chest, packed with gold, had been buried there by Frater Johannes to preserve it from the 'emissaries of the king', as stated in the Latin parchment Billy Bunter had discovered in the Cloisters. Perhaps Brother John had left other clues. Or perhaps he had confessed to the hide-out on the rack! Or perhaps the buried treasure had been found by chance, in the centuries that had elapsed since! Nobody could tell.

But one fact was sadly certain--the Greyfriars treasure had not remained where Frater Johannes had buried it. Somebody--perhaps hundreds of years ago--had dug it up, leaving the empty chest where he had found it. One gold angel from the chest had been dropped unnoticed, and left--and that single gold angel, in Billy Bunter's fat fingers, was all that remained of the treasure!

It was quite a blow!

In silence, the treasure-seekers gazed into that empty chest. They gazed and gazed--but no amount of gazing could discern a single gleam of a single spot of gold! The treasure was gone--probably long

gone-and that, alas, was that! The silence was long and deep. It was broken by Johnny Bull.
'I told you so!' said Johnny.

FINDINGS NOT KEEPINGS!

'I SAY, you fellows.'

Billy Bunter's fat squeak had a cheerful note. It was an hour later.

Tea-a rather late tea-was going on, in No. 1 Study in the Remove, when the fat Owl rolled in.

Five cheery faces surrounded the table. Treasure-less as they had returned from the expedition to Popper's Island, the chums of the Remove had, at least, returned with healthy appetites: and their accustomed cheerful outlook on life did not seem perceptibly diminished.

Billy Bunter, in the boat homeward, had looked quite woeful. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted. He had pitched Frater Johannes' parchment into the river, almost wishing that he had never, in his search for Coker's chocs, brought it to light at all.

Now, however, the fat face was brighter. Apparently the Owl of the Remove had found that there was, after all, balm in Gilead, so to speak. True, one gold angel, in a sticky pocket, was not much, to a fellow who had expected hundreds, if not thousands. Billy Bunter had been going to roll in gold. That gorgeous prospect had been washed out, by the discovery of an empty chest in the 'latibulum secretum' on Popper's Island. Nevertheless, even one gold coin was, on reflection, a boon and a blessing to a fellow who had been disappointed about a postal-order. Treasure-less as he was, Billy Bunter was, after all, in a state of unaccustomed wealth: with a prospect of tuck ahead, which, if not unlimited as he had hoped, was still very attractive.

'I say, you fellows.' Bunter helped himself to a wedge of cake, and munched as he proceeded. 'I say, it was Jolly rotten not finding that treasure after all--'

'The rottenfulness was terrific,' agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

'Some beast must have dug it up long ago--'

'I told you so!' remarked Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry picked up a cream tart from a plate. 'Where will you have it, Johnny?' he asked. He took aim across the table.

Johnny dodged.

'Chuck it, you ass!' he exclaimed.

'I'm going to-if you say "I told you so" again! If you want it in your eye, old man, go ahead!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Johnny grunted: but he did not go ahead. Perhaps he realized that he had, in fact, made that remark a sufficient number of times.

'Nothing left but just one gold angel, that the beast must have dropped when he snooped my treasure,' went on Bunter. 'Now look here, you fellows, I was going to shell out a lot of money if we'd found that treasure-nothing mean about me, I hope! I was always a generous chap, as you fellows know. I was going to shell out hundreds of quids!' said Bunter, impressively.

'Thanks!' said Harry Wharton, laughing.

'The thankfulness is terrific.'

'But--!' added Bunter, 'but--' The fat Owl hesitated a moment. 'But-as it turns out, there's only one spot of cash, that gold angel I've got in my pocket. I'm not whacking that out. You fellows can't expect it.'

'You fat ass,' said Frank Nugent. 'Nobody here wants a whack in it. Take it away, and take your face away. It's a worry.'

'Oh, really Nugent--'

'Shut the door after you,' said Harry.

'Well, I thought I'd just mention it,' said Bunter. 'I'm going to take it down to old Lazarus's in Courtfield tomorrow, and see what it's worth. It must be worth pounds. What do you think?'

'Ten or twelve, at least,' said Harry Wharton. 'Perhaps fifteen or twenty. It's a rare coin.'

Billy Bunter's fat face shone. He almost forgot the lost treasure. Seldom, if ever, had Billy Bunter had as much as ten pounds in his possession. Undoubtedly there was still balm in Gilead!

'Oh, crikey!' he gasped. 'Think so? Ten or twelve or fifteen or twenty! Quids! Oh, crumbs! I-I-I say, you fellows, its mine, you know!' The fat Owl was anxious to make that point quite clear.

Grunt, from Johnny Bull. 'It's not yours,' he said.

Billy Bunter glared at him, with a glare that might almost have cracked his spectacles.

'Why, you beast!' he gasped. 'Wharrer you mean? If you think I'm going to whack it out with a crowd of fellows, you're jolly well mistaken, I can jolly well tell you! It's jolly well mine, and I'm jolly well keeping it.'

'It's treasure-trove!' said Johnny. 'It has to go before a coroner--'

'Blow treasure-trove!' hooted Billy Bunter. 'Blow the coroner.'

'Treasure-trove has to be handed over to the proper authorities, as I've told you before--'

'Yah!'

'You'd better take it to Quelch, and he will see about it--'

'I'll watch it!'

'Johnny's right,' said Harry Wharton, with a nod. 'Treasure-trove has to be handed over. You can claim as the finder, if you like.'

'Findings keepings!' howled Bunter.

'Not in law--'

'Blow the law!'

'You can't just stick to it--'

'Can't I?' howled Bunter. 'I'm jolly well going to.'

'Better not!' said Bob.

'The better-notfulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter.'

'Yah!' Billy Bunter fairly spluttered, with wrath and indignation. 'Findings keepings is good enough for me, I can jolly well tell you. Didn't I find that parchment in the Cloisters, when I was looking for Coker's chocs-I mean, quite by chance? Didn't we dig it up on the island? It's mine, ain't it? And I'm jolly well not whacking it out, either, so if that's what you're after--'

'You fat villain!'

'Beast! It's jolly well mine, and I'm jolly well keeping it, and you fellows don't come in it at all, so yah! That gold angel's in my pocket, and it's jolly well going to stay there, so rats!' And the fat Owl shoved a fat hand into a sticky pocket, as if to protect the solitary remnant of the Greyfriars treasure which he had bestowed therein.

'Boot him!' grunted Johnny Bull.

'Bunter, you ass--!' said Bob.

'Now, look here, Bunter--!' began Harry Wharton.

He broke off, staring at the fat Owl. 'What's the matter?'

Billy Bunter did not answer that question. A sudden, startling change had come over his fat visage. That plump countenance registered alarm and despondency! He groped and groped in the sticky pocket.

The Famous Five stared at him. Something, evidently, was amiss. What it was they did not for the moment guess. But clearly something was very much amiss. Bunter, with frantic alarm in his fat face, groped and groped in the sticky pocket: speechless. But the fat fingers did not contact that for which they groped!

'Oh, crikey!' Bunter found his voice. 'Oh, lor!'

'What's the matter?'

'Oh, jiminy!'

'What's up?'

'Oh, crumbs! It's gig-gig-gig-gig---'

'What?'

'Gig-gig-gig-gone!' gasped Bunter. 'Oh, crikey! I forgot that pocket had a hole in it! Oh, lor!'

'Oh, my hat! Gone?'

'Gone!' groaned Bunter.

He groped and groped. Then he turned out the lining of the pocket, and blinked at it.

He blinked at a sticky lining. He blinked at a gash in that sticky lining. The Famous Five stared at it, and grinned. Really, they could not help grinning.

Billy Bunter had forgotten that hole in his pocket.

Harry Wharton and Co. naturally, had forgotten it too: but they remembered it now. They remembered that windy morning on Saturday, when Bunter had displayed that hole in his pocket, as evidence that Coker's postal-order belonged to him! Evidently, the fat Owl had forgotten to get it mended. Other things had been safe in that pocket, that were too large to slip through the hole. But coin was a different matter. That coin had slipped through--and vanished! That single, solitary gold angel, all that remained of the treasure buried by Frater Johannes in the reign of Henry VIII, was gone!

'I-I-I say, you fellows, it gig-gig-gig-gone!' moaned Bunter. 'I say, I forgot about that hole in the lining--oh, lor! I say, it's dropped out-somewhere! I say, where do you think it might have dropped?'

'The wherefulness is terrific,' grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

'Any old place,' said Bob. 'Might have dropped in the boat--'

'Or in the river when you rolled out of the boat--!' suggested Johnny Bull.

'Or any old where!' said Bob.

'Oh, crikey! I-I say, you fellows, all of you come and help me look for it! I say, I've jolly well got to find it! I say, come on.'

Billy Bunter had rolled into No. 1 Study to stay to tea. But he forgot tea now. Even foodstuffs faded from his fat mind. He whirled round and tore from the study. Where that gold angel was, whether it had dropped in the boat, or into the river as he landed from the boat or on the raft, or in the quad, or anywhere else, there was no telling. But wherever it was, it had to be found--unless Billy Bunter's prospect of a mountain of tuck was to fade away like the unsubstantial vision of a dream! The fat Owl rushed off in frantic search for it! But if he expected the Famous Five to rush after him and join in that frantic search, up and down and round about Greyfriars School and its vicinity, he had another guess coming!

They went on with their tea.

HARRY WHARTON and Co. had supposed, after the discovery of the empty chest buried on Popper's Island, that the treasure-hunt was over. But it was not quite so.

Coker, probably, heard of that discovery, and gave it up. Anyhow Coker had little leisure for treasure-hunting--Prout's third Georgic was keeping him busy! But if Coker gave it up, Billy Bunter did not. Somewhere, within or without the precincts of Greyfriars School, lay a gold angel that had slipped through a hole in a sticky pocket: a gold angel that was worth anything from ten to twenty pounds-if found! Day after day, a fat Owl might have been seen peering, and blinking, and groping, in every sort of possible or impossible place, in search of that elusive piece of gold, which had gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream! But neither his little round eyes nor his big round spectacles ever spotted it. It never materialized into a mountain of tuck! Such was the doleful end of Billy Bunter's Treasure-Hunt.

The next book in
THE BILLY BUNTER SERIES
will be
BUNTER THE VENTRILOQUIST