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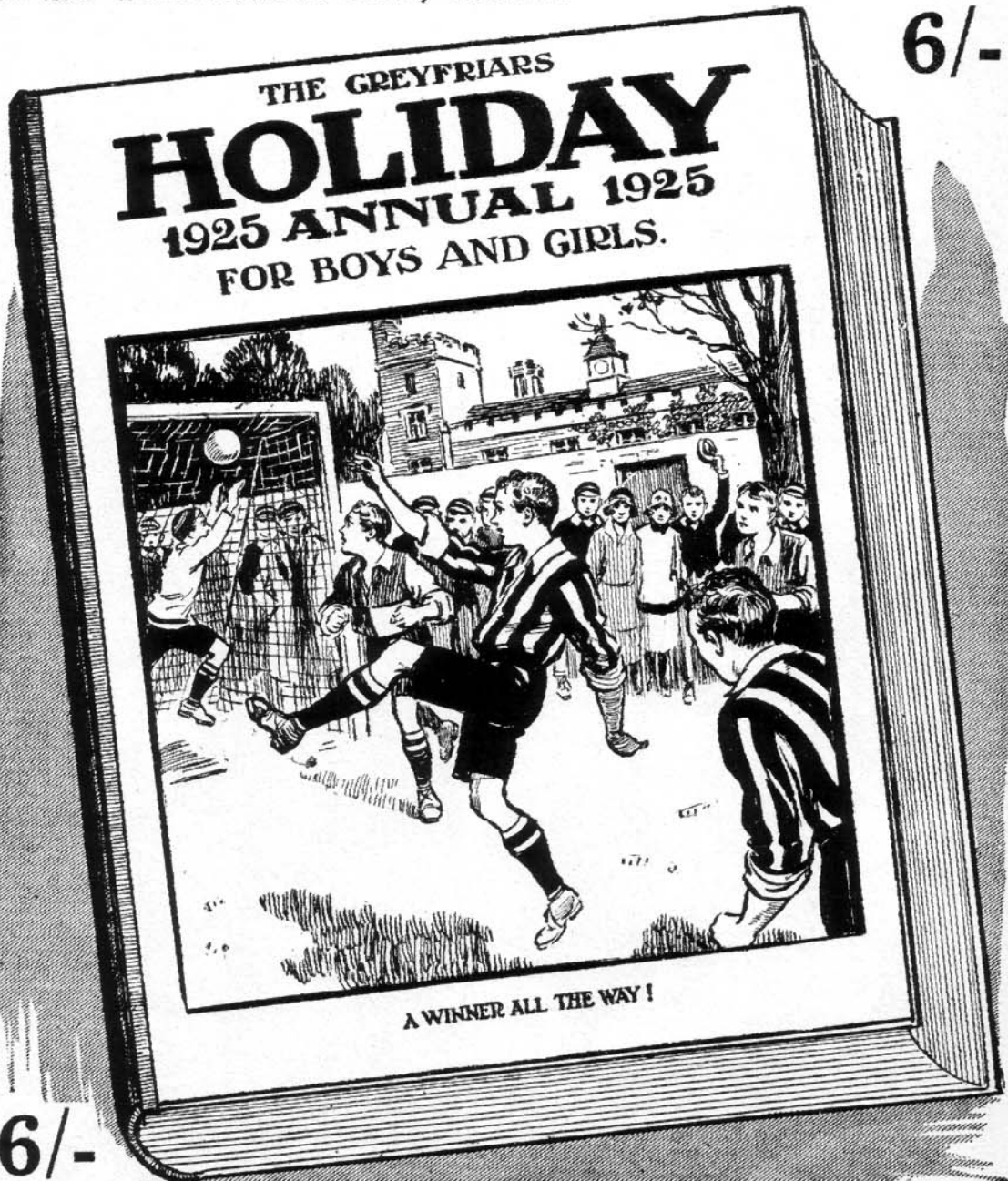
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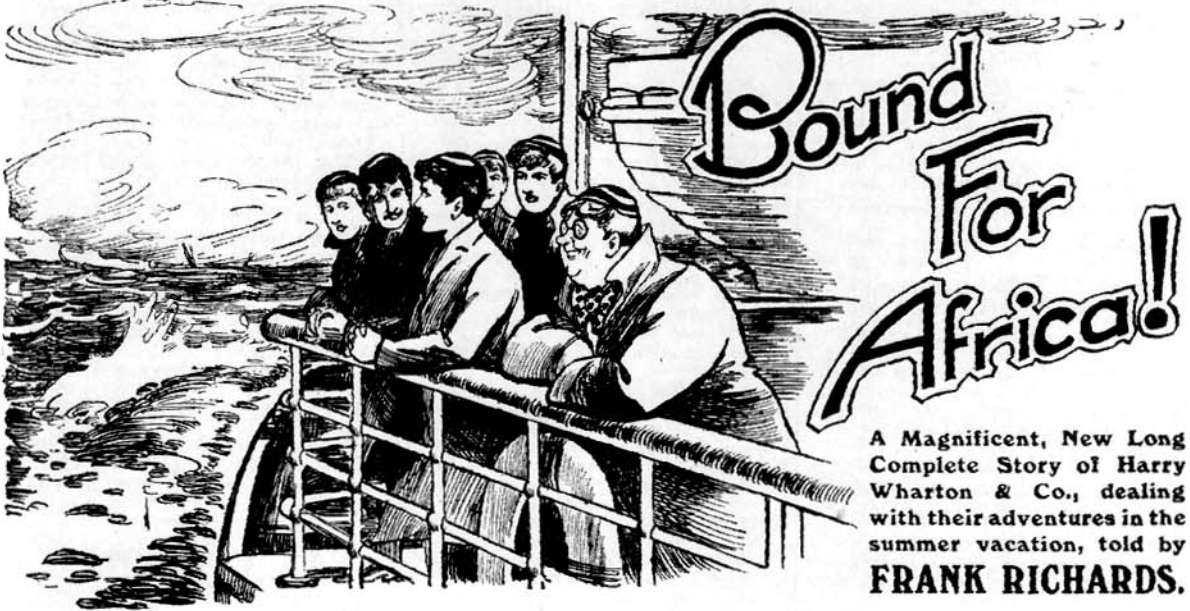
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Turned Down!

"YOU kids—" "Eh?" "You kids—" repeated Coker.

"Fathead!" "Ass!"

Coker of the Fifth seemed rather surprised by his reception in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Coker had come in with his friendliest smile on, though, as a rule, he did not waste much in the way of friendliness on Lower Fourth fags.

Certainly, he had walked into the study as if the place belonged to him. But that was only Coker's way. Judging by Coker's manners and customs, all Greyfriars might have belonged to him.

He addressed Harry Wharton & Co. in quite an amicable manner. Unfortunately, he addressed them as "kids."

Kids they were, in Coker's lofty estimation. But that was only one of the many points upon which Harry Wharton & Co. did not agree with Coker of the Fifth.

The Famous Five of the Remove were deep in discussion when Coker blew in. They were discussing the forthcoming holidays—now close at hand, as Greyfriars was about to break up. Very keenly indeed were the chums of the Remove looking forward to the holidays, which were to be spent in a visit to far-off Africa.

That holiday trip to Biskra, on the border of the Sahara Desert, was the one topic now in Study No. 1.

Coker's arrival interrupted the discussion. The chums of the Remove did not mind that very much. They were prepared to be civil even to Coker of the Fifth at the end of the term. But they were not prepared to be addressed as "kids." So they proceeded to tell Horace Coker what they thought of him.

"Look here," said Coker warmly, "I didn't come here for a lot of Lower

Fourth cheek. I've looked in in a friendly way. You kids—"

"There he goes again," grinned Bob Cherry. "Don't they teach you manners in the Fifth Form, Coker? Don't you know that you ought to be respectful to your betters?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky fag—" roared Coker.

"The cheekfulness of the esteemed Coker is also terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Horace Coker breathed hard and deep. He looked disposed to clench his big fists and rush on the five smiling juniors. But for reasons known only to himself, Coker had come to Study No. 1 to be friendly. So he restrained his just wrath.

"Look here—" he began.

"Can't," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "Not unless you put on a mask or a fire-screen or something. You ought not to ask fellows to look at a set of features like yours, Coker."

Again Coker of the Fifth almost let himself go. Again, with a great effort, he held himself in check.

The Famous Five were wondering by this time. They simply couldn't guess why Coker was so patient, or, indeed, why he had paid a friendly visit to the study at all. Generally Coker and the Removees were on warlike terms.

"Well, what is it, Coker, old man?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing. "Get it off your chest. Have you come here to apologise for your cheek during the term?"

"No!" roared Coker.

"If it's that," said Frank Nugent, "we're willing to excuse you, Coker, but we shall expect better manners next term."

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull.

"It's about that trip!" gasped Coker, red with wrath, but still trying to be patient.

"What trip?"

"I understand—"

"You do?" ejaculated Wharton in surprise.

"Yes!" roared Coker.

"Well, my hat! Wonders will never cease!" said the captain of the Remove. "Coker understands, you fellows! Fancy Coker understanding anything."

"Gannum!" said Bob incredulously. "I understand," went on Coker, unheeding, "that you kids are going out to North Africa for the holidays."

"That's so," agreed Wharton. "No need for you to worry about it in the Fifth, that I can see."

"I hear that you're all going with Major Cherry—"

"That's so."

"Place called Biscuit, or something like—"

"Biskra," said Wharton.

"You're going out to look for that Arab chap who was at Greyfriars this term—Ali ben Yusef—"

"We are," agreed Bob.

"I noticed the kid when he was here," said Coker. "Of course, I didn't take any special notice of him—a fag in the Remove. Still, I happened to notice him."

"He would have been no end bucked if he'd known that!" said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"It seems that he was kidnapped, or something," went on Coker. "An Arab man—what was his name—"

"Bou Saoud, a giddy Spahi," said Bob.

"That's it. He seems to have bagged this kid and whisked him off into a yacht or something, and buzzed off with him to his own country," said Coker. "I dare say they're there by this time. Major Cherry is going to find him, and you fags have persuaded the major to take you along with him for the vac."

"You've got it right," assented Wharton. "Blessed if I know why it should interest you, Coker."

All the Famous Five were wondering on that point. The kidnapping of the Arab schoolboy had caused a sensation at Greyfriars, and all the school had talked about it from the Sixth to the

Second Form. Most of the Greyfriars fellows envied the Famous Five, who were to go with Major Cherry in the search for Ali ben Yusef. But why Coker of the Fifth should be interested specially in the matter was a mystery to the chums of the Remove.

Coker proceeded to make the mystery clear.

"Well, it's like this," he said. "My opinion is that you kids ought not to go to a dangerous country like Algeria."

"Go hon!"

"Major Cherry must be rather an ass to take you with him—"

"You cheeky chump!" said Bob warmly.

"However, that's his own bizney," conceded Coker. "But to come to the point, I'm willing to go."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"A fellow like me would be useful on a job like that, and I should like it," said Coker. "Of course, it's a bit infra dig for a Fifth Form chap to join a party of fags. I've thought a good deal about that. But I've decided to go."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You will keep your distance, of course, and in public you will be careful not to address me as Coker—you will say Mr. Coker—"

"Oh!"

"And you needn't keep on mentioning before people that we belong to the same school," added Coker.

"Oh dear!"

"If you behave yourselves, and keep in mind that you are only Lower Fourth fags, we shall get on all right," said Coker. "I shall expect you to fetch and carry, and so on, and do as you are told."

"You will expect that?" grinned Bob.

"Yes. No doubt we can arrange for the major and myself to travel together, with you kids in a separate carriage. A fellow of my standing can't be seen about with a parcel of fags. Naturally, you will understand that."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Have I made it all clear?" asked Coker.

"Quite."

"Very good! Major Cherry will be here on the last day of term, I suppose."

"Just so."

"Then I shall see him. You'd better write first, and tell him I have consented to join the party. See?"

"I see!" chuckled Bob.

"Then it's settled," said Coker, and he turned to the door.

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

Horace Coker glanced back. The matter was now settled, in Coker's opinion, to Coker's satisfaction. He saw no reason whatever for that outburst of merriment.

"Hallo! What's the cackle about?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha! You see, you're not coming!" roared Bob Cherry.

"What?"

"We're landed with Bunter already, and we can't undertake to look after two silly owls instead of one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What?" roared Coker.

He stared at the chums of the Remove. It was so great an honour and distinction to have Coker of the Fifth in the party, that a refusal on the part of the Removees was quite unexpected—by Coker. He could hardly believe his ears.

"Haven't you got it yet?" asked Wharton. "We're not taking along any Fifth Form kids—"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if we did, we shouldn't pick out the biggest idiot in the Fifth—"

"No fear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Got that, Coker?" grinned Johnny Bull.

Horace Coker had "got it" at last. It dawned upon his powerful brain that he, Horace James Coker, the great man of the Fifth, was actually turned down by these cheeky fags. He had wasted friendliness and civility on a set of juniors, and this was his reward! As he realised it, Coker's long-trying patience gave way.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look out!" roared Bob Cherry, as Coker of the Fifth charged back into the study like a bull.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on their feet at once.

Coker was a heavy and hefty fellow. His charge almost scattered the chums of the Remove, though there were five of them. But they closed in again on Coker, and grasped him on all sides.

Coker would have disdained to count odds in dealing with fags of the Lower Fourth. Nevertheless, the odds were there.

Coker found himself rolling on the study floor, with five juniors rolling over him.

"Oh!" roared Coker. "Ow! Gerrooff! I'll smash you! Ow!"

"Sit on his head!"

"Whoooooop!"

"Give me the inkpot!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I'll— Yarooooopp-gug-gug-gug—"

It was unfortunate for Coker that he had his mouth wide open, roaring, when the inkpot was up-ended over his face.

Much of the ink went over his features. Much went down his neck. But quite a considerable quantity swamped into his mouth.

"Groooooch! Oooooch! Gug-gug-gug-gug!" spluttered Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roll him out!"

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmm!"

Coker rolled out of the study, spluttering ink. There was a shout in the Remove passage as he came rolling out. A dozen Removees had been drawn to the spot by the din in Study No. 1.

"Fifth Form cad!" shouted Peter Todd. "Kick him out!"

"Roll him downstairs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker sat up, spluttering. "Ow! Groooooch! Gug-gug! I—I—I— Oh, my hat! I'll— Keep off! I'll— Oooooch! Whooop!"

Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Toddy and Squiff, collared Coker all at once, and the Famous Five collared him at the same time, and Ogilvy and Russell rushed in to get a grip, and Bolsover major contributed a kick, and Penfold a shove.

Scarcely knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, Horace Coker went whirling to the Remove staircase, and went rolling down the stairs.

He landed on the next landing, and sat there gasping.

"After him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker picked himself up and fled. He was a fighting-man, and he never counted odds. But even Coker realised that he could not handle all the Remove at once. It was miles beneath his dignity to run before a mob of fags. Nevertheless, he ran.

He did not stop till he was in his own study in the Fifth Form passage. He

staggered in, slammed the door, and locked it, rather to the surprise of Potter and Greene, his study-mates.

"Hallo, what's this game?" asked Potter.

Coker sank into a chair.

"Ow!"

"Been mopping up ink with your face?" asked Greene.

"Wow!"

For a good many minutes Coker sat and gasped, while Potter and Greene stared at him.

"The cheeky young cad!" gasped Coker at last.

"Eh?"

"I'll smash 'em!"

Potter winked at Greene.

"By the way, Coker, old man, you told us you'd decided to join that party for Africa this vac. Have you fixed it up?"

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"But you said—"

"Whatever I may have said, I'm not likely to go on a holiday with a party of Remove fags. Don't be a silly ass!"

"But—"

"Shut up!" roared Coker.

Apparently Coker of the Fifth had decided not to join the party for Africa, after all.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Sticks!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh dear!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked glum. Bob Cherry looked the glummiest of the usually cheery quintette.

Billy Bunter blinked at them brightly through his big spectacles. Bunter did not share their glumness. He was quite merry and bright.

"Only a couple more days now, you fellows," said Bunter.

"H'm!"

"You've fixed it up with your people to go off immediately after break-up—what?"

"Yes," mumbled Bob.

"Same here," said Bunter. "I've telephoned to Bunter Court that I sha'n't be home for the holidays."

"Oh!"

"I've asked my pater to send me fifty pounds—"

"Eh?"

"He generally stands me something like that for the holidays, you know," said Bunter. "Of course, I shall need it all, with a trip to Africa in front of me."

The chums of the Remove exchanged unhappy glances. They were very keen on the trip to North Africa. But there was a fly in the ointment, as it were. The presence of William George Bunter was really not likely to add to the joyfulness of the trip.

"Of course, it's understood that I pay my own expenses," said Bunter. "I'm rather particular about that."

"Oh, chuck that!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I mean it!" said Bunter firmly. "Of course, as I shall be Major Cherry's guest, I shall allow him to pay travelling expenses, and hotel bills, and so on. As Bob's guest, I shall let him stand me anything in the way of theatres, entertainments, excursions, and extra feeds, and all that. Apart from these details, I shall be very careful to foot my own bill."

"With those details left out, it's not likely to be a very big one," remarked Nugent.

"Big or little, Bunter won't pay it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Cheese it, Bunter!"
 "I shall insist," said Billy Bunter, with calm dignity. "I know you've got lots of money, Bull. But I'm not having any of it. You're not going to be allowed to shove your vulgar money at me in your purse-proud way."

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Johnny.
 "I've asked my pater for fifty pounds for the trip," went on Bunter, while Johnny Bull seemed to be struggling on the verge of an attack of apoplexy. "He will send it, of course. Fifty pounds is little enough to him, though I dare say it seems a lot to some of you chaps. But it's possible, of course, that it may not arrive in time."

"Very possible, I think," said Wharton.

"The possibility is terrific!"
 "In that unlikely event," said Bunter. "I may need to borrow a small sum to go on with. Say, ten pounds."

"Say what you like," said Nugent. "You won't get any out of me."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"
 "Look here, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry slowly. "Do—do—do you think you'd better come out with us, after all?"
 Bunter raised his eyebrows.

"Of course! It's all fixed up!"
 "It will be jolly hot in Africa!"

"I don't expect it to be chilly, old chap."

"There are lions there, and snakes—"

"I shall be glad to get a pot-shot at a lion," said Bunter calmly. "If I have any luck, I'll bring a skin home for the study."

"Oh, my hat!"
 "As for snakes, that's all right, don't be funky—"

"What?"
 "I'll protect you," said Bunter reassuringly.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.
 "Look here, Bunter, will you let me off?" he exclaimed desperately. "I know I asked you for the holidays. That was before anything was thought about this trip to Africa. I'd fixed it

up to stay with Tom Redwing at his cabin in Hawkscliff, and I was going to give you a high old time if you came with us—I mean—"

"Pulling my leg," said Bunter calmly. "I know! Well, if you'd really gone with Redwing for the holidays, I should have turned you down. I'm not a snob, I hope. But I bar chumming with long-shoremen who butt in among gentlemen on a sneaking scholarship."

"You fat ass!" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"As it's turned out, I'm not going with Redwing," said Bob. "Look here, I'm going to speak plainly. I know you wouldn't come when you found out that it meant roughing it in a fisherman's cabin at Hawkscliff, or I shouldn't have asked you. I was pulling your silly leg!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat duffer?"

"Your little joke, old man. He, he, he!"

"I'm not joking!" said Bob, breathing hard. "This trip to Africa has turned up quite unexpectedly. It's not a suitable trip for you, Bunter. You know it isn't. You're too fat and lazy."

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter, apparently determined to regard all Bob Cherry's observations as humorous.

"We simply couldn't carry a passenger like you," said Bob, half angrily and half appealingly.

"He, he, he!"

"Will you let me off, Bunter?"
 Bunter blinked at the distressed Bob.

"My dear chap, I can't prevent you breaking your word if you want to," he said.

Bob crimsoned.

"If you keep me to it, I shall ask my father's permission, and you'll come with us," he said gruffly, "you know that."

"That's all right, old fellow. I'll stick to you."

"But—"

"It's all right, I tell you. Rely on me."

"Bunter, old man—" began Harry Wharton.

"No need for you to butt in, Wharton. This is a matter between Bob and me," said Billy Bunter calmly. "Bob's asked me for the holidays. I've accepted. It's too late now to alter arrangements. Bob can scarcely let me down at the last minute like this. Besides, he doesn't want to. I know that. You fellows are trying to influence him."

"You fat dummy—"

"The fact is, I feel bound to stick to old Bob," said Bunter. "I'm going to see that you fellows don't do him down too much."

"Oh, kick him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Besides, I'm really the one man necessary in this trip," said Bunter. "Any of you fellows might be left out without being missed. I'm the man for the job. Suppose you get into some fearful danger—well, I'm the chap to pull you out. A fellow of iron nerve, and as brave as a lion—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look here, Bunter—" said Bob.

"That's all right, old chap; it's settled. By the way," said Bunter, perhaps thinking it judicious to change the subject, "I hear that Coker of the Fifth has been butting in. That won't do, you know. I couldn't stand Coker. Make a note of that."

"Coker won't be coming," said Harry.

"But—"

"That's all right, then. Another thing, Bob, old chap, is this. We don't want a crowd. I suggest leaving two or three of these fellows out. Nugent, for one; he's too soft really for such a trip—"

"You cheeky owl!" ejaculated Nugent.

"And Bull," went on Bunter. "We shall meet all sorts of people on this



The Fifth-Form raiders poured into Study No. 1 with Horace Coker at their head. "Great Scott!" ejaculated Wharton, jumping to his feet. "Give 'em beans!" roared Coker, not perceiving the major. "Heave the blessed table over! Give 'em—" Coker's outburst was cut short. The next moment he was swung off his feet in the grasp of a powerful hand on his collar. "What does this mean?" demanded Major Cherry. "Oh, my hat!" gasped Potter in dismay. (See Chapter 4.)

trip, and stay in decent hotels, and all that. Well, you know what Bull's manners are like. I should hardly care to own him as a Greyfriars chap before strangers, you know. Leave Bull out."

Johnny Bull's face was a study.

"And Wharton, too," continued Bunter. "Wharton's all very well here, at school, but we don't want a holiday spoiled by his putting on airs, and all that. Leave him behind."

"You fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Bob—"

Bob Cherry turned an unhappy look on his comrades.

"It's my fault," he said. "I asked that fat rotter for the holidays, just to pull his leg, because he was fishing for invitations up and down the Remove. I knew he wouldn't come to Hawkschiff, and I'd have given him a high old time if he had. Now this blessed trip has turned up I'm landed with him, and if he holds me to it it can't be helped. I know I ought to be kicked."

"The kickfulness is the proper caper!" said Hurree Singh. "But the esteemed Bunter is the proper object thereof."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows— Yaroooooh!"

Bob Cherry did not kick Bunter. As Bunter's unwilling host for the holidays, he felt that he could not kick him. But four members of the Co. proceeded to kick the Owl of the Remove, and Billy Bunter fled for his fat life, roaring.

"And the pater's coming down to-morrow, and I shall have to tell him that we're landed with Bunter," groaned Bob, as his chums rejoined him after dribbling Bunter half-way to the School House. "If he hadn't a skin as thick as a rhinoceros, he wouldn't hold me to it. But that's Bunter all over."

"It is—it are!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Can't be helped—unless some other fellow asks him before the term is up. He'd rather go home with Mauleverer or the Bouncer than come with us."

"They won't take him off our hands," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Can't be helped. We shall have to make the best of it. After all, we've stood Bunter on holidays before."

"Bother him!" growled Bob. "But I suppose we shall have to make up our minds to it."

On that point there was little doubt. In fact, there was no shadow of doubt, no possible probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever. William George Bunter knew when he was in for a good thing, and when he was in for a

good thing William George was a sticker. Billy Bunter meant business.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Kind Invitations!

"TODDY, old man!" Billy Bunter, seated in the armchair in Study No. 7 in the Remove, addressed his study-mate, Peter Todd. Peter, who was packing up some books, did not heed.

"Todd, old chap, like to come to Africa with us?"

Peter looked round at that. "I'm booked for the vac," he said. Bunter turned up his fat little nose.

"Oh, don't tell me you've got anything good on!" he said disdainfully. "Your people are poor. A fortnight at Eastbourne and a week in London, with visits to the British Museum and the National Gallery. Groogh! Cut it out, and come with us to Biskra."

Peter Todd chuckled. "I might if Major Cherry asked me very nicely," he answered. "He's not likely to. We're nice chaps in the Remove, but the jolly old major can't take all the Lower Fourth with him."

"I'm asking you!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Oh, you!" said Peter, and he turned back to packing his books.

"I'm authorised to ask anybody I choose," said Bunter warmly. "I'm practically the head of the party. I mean it, Toddy. I'll take you out to Biskra if you like. Of course, I should expect you to act decently. You'd be careful not to mention before any nobby company that your father is a solicitor, or anything of that kind."

Peter made no reply to that.

"Is it a go, Peter?" asked Bunter. "Say the word, and I'll mention to the major to-morrow that you're coming. By the way, old chap, I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Not really?" asked Peter sarcastically.

"Yes, really. Can you lend me ten bob till to-morrow?"

"Not tence, old fat bean."

"I think you might lend a chap ten bob, Peter, when he's offering to take you on an expensive trip for the hols," said Bunter, blinking reproachfully at his study-mate through his big spectacles. "It isn't every fellow I'd ask."

"What beats me is, how you got yourself landed on them," said Peter. "How did you work it, Bunter?"

"You cheeky ass!" howled Bunter. "Bob insisted upon my coming, of course. I've turned down an invitation from D'Arcy of St. Jim's, and another from Lord Mauleverer, to go with Bob. Major Cherry is very keen on my going. You see, Algeria is French territory, and my knowledge of French will come in very useful. I shall be expected to act as interpreter."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look here, Peter, if you don't lend me ten bob till to-morrow, I sha'n't take you to Biskra."

"Go hon!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study, leaving Peter still very much puzzled as to how he had succeeded in "landing" himself on the party for Africa. Needless to say, Bunter was not giving any explanation of the true circumstances.

Billy Bunter rolled along the Remove passage in a discontented mood. There was a glorious holiday before him, an expensive holiday with all expenses paid,

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and it was a great prospect. Nevertheless, that prospect did not relieve his present state of impecuniosity. Bunter's celebrated postal-order had not arrived; it really looked as if it would not arrive that term at all. And Bunter wanted his tea. He had had tea in Hall, and tea with Peter in the study. But two teas were like two drops in the ocean to William George Bunter. He had room for two or three more, and then he would have been ready for supper.

He blinked in at Lord Mauleverer's study, and gave his lordship a genial nod.

Mauly groaned.
"Bunter's come to tea, Jimmy," he said.

Sir Jimmy Vivian, who was poaching eggs at the spirit-stove, looked round.

"Has he?" said Vivian.
"Yes, old chap," said Bunter affably. "The fact is, I want you chaps to come out to Africa with me for the vac. Let's talk it over, over tea."

"We've got eggs for tea," said Sir Jimmy. "Like an egg?"

"Oh, yes, old chap!"
"Here it is, then!"
"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer, as Sir Jimmy Vivian swung up his hand with an egg in it.

Bunter made a backward jump into the passage.

"You silly chump!" he roared.
"Don't you want this egg?" chuckled Vivian. "You put your boko in this study again and you'll get it, anyhow!"

"Beast!"
Billy Bunter rolled on his way, giving up the idea of tea in Lord Mauleverer's study.

At the end of the Remove passage he spotted Fisher T. Fish. His fat face brightened.

Fisher T. Fish certainly was not a fellow to lend money, or to ask another fellow to tea. But he was just the man to jump at the idea of a vacation on the cheap. Fishy generally spent the vac somewhere in the little old island where he now sojourned, for though he talked largely of his "popper's" dollars his popper never seemed to expend many of them on Fishy. So it was but rarely that Fisher T. Fish crossed the "pond" to the incomparable city of "Noo Yark." Bunter rolled up to him eagerly.

"Fishy, old man—"
"Can it!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Nothing doing." Apparently, he was able to guess, without being told, that Billy Bunter had been disappointed about a postal-order.

"I'm going to Algeria for the vac, Fishy."

"I guess I've heard so," assented Fisher T. Fish.

"Like to come?"
Fisher T. Fish sat up and took notice at that.

"You see, I can take a few friends if I like. Major Cherry's paying all exes," said Bunter cheerily. "I'd like you to come, Fishy. You're just the sort of chap to make a holiday a real success."

"I guess I'm your man. Bunter, old clam!" said Fisher T. Fish heartily. "Count me in!"

"Right-ho! It won't cost you a red cent, old man," said Bunter, touching Fishy on his weakest spot. "Not a dollar all the way."

"Good!"
"I—I suppose you could lend me a quid till my postal-order comes, Fishy?" added Bunter.

The bright and genial expression faded a little off the bony face of Fisher Tarleton Fish.

"Eh?" he ejaculated.
"A quid—"



"We don't seem to be near a station," said Billy Bunter, standing ready with all his properties. "We're passing one," grinned Bob Cherry. "But you said we get out at the next stop," growled Bunter. "So we do, old man," replied Bob. "Folkestone—this is a non-stop train, you know!" "Eh?" ejaculated the Owl. "And how long now to Folkestone?" "About an hour," said Bob innocently. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co. (See Chapter 5.)

"I guess quids are scarce at the end of the term," said Fisher T. Fish, shaking his head. "Make it sixpence."

"Look here, Fishy, when I'm taking you on an expensive holiday tour, I think you might lend a fellow a quid!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "If you don't treat me as a pal, you can hardly expect me to take you out to Biskra for the vac."

Fisher T. Fish eyed him thoughtfully. Certainly, a holiday in Africa, at the low price of one pound, would have been a tremendous bargain. The most enterprising tourist agency could not have done it at that price. But Fisher T. Fish began to entertain doubts.

"Hyer, you come along with me, Bunter!" he ejaculated. "We'll see about the holiday before we see about the quid."

"I—I say, Fishy—"
"Kim on!"

Fisher T. Fish ran Bunter along the passage to Study No. 1. Bunter, breathless and alarmed, was propelled into the doorway of that famous apartment with a bony grip on his collar. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were there, and they looked round in surprise.

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Bunter. "Make him leggo, you fellows! I say, Harry, old chap, I'll hold your jacket while you give Fishy a hiding!"

"I guess I want to know," said Fisher T. Fish. "Bunter's just asked me on a

trip to Africa this vac, in your party." "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton.

Frank Nugent burst into a laugh. "Is it genuine?" asked Fisher T. Fish. "Is this fat galoot allowed to add another pilgrim to the party?"

"No jolly fear!" said the captain of the Remove emphatically.

"I—I say, you fellows—"
"I guess he was taking me in, and I never smelled a mouse till he asked me to lend him a quid," said Fisher T. Fish, in disgust. "I guess I could have whistled for the quid and the holiday, too!"

"I guess so," said Harry, laughing. "You fat clam!" roared Fisher T. Fish.

"I—I say—"
"I guess I ain't shelling out any dollars," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'm kicking you the length of the passage, Bunter."

"Yaroooh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton and Nugent, as Billy Bunter disappeared from the study, with the Transatlantic junior on his track, letting out one foot after the other.

Loud yells rang along the Remove passage.

By the time Billy Bunter escaped, he was feeling quite tired. And he did not seek to raise any more little loans by

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asking Remove fellows to join the party for Africa. The Owl of the Remove realised dismally, at last, that that was a chicken that would not fight.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

"I SHALL want you two."

Coker of the Fifth had a stern and determined look on his rugged brow.

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance.

They had been going to Wingate's study, in the Sixth, for a chat with the captain of Greyfriars, when Coker addressed them. They stopped. Coker's word was law in his study in the Fifth—all the more because Potter and Greene were going home with Coker for the holidays.

"Well, what is it, Horace, old man?" asked Potter resignedly.

"I think I told you how those Remove kids checked me—"

Potter suppressed a yawn.

"When you wanted to butt into their holiday party, do you mean?" he asked. Coker glared.

"If you're asking for a thick ear, Potter—"

"I—I mean—"

"I'm going to make them squirm for it," went on Coker. "I can't let the term end without putting them in their place. These fags have to learn to respect the senior Forms. I'm going to rag their study this afternoon and thrash them all round."

"Well, I dare say it will do them good," agreed Potter amicably. "The more you thrash a Remove kid, the better it is for him, really!"

"Something in that," assented Greene.

"They've got something on this afternoon," pursued Coker. "Having some sort of a fag beanfeast, you know. I've had an eye on them. They're making preparations for a spread in Study No. 1 in the Remove. Well, we're going to drop in on it and mop them up, as a warning to be properly respectful to the Fifth, see?"

Potter looked a little uneasy.

"That's all very well," he said. "But if it's some of the Cliff House girls that are coming, we don't want to kick up a shindy. There's a limit, old man."

"It isn't that," said Coker. "I know that Marjorie Hazeldene is away now—she's gone with her people on a holiday to Biskra, in Algeria or Tunis, or somewhere, so she won't be coming to Greyfriars again till next term. That's all right."

"Oh, all serene!" said Potter. "If it's a fag-party, I don't mind helping you mop them up, old chap!"

"We'll call in Fitzgerald, and Hilton, and Smith major, and Price," said Coker thoughtfully. "Of course, I could handle that gang of fags entirely on my own—What are you grinning at, Greene?"

"Wa-a-was I?" stammered Greene.

"If you think I couldn't handle that gang of fags on my own, Greene—"

"Of course you could, old chap. No need for us to come," said Greene.

"I don't mean that! I could mop up all the Remove, if you come to that," said Coker. "Still, I think we may as well go in strong force!"

"Just as well," agreed Potter, with a private wink at Greene. Potter had his own opinion about Horace Coker's ability to mop up the Remove entirely on his own.

"You two, and Fitz, and Price, and Hilton, and Smith major," said Coker thoughtfully. "That's six—with me, seven. Practically eight, as I count for at least two in a scrap. That will be enough of us to knock the Lower Fourth into smithereens."

"Lots!" agreed Potter.

"Then call the other fellows, and let's get going," said Coker.

And Coker & Co. proceeded to prepare for the warpath. For once, the great Coker was laying his plans well; the Famous Five of the Remove had no suspicion of the intended raid. No doubt they were aware that Coker was not pleased with them. But they had much more important matters than Coker to think of. They were busy preparing Study No. 1 for a visitor—but it was not, as Coker supposed, a Remove party that was to gather to the feast in Study No. 1. The expected visitor was Major Cherry, Bob's father—a circumstance of which Coker had no knowledge.

The major had arrived at Greyfriars that afternoon, and was now with the Head. As soon as he had finished his talk with Dr. Locke, the juniors expected him in Study No. 1. That was why the study was newly swept and garnished, and the tea-table graced with unusual supplies of good things. Major Cherry was a guest whom Study No. 1 delighted to honour.

While the gathering of the clans was going on in the Fifth Form passage, the bronzed old soldier arrived in Study No. 1, where he found all the Famous Five ready to meet him. Wharton and Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh, were in their cheeriest mood—only Bob Cherry looked a little worried. He was wondering how his father would take the news that Billy Bunter was to be a member of the party for Africa.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's dad!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the major arrived. "I hope you haven't had tea with the Head, father."

The major smiled.

"No," he said, with a glance at the well-spread study table. "I've been looking forward to tea in the study."

"Oh, good!"

The major sat down.

Five eagerly hospitable juniors proceeded to provide for his wants on a generous scale.

"No news of Ali ben Yusef, sir?" asked Harry Wharton.

"None, so far. But it is pretty certain that Bou Saoud, the Spahi, has taken him back to Africa," said Major Cherry. "It will be in the Sahara that I shall find him again—if I am fortunate enough to find him at all."

"We're going to help," said Bob.

"I shall leave you boys safe at Biskra," said the major grimly. "You understand that you will not go into the desert."

"Hem!"

"I shall not allow any of you to go into danger," said Major Cherry, "and there will be very real danger in the desert, from Mustapha ben Mohammed and his men, and especially from his son, Bou Saoud, the Spahi. I hope to get military help from the French governor to rescue Ali, and that will not be work for schoolboys."

"Hem!"

"In fact, I am not sure that I ought to let you come out to Africa at all," said the major. "However, you will be safe in Biskra, and I think you told me, Bob, that some friends of yours are there now?"

"Yes; Hazeldene of the Remove, and his sister and father, and Clara Trevlyn,"

said Bob. "It will be a surprise to Marjorie to see us out there. And—and do you mind if Bunter comes, father?"

The major knitted his brows.

"Bunter? That fat fellow?"

"Ye-e-es," Bob coloured. "I—I asked him for the vac, before I knew anything about this trip, and now—"

"If you asked him he must come," said the major. "But—"

Major Cherry was interrupted.

The door of Study No. 1 was hurled suddenly open, with a terrific crash. There was a shout in the passage, in the well-known tones of Coker of the Fifth.

"Go for 'em!"

Then there was a rush.

Major Cherry jumped to his feet in amazement.

Coker of the Fifth came into the study with a rush, with Potter and Greene at his heels. After them came Smith major, Price, Fitzgerald, and Hilton of the Fifth.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Give 'em beans!" roared Coker in his excitement, not perceiving the major for the moment. "Heave that table over! Give 'em—"

Coker grasped the end of the table with both hands, to up-end it. The next moment Coker was swung off his feet in the grasp of a powerful hand on his collar.

"What does this mean?" roared the major.

"Ow! What! Ow—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Potter.

"Oh crumbs!"

The rush of the Fifth-Formers stopped as if by magic. They stared blankly at Major Cherry.

Fitzgerald, who was in the rear, slipped quietly out of the study. The rest stood and blinked at the major, in dismay, with crimson faces. Coker jerked his collar away from the major's grasp.

"Who—what— Great Scott—oh!" gasped Coker incoherently.

"We—we—we—" stuttered Potter.

"We—we—we—" gasped Greene.

"Hook it!" breathed Hilton. "Oh, that ass Coker— Hook it, you fellows!"

The Fifth Form raiders backed out of the study, almost falling over one another in their hurry. Coker, staring at the major, backed after them.

"What does this mean?" roared the major.

"Oh dear!"

Coker backed out. Bob Cherry, grinning, shut the door after him. In the passage Coker blinked at his dismayed comrades.

"I—I say—"

"You chump!" howled Potter.

"You ass!" hissed Greene.

"I—I—I didn't know—I never guessed—"

"You crass dummy!" roared Smith major. "Ragging a governor of the school, by gad! Oh, you chump!"

"I—I—I—"

"Bump him!" howled Potter.

"I—I— Hands off! Yaroooooh!" roared Coker, as his incensed comrades collared him on all sides.

Bump, bump, bump!

The Fifth-Formers scudded down the Remove staircase, leaving Coker gasping on the floor. In a dusty, dishevelled, and breathless state, Coker of the Fifth picked himself up and limped after them. Coker's raid on the Remove had not been exactly a success after all.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Off for the Holidays!

"WHERE is it?"

William George Bunter, comfortably ensconced in a corner seat in a first-class carriage, asked that question, blinking round at the Famous Five, who occupied the other seats.

These six juniors had the carriage to themselves in the express from Charing Cross to Folkestone, the major being in the next carriage.

Greyfriars had broken up for the summer holidays, and the Greyfriars fellows were far afield. Harry Wharton & Co. had started on their journey southward. That journey was to end, according to the major, at Biskra, on the border of the great African desert. But the chums of the Remove entertained a secret hope that they would go a good deal further than Biskra. But as Bob Cherry sagely observed, that could be left to be settled on the spot.

After a few days in London, for necessary shopping, the juniors had boarded the boat train at Charing Cross, and now they were fairly started. They were glad to be "on the go." They were looking forward keenly to the strange, mysterious land of Africa; and still more to a meeting with Ali ben Yuscf, who had been their schoolfellow at Greyfriars, and was now a prisoner in the hands of the lawless desert sheik, Mustapha ben Mohammed.

But Bunter was not thinking of the desert, or of Ali, or indeed of anything but a subject very near his heart—his lunch.

"Where is it?" he repeated, blinking at his comrades.

"Where is what, fathead?" asked Bob.

"The lunch-basket."

"What lunch-basket?"

Billy Bunter gave Bob an accusing blink.

"Didn't I tell you very particularly not to forget to order a lunch-basket to be put on the train?" he demanded.

"You did!" said Bob, with a nod.

"Well, then, where is it?"

"Echo answers, where!"

"The wherfulness is terrific, my esteemed, greedy Bunter," remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Do you mean to say that there isn't a lunch-basket?" demanded Bunter.

"Just that!" grinned Bob.

"We get lunch on the Channel boat," Bunter, said Harry Wharton. "You'll be sick if you keep on guzzling all the morning."

"If this is the way you treat a guest, Bob Cherry, I shall have to consider very seriously whether I can come out to Biskra with you," said Bunter.

"Go hon!"

"After urging a fellow to join you on this trip, and refusing to take no for an answer—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"The least you could do would be to provide a lunch-basket, I think. I've a jolly good mind to drop you at Folkestone," said Bunter warmly.

"Do, old chap!"

"The dropfulness would be an esteemed boon and blessing, my fat and ridiculous Bunter!"

"Yah!"

William George Bunter extracted a bag of bullseyes from one pocket, and a large packet of toffee from another. With these light comestibles, he proceeded to comfort his inner Bunter, and was soon in a happy and sticky state. Then he leaned back in his seat, opened his mouth, and went to sleep, and his deep



Shake, shake, shake! If there was anything Billy Bunter disliked more than missing a feed it was being awakened out of a nap. His eyes opened and he glared furiously at Bob Cherry. A fat fist shot out suddenly, and caught Bob Cherry unexpectedly on the nose. Crash! "Whoop!" roared Bob. "There," gasped the fat junior wrathfully; "now let a fellow alone to have his nap out!"

(See Chapter 6.)

and resonant snore rumbled through the carriage.

"Nice chap, isn't he?" grunted Johnny Bull. "How his people must love him! And how glad they must be not to have him home for the hols!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter opened one eye.

"I say, you fellows, shut up! Don't make a row when a fellow's trying to get a snooze."

He closed his eye again.

Bob Cherry leaned over and shook him, after his snore had roused for a few minutes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunter!"

"Groogh!"

"Bunter, wake up!"

"Groogh! Lemme alone! 'Tain't rising-bell—"

"We get out at the next stop!" roared Bob

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter jumped up. Although he had threatened to "drop" his comrades at Folkestone, that was very far from being his intention; and he had a lurking suspicion that his comrades would not have been sorry to drop him. He got busy at once.

"You silly ass! Why didn't you tell me before?" he gasped. "Where's my hat? Where's my bag? Where's my rug? Oh dear!"

"Buck up!" gasped Bob. "Next stop!"

"Where's my things? Help me, can't

you, you grinning owls? You jolly well want me to be left behind!" howled Bunter.

"Bunter's a giddy thought-reader," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's my rug—hand it over—you're standing on the corner, you beast! Gimme my bag! Now I'm ready!" gasped Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove stood ready—with all his properties in his possession. The express was roaring on its way through the green meadows of Kent, and showed no sign of slowing down.

"We don't seem near a station," growled Bunter.

"We're passing one," said Bob.

The express roared through a station without stopping. Billy Bunter was all ready to alight; but he noticed that his companions were sitting at their ease, and he blinked at them suspiciously.

"Look here, I'm all ready," he exclaimed. "You said we get out at the next stop, Bob Cherry."

"So we do, old man."

"Well, where is it?"

"Folkestone. This is a non-stop train," answered Bob blandly.

"Eh! And how long now to Folkestone?"

"About an hour," said Bob innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, quite entertained by the expression on Bunter's fat face.

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter. "You—you've been pulling my leg, you beast!"

"Dear me!" said Bob, in surprise. "That's dawned on him at last! What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

He stacked away his various possessions, and sat down again. It was necessary to get out at the next stop, certainly; but the next stop was a long way off as yet.

Bunter glared at his grinning comrades.

"You won't take me in again!" he growled.

And once more he closed his eyes and composed himself to balmy slumber.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nearly Left!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Wake up, Bunter!"

"Folkestone Harbour!"

"Turn out!"

Billy Bunter opened one sleepy eye to glare.

"Lemme alone!"

"Turn out, you ass!"

"Shut up!" howled Bunter. "I know jolly well that I haven't been asleep five minutes. You can't pull my leg again. Shut up!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Lemme alone!"

And Bunter closed his eyes again.

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry, shaking him. "Do you want to be left in the train? We're at Folkestone now." Snore!

The express had stopped, and the platform was thronged with passengers and porters and baggage. Major Cherry came along to the door of the juniors' carriage.

"Now, then," he said.

"Coming, dad."

"I've seen to the baggage. Don't forget your bags, though. Keep with me—there's a big crowd," said the major.

"Right-ho!"

Nugent and Hurree Singh, Johnny Bull, and Harry Wharton jumped from the carriage. Bob Cherry stayed behind to shake Bunter again. He shook him with energy.

"Bunter, you dummy—"

"Grooogh!"

"Wake up!"

"Shan't!" yelled Bunter. "I tell you you can't pull my leg again, you beast! Lemme alone!"

"We're at Folkestone—"

"Rats!"

"Do you want to be shunted off on a siding with the train?" roared Bob, in exasperation.

"Yah!"

"I tell you—"

"Shut up!"

Bunter jerked his fat shoulder away, and settled down to sleep again. Bob Cherry glared at him. He was strongly tempted to leave the fat junior to sleep, and to lose the Channel boat. Certainly Billy Bunter's absence would not have spoiled the holiday for the rest of the party.

But Bob felt that he had his duty to do, and he grasped Bunter's collar again to shake him into wakefulness.

Shake! Shake! Shake!

If there was anything that exasperated William George Bunter more than missing a feed, it was being awakened out of

a nap. His eyes opened, and he glared furiously at Bob. A fat fist shot out suddenly and caught Bob Cherry unexpectedly on the nose.

Crash!

"Whooop!" roared Bob.

He sat down on the floor of the carriage.

"There!" gasped Bunter. "Now let a fellow alone to have his nap out!"

"Why, I—I—I'll—"

Bob scrambled to his feet in raging wrath. Billy Bunter had a narrow escape at that moment of being used as a duster to dust the railway carriage. But Bob restrained his wrath.

"You—you silly, cheeky ass—" he spluttered.

"Shut up!"

"Are you coming?"

"No, blow you!"

"Then stay where you are, and a good riddance to you!" exclaimed the exasperated Bob, and he jumped from the carriage and followed his comrades, who were already making their way with Major Cherry along the crowded platform.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

He closed his eyes again. Then he re-opened them. Bob Cherry was gone, and Bunter was not too sleepy to realise that the other fellows were gone, too, and that the carriage was empty save for his podgy self. It dawned upon his fat brain that the train really was at Folkestone, and that it was necessary to change for the boat.

He jumped up in alarm.

"I say, you fellows!" he shouted.

But there was no answer. Harry Wharton & Co. and the major were on their way to the boat in the midst of a thick crowd of passengers. Bunter clutched up his belongings and fairly leaped from the carriage.

"Beasts!" he gasped. "Leaving me behind! I suspected them all along! Beasts!"

He glared round in search of the party. But crowds of hurrying forms hid them from his sight. Bunter clutched at a porter.

"I say, have you seen my party?"

The man blinked at him.

"Eh! What party?"

"Five schoolboys and an old fool!"

said Bunter. "An old ass with a face like a coffee-bean. Look here, find them for me, and I'll give you threepence."

The porter looked at Bunter, and turned away without a word. Perhaps he was overcome by the generosity of Bunter's munificent offer.

"Are you deaf?" howled Bunter.

Apparently the porter was deaf, for he paid no further heed to the Owl of Greyfriars.

"Beast! Cheeky low beast!" muttered Bunter. "Blessed if I know what the lower classes are coming to these days! Oh dear! Where are those rotters? Oh dear!"

Now was Bunter's opportunity for dropping the "beasts" at Folkestone, if he so desired. Apparently, however, he did not so desire, for he began a frantic search for them.

"Where are you shoving to?" demanded an indignant gentleman, as Bunter bumped into him.

"Don't shove, there!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "Blow those trippers!"

The trippers, however, saw no reason why Billy Bunter should shove past them. The fat junior had to take his turn with the rest. He heard a discordant hoot from the boat and fairly gasped with alarm. If the Channel boat started without him— Another groaning hoot from the boat made the summer

day hideous. Then a hand came from somewhere and dropped on Bunter's shoulder.

"Leggo, you beast—"

"Bunter!"

"Oh, I didn't see it was you, sir! I say, they've left me behind—"

"I've been looking for you," said Major Cherry, with a frown. "You should keep with the others, Bunter. Now keep with me."

"I say, the boat's starting—"

"It does not start for a quarter of an hour yet."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

A few minutes later the Owl of the Remove was crossing the gangway to the boat with the rest of the juniors. As soon as the major had seen them safely on deck he hurried away to see to the baggage. Billy Bunter turned an angry and indignant blink on the Famous Five.

"You beasts—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"You jolly well didn't leave me behind, after all!" hooted Bunter. "I'd really made up my mind to drop you, only the major came up and persuaded me to come. Look here, what am I going to sit on?"

"There's a large and extensive deck," said Johnny Bull. "No extra charge for sitting on it."

"Beast!"

"You can hire a deck-chair if you like, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Plenty of them to be had, if you hurry up before they are all bagged."

"A man will bring one if you ask him," said Nugent. "Tip him a bob."

"Lend me a bob, then."

"Oh, my hat!"

Nugent handed over the required shilling, and Bunter blinked round for a man with a deck-chair. A stout man in uniform came striding by, and Bunter clutched at his sleeve.

"Here, my man—"

"What?"

"Get me a deck-chair!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Are you deaf, or haven't you any sense?" hooted Bunter. "Get me a deck-chair, and here's a bob for you."

The man in uniform gave Billy Bunter a glare that ought to have withered him on the spot. Then he strode on without a word. Bunter stared after him in wrath.

"The cheeky rotter! What are you fellows grinning at? Why didn't that cheeky fellow bring me a chair?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "That's the captain of the steamer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bunter.

There was another discordant howl from the siren, and the steamer began to move. A few minutes more, and Harry Wharton & Co. were looking back at the white cliffs of England, wondering, and yet little guessing, what was to happen before they looked again upon those white cliffs gleaming in the sun.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Crossing the Channel!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. remained on deck, looking back at the white cliffs as they faded into the sea. Bright sunshine streamed down on the Channel and the crowded decks of the steamer. It was with an elated feeling that the juniors realised that they were fairly started at last on the journey that was to take

them into the land of desert and date-palm and dusky Arab.

Billy Bunter was not interested in the white cliffs of Albion, however, and had no desire to watch the equally white cliffs of France rise over the sea. He was interested in a much more important matter. The travellers were to lunch on the boat; and Billy Bunter was anxious to begin his lunch. In case of a quick passage there might not be time to finish if he delayed matters. The sea was almost as smooth as glass, the big steamer churned her way on with scarcely a roll, and Bunter felt that it was safe to negotiate a large-sized lunch. So he disappeared below immediately; and when the famous Five went down with the major half an hour later they found him going strong. The Owl of the Remove blinked at them from his table.

"I've started, you fellows," he said cheerily. "I feel better for having had a snack, already. Try the chicken; it's quite good. I've had some."

"Roast beef for me," said Johnny Bull. "That's good, too; I've had some," assented Bunter.

"I rather like the idea of steak-and-kidney pie," remarked Bob Cherry, scanning the menu.

"Good idea," said Bunter. "I've had one, and they're good."

Apparently there were few items on the list that Bunter hadn't had! But he was not finished yet.

He continued his lunch while the juniors disposed of theirs; and when they had finished Bunter did not rise.

"Coming up, old fat top?" asked Bob. "Not till I've had my lunch," answered Bunter. "We sha'n't get anything to eat on the train to Paris, you know."

"My hat! I shouldn't think you'd want anything," said Bob.

"The fact is," said Bunter, "my appetite is a little delicate to-day. I can't eat much. Just peck a little, you know."

"Oh!"

"I think I'll have another helping of that pudding; I've only had three. You might tell the man to hand that dish of oranges over this way; I could do with a few. I think I could tackle a bunch of bananas, too. Ask him if he's got a plum cake, will you, Bob? I like a tit-bit like that after lunch."

Major Cherry screwed his eyeglass into his eye and looked at Bunter, seeming a little alarmed. It really looked as if the Channel boat would be cleared out of foodstuffs by the time Billy Bunter had finished satisfying his delicate appetite.

"Don't overdo it, Bunter," said the major mildly. "We're not off the water yet, you know."

"Oh, I'm all right, sir," said Bunter cheerfully. "Quite an old traveller—never seasick. You fellows remember the time we had a cruise in Mauly's yacht? I soon got on my sea-legs—what?"

"I remember you ate too much and got jolly ill," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

The major looked at his watch. "Boulogne in about twenty minutes," he said. "Better come on deck soon, Bunter. I don't want to lose you again."

"I'll come up the minute I've finished my lunch, sir."

Major Cherry settled the bill, and the party returned to the deck, leaving William George Bunter to continue his raid on the provisions. The steward was regarding him with wonder by this time, and he seemed quite dazed when Bunter



Major Cherry sprang to his feet and caught Billy Bunter by the shoulder. "You have seen Bou Saoud?" he asked. "Ow! Yes!" gasped Bunter. "In the next carriage but one—ow—" "Look out!" shouted Bob Cherry suddenly. A figure appeared in the train corridor, and a dark, black-bearded face looked into the carriage—Bou Saoud. A revolver was in his hand, the muzzle directed full at Major Cherry. (See Chapter 9.)

asked for a plum cake to wind up with. His astonishment increased when Bunter disposed of nearly a dozen bananas, and then ordered several items from the list of sweets, to fill up any vacant spaces that might have been left in his fat person.

But even Bunter was satisfied at last, and he made a movement. A slip of paper fluttered on the table before him.

"Eight-and-six, sir," said the steward. "Oh, I say! The bill's paid," said Bunter in dismay.

"The gentleman paid for what you'd had till he left, sir. Eight-and-six for these items."

"I—I say, take it to Major Cherry—he's on deck somewhere—"

"Sorry, sir, can't be done."

"Look here—"

"Eight-and-six, please," said the steward firmly. "I'm rather busy, sir. Other gents waiting, sir."

Billy Bunter blinked at him in deep indignation. How much the major had paid for his lunch, Bunter did not know, and did not care; it must have been a considerable sum. But Bunter felt a deep grievance at having to pay for the items consumed since the major's departure. He felt that the major ought to have remained with him till the finish, notcase in hand!

However, there was no help for it, Bunter had to dive into his own resources, and the eight-and-six was paid over. Then the Owl of the Remove, in a state of great indignation, made his

way to the deck. He found that he had a little difficulty in moving, and he realised that he had lunched not wisely but too well. The steamer was moving with a gentle motion; but any motion was too much for Bunter at that moment. A ghastly feeling came suddenly over him, and he clutched at the staircase-rail and held on, perspiring.

"Oh dear!"

"Malade, pauvre garçon?" said a soft voice in French.

Bunter blinked round with lack-lustre eyes. The man who addressed him was not a Frenchman, though he spoke in French. He was a dark-faced man, evidently of Eastern blood, with a thick black beard and heavy black, bushy eyebrows.

"Let me help you," said the man, speaking in English now.

"Thanks!" said Bunter feebly. He felt that he could not have reached the deck without assistance. The man with the black beard gripped his fat arm and helped him up the stairs.

Harry Wharton & Co. were quite near at hand, but the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe them. Moreover, he was only thinking of his internal troubles. The black-bearded man led him directly away from the Greyfriars party, and stopped on the other side of the deck, out of their sight. There he dropped the helpless Owl into a deck-chair, apparently belonging to himself.

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"You will be better now," he said.

"Ow!"
The dark-skinned man stopped back and lighted a cheroot. He stood and smoked, and watched Bunter's face changing into many hues, while in the distance the cliffs of France and the buildings of Boulogne rose slowly into view above the summer sea.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Man with the Black Beard!

BILLY BUNTER sat very still. Had he not done so he felt that catastrophe would have come. Even Bunter realised that he would have done better without that final bunch of bananas. Within the Owl of the Remove those bananas seemed on the worst of terms with the plum-cake, or the roast beef, or the chicken, or the steak-and-kidney pie, or the apple-pudding; or perhaps all those conestibles were on bad terms with one another. At all events, for some time William George Bunter was feeling very bad indeed, and dared not move.

But the fresh air on deck revived him, and the inharmonious supplies he had taken on board seemed to settle down a little. He became conscious that the black-bearded stranger was speaking to him in a low and rather musical voice. Bunter was not of a grateful disposition, but even he could not help feeling that it was rather kind of a stranger to have stood by him like this, and he felt that he ought to thank the man. So as soon as he felt better, and no longer in danger of catastrophe if he opened his mouth, he proceeded to do so.

"Much obliged, sir," he said. "I say, is this your chair?"

"Yes, mon garçon."
"You don't mind standing?" asked Bunter, making no move to rise.

"Not at all."
"Thank you very much!"

"Vous etes tout seul?" asked the black-bearded man. "You travel alone, is it?"

"Oh, no! I've got friends on the boat," said Bunter. "They've left me in the lurch, as usual. They wouldn't look after a chap a bit, after all I've done for them."

The black-bearded man smiled.
"I dare say you've noticed them on the boat," said Bunter. "An old major with a coffee face, and a nigger, and four chaps—"

"Yes, I have noticed them," assented the black-bearded man. "I think I have seen the old gentleman before somewhere. Is not his name Cherry?"

"That's it—Major Cherry."
"And you are travelling with him?" asked the stranger.

Bunter nodded.
"I think I understand. It is a party of young noblemen being conducted on a tour—hein?"

Billy Bunter smiled serenely. Obligated as he was to this kind stranger, Bunter had mentally characterised him as a "nigger," because he was evidently of the brown race. But he felt quite cordial towards the brown man now. The fellow had judgment, at least. He had recognised Billy Bunter as a young nobleman! Bunter had always been aware that there was something very distinguished in his appearance, though the Remove fellows at Greyfriars had never seemed to observe it.

"Something of the sort," assented Bunter, with fat swank creeping into his manner at once. "Not that the other fellows are much class. I'm really

taking them with me out of kindness, you know. They sort of hang on to a chap. I dare say you know how a highly-connected fellow is run after at a big school."

"And you go to Paris?" said the stranger, looking at Bunter.

"Yes; we're stopping a night there."
"Then you go further?" said the black-bearded brown man, with an air of polite interest in the young nobleman.

"What-ho!" said Bunter loftily. "None of your three-days-in-Paris trips for me. I'm going a jolly long way!"

"But it is not the season when the nobility go to the South of France," said the brown man.

"Can't get to Africa without going to the south of France," said Bunter. "Not unless you go by sea, of course. We're going by way of Marseilles."

"You go to Africa?"
"That's it."
"Je comprends! A holiday in Algiers or Tunis?"

"No fear! We're going on to Biskra, right down south," said Bunter. "I expect I shall explore in the desert, too. That is, if it's made comfortable for a chap. I'm jolly well not going to rough it."

"A holiday at Biskra," said the stranger. "And it is only a holiday—nothing else?"

"Lots else," answered Bunter. "Those silly asses think they are going to find a nigger—hem!—I mean an Arab chap, who's got into trouble with his scrubby black relations there. All rot, of course!"

"Ma foi! Then Major Cherry is in search of Ali ben Yusef!" exclaimed the black-bearded man suddenly, and as if involuntarily.

"Yes," said Bunter. Then he blinked curiously at the brown man. "But what on earth do you know about Ali ben Yusef?"

"I—I heard your friends speaking on the boat," said the black-bearded man hastily. "It matters nothing to me, of course. You are feeling better now, my young friend?"

"Oh, I'm all right!" said Bunter. "I'm a jolly good sailor, you know. Never been sea-sick in my life. If you fancied I was going to be sea-sick, you were jolly well mistaken!"

The man looked at him.
"I wish you a happy holiday at Biskra," he said. "An agreeable youth like you will make many friends there."
Bunter smirked.

"I'm generally popular," he said. "This vac, you know, I was simply overwhelmed with invitations, and I'm rather sorry I came with this scratch crowd. I dare say I shall chuck them at Biskra, and join the Hazeldenes. They're staying there, and it stands to reason they would be glad to have me."

"Friends of Major Cherry's?" asked the brown man, eyeing Bunter with a strange curiosity.

"Oh, no! Hazeldene's a chap in my Form at Greyfriars, and he's there with his pater and his sister Marjorie. That's why Bob Cherry was so keen on going," Bunter grinned. "The silly as-thinks Marjorie would like to see him. As if she'd look at any other chap when I'm around! Some fellows are jolly connected."

"Bunter!" came a powerful voice across the deck.

"Hallo! That's Bob bawling for me

now," said Bunter, getting out of the chair. "They're looking for me, I expect."

Bob Cherry came threading his way among deckchairs and baggage and passengers.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were lost again. You've got to come and line up to have your giddy passport blinked at. At least, there's a fat Johnny pretending to examine them, though he really doesn't look at them at all. It's a jolly old ceremony we have to go through, goodness knows why! Get a move on, Bunter!"

"Well, good-afternoon!" said Bunter to the brown man. "I—He stopped suddenly as he observed that the man in the black beard had vanished. "I say, did you see that chap, Cherry?"

"What chap?"
"Chap with a brown chivvy; some sort of a nigger. I was talking to him. He was jolly interested in our trip to Biskra."

Bob Cherry frowned.
"You fat duffer, didn't the pater warn you not to talk too much to strangers about our journey?"

"Oh, rot!" said Bunter. "I know my way about. Don't you give me any advice, Bob Cherry."

"Look here—"
"You're a bit of an ass, you know," said Bunter. "Nobody will get much change out of me. I'm wide, you know—very wide."

Bob Cherry grinned.
"You are—in the waistcoat, at least," he said. "Come on, fatty!"

And Bunter was marched off. The Greyfriars party joined the queue of passengers waiting in the hot sun for the examination of their passports, an operation conducted with perfunctory slowness by a stout gentleman sitting comfortably in the shade. For a long, long time they had to stand in a hot, perspiring crowd, while that futile and useless ceremony was gone through, and the steamer plunged on towards the quay at Boulogne harbour.

But everything comes to an end, and they were "through" at last with that futile survival of wartime officialism.

Then the major led his flock ashore, and through the Douane, where they assured the Customs officers that they had no "tabac" and no spirits about them, and the red-legged soldiers allowed them to pass out at last into Boulogne. The juniors noticed that there was a rather grim expression on Major Cherry's face, and that he looked about him with keen, watchful eyes. As they went towards the Paris train, which was waiting in the station, he muttered a word.

"Keep together, you youngsters, and keep your eyes open for a man with a brown face and a black beard, and tell me if you see him."

"Yes, dad," said Bob, in wonder. "But what—"

"I caught a glimpse of him as we came off the boat," said the major, in a low voice. "I may be mistaken, but I think not. I know Bou Saoud, the Spahi, too well for that."

"Bou Saoud!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Yes."
"The villain who kidnapped Ali, and took him to Africa."

"If this is the man, he sent him to Africa, and stayed behind to spy on me," said the major grimly. "The man I saw was wearing a black beard—a disguise, I am convinced. I am almost

(Continued on page 17.)

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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 864.



EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

LOTS of fellows would turn up their noses at the idea of a walking-tour in these days of swift transport by car and charabanc.

Yet a walking-tour has much to commend it, and it has a special charm of its own. Given the right sort of companions—cheery, light-hearted fellows—a walking-tour takes some whacking.

Jogging along the highway, in cool, comfortable clothes, with a cricket-shirt open at the neck, and a haversack slung over your shoulder, and your chosen chums keeping pace with you, is great sport. At least, I think so. There are others who look upon walking-tours as "too much fag" (that's one up against Maully!). Others, of the Alonzo Todd type, are too physically frail to think of undertaking a tramp of twenty to thirty miles.

Of course, you should never make a martyrdom of a walking-tour. Jog along at a steady pace, without trying to break records, and when you come to any spot of special interest, stop and explore it.

There are crowds of delightful places in rural England. Abbeys, castles, haunted houses, nesting farms—all make a romantic appeal. And the lover of Nature will revel in the woodland and mountain scenery.

Why I like walking-tours is that they make me feel so jolly fit. I feel as hungry as a hunter—or should I say a Hunter?—and what could be more ripping than to sit in an old-fashioned farmhouse eating new-laid eggs, to be followed by strawberries and cream?

I'm not going to pretend that walking-tours are preferable to cricket, or cycling-tours, or tennis. But they make a delightful change from the usual summer sports, and I think it is high time we had a special number dealing with this topic.

There are several fellows in the Remove who do not share my enthusiasm for walking-tours, and their contributions are spiced with sarcasm. They regard walking-tours as waste of time and energy. They would rather sit in the corner of a first-class railway-carriage, and be whirled along at sixty miles an hour, than foot it on the King's highway, at an average pace of four miles per hour!

Well, one man's meat is another man's poison; and this is a saying which applies to outdoor sport as well as to anything else.

There is another grand supplement on the way, boys, dealing with the "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"—a copy of which I have been privileged to see. Take it from me, chums, it's the goods. With the summer vacation well in front of their minds, the hard-working "Herald" contributors have been burning the midnight oil in order to keep up with the demands of the printer, so that even while you are reading elsewhere of our adventure in Africa, you will still—in the Supplement—be able to follow our frolics at Greyfriars.

I will now leave you to tour through the special articles in this number, and I hope some of them will make you laugh so heartily that you will burst your waistcoat-buttons.

HARRY WHARTON.

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GREYFRIARS has produced some wonderful walkers—though most of them belong to past generations. Of late years, walking seems to have gone out of fashion. A hundred years ago, however, long walks were frequently indulged in, sometimes for wagers, sometimes in the ordinary course of events.

In the summer of 1817, which was a particularly hot one, the English poet Shelley, then living at Marlow-on-Thames, thought nothing of walking to London and back—a distance of thirty-two miles each way. A biographer tells us that Shelley never appeared to be tired after this "little jaunt."

One of the most famous walks is the London-to-Brighton one, and this event is still kept up. The distance—from Westminster Bridge, London, to the Aquarium, at Brighton—is fifty-two miles, and many thrilling struggles have been witnessed on this historic road.

There have been men who have walked round England, and even round the world. But the latter feat was, of course, performed in easy stages, with a certain amount of sea-voyaging in between.

The greatest walker Greyfriars has ever known was a master who was here about 1840. His name, appropriately enough, was Trudgitt. He spent all his week-ends on the road; and he once walked a hundred miles in twenty-four hours. A man who did this to-day would be entitled to an award which is known as the "Centurion" Medal.

Mr. Trudgitt used to walk in all weathers. He was a familiar figure on the Kentish roads, and must have known practically every inch of the county. He went along at a swinging stride; he was lightly clad, even in the severest weather, and he never wore a collar or a cap—though he was obliged to do so at Greyfriars, for etiquette's sake. It was his boast that he had never had a day's illness, and although fifty years of age, he looked considerably younger. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that he spent all his leisure in the open air.

It was Mr. Trudgitt who organised the annual fifteen-mile walking match at Greyfriars—an event which was discontinued a few years back, owing to the state of collapse in which some of the competitors finished. Fifteen miles at

top walking speed is a strain on the strongest constitution.

Among the famous boy walkers of Greyfriars, mention must be made of Cornwallis, who put up some remarkable performances over long distances. In 1835 he caused quite a sensation by walking from Greyfriars to St. Jim's. On arrival at the latter school he took part in a cricket match, and actually scored a century! He was even game enough to walk back to Greyfriars, but his schoolfellows wouldn't hear of it, and they made him return with them by train. I do not know the exact distance by road, between the two schools; but it is over thirty miles. To-day, if a fellow walked from Greyfriars to St. Jim's, he would be voted crazy!

On a December night, in the year 1897, two Greyfriars seniors walked to London for a wager. They broke bounds after lights out, and set out on their long pilgrimage. It was a wild night, and the wind and rain took all the glamour off their adventure. They reached London shortly after dawn—"like a pair of drowned rats," as they afterwards described it. Then they took train back to Friarale. But the train broke down during the journey, and there was a long delay, so that the seniors did not arrive at Greyfriars until morning lessons were in progress. They were hauled up before the Head, and given a severe reprimand. But they had won their wager, so what mattered?

Among the present generation of Greyfriars fellows there is no walker of outstanding merit; though Gwynne of the Sixth enjoys a long tramp occasionally, and thinks nothing of covering twenty miles on a half-holiday.

Personally, I prefer to take my recreation in a less arduous form than "jogging along the highway." But there's no accounting for tastes!

"Walter Jones," said the teacher sternly, "you are not attending to the lesson. Did you hear Tommy Smith's description of the American product, hominy?"

"Yes'm," replied the small boy glibly. "All right, then. Give me a sentence in which you bring in the word correctly." With the courage of despair Walter replied: "Hominy marbles have you?"



My Biggest Walk!

Some Amazing Revelations of our Contributors — some Fact, and some Fiction!

BILLY BUNTER:

Believe me, or believe me not, but I once walked from Jonno-Grotes to Land's End. I forget how many thousand miles it is, but it makes little walks like the London-to-Brighton affair look ridiculous. I did this huge walk during the holidays, with the idea of reducing my superfluous flesh. I felt a bit weary and footsore after I had done a hundred miles, but, like Feeclicks, I kept on walking! All through the heat of the day, I footed it gaily on the King's Highway. Natchurally, I had a haversack full of tuck over my sholder, and every now and then I stopped to sit down by the wayside and have a snack. My picture appeared in all the pictorial papers, under the heading:

"STOUT SCHOOLBOY'S STRENUOUS WALK!"

I finished up at Land's End as fresh as a new-laid egg; and I would cheerfully have gone on walking, only I should have walked into the sea! When I wayed myself, I found I was a stoun lighter than when I started. I recommend long-distance walks to any fellow who is slightly inclined to corpulensy, like me!

ALONZO TODD:

I am a walker of no mean order. Every morning, before breakfast, I take a constitutional by tramping the whole length of the Remove passage. Then I stagger exhausted into the dining-hall, and fortify my feeble frame with eggs and bacon. Every evening I take a sharp stroll in the Close, starting at the School House steps and finishing at the tuckshop. When feeling in the mood for a long-distance walk, I put on a pair of stout walking-shoes, tie a damp towel round my head to avoid sunstroke, take my trusty cudgel, and trudge all the way to Courtfield! Then I rest in the cinema there for several hours, before returning to Greyfriars by taxi. My Uncle Benjamin assures me that walking is a highly beneficial and health-giving exercise; but one must be very careful not to overdo it. I once knew a fellow who attempted to walk five miles, all in one day. Of course, he collapsed with the exertion, and languished for several months in hospital. He wasn't in a ward by himself. He must have had two companions; for I am told that he lay between life and death! There is no doubt that walking, in moderation, is the finest exercise "on earth."

H. VERNON-SMITH:

More for a "stunt" than anything else, I walked to Wembley to see the Exhibition. I am no weakling, but I confess I was very fagged and footsore at

the end of my long tramp. I had to take a good long rest before I actually visited the Exhibition; and I was only too glad to return to Greyfriars by train, like a civilised being. You won't catch me performing these long-distance walking "stunts" again!

HARRY WHARTON:

A thirty-mile walk in one day is my record. I don't claim that it was a wonderful feat, or anything like that; but I recollect feeling like a limp rag at the end of the day. Ever since then, whenever I have wanted to go a long distance, I have relied upon that trusty steed of steel, my bicycle!

DICK PENFOLD:

When days are bright, and Nature smiles, I love to walk for miles and miles. I sometimes take a friend or cousin, and think out poems by the dozen. There's nothing like the open air for inspiration, I declare! I cannot stand a stuffy study, but love the roads — unless they're muddy! How grand it is to stride along, and hear the sea's melodious song; or else strike inland, for a change, by wooded glen and mountain range. Walking is ripping recreation; it fills your heart with exultation. But when you get the cramp or stibch, or tumble in a miry ditch; or when your friend grows hot and waxy—it's better far to take a taxi!

JAMES WALKER:

A fellow with a name like mine ought to be a great lover of the Open Road,

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the great Out-of-doors, and all that sort of thing. But, truth to tell, I'm a Walker by name, but not by inclination. Rather than tramp the weary miles, I prefer to borrow Blundell's motor-bike!

LORD MAULEVERER:

I have already described my biggest walkin' feat, for the benefit of HERALD readers. It was when I tramped the whole way down to the village an' back in the record time—for me—of three hours! I was absolutely played out by the time I reached the gates of Greyfriars. All the stuffin' an' stamina had been knocked out of me, begad! Limply I crawled away to my study sofa, to sleep off the effects of that wonderful feat of endurance!

FRED TROTTER (The School Page):

A Trotter never walks—he trots! When I'm sent on an errand, I set off at a snart double, and you can't see me for dust! I scorn the idea of walking. It's a slow, slovenly, slipshod way of getting about.

(Dear us! You must have reformed, Frederick, since we last saw you slinking out of the school gates at a snail's pace!—Ed.)

HURREE SINGH:

I confessfully admit that I am not overfond of the tramping trudge; nor do I envy the esteemed and ludicrous ploughman, who homeward plodfully plods his weary wayfellow! I much prefer the bikeful jigger, or the swiftful taxi, or the soarful aeroplane. I have a strongful objection, both to footing roads and footing bills!

DICKY NUGENT:

I once walked fifteen miles in one day, and if this isn't good going for a kid of nine, I should jolly well like 2 know what is! I don't of 10 perform such a feat—in fact, I'd never done it be-4; and I should hesit-8 to do it again! But I of these days I'll see if 5 got the energy!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

"I reckons as 'ow I've walked ten thousand miles in the course of me career; and if there's any man, woman, child, or young rip what can beat such a record, I shall be glad to 'ear from 'im! I'm a great walker, I am; I gets about everywhere on me two pins. The 'Ead once offered me a tricycle, to go down to the village an' back on, but I scorns such a means of locomotion! It ain't often that I bursts into rhyme, but 'ere goes:

"Though my feet is somewhat corny,
An' my 'ands is 'ard an' 'orny,
An' my legs I've got the cramp in,
Still, I means to keep on trampin'!"

[Supplement ii,



Ructions on the Road!

The Story of a Walking Tour, in which Billy Bunter plays a prominent part.
— By TOM BROWN —

"I'M coming!"
"You're not!"
"I tell you I am!"
"We tell you you're not!"
"Look here, you beasts—"
"Go and eat coke!"

This battle of words took place in the gateway of Greyfriars between Billy Bunter and the Famous Five.

Harry Wharton & Co. were setting out on a short walking-tour—an all-day affair.

It was a sunny Saturday morning in August, and the chums of the Remove were clad in sports coats and khaki shorts. Haversacks were slung over their shoulders, and they wore comfortable walking-shoes. They intended to walk to London by easy stages, and to return to Greyfriars by train.

Billy Bunter had caught up with the Famous Five in the school gateway, and he was bent upon joining them. Bunter wasn't a walker. He carried too much overweight, so to speak. His usual mode of progression was a roll or a waddle.

But a walking-tour appealed to Bunter, for this reason. Every few miles it was customary to halt for light refreshments. The actual walking was too much like hard work to suit the Owl of the Remove. But the refreshment part of the programme suited him down to the ground. He had visions of jolly little farmhouses, tucked away in the heart of Kent, where now-laid eggs and strawberries and cream and cooling draughts of soda-and-milk could be obtained. He also had visions of bunshoppes, situated in busy towns, where wonderful snacks might be had.

Bunter glared at the Famous Five. "I'm jolly well coming!" he snorted. "You're jolly well not!" growled Johnny Bull. "Run away and pick flowers!"

But Billy Bunter was not to be easily shaken off. The juniors walked on at a good, swinging pace, and Bunter walked on—or, rather, waddled—in their wake. Bob Cherry gave a low chuckle.

"Bunter will soon get tired of this game," he murmured. "He wasn't cut out to be a human Felix. We shall shake him off before long."

The morning was hot, and the pace set by the Famous Five was a "cracker." Billy Bunter puffed and snorted in the car like an antique engine. He had bellows to mend before the first mile had been covered.

Courtfield was the juniors' first stopping-place. They trooped into the Elysian Cafe, and ordered buns and ginger-beer for five.

By this time Billy Bunter was not to be seen. Apparently the pace proved too much for him and he had dropped out.

"He's thrown up the sponge, and gone back to Greyfriars," said Harry Supplement iii.]

Wharton. And that was the general opinion.

The Famous Five rested for half an hour in Courtfield, for they had a long walk ahead of them, and they were not disposed to make a martyrdom of it. After their rest they took to the road again.

"Burchester's our next stop," said Frank Nugent. "That's three hours' solid walking, and we shall feel like a jolly good lunch when we get there."

"Yes, rather!"
"The munchfulness of the lunchfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh.

The five juniors walked abreast, chattering gaily. They went from one topic to another, and they covered the miles without realising it, so absorbed were they in their conversation.

At last the little market town of Burchester loomed into view. As Nugent had predicted, the juniors were peckish by this time, and they felt in form for a good lunch. They called at "Ye Olde Bunshoppe," a historic refreshment-place with which they were well acquainted. Luncheons on the lawn were a speciality of the establishment.

It was very pleasant to sit at the little tables in the open air, with a cool breeze blowing across the lawn.

A rosy-cheeked waitress bore down upon the Greyfriars party, and Wharton ordered cold chicken for five, to be followed by baked apple-dumplings.

Conversation languished at this stage, and the juniors discussed the good things of the table instead of discussing the coming footer season.

"They do you well here," said Johnny Bull when the meal was over.

Harry Wharton nodded and frowned. He had just been presented with the bill. "They certainly 'do' you well!" he remarked. "I expected the bill to be about a quid, and it's a couple."

"Eh?"
"Two quids!" said Wharton. "That's eight bob a head."

"Something wrong there," said Nugent. "The waitress has made a mistake. Let's ask her about it."

Wharton beckoned to the girl, and pointed out that the bill seemed very excessive.

"Yes, it does seem a lot, sir," agreed the waitress. "But I've included Master Bunter's lunch on the bill."

"What!"

The juniors stared blankly at the waitress. What on earth was the girl babbling about? How could Billy Bunter possibly have called at Ye Olde Bunshoppe at Burchester, when he had dropped out from the walk and gone back to Greyfriars?

"Master Bunter was here about half an hour ago, gentlemen," the waitress went on. "He ate an enormous meal—nearly a pound's worth of food—and he said that five of his friends would be coming along to lunch, and that I was to include his bill with theirs."

"My hat!"

"Well, of all the nerve!"

"We'd better pay and look pleasant, I suppose," said Wharton. "But what beats me is this. How did Bunter manage to get here in advance of us?"

"He had a bicycle," explained the waitress.

"Oh!"

The Famous Five began to see daylight. Instead of going back to Greyfriars as they had supposed, Billy Bunter had walked as far as Courtfield, where he had hired a bicycle, and had gone on in advance while they had been partaking of refreshment in the Elysian Cafe.

"The—the fat worm!" growled Johnny Bull. "This is a rotten trick, and no mistake! Fancy eating a quid's worth of grub, and asking for it to be put down to our account!"

"We'll pay it," said Wharton. "and take it out of Bunter's hide later!"

The bill was settled, and a "tip" left for the waitress, and the Famous Five took to the road once more. They had very little hope of overtaking Bunter. The fat junior was mounted and they were on foot. Still, they would see Billy Bunter again in the evening, and give him the bumping of his life.

The sun was high in the heavens by this time, and walking was warm work.

"We'll take things very easily until we

(Continued on next page.)

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HINTS TO WALKERS!



By BILLY BUNTER.

THE most important thing to remember when setting out on a long walk is to take a haversack crammed with tuck. An army marches on its stummock, and a long-distance walker, if he is wise, does ditto!

At intervals of fifty yards you should find a convenient grassy mound by the wayside, and sit down and partake of light refreshment. But don't drink more than six bottles of ginger-pop at one sitting. I did this once, and found that I couldn't have walked another yard without going off pop!

When your supplies of tuck are eggshattered—and you yourself are in a simimular state—call in at every refreshment-places you come to. In order to walk forty miles it is necessary to be well forty-fied.

Never get a fellow to pace you on his bicycle. He'll only keep getting in your way—running into you from the rear and all that sort of thing. Besides, after you've tramped a duzen miles, and your legs are like lead, and your tung is lolling out of your mouth, it's tantalising to see a fellow taking it easy on a bike!

A summer evening is the best time for walking. But beware of the bats and natts and mosketoos. Personally, I always wear a mosketo-net over my face and arms, in order to keep the beastly pests at bay. There's nothing more aggravating than to be stung and bitten all over your annatermy.

TEN tiny toddlers, voted walking fine; One walked straight into a car, and then there were nine.

Nine tiny toddlers, resting on a gate: One fell backwards, broke his neck, and then there were eight.

Eight tiny toddlers, tramping down in Devon: In a ditch one chanced to pitch, and then there were seven.

Seven tiny toddlers, in a fearful fix: Bull came charging, butted one, and then there were six.

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When you return from your walk, always come in at the school gates looking as if you're half dead. Then, if your Form master spots you, he will probably take kompassion on you, and eggcuse you from lessons next day. But I regret to say that this has not always been my eggspereience!

If your schoolfellows ask you how far you've been, always multiply the actual distance by three. That is to say, if you've walked eight miles, tell them you've done twenty-four. They will then regard you as a Spartan and a hero, and invite you to their studies for rest and refreshment—if you're lucky!

RUCTIONS ON THE ROAD!

(Continued from previous page.)

get to Canterbury," said Wharton, "and we'll stop there for an iced lemonade."

Nearly two hours later, when the juniors ambled into the famous cathedral city and stopped at the first refreshment place they were astonished and furious to find that Billy Bunter had again forestalled them. The fat junior had stopped at the same place, and refreshed himself liberally with ice-cream, leaving a little bill of four-and-sixpence to be settled by his schoolfellows.

This was bad enough; but there was worse to follow.

When the walking-party halted for tea at Rochester they found that Bunter had served them the same trick. He seemed to have an uncanny knowledge of the various places they would stop at. Doubtless he had heard them discussing their stopping-places at Greyfriars before they started.

At all events, the fat junior had done himself well. The lunch at Burchester, the ice-creams at Canterbury, and the tea at Rochester ran into quite a big sum. It was fortunate that the Famous Five were in funds, or an awkward situation would have arisen.

Bob Cherry made a claw-like gesture with his hands, as if about to throttle somebody.

"Wait till I get hold of that fat bouncer!" he said grimly. "I—I'll burst him!"

"If he does this sort of thing all the way to London we shall be broke by this evening," said Nugent.

"The brokefulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh dolorously.

But Billy Bunter's merry antics had already come to a full stop.

A few miles out of Rochester the juniors suddenly and unexpectedly came upon their plump schoolfellow. They could hear a hissing noise behind a hedge, and on crawling through a gap to investigate they found Billy Bunter,

in his shirt-sleeves, trying to pump up a tyre. The bicycle was upside-down in the meadow, and Bunter was pumping for all he was worth, and perspiring profusely as he pumped. But the more he pumped the more quickly the air rushed out of the tyre, which was punctured in about six places.

Bob Cherry gave a yell.

"Here he is!"

Billy Bunter spun round with a start. His jaw dropped when he caught sight of the Famous Five.

"Oh crumbs! I—I say, you fellows! I'm punctured!"

"Not yet," said Johnny Bull grimly, "but you're just going to be!"

With one accord the juniors rushed at Billy Bunter and bore him to earth. Then he was bumped roundly and soundly on the parched turf, until there was scarcely a breath in his body, and he made a noise like his own deflated tyre.

"That's for playing those rotten tricks on us!" said Wharton sternly.

"Ow-ow-ow! I—I say, you fellows, what am I going to do? I can't mend this beastly puncture, and I haven't the cash to get back to Greyfriars by train!"

"Then you must hoof it!" growled Johnny Bull. "P'r'aps, if you're lucky, you'll get a lift on the road. But you don't deserve to."

The Famous Five went on their way, and Billy Bunter wailed appealingly after them. But they did not feel disposed to give Bunter a helping hand, in the circumstances.

That evening, when the chums of the Remove arrived back by train, there was no sign of Billy Bunter. The fat junior didn't come in until long after locking-up time. He was utterly worn out, and apart from one or two short lifts on the road, he had had to plod his weary way homeward, like the ploughman in the poem. But the verdict of his schoolfellows was that it served him jolly well right!

THE END.

Keeping Him Lively!

He was the slowest boy on earth, so his parents had apprenticed him to a naturalist. But even the naturalist found him slow. It took him two hours to give the canaries their seed, three to stick a pin through a dead butterfly, and four to pick up a convolvulus.

The only point about him was that he was willing.

"And what," he asked, having spent the whole afternoon changing the goldfish's water, "shall I do now, sir?"

The naturalist ran his fingers through his frenzied locks.

"Well, Robert," he replied at length, "I think you might now take the tortoise out for a walk."

TEN tiny toddlers, voted walking fine; One walked straight into a car, and then there were nine.



Ten Tiny Toddlers!

By DICK PENFOLD.

Three tiny toddlers—twenty miles to do;

One caressed a charabanc, and then there were two.

Nine tiny toddlers, resting on a gate: One fell backwards, broke his neck, and then there were eight.

Eight tiny toddlers, tramping down in Devon: In a ditch one chanced to pitch, and then there were seven.

Seven tiny toddlers, in a fearful fix: Bull came charging, butted one, and then there were six.

Six tiny toddlers—when will they arrive? One dropped out, fed-up no doubt, and then there were five.

Five tiny toddlers, feeling stiff and sore: One was "done," collapsed, poor son, and then there were four.

Four tiny toddlers (gone their grins of glee): One fell down a collar-flap, and then there were three.

Two tiny toddlers, tramped at set of sun: One collapsed exhausted, for he'd dragged the other one!

One tiny toddler—farmer fired his gun, Shot him accidentally, and then there were none!

No tiny toddlers on the road were seen: Never go on walking tours—ride a swift machine!

[Supplement iv.



(Continued from page 12.)

certain that it was the Spahi. Keep your eyes open for him!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter. The fat junior quaked, but he held his peace. But he understood now why the kind stranger had come to his aid on the steamer, and why he had displayed so much interest in that journey to the African desert. Bou Saoud had learned all that he needed to know of the major's plans from the fatuous Owl of the Remove.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were fully on their guard during the run from Boulogne to Paris in the French express. Even Billy Bunter did not give his whole thought to wayside refreshments, but blinked suspiciously at every passenger who entered the train or passed along the corridor. The idea that Bou Saoud, the son of Mutapha ben Mohammed, was shadowing the party, was a rather disturbing one. The Spahi had succeeded in kidnapping Ali at Greyfriars, and they knew him to be a determined and desperate man. For the first time it came into their minds that there might be danger in their journey long before the African desert was reached. Bou Saoud was watching them, possibly only to discover their plans, more probably to make some attempt to prevent the journey to the rescue of Ali ben Yusef.

Major Cherry was only too well aware of the possibilities. The rescue of Ali depended on him. Any mischance that befell him on his journey would leave the schoolboy shik a helpless prisoner in the hands of the Sheik Mustapha, with no hope of rescue, and that the savage chief who had usurped Ali's rightful place would spare his life was impossible. Even now Ali's life hung on a thread. He was spared so long as Mustapha retained hope of getting possession of the Eye of Ahmed by means of his prisoner.

More than once the major's hand slid into the pocket where reposed the revolver which he had carried through Flanders and Mesopotamia in the War days. Now that he knew Bou Saoud was on the track, he knew that that revolver might be needed. A life to the desperado of the desert was nothing. Only the consideration of his own safety would deter Bou Saoud from delivering a knife-thrust at a favourable moment. With the education he had received in a French military school, with the swagger of an officer of the Spahis, Bou Saoud was still at heart the truculent savage of the Sahara.

But the train rolled on, and no sign was seen of the brown-faced man with the black beard.

By the time they had passed Creil, Billy Bunter had dismissed the black bearded man from his mind, and was thinking only of his next meal. He had recovered from his terrific innings on the boat. He blinked at his watch and at a time table, and counted the minutes to

Paris. Meanwhile, the major's bronzed face was growing more and more thoughtful, and his glance rested doubtfully on the juniors more than once. Bob fancied he could read his thoughts, and he spoke at last.

"Look here, dad, we're not afraid of that dashed ruffian, Bou Saoud," he said. "We're quite able to handle him if he butts in."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "The ratherfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Major Cherry smiled faintly. "I did not anticipate this, of course," he said. "I supposed that Bou Saoud was already back in the desert with Mustapha ben Mohammed. I begin to think that I should not have allowed you boys to come on this journey." He knitted his brows. "I did not think there might be danger before Biskra. But, as it turns out—"

"The danger doesn't worry us, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"I know. But it is there, all the same," answered the major. "And I am responsible for you to your people, you know."

"Our people wouldn't want us to desert old Ali while he's up against it," said Harry.

"No fear," agreed Nugent. Major Cherry nodded, but he was evidently not quite satisfied in his mind.

"Of course, if you think we may be in the way—" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, I fear there is work ahead that is not work for schoolboys," said Major Cherry. "However, there is plenty of time to think about it."

"I say, you fellows, don't be funky," said Billy Bunter cheerfully. "I'm not afraid of any dashed niggers. I'll look after you."

"Fathead!" growled Bob. "Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ass!"

"Hem!" murmured the major. "I say, you fellows, is there a grub carriage on this train?" asked Bunter.

"I'm getting jolly peckish."

"You must be," said Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the carriage, and rolled along the corridor in search of the dining-car. He was absent about a minute. Then there was a rush of footsteps on the train corridor, and Bunter came bolting back into the carriage, gasping.

"Look out!" roared Bob, as Bunter sprawled over his legs.

"Ow!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat on the floor of the carriage with a bump and a yell. Major Cherry stared at him sharply.

"What is the matter with you, Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"Yaroooh!"

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Wharton.

"He's after me."

"Eh? Who—what—"

"That chap—black beard—man on the boat! I saw him—" spluttered Bunter incoherently.

"Oh my hat!"

Major Cherry sprang to his feet, his eyes glinting. He caught Bunter by the shoulder, and jerked him upright.

"You have seen him?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Where?"

"In the next carriage but one—Ow—"

"Look out!" shouted Bob.

A figure appeared in the train corridor, and a dark, black-bearded face looked into the carriage. Major Cherry swung round. There was a savage grin

on the black-bearded face, a glint in the black eyes of the disguised Spahi.

A revolver was in his hand, and it was thrust into the doorway of the carriage, and the muzzle almost touched Major Cherry as the Spahi pulled the trigger.

At the same moment Harry Wharton struck at the Spahi's arm, and the weapon was deflected just in time.

"Crack!"

The bullet missed Major Cherry by an inch, and was buried in the cushions of the seat.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Brave Bunter!

BOU SAOUD muttered a word in Arabic, and the revolver swung up towards the major again. But he had no time for a second shot. Bob Cherry's fist crashed into his dusty face, and he went spinning back into the train corridor.

"Collar him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Stand back!" exclaimed the major. He sprang into the corridor after the Spahi.

Bou Saoud was staggering against the windows, panting. Bob's blow had caught him fairly in the face, with all Bob's hefty strength behind it, and he was dazed for the moment. His black beard had been loosened, and hung now by one wire, showing the clean-shaven brown chin of the Spahi.

"You scoundrel!" said the major, between his teeth.

He leaped at the Spahi.

But the Arab recovered himself in a second. He spun round and raced up the corridor of the train.

"Stop him!" roared the major, dashing in pursuit. "Stop him! Arrêtez!"

The Spahi dashed into two plump Frenchmen who were smoking and talking in the corridor. He sent both of them sprawling, and dashed on. The major, rushing after him, stumbled over the sprawling Frenchmen, and one of them grasped his leg as he passed, and dragged him down.

"Let go, you fool!" panted the major.

"Mon Dieu!"

"Ma foi!"

"Mais, qu'est-que-c'est—quoi—"

"Mais, coquin—sclerac—"

Major Cherry struggled to his feet, with the two excited and gesticulating Frenchmen. The Spahi had vanished along the corridor. The major shoved off the Frenchmen without ceremony; but he was too late to pursue the Spahi farther. From the window of the train he caught a glimpse of a man with a dangling, black beard rolling down a grassy slope by the railway track.

Bou Saoud had leaped from the train. The major gritted his teeth.

"Gone!" he muttered.

In a moment the Spahi, rolling in the grass, was left behind and out of sight by the express as it rushed on towards Paris.

Pursuit was impossible.

"Monsieur—"

"Vous expliquerez—"

"J'exige—"

"Je demande—"

The two French gentlemen addressed Major Cherry together, in great excitement. In the roar of the train the crack of the revolver had not been noticed; all the passengers knew was that an "Anglais" had rushed along the corridor in pursuit of another passenger, and the two passengers who had been upset wanted an explanation.

The major controlled his impatience, and satisfied the French gentlemen with

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an apology in his best French; and returned to his carriage, leaving them shrugging their shoulders up to their ears.

"He's gone?" asked Bob, as his father came into the carriage.

The major nodded.

"Thank goodness it's no worse!" said Bob, with a shiver. "I—I was afraid for a moment—" Bob's voice choked.

His father's narrow escape had shaken him.

"He jumped from the train," said the major. "He may have been injured; but these desert Arabs are as active as cats. Anyhow, he is gone now."

The major sat down. His narrow escape had had no effect on his iron nerve.

He fixed his eyes on Wharton.

"You saved my life, my lad," he said. "I shall not forget that. Only a few minutes before I was thinking that I had made a mistake in bringing you boys on this journey—and if I had not brought you I should be a dead man at this moment! By Gad, if Ali is rescued, he will owe it as much to you as to me!"

"What are you going to do about it, father?" asked Bob. "I suppose the police ought to be set after that rascal?"

Major Cherry shook his head.

"We have no time for delay," he said, "and I am pretty certain that Bou Saoud will be hundreds of miles away before the French police could get on his track. Fortunately, what has happened was not noticed on the train, and we need say nothing. We don't want to be hung up for days or weeks in Paris."

"Where's Bunter?" asked Nugent suddenly.

In the excitement, the juniors had not noticed that Billy Bunter was not to be seen in the carriage.

"Blessed if I know," said Bob, looking round.

The Owl of the Remove seemed to have vanished.

Major Cherry stepped out of the carriage, and paced up and down the corridor, lighting a cigar. What had happened had given him food for thought—and he was not thinking of Billy Bunter. But the Famous Five wondered what had become of the fat junior.

"He was in the carriage," said Harry. "I didn't see him clear off—"

Bob Cherry grinned, and pointed to a foot that protruded from under one of the seats.

That foot evidently belonged to William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove, in a blue funk, had squeezed himself out of sight under the seat, and apparently was not aware yet that the episode was over and the savage Spahi a dozen miles behind the train.

The juniors grinned.

Bob Cherry stooped, and seized Bunter's ankle in an iron grip.

There was a yelp of terror under the seat.

"Ow! Mercy! Ow!"

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

That roar of laughter reassured Bunter. His fat face and big spectacles blinked out from the dusty recess.

"Ow! I—I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is—is—is he gone?" gasped Bunter. "Long ago!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "It's all serene, fatty. You can come out."

The Owl of the Remove crawled out into view, dusty and crimson and per-

spiring. He gasped as he collapsed into a seat.

"Oh dear! Ow! I say, you fellows, are you sure he's gone?"

"The gonefulness is terrific, my esteemed funky Bunter!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Inky—if you think I was funky—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "We don't think—we know!"

"Nothing of the kind. Do you think I got under the seat because I was afraid of a dashed nigger?" exclaimed Bunter indignantly.

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know! I—I—I wasn't afraid of him—I was looking for a five-franc piece I'd dropped—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you fellows can't take my word I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," roared Bunter. "I don't want any of your cheek, or any of your cackle. I was looking for a five-franc piece—I mean a five-franc note. As for that dashed nigger, he's beneath my notice. If he turns up again I'll deal with him fast enough."

Bob Cherry glanced out into the corridor. The major had finished his cigar and was coming back.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Protect us, Bunter!" gasped Bob.

"Yaroooo!"

Bunter rolled off the seat and dived under it with marvellous celerity. He vanished as the major looked in at the doorway. Only two feet remained in evidence.

Major Cherry stared at them.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"Is that Bunter under the seat?"

"I—I think so!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"What are you doing there?" exclaimed the major testily. "Do you want to rub up all the dust on the floor? Get out of it at once!"

The major's voice reassured Bunter. He crawled out, blinking round him in surprise.

"Where is he?" he panted.

"He—who?"

"That nigger—the Spahi—"

"He is off the train long ago," snapped the major.

"Beast!" roared Bunter, with an infuriated blink at Bob Cherry. "You said he was coming!"

"I didn't say Bou Saoud was coming," chuckled Bob. "I said 'here he comes.' And the 'he' was my pater."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter plumped down in a corner seat, glaring at his hilarious comrades with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. The major smiled faintly.

"I think, Bunter, that you would do well to return when we reach Paris," he said. "I will make every arrangement for your journey back if you care to go. You are really not suitable for a dangerous journey, my boy!"

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"Well, I like that," he said. "I fancy I'm the only plucky fellow here, if you come to that!"

"Oh gad!" said the major.

"As for danger, it's nothing to me—less than nothing. If we really come up against it, you'll find that I'm the fellow to rely on!" said Bunter reassuringly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling, you silly asses!"

The major let it drop at that. Billy Bunter sat in glowering indignation while the express ran on to Paris, and then the party gathered up their belongings and emerged into the crowded, noisy Gare du Nord.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Night in Paris!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. would have been glad to change directly into the P. L. M. train at the Orleans station, and continue their journey to the south without a pause. But the major, though hard as iron himself, had decided to give his youthful companions a night's rest in Paris, and to take the southern express in the morning. Billy Bunter, at least, agreed with the major's decision—he was in no hurry, and he stated with unmistakable frankness that he expected a comfortable bed in a comfortable hotel at night. No sitting up in dashed railway carriages for him, Bunter told his comrades—neither did he care for a "wagon-lit"—what he wanted was a comfortable bed at night. Fortunately the major agreed with Bunter on this point, and from the Gare du Nord the party drove to the hotel already selected by Major Cherry, where their rooms had been engaged in advance.

In spite of his assurances to the major, Billy Bunter's fat nerves had been rather shaken by the incident on the train. He had debated in his podgy mind whether he should continue the journey, which now seemed to have a spice of danger. Certainly, the major's narrow escape had not worried Bunter—he did not waste much thought on that. But a bullet intended for one person might possibly hit another—and that other might be William George Bunter! That gave the matter quite a serious aspect.

But dinner at the Paris hotel comforted and reassured Bunter. It was quite a nice dinner, and it was a very extensive one, so far as Bunter was concerned. With an almost unlimited series of feeds like this in prospect, Bunter felt that he could face the danger—such as it was. Besides, when danger was not near at hand, Bunter was as brave as a lion.

So he nobly determined not to desert his pals, but to stick to them through thick and thin—at least, so long as his fat comfort was properly considered.

After dinner, the major had some business in the evening that took him away from the hotel, and after some hesitation, he agreed to allow the juniors to take a stroll by themselves. He was assured that Bou Saoud was far enough away by this time—it was pretty certain that the Spahi was speeding southward to escape a possible pursuit by the police.

"Keep together, and keep to the lighted streets, and come back early," said the major. "I rely on you, Wharton!"

"Right-ho, sir!" said the captain of the Remove.

And the six juniors sallied forth together to see what they could of the sights of Paris in a couple of hours.

They mingled with the thronging crowds that swarmed the boulevards in the summer evening. All Paris seemed out of doors—every little iron table outside the innumerable cafes seemed to be taken.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't say you're ready for supper, old chap," urged Bob Cherry. "I really

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couldn't stand watching you eat again just yet!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Give your dinners time to settle," suggested Johnny Bull. "You ate four or five, you know."

"Otherwise the burstfulness is the horrible possibility," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I wasn't going to say supper!" howled Bunter. "I'm not ready for supper yet!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You silly asses! I was going to suggest seeing some of the shows," snorted Bunter. "There are a lot of shows in Paris that ain't allowed in London. You can't see them there!"

"And we don't want to see them here, Bunter," said Harry Wharton quietly. "Don't be a young blackguard, if you can help it!"

"Oh, you're a noodle!" said Bunter contemptuously. "I can tell you, I'm a bit of a dog when I get going."

"Fathead!"

"Well, I'm going in here, and chance it!" said Bunter obstinately, stopping outside a cafe-chantant. "It's all right. You don't pay anything—you just order a drink, and that pays for the show, see?"

"A drink?" repeated Johnny Bull.

"Oh, you can order lemonade if you like," said Bunter scornfully. "Mine's champagne!"

"You silly owl!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter marched in, and his companions followed him in. They sat down in the crowded hall, round a little

table at a distance from the stage. A fat and perspiring waiter came to take their orders, and Wharton gave the order for cool, summer drinks—omitting champagne for Bunter. There was no danger of Bunter ordering champagne for himself, however keen his desire to be a "bit of a dog." The price of it deterred Bunter from spreading himself in that direction.

At Greyfriars the juniors learned French, and some of the Co. were quite high up in Monsieur Charpentier's class. But as they had observed on previous vacations, the French of Greyfriars was not precisely like the French of France. It had a sort of family resemblance, and that was all.

A young man with a cardboard nose, painted bright red, came on the stage, and "pattered" to the audience in a French that was a deep mystery to the Greyfriars juniors. He kept the audience in a roar of laughter, but his jests, whatever they were, were quite lost on Harry Wharton & Co.—which perhaps was just as well.

"I say, you fellows, they speak rotten French here—I can't understand any of it!" grunted Bunter.

"A lot of it is slang, I think," said Harry. "I dare say we're not missing much."

"I say, I'm thirsty."

"There's lots of lemonade."

"Rats!"

"This orangeade is good," said Nugent.

"Bosh! I want a hefty drink," said Bunter.

"Fathead!"

At the next table were two young American tourists, with bottles of wine and big cigars, doing their best—like many tourists in Paris—to look as blasé and wicked as possible. Billy Bunter blinked at them with eyes of envy. He wanted to look blasé and wicked, too. He would have rejoiced to be taken for a regular dog, a roaring blade who had heard the chimes at midnight.

"Look here, you fellows, make it champagne, and I'll foot the bill," said Bunter generously.

"Ass!"

"Why shouldn't we make a night of it?" said Bunter recklessly. "Let's roll back to the giddy hotel about one in the morning, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, old man, you're too funny to live," said Bob Cherry. "You beat that fellow on the stage hollow."

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter sat discontentedly and sipped his lemonade. This wasn't his idea of a "night out" in Paris by any means. Though what would have happened to Bunter, had he imbibed champagne, was a rather entertaining question. Bunter had tasted champagne, and at the bottom of his heart considered it immensely inferior to ginger-beer. But nothing would have induced him to admit it.

"I say, you fellows—" he said suddenly.

"Oh, dry up!" said Johnny Bull.

"He's there—"

"Who, ass?"

"That nigger," said Bunter breathlessly.

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors looked round at once. It was possible, though not at all likely, that Bou Saoud was in Paris, and that he was shadowing the Greyfriars party.

"Where?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Look!" breathed Bunter.

At a little distance, an Arab in a Spahi uniform was sitting at a table, watching the stage and sipping a glass of wine. He was a lithe, handsome fellow, with a black moustache, and the juniors guessed that he was one of the French native soldiers from Algeria on leave.

"You silly ass!" growled Johnny Bull. "Do you think every giddy Arab is Bou Saoud? That's not the man."

"I suppose I can trust my eyes!" snapped Bunter.

"Then you can't trust your specs! He's not the man, I tell you!"

"Rats!" The Owl of the Remove blinked at the Arab. "I tell you I know him. He's got a false moustache now instead of a false beard."

"Rats!"

"He came in soon after us," went on Bunter. "He's watching us."

"Lots of people came in after us, fat-head—and he's not watching us!" growled Bob.

"I dare say you're afraid of him, Bob Cherry—"

"What?"

"There's nothing to be afraid of, with all these people about. And there's a gendarme at the door, too."

"You born idiot! It's not the man!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't think you ought to pretend not to recognise him, just because you're afraid of the man," urged Bunter. "I'm not funky, with all this crowd here—I mean, I shouldn't be funky in any case. Look here, you'd know him fast enough without that false moustache on his face—it makes him look different. One of you fellows go up to him and grab it off."

"What?"

"Then he'll be shown up, and we can give him into custody, see?"

"But it's not the man!" howled Bob.

"Oh, rot!"

"For goodness' sake shut up, Bunter!" said Wharton; and the juniors turned their attention to the stage again, while Bunter—quite convinced that his short-sighted eyes had told him the truth—continued to blink suspiciously at the Arab.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Man!

BILLY BUNTER was not giving any attention to the stage now. He blinked at the dusky man with a fixed blink, apparently unable to take his eyes, or his spectacles, off the Arab. The man became aware of his fixed scrutiny at last, and looked across at Bunter, first with a surprised stare, and then with an angry glint in his black eyes. He did not seem to like being stared at by Bunter's gleaming spectacles. Bunter, however, was too short-sighted to notice the signs of gathering anger in the soldier's face, and he continued to stare across at the man unremittingly.

The soldier finished his wine, and rose from the table. His eyes were fixed on Bunter now, and he came across towards the table round which the Greyfriars juniors were gathered.

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Bunter clutched at Wharton's sleeve.

"Look out!" he gasped.

"Well, what is it now?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"He's coming."

"Who's coming, ass?"

"That nigger."

"I tell you he isn't the man!" hissed Wharton. "If you weren't as blind as a silly owl, you'd know it."

"Rot! He's coming over to us!" whispered Bunter excitedly. "I say, look out for his revolver!"

"Fathead!"

All the juniors glanced at the dark-faced man as he came up to the table. Bunter edged back a little behind Bob Cherry. The soldier fixed his eyes on Bunter.

"Vous me regardez, donc," he said. "Je ne vous connais pas, mais vous me regardez toujours. Pourquoi?"

"I—I say, you fellows, what does he mean?"

"He means that he doesn't know you, but you keep staring at him!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I jolly well do know him—"

The native soldier, who seemed very angry, rapped the table with a set of brown knuckles.

"Pourquoi?" he demanded.

"He's the man, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I know his voice, too. And he speaks French."

And then Bunter, emboldened by the number of people close at hand, and quite convinced that he was going to show up a disguised Bou Saoud, reached up suddenly and grabbed at the thick curling black moustache of the Spahi.

That movement took the man quite by surprise.

Before he knew what Bunter was at the fat junior had grabbed the big moustache and tugged at it.

All round the juniors' table people stared at the scene in gesticulating amazement.

Bunter expected the big black moustache to come off in his hand, thus proving that the Arab soldier was Bou Saoud.

But it did not come off!

There was a yell of mingled pain and wrath from the Arab as Bunter tugged—a yell that left no doubt that the big moustache grew where it flourished, and that the man was considerably hurt by Bunter's sudden fierce tug.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Bunter gasped.

Even his obtuse brain realised that the moustache was the genuine article, and that it was not a disguise.

"Oh! Oh dear!" stammered Bunter.

"It—it—it isn't the man!"

"Great Scott! What's going to happen now?" gasped Johnny Bull.

The soldier stood rubbing his moustache with his dusky hand, and glaring at Bunter as if he would eat him. For a moment or two he seemed to astounded to act. Then he hurled himself at the Owl of Greyfriars.

"Ow! Help!"

Bunter dived below the table just in time. Two or three glasses of orangeade went crashing over.

Wharton sprang to his feet.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"Moi e le frappe—je le tue!" yelled the enraged Spahi, grabbing under the table at Bunter.

"Yaroooh! Keep him off!"

Wharton and Bob Cherry grasped the arms of the justly-incensed soldier, and dragged him back. He poured out a stream of mingled French and Arabic, and waiters and attendants rushed up on all sides. Under the table Bunter yelled for the police.

"It's a mistake," gasped Wharton, trying to explain to the infuriated man.

"Je vous dis—le petit garçon est fou—tres fou—"

"C'est un fou!" gasped Bob, bursting into French. "Vous comprenez, c'est un fou, et nous le garde."

"Help!" yelled Bunter. "Police!"

The Spahi calmed himself as he heard the explanation. The juniors were explaining that Bunter was a lunatic—which really seemed the only possible explanation to give after what he had done.

"Ah ca!" said the soldier. "C'est comme ça—je comprends! Laissez moi done."

The juniors released his arms, and the Spahi walked back to his table. He was satisfied with the explanation that Bunter was out of his mind.

"Oh, my hat! What an evening!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We'd better get out of this."

"Yes, rather!"

An excited crowd surged round the juniors, and the proprietor of the cafe, in greasy evening clothes, came up and poured out a stream of French at top speed and with frantic gesticulations. The juniors did not understand a tenth of what he said; but they caught the words "allez-vous-en," oft repeated, and understood that they were being told to leave.

They were only too glad to do so.

Bunter was jerked out from under the table, amid laughter from the onlookers, and marched out of the place in the midst of the Greyfriars juniors. They went with crimson faces, and were happy to find themselves in the street again.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Let's get back to the hotel, you fellows. It's about time, anyhow!"

"I say, I ain't sure that he wasn't the man, after all!" gasped Bunter. "The moustache wouldn't come off—but why did he drop the matter so quietly? That looks guilty."

"You silly ass! We explained to him that you weren't in your right mind!" roared Bob.

"What!" yelled Bunter.

"He let you off because he thinks you're a lunatic, and we're your keepers."

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter.

"And so you are, and so we jolly well are!" growled Johnny Bull. "And if you play the goat again, Bunter, I'll jolly well dot you on the nose! That's a tip!"

"Yah!"

The juniors walked back to their hotel. Among the crowds that thronged the Paris pavements they passed two or three dozen Arabs, in their walk. But Billy Bunter did not look among them for Bou Saoud. He was quite fed-up on that subject—a feeling shared by his comrades.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Marseilles!

BRIGHT and early the next morning the Greyfriars party drove to the Orleans Station, and boarded the Paris-Lyons-Mediterranean express for the south. Marseilles was their next halt, where they were to take the boat across the Mediterranean to Africa. It was a long, long run from Paris to the ancient Phocean city by the blue waters, but the chums of the Remove were prepared to enjoy it. It was not the season when the great crowds go southward to the Riviera, but the train was fairly well filled, and the travellers were unable to get a carriage



Billy Bunter's heart throbbed violently as he saw the gleam of steel in the Spahi's hand. Major Cherry's life hung on a thread. Then, suddenly, in a paroxysm of terror, Bunter yelled. It awoke Major Cherry, who sat up in bed in amazement, and switched on the light by his bedside. "Bou Saoud!" he gasped, as he saw the Spahi, knife in hand, within the room. (See Chapter 14.)

to themselves. The train had passed Lyons, when an attendant came along the corridor, looking into the carriages, and stopped at the one where Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent sat among the passengers, with Bob Cherry on the opposite seat.

"Monsieur Sherry?" said the attendant.

Bob gave a start. "I suppose that's little me," he remarked, looking round at the man. "What's wanted?"

"Je cherche le petit Monsieur Sherry, qui voyage avec son pere."

Bob grinned. "I'm the little Mr. Cherry, voyaging with his father," he answered. "What's the game?"

The attendant handed him a sealed envelope.

"On me donne cela pour vous, monsieur," he said.

"Thank you!"

Bob looked at the letter in great surprise. Someone on the train, apparently, had handed the letter to the attendant to be given to him. The envelope was, however, addressed to Major Cherry, not to Bob.

"It's for the pater," said Bob. "I'd better hike along the train with it at once. Blowed if I can make it out!"

Bob went along the corridor with the letter in his hand.

He reached the carriage in which the major sat, with some of the members of the Greyfriars party.

"A letter for you, dad," said Bob. "Eh?"

Bob Cherry explained, as he handed the letter to his father. The major opened it, with a puzzled brow.

Then his eyes glinted under his knitted brows.

"Bou Saoud!" he muttered. "My hat! Is that scoundrel on the train!" exclaimed Bob.

"He has been on the train, at all events; I doubt if he is on it still," said the major. "Probably he got off at Lyons, after giving this letter to the attendant. You may read it."

Bob looked at the letter; it was written

in French, but he was able to make it out. Translated, it ran:

"Monsieur.—You have had one narrow escape. You will not escape the next time if you persist in your voyage to Africa. Be advised, and turn back at Marseilles. If you take the boat for Algiers, you will not live to see the African shore.

"BOU SAOUD."

"Cheeky rotter!" said Bob. "The cheekfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But it will make no difference to our esteemed selves."

The major smiled. "None at all," he said. "And I scarcely think that Bou Saoud will venture to attempt any rascality on board a crowded steamer, in spite of his threat."

"Gas!" assented Bob. "He must be a silly ass to think that he can frighten us back. But that means that he will be on the watch at Marseilles when we take the steamer, dad."

"We shall be on the watch, too," said the major.

"Yes, rather!"

The news that Bou Saoud, the Spahi, had been on the train was rather exciting to the juniors. They wondered whether he was still on board, but it was useless to think of searching a crowded express for a man who would certainly be in some disguise if he was there. Nothing was seen of the man, at all events, during the run through the south of France, and by the time they reached Marseilles the Greyfriars party were too fatigued to think much about Bou Saoud, or anything but bed. The major had booked their quarters at the Hotel de l'Orient, near the harbour, and they drove at once through sleeping streets to the hotel.

"We get a day in Marseilles," Bob Cherry remarked at breakfast the next morning—a late breakfast. "The packet boat goes to-morrow. We shall be able to see some of the sights."

"I say, you fellows—"
"And don't you get on the track of

any giddy Arabs, Bunter. There are no end of them here."

"Rats!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I'm rather tired. Let's have a taxi for the day, and see the sights without fagging ourselves out. I'll stand the facket."

"I don't think!" grinned Bob. "One of you fellows can settle," explained Bunter, "and I'll square when—we get back. I'll keep an account of—"

"If that's the way you stand a taxi, old man, we'll be satisfied with the trams," chuckled Nugent.

And the Greyfriars party sallied out cheerily to look at Marseilles, sun-baked and somewhat odorous, but bright with variegated colours and busy life. They walked along the celebrated Cannebiere, they visited the Jardin Zoologique, they gazed at the innumerable shipping in the spacious harbours, and they looked away across the blue sea towards Africa, the shores of which they were soon to tread.

It was an exciting and cheery day, and the Greyfriars juniors were tired enough when they came in to supper and bed. Billy Bunter almost fell asleep over his supper, and did not eat more than enough for two or three fellows, which was quite an unusual circumstance with Bunter, and showed that he was very tired.

Three double rooms were occupied by the juniors, and the major had a room adjoining. Harry Wharton had the pleasure—or otherwise—of sharing a room with Bunter. Bunter was soon fast asleep, as his powerful snore testified, and Wharton was not long in following his example. It was long past midnight when the captain of the Remove was suddenly awakened by a shake.

He started up in bed in alarm. "What—"
"I say, Wharton—"
"You silly ass!" Wharton sat up, blinking in the light which Bunter had turned on. "What are you waking me up for?"

"I'm hungry."
"What!" howled Wharton.
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"I had hardly any supper, you know," said Bunter plaintively. "I say, it's one o'clock. Do you think I can get any grub if I go down?"

"You silly owl, of course not! Everybody's in bed, and the place is locked up for the night."

"I'm hungry."

"Go back to bed, ass!"

"But I'm hungry."

"Do you want this pillow on your silly head?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up, and let a fellow go to sleep!"

"I say, old chap, suppose you go down and wake up the cook, or the head waiter, or the proprietor—"

Wharton grasped his pillow.

"Where will you have it, fathead?"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled disconsolately back to bed.

"Turn out the light again, fathead!"

"Yah!"

Wharton rose and turned out the light. Then he composed himself to sleep again. He was sinking once more into balmy slumber, when a still small voice proceeded from Bunter's bed.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Mnmmmm!"

"I'm hungry."

"Shurrup!"

"Beast!"

And Wharton determinedly went to sleep, heartlessly indifferent to the fact that Bunter was hungry—though that fact, to Bunter's fat mind, outweighed every other consideration in the wide universe.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Baffled—by Bunter!

"Oh dear!" murmured Bunter.

Bunter was hungry.

There was no doubt about it. He was hungry. A supper only sufficient for three had left William George Bunter with an aching void. It was hours and hours till breakfast. It was simply impossible to wait for that meal. It really seemed equally impossible to get a meal served at two o'clock in the morning. But Bunter was feeling desperate. He turned out of bed at last, but this time he did not awaken Wharton, or turn on the light. Bunter was determined to explore for food, and he had a strong suspicion that the captain of the Remove would lock the door to keep him from carrying out that desperate intention, if he was awake.

So Bunter dressed quietly, in the glimmer of light from the window, and stole out of the bedroom in his socks.

The corridor without was dim and ghostly in the rays of moonlight that filtered in here and there by shuttered windows.

Bunter went a few steps towards the stairs, and stopped.

There was something eerie and uncanny in the vast, silent building, plunged in darkness and slumber. All was silent. The clang of the last noisy tram had died away.

Bunter stopped, and hesitated. Hungry as he was, he felt very disinclined to creep down the big, dark staircase into silence and shadows.

As he stood hesitating, he heard a slight sound from the major's door. He blinked round, wondering whether Major Cherry was also hungry and up. It really was not probable, but undoubtedly Bunter had heard a sound from his room.

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There was an unshuttered window in the corridor near the major's door, and a pool of moonlight glimmered there. In the moonlight, Bunter, standing in deep shadow, saw something that made his fat heart leap to his mouth in terror.

Close by the major's door was a dark figure, and the sound Bunter had heard was the turning of the handle in a cautious hand.

Bunter could not see the man's face, but he had a partial glimpse of his cheek and neck, and saw that the skin was brown. He did not need telling who the midnight intruder was. It was Bou Saoud, the Spahi. Bunter stood rooted to the floor in fear.

Like one in a dream, he watched the Spahi open the door, and then stand listening, with bent head, in the doorway. From within the room came a sound of heavy breathing. Major Cherry was fast asleep.

Bunter's heart throbbed again, with a sickening throb, as he saw something gleam in a brown hand. It was the gleam of sharp steel.

Still terror kept him motionless. It was the Spahi, and Major Cherry's life hung on a thread.

Then suddenly, in a paroxysm of terror, Bunter yelled. His wild and frightened yell rang through the sleeping building.

It rang and echoed, and awoke all the Greyfriars juniors, and a good many other guests in the hotel. It awakened Major Cherry, who sat up in bed in amazement, and switched on the light by his bedside.

The sudden blaze of electric light startled the Spahi, as he stood within the room, knife in hand.

"Bou Saoud!" shouted the major.

His hand dived under his pillow and flashed out with a revolver in it. For an instant it seemed that Bou Saoud would carry out his intended attack; he stood with his weapon gripped in his dusky hand, his black eyes blazing at the major. But the revolver was rising, and the ruffian realised that he would never reach the bedside alive. With a muttered Arabic curse he bounded out of the room into the corridor and ran for the stairs.

Crash!

"Help!" yelled Billy Bunter.

Where he stood, in the darkness, the Spahi had crashed into him.

Bunter went sprawling to the floor, yelling with fright. The Spahi staggered against the wall, panting. But he recovered himself in a moment and rushed on to the stairs. Down the dark staircase he went, springing with reckless activity, and vanished. Bunter, sprawling on the floor, let out fearful yell after yell.

Lights flashed on stairs and in corridors. There was a buzzing of excited voices. The Greyfriars juniors, in their pyjamas, came hurrying out of their rooms. Major Cherry, half-dressed, appeared in the corridor with a revolver in his hand.

"It was Bou Saoud," he said.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Bob, his face turning pale. "Bou Saoud—here in—"

"Yes," said the major grimly, "Bou Saoud—here; and he nearly caught me napping. Something awoke me just in time—"

"Help! Fire! Police! Help!"

"Shut up, Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull. "The man's gone, you ass. It's all safe."

"Ow! Keep him off! Help!"

"Cheese it!"

Major Cherry stooped and picked the Owl of the Remove up. Bunter blinked round him in alarm.

"He—he's really gone?" he gasped.

"All safe," said the major reassuringly.

"What were you doing out of bed, Bunter? You are dressed! Was it you that awakened me?"

"I—I saw him!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I was going down to look for some grub—"

"Good gad!"

"And—and I saw him—at your door. I say, you fellows, is he really gone? He rushed into me—"

"Well, my hat!" said Johnny Bull.

"Bunter's come in useful for once. Good old Bunter!"

There was an excited crowd in the corridor by this time, demanding explanations. The major sent the juniors back to bed, and in a short time the hotel was being searched for the assassin. But he was not found—and an Arab visitor, who had taken a room under the name of Achmed, was found to be missing. To the proprietor of the hotel it seemed an ordinary case of an hotel thief; and the major let it go at that. But there was no more sleep for the Greyfriars party that night—and even Billy Bunter forgot that he was hungry. As soon as he had quite recovered from his fright Billy Bunter regarded himself as the hero of the hour.

"I say, you fellows, it's rather lucky I was on the watch—what?" he said at breakfast the next morning.

"On the watch?" repeated Bob.

"Yes, rather. While all you fellows were snoozing," said Bunter disdainfully.

"Lucky I was up and doing—what? With a little more luck I'd have collared that Arab rotter. He got away by the skin of his teeth after I seized him—"

"Seized him?" said Nugent.

"Yes—I rushed on him and seized him and held on to him like glue," said Bunter. "You fellows would have funked it! I know that! Not little me! I collared him, and if he hadn't got loose—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"You fat fraud!" exclaimed Wharton.

"You weren't on the watch; you went out looking for grub—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And you were scared out of your wits—if you have any—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, then, are you ready for the boat?" broke in Major Cherry; and the subject of Bunter's heroism—or otherwise—was dropped.

"Off for Africa!" said Bob. "At last!"

The deck was under their feet—the sultry sun blazed down on the Greyfriars party from a sky of cloudless blue. The steamer churned her way out of the harbour of Marseilles, and the eyes of all the juniors were turned southward—towards the dim and mysterious African land which they were eager to tread.

THE END.

(A series of thrilling and dangerous adventures await our cheery party of Removites, but at the moment their eagerness to set foot on African soil outweighs all thoughts of danger. Be sure and read the next grand story of this wonderful series, entitled—"The Schoolboy Tourists." You'll vote it top-hole!)

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SHERWOOD GOLD

By
**FRANCIS
WARWICK**



INTRODUCTION.

The story is staged over the period when Richard Lion-Heart, the king, was away in Palestine on the Third Crusade. **TOM HADLEIGH**—a youth of sixteen, who was found as a babe by the monks of Hadleigh Priory deserted in Sherwood Forest. Brought up by the good monks and apprenticed to a goldsmith, Simon Rye, Tom discovers in Simon Rye an unscrupulous and slave-driving master. He breaks away from him, determining to seek fortune under more savoury conditions, and throws in his lot with

LANTERN—a care-free adventurer of diminutive stature, but with a sterling swordsmanship.
ROBIN HOOD—chief of the band of outlaws whose headquarters are in the depths of Sherwood Forest. A good friend to the poor and needy, and a source of continual worry to **EARL HUGO OF CHARNDENE**—an unprincipled vassal of Prince John, known to the people of Nottingham as the Black Wolf.

FRIAR TUCK, ALAN-A-DALE, LITTLE JOHN, etc.—members of Robin Hood's band.
LOU—once jester to Earl Hugo, but now the friend of Tom Hadleigh and Lantern. Lou tells Tom that the peculiar talisman in his possession—a half circle of polished horn upon which are the words "The once betwixt—a split oak—follow the water—Gold," which was found near Tom by the good monks of Hadleigh when the former was a babe—would reveal the whereabouts of a wondrous treasure could the other half of the talisman be fitted to it. Lou declares that the other half of the talisman is in the possession of the Black Wolf. They set out to seek it.

Unknown to Earl Hugo, his vassal, Guy de Blois, steals the talisman from him intending to unearth the secret treasure for himself. But Tom gets to close quarters with him and a thrilling duel ensues. Before Guy de Blois is vanquished, however, he grinds his heel on the half of the talisman, crushing it to dust.

Some time later, Tom and Lantern see a party of the Black Wolf's men coming in their direction. Lantern arranges with Tom to lure the Black Wolf and his vassal, Gilbert de Vaux, into the depths of the forest what time he, Lantern, speeds off to bring Robin Hood and his band on the scene. The plan is put into practice, and Tom, with reckless abandon, gallops his horse into the forest, with Earl Hugo, Gilbert de Vaux, and the men-at-arms thundering upon his heels.

(Now read on.)

A Trick of Fate!

NOT only was Starlight a swifter horse than any of my pursuers, but Lantern and I had, as I say, travelled at our leisure, and my horse was very fresh, whereas Hugo had travelled at a good pace all the way from York.

Ay, all should have been well: all would have been well, but for the vilest luck in all the world!

I had soon seen that two horsemen were fast outstripping the rest, and these men were Gilbert de Vaux and Hugo himself. 'Twas natural enough that men of knightly rank would be better horsed than men-at-arms. Close behind them came a small, broad man, one of Hugo's squires. And I determined to separate these three from the rest!

Rounding another twist in the road, so soon as they bore in sight, I swung round and plunged amid the trees.

They grew scant upon that point, and the broad aisles betwixt the great trees were carpeted with mouldering leaves—'twas a rare ground for such a chase as this!

I saw Hugo and De Vaux, with the squire hot upon their heels, leave the road in mad pursuit. I laughed gleefully, for very sure I felt that those behind them would never see the turn we had taken, and would thunder by along the road.

Starlight twisted and turned amid the trees as I touched his bridle. A rare game did we play with our pursuers! And, as I have said, all would have been well, save for the vilest fortune in all the world!

'Twas but a root upon which Starlight stumbled, but thrown was I 'gainst the bole of a great beech. And all went black!

I opened my eyes after what seemed an eternity of time, but what can scarce have been many minutes—opened my eyes, I say, to see a blade gleaming o'er me, darting down towards my heart!

I stared at it stupidly—saw the steel gleam as a shaft of light from the dying sun fell 'twixt the beech branches. I realised that death was very near, but, somehow, too dazed was I to care.

And then, ere the sword could pierce me, 'twas knocked aside, and I heard the voice of Hugo.

"Fool!" snarled he. "Wouldst slay the young whelp 'neath my own eyes, when I have declared that the torturer shall have sport with him? And what if he carries not the talisman? What if that accursed jester, Lou, has kept the talisman for himself? If so, this boy's lips shall tell us what we seek to know, or I know little of the skill of Giles, the torturer!"

Gilbert de Vaux sheathed his blade, muttering something I could not hear. Gradually my brain was growing clearer, and I tried to stagger to my feet. In a moment I felt my wrists grasped behind my back, felt a cord twist round one of them. Then Hugo was at my throat, and an ugly laugh he gave to find the talisman there.

He severed with a dagger the leathern plait by which it hung around my neck.

"Now the gold is mine—mine!" he cried, his cruel voice harshly exultant.

I sprang into action at that! Never

should the Black Wolf gain that treasure, I told myself fiercely. Dragging my hands free from the squire who sought to bind them, I leapt at Hugo and snatched the talisman from his hands.

He gave a snarl of fury—a snarl like that of some wild beast. The next moment I had flung the talisman far from me into the undergrowth hard by.

"'Twill be rare luck indeed an you find that now, Hugo!" I cried.

All the three sprang upon me then, and though I struggled desperately, ere long I was overpowered. Bound and helpless, I was flung down.

"Ay; Giles shall have thee—but thou shalt live till the day that talisman of thine is in my hands, and the words writ thereon are known to me!" whispered Hugo, his voice shaking with passion. "Ay, thou shalt live! But every day shalt thou pray for death, I'll warrant me!"

And with that he stooped above me and dealt me such a savage blow upon the temple with his fist that once more did the blackness surge around me, and I lay senseless at his feet!

A Night of Horror!

I RECOVERED my senses to find myself lashed upon a moving horse.

I was laid upon my back, with arms and legs a-staddle down the beast's sides. Ropes, passing 'neath the horse's belly, secured my wrists and ankles, and were wound around my body, so that I could scarce stir a finger.

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Ay, scarce a finger could I stir, so utterly helpless was I! And when my eyes fell upon the gaunt figure of the Black Wolf riding nigh me, I needs must own that my heart grew chill.

For at last he had me in his power again, and 'twould be by a wondrous chance indeed were I to escape from his evil clutches.

At Hugo's side rode Gilbert de Vaux, the livid scar from the sword-cut I had once put upon his brow showing very clear upon his hawklike features. 'Twas he who first saw that my eyes were opened, and his face broke into a cruel smile. He spoke to Hugo, and the Black Wolf turned his face towards me.

"Oho!" snarled he. "So the young whelp looks about him at last. I trust that he is satisfied with his company."

And he laughed mockingly. I tried to speak, only to find that my mouth was silenced with a gag. But my eyes burnt fierce upon them, for Hugo laughed again.

"See his eyes flash fire, Hugo!" sneered De Vaux. "A strong, vigorous fellow this—one who should make good sport for Giles, the torturer!"

Hugo nodded, his teeth gleaming like those of some wild beast as his lips drew back.

"Ay, that will he! And methinks 'twill not be overlong ere this young friend of outlaws tells us that which we shall ask of him—to wit, the words writ upon his talisman. Never yet have I found lips that would not open 'neath the soft persuasion of that good rascal Giles!"

Again he laughed mockingly, then added in a low voice that I barely heard: "Would that I knew how that half of the talisman ever came to be in his possession."

Through the gloom I could see the steel caps of those who rode behind Hugo and De Vaux, bringing up the

rear of the cavalcade. My horse, I judged, was being led by one of the squires.

I wondered how long Hugo had taken to collect his scattered followers, wondered, too, how long the Black Wolf had searched vainly for the talisman I had flung far amidst the undergrowth, ere he gave up the fruitless task.

On and on we travelled down the forest roads, and every bone of my body jarred, every inch of my back was sorely bruised with the trotting of the horse. Lashed as I was, I could see no part of the animal, save an occasional whisk of tail; but I was sure that 'twas my own white destrier—Starlight.

'Twas grown mighty dark now. I could see but the upper branches of the trees, or how eagerly would I have scanned each brake and thicket for a sign of the outlaws. For soon must Lantern return with Robin Hood and the bowmen to that part of the forest where I was to have kept our enemies upon a wild chase.

The sun had long set, and I could judge not at all where we now were. But even though we were far from that other part of the forest where they captured me, there was high chance that we might meet the outlaws, and my hopes ran high at first. But as the long minutes passed, and still there was no sign of them, I began to realise, with heavy hopelessness, that my chances of rescue were indeed slender.

'Twas a clear night of stars, with the moon floating high above the forest, streaming down 'twixt the branches upon the road. If Hugo had intended to camp in the forest for the night he would have done so long ere this, so 'twas evident that he intended to reach Charndene as swift as might be, no doubt, despite his strong guard, fearing the shafts of the merry men in Lincoln green.

A wind had sprung up at sunset,

driving noisily 'midst the trees, and causing great black shadows to wave slowly in our path as the branches stirred. And 'twas to this, I believe, that I owed what followed.

All suddenly I heard an exclamation nigh me, heard the startled whinny of a horse, heard the beast shy sideways, doubtless frightened, as I say, by the stirring shadow of some great tree. The horse to which I was lashed started aside, and a moment later I realised that the man who led Starlight had let fall the guiding rein to control his own nervous steed.

Starlight free!

It did not take me many moments to seize that chance, I can warrant. Securely bound upon the destrier's back though I was, one thing could I yet do. My heels were 'gainst his flanks, and suddenly, with all the strength of my aching limbs, I dug in my heels.

There came a quick shout of alarm from Gilbert de Vaux as Starlight leaped forward. I heard the Black Wolf snarl out in fury. There was a commotion in front of me, I heard the rattle of arms, felt Starlight hesitate as he found himself hemmed in amidst the horsemen to the fore. Again I drove my heels hard into his flanks, and this time Starlight thundered clear.

The men-at-arms, through whom my horse went leaping, were taken too un-awares to realise yet what was taking place. The next moment Starlight was thundering down the dark road, with streaming mane and eyes dilated, while I lay helpless, lashed upon his back.

I could hear them galloping after us in mad pursuit, could hear the shouts of the men-at-arms and the rattle of their mail; could hear, too, the hoarse fury of Hugo's voice as he vowed to flog them all should I escape.

Shaken and breathless, bruised from head to heels, I could but listen to those sounds as they came faintly to my ears betwixt the clapping hoofbeats of Starlight. Gagged as I was, I could not even urge on my steed, save with my heels. I could but pray that his wondrous swiftness would not fail me this night.

A sharp bend there was, rounding a great mass of rock, and at this point, instead of taking the turn, Starlight left the road and plunged in straight amidst the trees.

Into the darkness we vanished from sight of those who thundered hot upon our heels. The black shadows, scarce broken by the moonlight, swallowed us utterly from their gaze, and though I heard them follow into the trees, ere long the hoofs of their horses and their far-off shouts died away in the distance.

Starlight had dropped to an uneasy trot, puzzled, doubtless, by the strange, silent burden upon his back, his nerves all on edge. I renewed my struggles, but I could not free myself.

On and on Starlight wandered, roaming aimless 'midst the forest glades, through moonlight and shadow, down the empty, ghostly avenues of trees, through silent places deep in brooding darkness. Creatures of the night peered out at us in passing; horrid shapes seemed to flit where the shadows stirred. 'Twas a night of horror.

I had escaped from Hugo, but was I much better case? I could not free myself, and in these lonely woods it looked indeed as though a grim fate was awaiting me.

For how could I hope other than to die slowly from starvation upon the back of my own warhorse?

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The men-at-arms through whom my horse went leaping were taken too unawares as yet to realise what was taking place. The next moment Starlight was thundering down the road with streaming mane and eyes dilated, while I lay helpless—lashed upon his back. (See page 24.)

The Figure in the Twilight!

GRADUALLY the hours of darkness passed, and dawn came stealing, cold and grey, o'er the tree-tops.

One thing had I accomplished. I had freed my mouth from the accursed gag that had silenced me, and the sound of my own voice as I spoke to Starlight was something of a comfort to me in the dead silence of the forest.

Into what quarter of Sherwood Starlight's wanderings had brought us I could not remotely dream. For aught I knew, any moment might bring us forth from the trees into view of the castle of Chamdene or to the hidden camp of the outlaws.

Sick and dizzy I felt, with a hunger and thirst hard to bear. And ere long I must have swooned away, for a great blank space there seemed to be, and when I realised my surroundings once more darkness was creeping on again.

Ay, a whole day had passed! The sun was setting. I could see the crimson sky gleaming through the trees as the white drestier that bore me rounded on.

Even now did I sometimes strain upon the ropes that lashed me to Starlight's back. But right well had I been bound, and my weakened efforts were utterly vain.

Darkness filled the forest, but I was scarce conscious of those hours. Throughout that second night of horror I lay in a sort of queer coma—a daze, midway 'twixt life and death.

And then, when dawn's dim light was creeping through the trees, we came upon him!

Ay, 'twas he, that strange, eerie figure, the old blind man who had known my name! He sat there in the dim twilight of the glade, nigh the great black mouth of his cave, with a great bird, as black as the cave mouth itself, seated upon a boulder at his side. To this bird he seemed to mumble low, and all the tales of witchery and evil things that I had ever heard came to me then. If I could, I should have turned and fled from the horrid spot!

For Starlight, in his roaring, had

borne me to the lonely glade of the Blind Man of Tarn!

The horse had come to a standstill, strangely ill at ease. 'Twas as though he, too, wished to turn and flee, but that something held him as though rooted to the spot.

And then the blind man raised his face—that strange, grey face, all horrible with the scarred sockets where his eyes had been.

A shiver ran through me as that face slowly turned t'wards me, for 'twas as though the blind could see! Lashed to Starlight's back, I quivered as though with an ague.

All suddenly his mumbings ceased, and the old man waved a skinny arm. The great black shape of the bird at his side rose silent into the air and flapped away into the gloom of the trees.

Starlight trembled as the blind man rose slowly to his feet, supporting himself upon a crooked staff. With one claw-like hand outstretched, he came slowly t'wards us through the twilight of the dawn.

As on that other night, I shuddered at his approach. And yet, as he drew nearer, all suddenly my uncanny fear of him fell from me!

My voice sounded strange to my ears as I called out to him in a weak whisper. He stood still at that, his sightless face directed upon me, and forth from his ashen lips there came a wild, wailing cry.

"I knew—I knew! I knew that you would come, Tom of Hadleigh. You have come, as I knew you would come!"

He gave a shrill cackle of horrid laughter.

"I am an old man," he mumbled—"an old blind man! But you had to come to me, for I alone of men can tell you those things which you must know ere the leopard shall triumph o'er the wolf, and through you shall I be avenged—avenged!"

He came nearer, and I spoke to Starlight soothingly, fearful lest the scared horse should take fright and carry me away. Then, as best I could, I told him of my plight, though wondering the while if a blind man could hope to help

me. But a haze was o'er my eyes, and my head ached mightily. Even the effort of speech was too much for me in my weakened state, and my voice died away in light-headed mutterings. The wild figure of the Blind Man of Tarn seemed to drift in mists. And then, sick and dizzy, I swooned away once more.

'Twas but slowly that my senses returned to me.

I was lying upon a couch of moss and leaves within the cave; for somehow the blind man had indeed loosed my bonds and dragged me thither.

Scarcely had I realised where I was than I fell asleep, utterly weary.

When I awoke again 'twas night. Mighty weak was I—light-headed, too, I must suppose. For four long days and nights did I lie within that cave, and the blind man tended me. Not until the fifth morning did I come forth into the sunlight that streamed into the glade, to see Starlight, all dappled with the shadow, cropping the grass nighly contentedly within a few paces of the Blind Man of Tarn.

The blind man's strange power over all dumb beasts and creatures had vanquished Starlight's dread. The noble horse looked up as I appeared at the cave mouth, and whinnied right joyfully. He came trotting t'wards me, and I laughed for very joy myself as I stroked his handsome mane.

Then the blind man called to me. He was sitting upon a boulder, his face turned upward to the light, and I saw that he listened to my footsteps.

"Sit by me," he mumbled. "For I am an old man, and the sinking fires of life within my withered heart shall soon flicker out. The time has come when you must know the secret of your life. Tom Hadleigh—ay, the time has come, for soon shall my lips be sealed with dust. Come!"

I crossed to where he sat, and sat beside him. In halting words I began to express my gratitude to him, but he shook his head impatiently.

"Look into my face," he muttered, turning it t'wards me. "Tell me—canst not remember me now?"

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"Right well do I remember you," I answered, puzzled. "'Tis as yesterday in my mind, that night when you saved me from the wolves, and—"

"Earlier than that," he whispered. "Canst not recall me to mind ere that?"

I stared at him wonderingly. "Nay, but I had seen you not ere that night," I told him.

He laughed shrilly. "Ay, but you had—you had! As a little lad you knew me, when I had eyes!"

I started. "As a little lad?" I echoed. "Then was I at the priory at Hadleigh. I knew no one save the good monks, and the men-at-arms who defended its walls from the plundering hands of godless men."

His hand came clawing out to mine. The old bones fastened so tight upon my wrist that I wondered at the strength within them.

"Canst not recall one Brother Peter?" A startled cry leapt to my lips as I searched the blind man's face.

"Ay," I muttered. "I recall Brother Peter. But you are not he!"

"Look again!" he cackled. Again my eyes dwelt upon his face. The beginnings of a great horror touched my heart with icy fingers. A cry choked in my throat.

"Brother Peter! Your face! By St. Christopher, 'tis his face!" I stammered. "I can see now. By Heaven, what fiendish hand has done this thing?"

Horror filled me, and a great amazement. I could see now indeed that he spoke truth, that he was this Brother Peter I had known at Hadleigh—a quiet, good man, in high favour with the prior. But what a ghastly change was here!

I shuddered. The blood was surging through my veins—hot hate was upon me for the doer of this crime!

"What hand?" he answered hoarsely. "Why, the same hand that has peopled the great demesne of Charndene with sightless men and crippled men and bleaching bones! Who other than the Black Wolf?"

"Hugo!" I muttered. "Ay, 'tis the work of Hugo that you see," he said in a shaking voice. "When he came that night to Hadleigh, to murder and plunder and destroy, his evil brood tried to force from me knowledge of where the sacred relics were hid. I told them not, and they put out my eyes ere I escaped from them."

"Blind, I wandered in the forest, till the grace of Heaven guided me to this cave. Here made I my home. The good people of Tarn, a hamlet yonder, bring food to me, and here have I lived through the weary years, awaiting your coming!"

"My coming?" I echoed, in amazement. "Ay, lad. For in my heart—'twas a message from Heaven, perchance—have I known that you would come, that through you would Heaven revenge itself upon the evil-doers for their black deeds! 'Tis your strong arm that shall hew them down!"

His voice rang out fierce and wild in that woodland glade, more strong and vigorous than I had heard it yet. His strange words set me wondering if these were not but the ramblings of a madman's brain.

"The end draws near for me, the old blind man," he went on more quietly.

"Ere long, life shall no longer warm my slow blood. But happy shall I die, knowing that through me shall the will of Heaven be done—that through me shall the banner of the black wolf's head be trampled in the dust! For I alone know the secret of your noble birth, lad!"

With his skinny hand he drew me nearer.

"Listen!" he whispered. "I tell you that Hugo is but a usurper, and that to you alone belong these broad lands, these towns and hamlets, and the great castle! Ay, thine is the fair demesne of Charndene. For you are Richard Athelstane, the earl!"

The Wondrous Truth!

AS in a dream did I hear those whispered words:

"You are Richard Athelstane, the earl!"

Could this be very truth, or was it but the wild imagining of a madman's brain? I moistened my dry lips with my tongue ere I cried hoarsely:

"By what name do you call me?"

"Richard Athelstane is your name," he answered. "Ay, Richard—a King's name do you bear, lad! I know you well for the true son of Edward Athelstane, the earl!"

"Edward Athelstane!" I echoed, breathless. And at the name there came swift to my memory of that parchment I had found in the iron casket in that hidden room in the north tower at Charndene, where had sat the grinning nine.

Eagerly I spoke of it. And then suddenly my heart fell.

For I recalled how that parchment had told of a birthmark, in the form of a falcon, that was to be found upon the chest of the son of this Edward Athelstane. And no such mark, I knew, did I bear.

'Twas like the awakening from a great and glorious dream.

"Fool that I was to put faith for a moment in his mad ramblings!" I told myself.

And then he broke in upon my thoughts, and in his voice was there something very strange.

"Nine skeletons, you say, lad?" he muttered. "Nine skeletons sat around that table where you found the parchment of which you speak? May all evil men perish thus!"

"But for aught we know, these men were not evil," I said. "Perchance—"

"Nay, nay," cried he, with a horrid cackle. "Evil were they all—all the nine! There was Hugh FitzWalter there, and William the Black, and other ruffians whose names I cannot call to mind so well. And at the head of that table sat Fulke de Ploermel, the father of the Black Wolf himself."

I listened in a great amazement.

"But how can you know all this?" I cried.

He gave a mad laugh, and stretched out a shaking hand, grey and shrunken. When he spoke his voice was but a mumbling whisper.

"Well do I know! For 'tis this hand you see that poured out the poisoned wine of which they drank. 'Twas this hand that closed the secret door upon

them when Death had closed their eyes—"

"Nay, lad, recoil not! Richly did they all deserve their fate! 'Twas Fulke de Ploermel, your father's enemy, who brought about the earl's death in France—ay, and would have slain you, too, an he could! Somehow had he and his vile companions found that such a parchment there was, and very intent they were upon destroying it, for proof it was that Charndene was not theirs. They found that secret room, and straightway was I sent for wine to pledge their find."

"But I had served your gallant father, lad—that great and glorious soldier, Edward, Earl of Charndene. Never should his enemies gain their evil ends an I could so prevent! Ay, a horrid impulse came upon me—a wicked deed, despite the wickedness that they had done. Death was in the draught I gave them. They had found the casket when I returned to that room, but they drank ere carrying out their plan of destroying the parchment within it so that the child who had escaped them should never have proof of his identity. And so they died in that secret room, all the nine; and I stole forth from the castle, and no one knew where they lay."

"Ay, 'twas as though Fulke and his eight companions had been spirited away. But though Fulke was dead, his son, Hugo, usurped the earldom in his father's stead, helped by Prince John. While I—I wandered in Sherwood Forest for a day and a night, haunted by the thing that I had done. For though they were wicked men, and richly deserved their fate, I had no right to take upon myself the vengeance on their deeds. But I had acted on a desperate impulse, for nothing else in all England seemed to have power to stay their villainies."

"And so, in remorse, I fled to Hadleigh, and took vows, and became the Brother Peter that you knew in after years."

There was a long silence. Then I muttered:

"But how can I be the son of Edward Athelstane? For the parchment spoke of a birthmark, in the form of a falcon—"

"Bare your chest," said he. And his skinny hand ran over me, resting at last upon a spot below the heart.

"'Twas there," said he. "Is there no scar?"

I gave a swift exclamation then. For, true enough, a scar there was of white, smooth skin, half the size of a man's palm.

"Why—" I began excitedly. But he checked me.

"I will finish my tale," said he. "Though I knew it not, ere Fulke de Ploermel died of the draught I gave to him and his evil comrades, an old serving man named Tostig, who had loved your father, had fled with you into Sherwood Forest. For your mother had died soon after news came of the death of the earl, and but for the faithful Tostig you, too, would have died—ay, and at the hands of Fulke!"

"But when the old man fled with the child he was seen by Hugo, Fulke's son, he whom they now call the Black Wolf. Hugo and his men followed Tostig, and though for a time he escaped them, knowing the forest better than they, his

old bones could not last out long. So he hid you in a lonely glade, lad; but first, with his knife, he cut away that fatal mark that in after years—so the old man thought—would have brought about your death at the usurper's hands had it been found. Then did he set out for the priory, which he feared never to reach, to obtain the help of the good men within.

"But his enemies found him first. They struck down the old man, and thought that he was dead. Mighty eager were they to obtain, also, a talisman he had borne away with the child. This had been broken in twain in his final struggles. Half they had, but the other portion was still clutched tight in Tostig's hand.

"The Black Wolf was about to sever the man's hand with his sword to obtain this, when by the grace of Heaven did Prior Walthoof come upon the scene with all his train, and threatened Hugo with the curse of the Holy Church if he committed that foul crime. Like cowed dogs they slunk away. Ay, 'twas on that evil day that Hugo's hatred for Hadleigh Priory began—that black hatred which ended years later in the razing of it to the ground in defiance of all laws of man and Heaven.

"But Tostig was not dead, though wounded unto death. He regained his senses just long enough to tell the prior of where you lay hid, and of who you were; also did he render to him the half of the talisman that he still held, though he died ere he told of what it did portend."

The low, mumbling voice ceased. I found myself trembling strangely. And I needs must own that a lump seemed to rise within my throat at thought of the gallant man who died for me and my father's memory!

But a wondrous thrill was in me. So 'twas true! Richard Athelstane my name, the fair demesne of Charndene mine! My breath came hard and fast; but I cannot describe that moment, that supreme moment of my life!

I could not speak. Suddenly did the blind man point with a shaking finger through the trees.

"There it lies—the great castle—that way!" he whispered. "From its tower streams the accursed crimson banner with the wolf's head upon it! But you must drag down that blood-red banner and trample it to the dust! You must wrest this great demesne from the usurper and come into your own! You must save your people, oppressed and downtrodden, groaning 'neath Hugo's heel! In you, and in you alone, Earl Richard, lies the hope for the wretched people of your demesne! And the day will come, I know, when the leopard shall triumph over the wolf! For that is thy banner, lad—the banner 'neath which thy sires have ever fought for truth and right—a leopard's head, golden, upon a white field."

The passionate words broke off, and a strange, exultant light seemed to be upon his face. I sprang to my feet.

"Ay, I will fight! The days shall come indeed when the banner of the black wolf's head shall be dragged down, and in its place there shall float from the towers of Charndene the white banner of the leopard's head! I will lead my people 'gainst the oppressor, and, with the help of Heaven, shall Hugo be routed out, he and his companions, like so many foul rats!"

For a long time we sat talking, and my eyes shone with a wondrous light as I listened to all he told me of my father,

Edward Athelstane, the earl—of his bravery and reckless daring in battle, and of the honour he held dearer than life itself! Even now I could scarce think of this man as my father, but such I knew him to be!

"But how did you know me that night when first I came hither—that night you saved me from the wolves?" I asked.

"By your voice, lad," he answered; "as upon this time also. For 'tis unchanged, for all that 'tis deeper now—more strong, the voice of a man."

"Why did the prior never tell me who I was?" I asked of the blind man later.

"Prior Walthoof considered it to be better thus, lad. You see, your chances of gaining your rights seemed so vastly slender. He and I alone knew who you really were. And when you grew older, since you would ne'er become a monk, he apprenticed you to the goldsmith; for, if you never gained your rights, some livelihood must you have. And if, by some miracle, you ever did gain that which was yours, 'twould but make you the better able to command men, to have mixed with folk of more humble rank. He—"

Then all suddenly the blind man broke off, listening, his face startled. His skinny hand went out to mine, and I saw that Starlight, too, had ceased to crop the grass, and was staring uneasily into the trees.

"Hist, lad! Didst hear something—a stealthy footfall?" muttered the blind man.

I sprang swift to my feet. I listened, but all seemed still. Then all suddenly a twig snapped sharply not far away, and in a moment I had snatched up my great sword, where it lay in the mouth of the cave, and went running amidst the trees, in the direction from which that sound had come.

Ay, there he was—a figure stealing away into the dim green twilight of the woods.

I gave a shout, and rushed in pursuit. He heard me coming, and swung round.

And a startled cry leapt into my throat when I found myself face to face with this man who had been listening to our words—who had heard all the blind man's wondrous tale, and knew me for the earl!

For 'twas none other than Gilbert de Vaux!

How much he had overheard I could not know. But by his eyes as he faced me could I tell that he had heard enough, at any rate, to know that I was Richard Athelstane, Earl of Charndene—that I was that son of Edward Athelstane whom Hugo, and the rest of them, believed to have perished as a babe!

I realised, too, that De Vaux's presence could only mean that Hugo had by no means given up his search for me, but that he and his men still scoured the forest, determined to leave no stone unturned till I was in their hands again! And how they knew why

I really was, they would strive all the more desperately to capture me!

And ill-luck had brought De Vaux to the blind man's glade!

An ugly smile was upon his face as our blades clashed.

"So I have found you, young golden-head!" sneered he.

"Nay, 'tis I who have found you, hawk-face!" I told him.

Our steel rang fiercely. But now I saw that he was not alone. He had six men with him—five men-at-arms and a cross-bowman—and these had come racing towards us. But he motioned them back—clearly he meant me for his own prize! Yet by their very presence he had the vantage over me; for if he overcame me, well enough for him, whereas if I overcame him his men would fall upon me like a pack of wolves in a moment!

But I had no time to think of what was to follow. I had enough to think of in holding my own with him, for he was a mighty skilful swordsman.

He slipped past my guard, and his point flashed to my heart. But I sprang back so swift that the darting blade but pricked my chest. He gave an exclamation of triumph to see the red blood flow out upon my jerkin; but the next moment I, in my turn, had beaten down his guard and drawn blood from his cheek.

"There!" I cried. "We stand equal now, Gilbert! But remember, 'tis this same blade of mine that overcame Guy de Blois! Have a care lest this night you share his fate!"

For a moment he faltered, and his face blanched. My words had taken him aback. 'Twas clear that he knew of the death of De Blois the Red, though the manner of it must have been something of a mystery to him till then.

I laughed, and pressed hard upon him. Our swords clashed right merrily as we circled 'neath the trees, twisting and leaping swift from side to side, cutting and thrusting.

(How will young Tom bear himself in this unequal fray? Will he vanquish De Vaux and fall a victim to the men-at-arms, or will De Vaux prove the better man? Next Monday's grand instalment will enlighten you, chums. Don't miss it!)

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"THE SCHOOLBOY TOURISTS!"

By Frank Richards.

THAT is the title of the next long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with their journey to the South in search of Ali ben Yusuf. An amusing character is brought into this splendid series of yarns in the shape of an Arab guide, who is presumptuous enough to call himself "Honest Ibrahim." Ibrahim's honesty leaves a lot to be desired, but his dogged persistency to "serve the fine gentlemen," is admired, and Ibrahim finds himself at last formally installed as a guide to the Greyfriars party. Ibrahim is a rogue, but an amusing rogue.

INTO THE DESERT!

Soon after Harry Wharton & Co.'s arrival at Biskra they fall in with Marjorie Hazeldene, Miss Clara, and the former's brother. The Hazeldenes are spending their summer holiday at Biskra—in fact, they occupy the villa next to that which shelters the cheery Removites. Miss Clara, ever game for a "lark," greets Billy Bunter in her own fashion, and B. B. is the laughing-stock of the place for some hours afterwards. But apart from the light and breezy side of

this ripping story, there is the serious. Major Cherry sets his plans to follow the captors of Ali into the desert wastes, and it is with many forebodings in his heart that Bob Cherry learns of his pater's departure on that perilous errand. Don't miss this story, boys, it's great! Like the desert sun—a real scorcher!

"SHERWOOD GOLD!"

Another long instalment of this fine serial is on the programme for next Monday, boys. We are nearing the end now of this masterpiece of fiction, and many of you, I'll warrant, will sigh with regret when the curtain rings down. There is consolation for you, however, in the shape of another wonderful serial from the pen of Hedley Scott, who wrote that powerful detective romance, "The Yellow Claw!" Look out for Hedley Scott's latest—in the MAGNET.

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"

Hurrah! Even where I sit 'midst the bustle and scurry of our great metropolis I fancy I hear in anticipation the great cry that will go up when the good old "Annual" makes its appearance next Monday! There is little to be said in the way of propaganda to my loyal chums, for one and all are acquainted

with this world-famous "Annual," and one and all will, I feel sure, be anxious to obtain a copy of the 1925 edition. In passing, I may be permitted to say that this new volume honestly surpasses anything in the way of "Annuals" ever put before the reading public, and having said that I will conclude with the tip that Harry Wharton & Co. have chosen "The Holiday Annual" as the subject of their next supplement. Don't miss either of these treats, chums.

EDUCATION.

This may sound dry, but it is not so. A chum asks my advice as to how he is to get educated. He says he has a dictionary, but he does not know how to proceed. I am not going to advise this correspondent to swallow the dictionary. He would be bound to get indigestion, and most likely have a nasty bout of Syntaxis. What I should like to do is to put him in touch with a Lancashire reader who says he is keen on journalism. There you have it. A sketchy kind of education can be pulled into proper form if close attention is paid to the newspapers, for nowadays they have articles on all manner of useful subjects, and one can easily pick up sound information which was missed in the vanished schooldays.

"BUNTER IN BURMAH!"

A correspondent in Rangoon sends me a budget of compliments about the MAGNET. He says he would like to see a correspondence exchange in the old paper, but I am afraid that is out of the question. No space to spare. My friend in Burma says that the fat and funny porpoise is ever so much appreciated in his country. I am afraid there is no chance of Bunter getting out to Burma yet awhile. Our tame porpoise is busy at the moment in Northern Africa. As to further yarns about the Owl's ventriloquism, I can safely promise something more in that line. Best thanks to my chum in the slippers East.



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