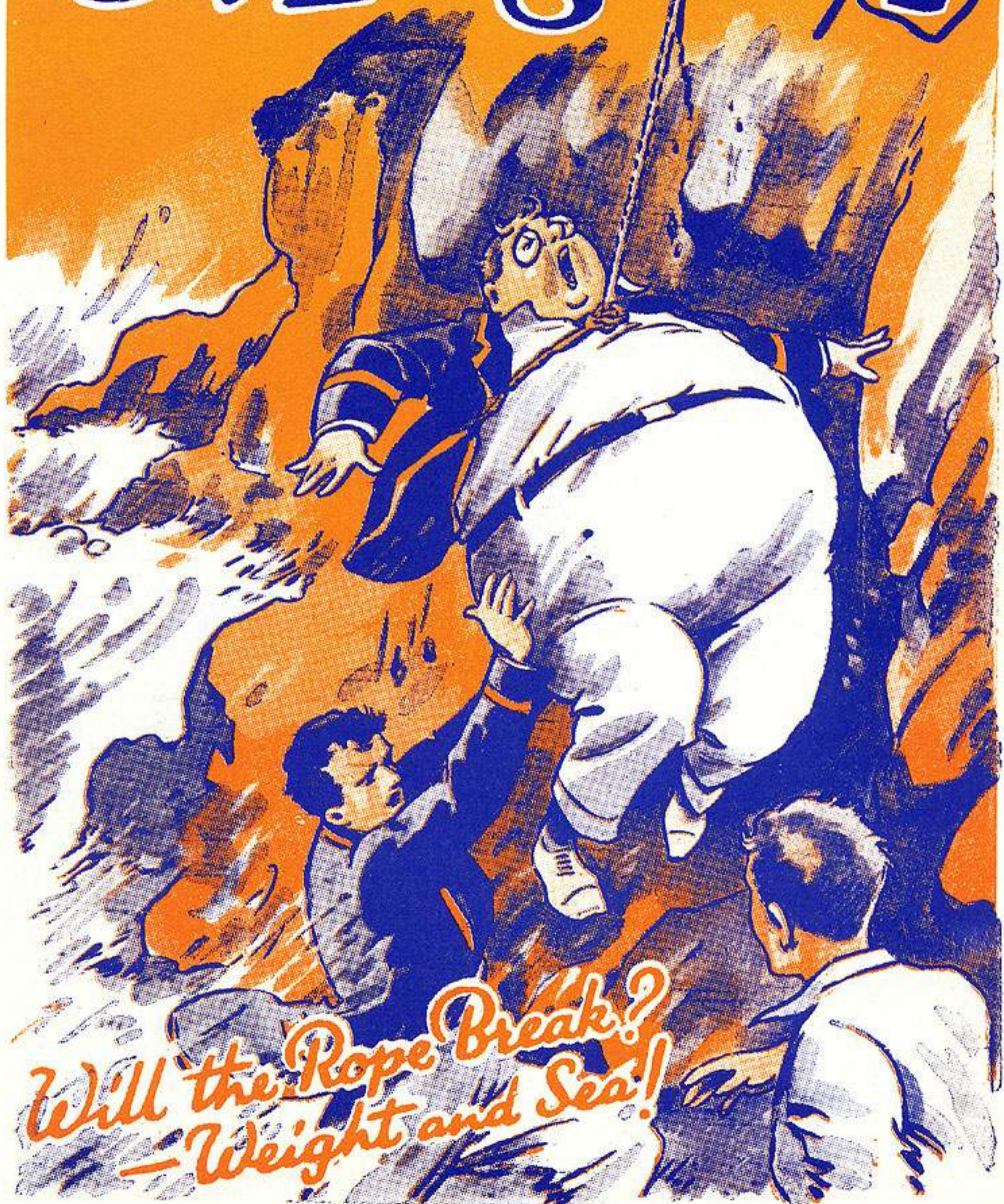


Great School-Adventure Yarn and Thrilling Flying Story—Inside!

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



*Will the Rope Break?  
—Weight and Sea!*



# COME INTO *the* OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

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

**H**ERE is a rather unusual query which comes to me this week from a Birmingham reader. He wants to know

## WHAT IS A LIMEJUICER?

Well, although it seems strange, my chum is one himself! So am I—and so are most of my readers. For the expression "Limejuicer" is what an American sailor calls an Englishman. When British ships are in the tropics, all the sailors are issued with a ration of lime-juice twice a week. As this is only done on British ships the Americans use the expression to denote both the ships and the people of our country. Incidentally, I wonder if my Birmingham reader knows what a "Pommy" is? This is an expression used in Australia to denote an Englishman. And, while we are on the subject of curious names, how many of you know what a "Bluenose" is? This is another sailor's expression which simply means an inhabitant of Nova Scotia.

One of my Manchester readers asks me if I have heard of

## THE COMMA THAT SAVED A LIFE.

Yes, I have heard of it, and for the benefit of other readers, I will pass on the information. Years ago, in Russia, a man was condemned to death. He appealed to the Czar, who wrote on the death warrant: "Pardon impossible, to be sent to Siberia." Fortunately for the prisoner, the Empress saw the death warrant, and transposed the comma so that the words read: "Pardon, impossible to be sent to Siberia." The convict was thereupon released!

There is another case of a transposed comma which caused a lot of bother, this time in the United States. A clerk in the Congress should have written "All foreign fruit-plants are free from duty." Instead of that he wrote "All foreign fruit, plants are free from duty." The result was that the mistake could not be changed until a new session of Congress met, and it was estimated that a matter of two million dollars was involved before the business was rectified! A pretty expensive comma that one!

Tom Vincent, of Faversham, puts the following question to me:

## WHAT IS A VAVASOUR?

There aren't any nowadays. Vavasour was the original name of a Baron. Formerly that was the only title in the British peerage. The Saxons changed the name from Vavasour to Thane, and when the Normans came along they altered it again to Baron. Nowadays, the title of Baron is the lowest in our peerage. Dukes, marquises, earls and viscounts rank above them.

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Next query, please? Here it is—it comes from John Gibbs, of Barnes:

## WHO INVENTED BALLOONS?

It is said that the principle was invented by an Augustine monk, in Saxony, in the 14th century, and adopted by a Portuguese monk who died in 1626. The first record of a man trying to navigate the air, however, was in 1670, when someone had the bright idea of building a boat which it was hoped would be raised in the air by means of four hollow balls of thin copper from which the air had been exhausted. Nothing came of this, however, and it was not until 1782 that the first ascent was made in a fire balloon by Joseph Montgolfier. Two years later, the first ascent was made in this country. Ballooning became a popular hobby after that, and quite a number of spectacular ascents were staged, some of the balloonists riding on horses which were attached to the balloons. The principal balloon race held nowadays is the race for the Gordon-Bennett Cup.

**H**AVE you ever seen a mirage, chums? Harry Edwards, a Rochester reader, tells me that he saw one recently in London, and he asks

## WHAT CAUSES A MIRAGE?

In this particular case, which he mentions, the mirage was caused by the heated air rising from the Mall, leading to Buckingham Palace. Mirages have occasionally been seen there, and give the impression that the Mall has been turned into a lake. Varying stratas of air at different temperatures cause an optical illusion. Mirages are not very frequent in this country, but in both hot and cold climates they are quite ordinary happenings. In places like the Sahara desert, the mirages appear to be lakes, but are really a reflection of the sky. In the Northern latitudes the most frequent mirages are reflections of ships or icebergs which are really some considerable distance away, but appear to be near owing to the blending of light rays. A sailor friend of mine, who has frequently sailed the Arctic, tells me that it is quite a common occurrence up there to see a mirage of a ship upside down and appearing to be sailing in the sky. Actually, the ship is far away, and the reflection of it is thrown up to the sky by the heated layers of air.

Now for a few

## RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to various other queries which readers have put up to me:

**What is the Difference Between Standard and Sub-Standard Film?** ("Cine-fan," of Wimbledon): Standard film is that which is used in ordinary cinemas, and is 35 millimetres in width. "Sub-standard"

film is of less width and is used for educational and amateur purposes. There are different sub-standard widths, of 8, 9½, 16, and 17½ millimetres respectively.

**What is the Population of China?** (R. E. J., of Kingsbury): No one knows for certain, because no proper census has been taken. It is estimated, however, that it is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 500 millions!

**What is the difference Between a Star and a Planet?** (John Wills, of Dover): A star is a self-luminous heavenly body, similar to the Sun. A planet is like the Earth and depends for its light upon the body around which it revolves.

**What is the Highest Building in England?** (R. K., of Barrow): Salisbury Cathedral. The spire is 404 feet high. St. Paul's Cathedral comes next with a height of 365 feet to the cross.

**How Long is the River Amazon, and is it the Longest River in the World?** ("Curious," of Doncaster): The Amazon is 4,000 miles in length. It is the longest single river in the world, but the Missouri and Mississippi rivers combined are 6,160 miles in length.

**E**VERY year many thousand of boys and girls eagerly await the appearance of the famous "Holiday" and "Hobby" Annuals, and every year these grand volumes get better and better. As Monday is the publishing date of these two leading Annuals it is up to you to purchase your copies now, or, failing this, to get your newsagent to reserve you copies until some future date when you may be able to pay for them. What a treasure-trove of stories, articles and other interesting features the "Holiday Annual" contains—hours and hours of delightful reading. And you'll meet all your favourite schoolboy characters in this champion Annual, too! Its price is only 5s.

The "Hobby Annual" treats in an interesting way practically every hobby under the sun, and is profusely illustrated with drawings, photographs and easy-to-follow diagrams. This handsome volume is obtainable at the bargain price of 6s. Secure both these grand Annuals while the going's good!

Of course, you've all noticed by now that our old friend, Mr. Chapman, has illustrated this week's school yarn. Yes; Mr. Shields is taking a much needed holiday by the "briny," and I feel sure that you are all with me in wishing him a really good time. A word of thanks, too, to Mr. Chapman who has so loyally stepped into the breach!

Having got that little lot off my chest, we'll run the rule over next week's list of features.

The star item is the magnificent long story dealing with the further exciting adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., at Portercliffe Hall, entitled:

## "ON THE TRAIL OF TREASURE!"

By Frank Richards.

Unquestionably, this is the finest yarn in the series, and as the MAGNET is certain to sell like hot cakes, readers should make a point of ordering their copy for next week in advance. Then we have the "Herald" supplement containing another instalment of Dicky Nugent's amazing serial, which will raise a record laugh, believe me.

Following these come further thrilling chapters of "The Flying Submarine!" with Geo. E. Rochester at his very best, and the Greyfriars Rhymester's weekly interview. Meet you all again next week, chums,

YOUR EDITOR.

# The MAN in the MASK!

By FRANK RICHARDS



—featuring the World's most famous schoolboy characters, HARRY WHARTON & CO., of Greyfriars.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Spiders!

“COME on, Bunter!”

“Shan't!”

Billy Bunter's answer was short, if not sweet.

“The tide, fathead!” exclaimed Harry Wharton.

“Blow the tide!”

“It's coming in!” roared Bob Cherry.

“Let it!”

It was a hot August afternoon, and Billy Bunter was tired. Having walked a mile, Billy Bunter felt that he was entitled to be tired, and entitled to take a rest. So he was taking it.

Extended on his podgy back on the sand, in the shade of a high chalk cliff, with his fat hands clasped behind his fat head, the Owl of the Remove rested.

Harry Wharton & Co. waited a few minutes patiently. Billy Bunter had more weight to carry than they had—much more! So they gave him a few minutes. But a few minutes were not enough for Bunter. Instead of rising refreshed and plugging on along the Margate beach, he closed his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles with the evident intention of going to sleep.

It was not a yearning for Bunter's fascinating society that made the chums of the Remove anxious for him to get up and come on. But for one little circumstance they would willingly have left Billy Bunter to sleep and snore as long as he liked, and come back to Portercliffe Hall any old time. That little circumstance was that the tide was coming in.

Time and tide wait for no man!

Bunter, perhaps, did not expect the mighty forces of Nature to remain in abeyance while he had a nap. He just did not think about the matter at all. Thinking was never Bunter's long suit. He was tired—he wanted a rest—and that was that! But, with the North Sea creeping up the shelving sands, Harry Wharton & Co. could not quite leave it at that.

Seven members of the Portercliffe holiday party had started to walk along

**There's a million dollars waiting to be picked up at Portercliffe Hall if only Fisher T. Fish and his “popper” can locate the prize. But there's a rival in the quest—an unknown, unscrupulous and resolute rival. It is the man in the mask!**

the beach from Margate to Kingsgate. It was an agreeable walk, and though the tide was on the turn, there was plenty of time—for anybody, but Bunter. Other members of the party had gone by the upper road to meet them when they came up the gully at Kingsgate. Bunter preferred to walk by the beach. Soft sand, for a rest, was attractive, and Bunter could do with lots of rests when he was taking a walk.

Standing round Bunter, as he lay in comfortable if not graceful repose, the

Greyfriars fellows told him what they thought of him, unheeded by the fat Owl of the Remove.

“Get up, you blithering bloater!” said Bob Cherry.

“Get a move on, you howling ass!” said Frank Nugent.

“Kick him!” suggested Johnny Bull.

“The kickfulness is the proper caper,” remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“Bunter, you bloated bandersnatch!” exclaimed Harry Wharton.

“Do you want to be drowned, you fat idiot?” asked Kipps.

The eloquence of the Famous Five did not move Bunter. But as Oliver Kipps asked that question, the fat junior heaved himself to a sitting position and blinked at the sea through his big spectacles.

Bunter, it seemed, did not want to be drowned. It would have been no great loss, perhaps; still, he objected.

But the lapping sea, curling up the sands, was at quite a distance. Billy Bunter gave an angry snort.

“You beast, Kipps! You rotter! Making a fellow sit up for nothing! Beast!”

And Bunter settled down again. “Can't you get it into your fat head that the tide's coming in?” roared Bob Cherry.

“And the tidefulness on this esteemed coast is terrific, my absurd and idiotic Bunter!” said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“Oh, chuck it!” said Bunter contemptuously. “Think you can pull my leg! There's time to walk miles before the tide's anywhere near us. Shut up!”

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"You blinking, blithering, bloated, babbling blitherer!" hooted Bob. "The sands aren't as wide as this all the way! You frowsy, footling frump, the cliffs bulge out to the sea before we get to Kingsgate! You piffing, pie-faced porker, we shall be cut off by the tide if we don't hurry!"

"Yah!"

"Oh, kick him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Roll him along like a barrel!" suggested Bob.

"Look here, you rotters, leave a fellow alone!" roared Bunter. "I'm tired! See? Tired! Well, I'm going to rest. You can clear off if you like! If you fancy I want your rotten company and your bad manners, you're jolly well mistaken! I don't! I'm sorry I ever came to Portercliffe Hall with a Bank Holiday crowd like you lot! Clear off as soon as you like! You can't go too soon to please me!"

"You howling fathead—"

"If you're afraid of the tide, I'm not!" said Bunter sarcastically. "I'm not a shivering funk, I hope! Blessed if I don't think you fellows are afraid of your own shadows! Never saw such a funky lot!"

"I'm going to kick him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Beast! Run away if you're frightened!" jeered Bunter. "I'm in no hurry to get back to Portercliffe Hall. Lots and lots of time to get in for dinner. Nothing else to hurry for, I suppose! Just clear off and leave a fellow alone!"

Harry Wharton & Co. eyed the fat Owl in intense exasperation.

But for that little circumstance, that the tide was coming in, they would gladly have left him to his own devices.

But ahead of them, out of range of Bunter's spectacles, the chalk cliffs took a wide sweep seaward, and between the bulge of the cliffs and the incoming tide the space was already narrowing.

When the tide once reached the cliffs the sand would be a good many feet under water, and the North Sea would be dashing on the chalk in masses of foam and spray. More than once unwary trippers had had narrow escapes in that pleasant walk along the sands.

Leaving Bunter to be drowned was hardly to be thought of, exasperating as he was. Convincing him that he was in danger was impossible, for Bunter knew best as he always did. Kicking him for a distance of half a mile seemed the only resource. It was a rather hefty task. Still, there was a certain satisfaction in it.

"Hold on!" said Kipps. He slipped his hand into his pocket, with a wink at the Famous Five. A weird wriggling object came out of his pocket in his hand.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"Look here, there's no time—" he began.

"Shut up, old man!" said Bob.

Johnny grunted. There was no time, in his opinion, for any of Kipps' weird conjuring tricks. However, he shut up.

"Feel comfortable there, Bunter?" asked Kipps.

"Eh? Yes! Don't jaw!"

"What about the sand spiders?"

"There aren't any. You can't pull my leg! Look here, you fellows, clear off and leave a fellow alone!"

Kipps leaned over the sprawling fat junior. His finger touched Bunter's fat neck, and he jerked his hand away with a hideous wriggling object in it. Bunter blinked at him with a startled blink through his big spectacles. The sight of

that horrible wriggling spider made him shudder.

"Oooogh!" he gasped. "Stamp on it! Oooogh!"

Kipps made a motion of throwing the spider on the sand and gave a heavy stamp. The Famous Five grinned.

It certainly looked as if the schoolboy conjurer had stamped on that spider. It was not likely, however, that Kipps had stamped on his mechanical spider, which he had constructed with great care and ingenuity.

"I—I say, you fellows, are there any more?" gasped Bunter.

"Look!" ejaculated Kipps.

He grabbed at Bunter's fat ear, and again a hideous object wriggled in his hand.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Bunter.

"And look here—"

From the back of Bunter's collar Kipps drew a wriggling spider. The Owl of the Remove bounded to his feet.

Bunter was tired. Bunter was obstinate. But Bunter did not want to rest on a spot thickly inhabited by horrible spiders.

"Urrrgh!" he gasped. "I—I say, you fellows, let's get out of this! I say, come on! Oh crikey!"

Bunter was the first to start. The Famous Five, grinning, followed him, and Kipps slipped his mechanical spider back into his pocket, and followed on.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Bunter All Over!

"O H dear!"

"Buck up!"

"I'm tired!" yapped Bunter. "Shall we pull you along by the ears?"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

Slower and slower the fat junior plugged on. His fat little legs were tired, and the soft sand was clinging to the tread. The effect of the spiders spurred Bunter on for quite a distance. But laziness supervened.

He came to a halt where a chalky rock jutted from the sand, and sat down. One more there was a general halt.

Harry Wharton cast a rather anxious glance ahead, where the strip of sand was narrowing as the tide approached the bulging cliff. There was plenty of time yet to get past, even at a moderate walk. At the rate of Bunter's crawl there was barely time. And if the party stopped, there was no time at all.

"Will you come on, you howling ass?" demanded Wharton.

"No, I jolly well won't!" snapped Bunter. "There ain't any spiders here, and I'm going to have a rest! If you like to wait half an hour, I'll come! If not, cut off, and be blowed to you!"

"You silly ass, in half that time we shall be shut off by the tide!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Gammon!"

"Look out, Bunter, I fancy there's a spider there!" said Kipps, and he reached to the rock where the fat junior sat, and held up his hand, with a wriggling spider in it.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he leaped up from the rock.

Then all of a sudden it dawned on Bunter!

He had never come across spiders on Margate beach before, and he remembered that Oliver Kipps was a conjurer, and generally had some of his weird contrivances in his pocket for the entertainment of the unwary.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

He realised that his fat leg had been

pulled! There were no spiders—there never had been any spiders—and it was a trick to make him get a move on, when he was tired and wanted to rest!

Wrath boiled up in the fat breast of William George Bunter.

He barged suddenly at Kipps and grabbed the wriggling object from his hand! Before the surprised conjurer could lift a finger, Bunter's fat arm swept through the air, and the mechanical spider shot out to sea.

Kipps gave a low howl!

"My spider!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "You won't play any more tricks with that spider, Kippers! He, he, he!"

For a moment Kipps stared after his vanished spider. Then, red with wrath, he hurled himself at Bunter.

Bunter was chuckling.

But he ceased to chuckle quite suddenly. He roared wildly as Oliver Kipps grasped him, and bumped him down on the beach and banged his head on the sand.

"Ow! Oh! Wow! Leggo!" roared Bunter. "Stoppit! I say, you fellows, draggimoff! Yaroooh! Beast! Whoop!"

"There!" gasped Kipps, releasing the fat Owl at last, and leaving him sprawling and roaring. "There, you fat freak!"

"Yarooop!"

"When you've finished your solo, Bunter, are you coming on?" inquired Cherry.

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"Come on, you bloater!" bawled Johnny Bull.

Bunter sat up, with a blink of fury through his big spectacles.

"Shan't!" he roared. "Shan't! See? Go and eat coke, the lot of you! I'm fed-up with you! Leave a fellow alone! Yah!"

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

"Nothing else to be done!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Where will you have it, Bunter?"

"Beast! If you kick me, I'll— Yaroooooop!" roared Bunter as the toe of a boot clumped in his fat ribs. "Ow! Oh, you rotters! Ooooh!"

Bunter scrambled to his feet. His fat face was red with fury. The juniors tramped on once more, expecting Bunter to follow. Instead of which the fat junior turned and bolted back along the beach.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, turning. "Bunter!"

"Bunter, you mad ass!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Bunter, you lunatical fathead!" yelled Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter did not heed! He flew! He wasn't going to walk another half-mile—not another quarter of a mile—not another ten yards, if he could help it! And he wasn't going to be kicked! He was going to do what he jolly well liked!

And what he jolly well liked now was to run back along the beach as fast as his fat little legs could carry him; in the full expectation that the juniors would leave him to his own devices rather than take the trouble to chase him down.

Which undoubtedly they would have done, with relief and pleasure, but for the fact that Bunter, left to his own devices, would have been drowned like a rat in a trap!

They yelled after him. They roared after him. Bunter flew on unheeding, kicking up a spray of sand as he went, gasping and spluttering and perspiring, but feeling that it was worth an effort to get away from those beasts.

"After him!" said Bob. "Come on, we can't leave him here!"

"Buck up—the tide won't wait for

us!" said Nugent. "We'll wait here. Kick the fat ass all the way back!"

Bob Cherry rushed in chase. Harry Wharton dashed along with him. The other fellows sat on rocks to wait.

Bunter had a start. But the two juniors gained on him. When, at twenty yards distance, he blinked over his shoulder, he was startled to see two red and wrathful faces quite near at hand.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

And he tore on.

"Stop!" roared Bob.

"Beast!" came gasping over Bunter's fat shoulder

Bob put on a spurt and grabbed at him. As he grabbed, Bunter slipped on a ridge of chalk and went down. Bob, unable to stop in time, stumbled over

strew him along the beach in little tiny pieces! I'm going—"

Wharton shot in pursuit again, Bob at his heels. A dozen more yards, and Billy Bunter was captured—a hand on either side of him grasping his fat ears. He yelled as he was slewed round.

"Leggo! Beast! I'm not going to— Yarooop! I tell you I won't— Whoop! I refuse to— Yoo-hoop!"

Gripping the fat ears, Wharton and Bob marched him back to the spot where the rest of the party waited. They marched to an accompaniment of wild howls and squeaks from Bunter! He seemed to feel a pain in his ears! No doubt he did, for the grip of them was like the grip of a steel vice.

"Keep hold of the potty porpoise!"

The wave retreated in lines of billowing foam, leaving six inches of water washing the foot of the cliff.

"Now!" panted Bob. He gripped a fat arm, and Wharton gripped the other. The juniors rushed on.

In a few moments the wave would be breaking in again, and if they were between it and the steep cliff, they would be washed off their feet—dashed on the chalk and carried out to sea with the receding water. Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, Hurroo Singh, and Kipps dashed on at a swift run and got through past the bulge of the cliff to the wider beach on the farther side.

Wharton and Bob Cherry, holding Bunter, rushed after them. Bunter floundered and slipped in the bubbling



"You can't pull my leg!" said Bunter. "There aren't any sand spiders about here! Clear off!" Kipps leaned over the sprawling fat junior. His fingers touched Bunter's fat neck, and he jerked his hand away, with a hideous, wriggling object in it. "Ow!" gasped the fat Removite, blinking with a startled blink and shuddering. "Stamp on it! Ooogh!"

him, shot across him, and landed on his features on the sand.

The roar that Bob Cherry gave, as his nose dug up sand, could almost have been heard at Margate, Kingsgate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate. It woke all the echoes of the beach and the cliffs.

Bunter scrambled up.

But he scrambled into the grasp of Harry Wharton, who had reached him.

Harry's grip closed on his collar.

"Now, you fat idiot—" gasped Wharton.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"You howling ass, come— Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton, as the enraged and exasperated Owl suddenly hit out.

A fat fist landed on Wharton's chin. He let go Bunter, staggered, and sat on the sand.

Bunter was off again like a fat rabbit. Bob Cherry staggered up, clasping his nose with one hand, rubbing sand out of his eyes with the other.

"Ow!" said Bob. "Wow! Where is he? I'm going to slaughter him! I'm going to smash him! I'm going to

growled Johnny Bull. "I'll help him on with a kick or two! We shall have to buck up if we're to get through!"

"Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "I'm coming, ain't I? I say, you fellows— Ow! I say— Beasts!"

The juniors hurried on. The tide was washing right up to the cliff in front of them now, and receding again, to leave a narrow wet strip.

They could get through, but not without getting wet, for the spray was falling like rain. Panting, they arrived at the narrow spot, and then, for the first time, the reality of the position burst on Bunter's fat and obtuse mind.

They stopped, as a wave came dashing in, smashing on the chalk. Bunter gave a squeak of terror.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Keep quiet, you fat owl!" snapped Wharton. "When this wave goes back we've got to run for it!"

"I shall get wet—"

"Would you rather be drowned?" yelled Bob.

"Beast!"

water on the sand, howling with terror. From a lofty disregard of danger, Bunter had dropped at one fell swoop to the deepest depths of frantic funk.

"Leggo!" he howled. "I'm going back! I'm not going to be drowned to please you! Beasts! Leggo!"

"You can't go back!" shrieked Bob. "The way's closed behind us towards Margate."

"Beast!"

Bunter struggled frantically. Water washed round his fat knees, sand surged round his feet; there were twenty yards to cover before the bulge of the great cliff was passed; and the sea was coming in again with a rush and a roar. In sheer terror, Bunter wrenched his fat arm away from the two juniors as he slipped in the wet sand and water, and cut back. Panting and puffing, he flew out of reach of the oncoming, foam-crested wave, leaving Wharton and Bob half-way to safety.

"Back up!" came Johnny Bull's roar in advance. The four fellows ahead had

got past the cliff. "Hurry, for goodness' sake! It's coming in!"

Wharton and Bob stopped. The wave was coming; but they had time for a swift rush to join their friends in safety—leaving Bunter behind! That they could not do!

They did not speak—the same thought was in both minds as they rushed back after Bunter. And as they went, the tide came roaring in, and a great wave dashed on the cliff, and eight or nine feet of water rolled where they had been standing a few seconds before.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Trapped by the Tide I

"BUNTER—"

"Oh, you mad idiot!"

Bunter, in frantic panic, was racing up the beach to the cliffs, his only idea being to get away from the incoming tide. That the tide would follow right up to the steep chalk, and rise there, foot by foot, he was too scared to think of or realise.

Wharton and Bob Cherry panted after him desperately.

The way to safety was cut off now; but they would not give up hope—they would get through somehow. But they had to get Bunter first.

Up the sand, wet with spray, over dragging trails of seaweed and jutting, slippery chalk, Bunter went running, slipping, stumbling, jumping, panting. But the two juniors overtook him, grasped him, and dragged him to a halt. He wriggled wildly in their grasp.

"Leggo! We shall be drowned!" yelled the fat Owl. "Beasts! Why did you come this way? I believe you want me to be drowned! Leggo!"

"You potty chump!" gasped Bob. "We've got to get away—come on! The tide goes right up the cliffs here—right up to the farthest cliff, you silly fat-head—if we don't get out we're done for!"

"It's all your fault!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, come on, idiot!"

They dragged the fat Owl back towards the strip between the bulging cliff and the sea.

But they had to stop there. Minutes had been wasted—and minutes, even seconds, were precious—too precious to be lost. The beach was awash with water—a depth of a yard or more lay at the foot of the jutting chalk, whirling and swirling. They backed away from another incoming wave that thundered high up the cliff. Receding, it left three or four feet of water in front of them—it was a matter for swimming now.

Across that swirling space beyond the jutting bulge of cliff their friends were in safety. They saw Frank Nugent clamber on a jutting ledge, clinging like a cat to wet chalk, and stare back with anxious, alarmed eyes. Wharton waved a hand to him.

"Keep on!" he shouted. "We can't get through—we shall have to try back. Go along the top and look out for us."

His voice reached Nugent, who shouted back, but his reply was lost in the din of the tide. Wharton and Bob had to back away, the water spreading and swirling round their knees as they went.

There was nothing for it, but to hurry up the beach to the innermost embayment in the long, irregular line of cliffs, the tide following them hungrily.

That was only postponing the evil hour, and they knew it. But to get past the jutting chalk was impossible; they were cut off from escape; and to remain where they were was to be overwhelmed. The bulging cliff was now right out in the sea, and the tide deep

on either side of it. But some distance from it the cliffs lay farther landward, and there was still a strip of beach untouched by the tide.

"Well, this is a go!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Wharton stopped and scanned the irregular line of cliffs with anxious eyes. They were steep, broken here and there into gullies; but climbing them looked a tough proposition. For Bunter, it was an obviously impossible task.

Bunter rubbed the spray from his spectacles, jammed them back on his fat little nose and blinked accusingly at his companions.

"We shall have to walk all the way back to Margate now!" he gasped.

"I jolly well wish we could!" sighed Bob. "I wouldn't mind the walk!"

"Well, we've got to!" grunted Bunter.

"You silly ass," said Harry quietly, "the tide's washing up to the cliffs for a distance of half a mile or more, between this and Margate. We can't go back!"

Bunter's fat jaw dropped.

"But we can't go on!" he howled. "We've got to go back! If we can't go back, what's going to happen?"

The two juniors did not answer that. Bunter's folly and obstinacy had landed them in a death-trap; but it was useless to reproach the fat and fatuous Owl. Bunter's eyes grew large and round with terror behind his spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

"We must try climbing up!" said Harry. "Come on!"

"Think I can climb beastly cliffs seventy feet high?" wailed Bunter. "Oh, you rotters! I believe you got me here on purpose!"

"Come on," said Harry, as gently as he could. On that blazing August afternoon, the shadow of death was on them.

They gave Bunter helping hands over the rough wet chalk at the foot of the cliffs. Behind them the tide came steadily in. Water raced up the sand and receded and raced up again—ever deeper!

"Looks like a chance here!" muttered Bob.

He stopped where one of the deep, rugged gullies rived the face of the cliff.

Wharton scanned it anxiously. For some distance up, there was plenty of handhold and foothold for a climber. But beyond that, the surface was too smooth for climbing.

A rope from above would have saved the situation. He scanned the cliff-top in the hope of seeing someone look down.

Along the top of the cliffs ran the public esplanade, extending from Margate to Kingsgate, and probably plenty of holiday-makers were passing along it that sunny summer's afternoon. But no one was near the dangerous verge.

There was no sign of a human being to be seen by the schoolboys trapped under the cliffs.

With a rush and a foamy surge, the sea came up to them, drenching them to the knees. There was nothing else to be done; and they clambered into the rugged gully.

For a dozen feet up, the rugged chalk jugged almost like steps. It was easy enough for the two active juniors to clamber up. It was not so easy to drag the fat and clumsy Owl of the Remove after them. But they managed it, and stopped at last on a ledge of rock high up the gully.

Below them the sea roared in. In a few minutes the foot of the gully was under water, the tide washing now along the whole facade of the cliffs. And

up the gully, roaring after them, wave after wave came.

"We—we—we can't stay herè!" squeaked Bunter, almost fainting with terror, as he blinked through his wet spectacles at the water rising and foaming below. "I—I say, you fellows, shout for help! So-somebody may hear you up there on the prom."

It was not likely that a shout would be heard in the din and boom of the surging tide. But the juniors tried it, shouting and shouting again. Then came a surge of rising water, splashing them from head to foot on the ledge, and eliciting a wild squeal of terror from Bunter.

"Ow! Hold me! Help! Wow!"

The water receded, leaving them drenched and breathless.

"We've got to get higher!" muttered Wharton, between his teeth.

He scanned and groped over the rough chalk, seeking a place to climb. He clambered up at last, finding a rocky ledge several feet higher. Lying on it on his chest, he reached down.

"Give me your paw, fathead!"

He grasped Bunter's fat hand and pulled, and Bob Cherry shoved the fat junior from below. With a combined effort, Bunter was got to the upper ledge. Bob clambered breathlessly after him, a wash of the tide almost tearing him away as he climbed.

The higher ledge was small. There was barely room for the three of them to cluster there. Further climbing was impossible. There was no hold for a monkey. And the tide rose and rose.

Bunter, jammed on the chalk, mumbled with terror. Wharton and Bob Cherry looked at one another with quiet, set faces.

"The tide mayn't reach as far up as this," muttered Bob.

Wharton smiled faintly, and did not answer. He knew that if the tide did not reach that level, the surges would soon be washing over the ledge.

"The other fellows will be coming back along the top and looking for us," said Bob hopefully. "They—they'll spot where we are, and get a rope—"

Wharton nodded.

But the hope was faint. The other fellows had a good way to go to get off the beach at the Kingsgate end, and a long way to come back along the cliff-top. Before then, as both the juniors knew, the matter would be settled, one way or the other.

They could only clamp themselves to the rough chalk and watch the tide rising, and wonder, with beating hearts, whether it would reach them and wash them away to death. And as they clung they shouted, again and again, in the faint hope that someone passing along the promenade above the cliffs might hear their voices above the din of the rushing, foaming water eddying in the gully.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### Alonzo Comes in Useful!

ALONZO TODD stopped. His face beamed. "How delightful!" he exclaimed.

Three other fellows stopped and stared at Alonzo.

Vernon-Smith, Wibley, Fisher T. Fish and Alonzo Todd were walking along the promenade over the cliffs.

They had preferred the upper road, while the rest of the Greyfriars party walked along the beach. They were going to rejoin Harry Wharton & Co., when the latter came up from the beach at the Kingsgate end of the promenade. Each of the four fellows was busy with

his own thoughts as he sauntered along in the bright sunshine.

Smithy was debating in his mind whether to smoke a cigarette as he walked. Wibley was thinking out thrilling details of a drama he was specially writing for the Greyfriars fellows to perform at Portercliffe Hall. Fisher T. Fish's keen, cute mind was concentrated on the "hidden hoard" at Portercliffe, and the chance of his popper, Hiram K. Fish, getting his lean Transatlantic fingers on the same. Alonzo, with a large botanical volume under his arm, was thinking of botany—his favourite subject.

The big volume under his arm served a double purpose. From its entrancing pages Alonzo could absorb valuable knowledge of trees, flowers, fruits, vegetables, roots, and other thrilling things of a like nature. And between its leaves he could press and preserve the various specimens he picked by the wayside for his botanical collection.

Every now and then, it is true, the collected specimens dropped from between the pages of the volume, and were lost for ever—Alonzo being a rather absent-minded youth. Sometimes the work of hours would be undone in a few minutes in this unfortunate way.

In fact, when Alonzo was collecting specimens of the wonders of the vegetable world, he often left a trail of the same behind him, happily unconscious of what he was doing till he arrived home, and wondered what had become of his specimens.

While Smithy, Wib, and Fishy walked on the asphalt prom, Alonzo wandered on the wide belt of grass between the prom and the cliff edge, scanning it for anything unusual in the way of grasses or ferns.

His mild gaze, as he stopped, was fixed on a little bunch of ferns, growing on the very edge of the cliff. To Smithy, Wib, and Fishy there was nothing of a delightful nature about those ferns. But then they were not botanists.

"How very, very gratifying!" said Alonzo, beaming. "Pray wait a few minutes for me, my dear fellows, while I secure those ferns."

"Keep away from the edge, fathead!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "It's not safe to fool about the edge. There's a fall of about sixty feet, and the tide's coming in."

Alonzo paused. The cliff edge was steep and abrupt, and the bunch of ferns grew on the very verge.

"Perhaps I had better crawl on my hands and knees," said Alonzo thoughtfully. It would be very, very unpleasant for a fatality to occur. Or perhaps, my dear Herbert, you would like to secure those specimens for me."

"Perhaps," assented the Bounder; "but perhaps not."

"Or perhaps you, my dear Fish—"

"Guess again," suggested Fisher T. Fish.

"Or perhaps you, my dear—"

"If there's anything I really like," said Wibley solemnly, "it's crawling on my hands and knees, and making my bags dusty, and getting full of ants, with a chance thrown in of breaking my neck at the bottom of a sixty-foot cliff. But not this week, old chap."

"Then perhaps you will hold me by the ankles, while I crawl to the edge," said Alonzo. "The ground seems to slope at the edge into a sort of gully, and it would be very, very disagreeable to fall over."

Alonzo laid down his botanical volume, and dropped on his bony knees. With his lean figure extended at full length, he crawled through the grass towards the edge of the cliff. And the

Bounder and Wibley grasped an ankle each, to make sure that Alonzo did not roll over.

"Ow!" squeaked Alonzo suddenly. "Wow! I am very, very much obliged to you, my dear friends, for holding me, but pray do not—wow!—pray do not—yow!—pray do not pinch me like that! Yow—ow—ow!"

"Must hold you tight, old bony bean," said Wibley. "Think what a loss it would be if you went over. Tons and tons of useless knowledge all wasted!"

"Wow!"  
The Bounder and Wibley were holding Alonzo tight enough. His bones very nearly cracked in their grip.

However, he reached the bunch of ferns, and grabbed at them. The precious specimens came away in his hands, sending a shower of dislodged earth over the edge of the cliff.

"Oh!" exclaimed Alonzo suddenly. Something seemed to have startled him.

"G o t 'e m?" asked Wibley.

"Yes; but—"

"Pull him back, Smithy!"

"But—" gasped Alonzo.

"We've got you, old man! Pull him back!" said Vernon-Smith.

Smithy and Wibley pulled. They marched back from the cliff-edge, holding Alonzo's long legs like the shafts of a cart.

Howls came from Alonzo as his features brushed through the grass. His hands, full of ferns, clawed wildly.

"Ow! Wow! My dear—wow!—friends—yow—ow!" howled Alonzo. "I say—Wow! Ow! My nose— Oh! Oooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fisher T. Fish, watching the scene, greatly entertained. "I'll say this is the bee's knee! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow!" yelled Alonzo. "Pray release my legs! Ow! My nose is very, very painful! Wow!"

But his helpers dragged him on till he was off the belt of grass, and landed safely on the asphalt of the promenade. There they released him, grinning, and Alonzo sat up gasping for breath and rubbing his nose.

"Oh, goodness gracious!" gasped Alonzo. "I am very, very much obliged, but really—ow! Really—wow! Oh dear!"

My dear friends, you should not have pulled me back—ow! There is somebody below the cliff—ow! I heard a cry as I was leaning over—ooooh! It startled me very, very much!"

"Somebody below the cliff!" repeated the Bounder, staring. "What rot! The tide's in."

"I certainly heard someone call from below," gasped Alonzo. "It sounded to me like a cry for—wow!—help!"

"Rot!" said Vernon-Smith.

"My dear Herbert—"  
"Hold on, though," said Wibley. "Might be somebody caught in the tide. The other fellows went along the beach, you know."

"They wouldn't wait to be caught by the tide, fathead!" said the Bounder. "They've had lots of time to get through."

(Continued on next page.)

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Alonzo gasped.  
"I assure you, my dear Herbert, that I heard a cry from below. The tide makes a great deal of noise in the gully, but I am sure I heard—"

"Rot!" repeated the Bounder. "Still, a fellow may as well make sure. No joke to be caught in the tide under those cliffs."

Smithy dropped on hands and knees, and crawled to the edge. The Bounder had a cool head, and a nerve of iron. At the dizzy verge of the cliff he put head and shoulders over, and coolly stared down at the chalky slopes, and the foam-flecked tide that covered the beach, and dashed against the cliffs.

"Oh gad!" he ejaculated suddenly, as a cry floated up from the depth below, faint in the distance and the din of the water.

"Help!"  
It was faint, but clear. On the promenade above it could not have been heard; but with his head over the verge of the cliff the Bounder could hear it.

He scanned the rugged steep of chalk that dropped below him, almost sheer, to the swirling tide welling up the beach. The shout floated up again. The Bounder picked out clustered figures on a jutting ledge sixty feet below.

As he stared at them a swirling wave dashed up and engulfed them. It receded, leaving them streaming with water and gasping for breath. A fat figure was hunched spluttering against the cliff. Two white faces looked up, almost in despair. A breathless cry came again.

Smithy waved a hand over the verge, and shouted back:

"Hold on! You're seen—hold on, Wharton—help's coming!"

His voice reached down into the depths of the gully. A shout came back from below. Vernon-Smith crawled back from the dizzy edge and rejoined his companions.

"Good old Alonzo!" he said with a grin. "Lucky you went crawling after your dashed rubbish, old bean!"

"My dear Herbert—" murmured Alonzo.

"Anybody there?" asked Wibley.

"Wharton, and Bob Cherry, and Bunter, sticking on a ledge with the tide rising on them!" answered the Bounder curtly. "We've got to get a rope from somewhere! Where the dickens—"

He stared round.  
"I guess they're some jays, to be cinched like that!" remarked Fisher T. Fish. "I guess—"

The Bounder, unheeding, cut off at a run towards a building on the cliff at a distance. It was a coastguard station—and the only spot anywhere near at hand where help could be obtained. And Wibley crept to the edge of the cliff and shouted to the fellows below that help was coming.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Rescued!

"I SAY, you fellows—"  
"All right now, old fat man!"  
"I'm wet!"  
"Not really?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Wet through!" said Bunter.  
Wharton and Bob grinned. They were all wet through, drenched and dripping. Again and again a surging wave had washed over the ledge, and they had had to hold on, and hold Bunter, to save their lives. And the tide was rising higher and higher.

But help was coming now; every moment they expected a rope to come slithering down the cliff. They were not worrying about wet.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here it comes!" exclaimed Bob, in great relief.

Down the rugged chalk came a long, thick rope from above. Bob caught the end of it as it fluttered over the ledge.

"Bunter first!" said Harry.

Billy Bunter was about to make that suggestion himself!

The end of the rope was passed under the fat Owl's arm-pits, and knotted fast. Wharton shouted to the fellows above.

"Pull!"  
The Bounder, cool as ice, was at the cliff-edge, looking down. He called to the crowd farther back on the cliff-top. There were plenty of hands to help with the rope. The coastguard had come, and walkers on the promenade, gathering to see what was on, willingly lent help. Many hands pulled on the rope, and the fat Owl of the Remove was lifted off the ledge.

He squeaked as he rose.  
"Ow! I say, you fellows—wow! I say, this beastly rope is pinching me—oogh! I say—oh lor'!"

Bumping against the rugged chalk, Bunter was drawn up.

His dizzy eyes blinked at the wide space of beach and sea, and he closed them behind his spectacles. He kept them tight shut, quivering with terror as he was dragged up the cliff.

Up he went, and he was pulled over the verge, and carried back across the grass. Wet and smothered with chalk from the cliff, Bunter sank in the grass as he was released from the rope, and gasped and spluttered.

The rope slithered down again, and Wharton and Bob Cherry were pulled up, more easily than the fat Owl, in turn.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "I'm jolly glad to be out of that! How did you fellows find out we were there?"

The Bounder chuckled.

"Jolly old Alonzo!" he answered. "He stopped here to botanize—some jolly old specimens on the edge of the cliff, and heard you—"

"I am so very, very glad, my dear Robert!" said Alonzo Todd. "Was it not very, very fortunate that I stopped to secure those specimens of ferns?"

"Very, very, very, very!" grinned Bob.

And he gave Alonzo Todd a hearty smack on the shoulder. The weedy Alonzo staggered.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Wow! My d-d-dear Robert, I am very, very glad to see you in safety, but—wow—please do not—yow—dislocate my spinal column—ow!"

"I guess you were some ginks, to get cinched in the tide that-a-way!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"It was that fathead Bunter!" said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"That blithering idiot Bunter!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We had to stop for him, or he would have been drowned—not that it would have mattered—"

"Beast!"

"Where are the other fellows?" asked the Bounder.

"They got through all right, but that burbling bandersnatch Bunter—"

"That piffling porpoise Bunter—"

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter. "It was all your fault! Look at the state I'm in! I'm wet through, and smothered with filthy chalk! I've lost my toffee, too—I must have dropped it climbing that beastly cliff! And that rope pinched me—I've got a pain!"

"You've got a pain?" demanded Bob.

"Ow! Yes!"

"I'll give you another!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter, squirming away in the grass. "Yow! If you kick me, you beast, I'll—yarooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry thanked the coastguard for his timely aid, a proceeding in which Billy Bunter did not join.

Bunter was not in a thankful mood. He was wet, he was chalky, he had been frightened out of his fat wits, he was feeling very uncomfortable, and he was convinced that it was anybody's fault but his own. Bunter, as usual, was a very much injured party. Not for the first time, Billy Bunter realised that it was a beastly world, populated chiefly by beasts; himself probably the only really decent fellow in it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they come!" exclaimed Cherry as four running figures came in sight on the promenade from the direction of Kingsgate.

Johnny Bull, Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Kipps had got up from the beach at the Kingsgate end, in a state of great anxiety for their friends. They were coming back along the promenade to look over the cliffs for them, when they sighted the group, and came up at a breathless run.

"Thank goodness you're safe!" panted Nugent.

"The thankfulness of the esteemed goodness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"That idiot Bunter—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Let's kick him all the way back to Portercliffe Hall!" suggested Kipps.

"Good egg!"

"Let's!"

"I say, you fellows, look at the state I'm in!" groaned Bunter. "Wet through, and smothered with chalk from that filthy cliff—"

"Look at the state we're in, you fat Owl!" said Harry.

Snort, from Bunter! The state that Wharton and Bob Cherry were in did not seem to matter very much to Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, I can't walk home in this state," said Bunter. "Besides, I'm too tired! I'll rest here while you get a taxi!"

"Fathead!"

"After what I've been through, I think even you fellows might be a little considerate!" said Bunter bitterly. "But it's always the same—selfishness all round. I'll stand the taxi—you needn't worry about that! One of you fellows can lend me the money—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, don't walk away while I'm talking to you!" roared Bunter.

But the fellows did walk away; and the fat Owl, after glaring at them through his big spectacles, rolled after them. He squelched water and wet chalk as he rolled.

"I say, Alonzo—" he gasped.

"Yes, my dear William!" said the good and patient Alonzo.

"You're not such a beast as the other beasts," gasped Bunter. "You'll get me a taxi, old chap—"

"I should be very, very pleased, my dear William—"

"Well, go and get it, and not so much jaw!" said Bunter.

"But taxicabs are not allowed on the promenade, my dear William; so I very, very much regret that—"

"Idiot!"

"My dear William—"





"Pull him back!" said Vernon-Smith. Smithy and Wibley pulled. They marched back from the cliff-edge, holding Alonzo's legs like the shafts of a cart. Howls came from Alonzo, as his features brushed through the grass. In one hand he clutched a bunch of ferns. "Ow! Wow! My dear—wow—friends—yow-o!" he howled. "Ow! My nose!"

"Beast!"

"We can get a car in a garage at Kingsgate," said Bob. "It's about half a mile. Buck up, Bunter!"

"Look here, I'm tired!" roared Bunter. "See—tired? If two of you fellows join hands, you can carry me as far as the end of the prom."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Kipps unexpectedly. "Lend me a hand, Wib, and make a chair for Bunter!"

Wibley grinned.

"I'm on!" he said. "Anything to oblige Bunter! Who else matters except Bunter?"

"Oh good!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you're not such beasts as the other beasts!"

Kipps and Wibley joined hands to make a "chair" for Bunter. They gasped as they lifted his weight. How far they could have carried that tremendous weight was a question that was never answered.

The distance that they carried Bunter was about a yard. Then their joined hands suddenly parted.

Bump!

Bunter sat down on the asphalt with a concussion that almost shook the Isle of Thanet. He roared as he sat.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Try again!" said Wibley.

"Waiting for you!" said Kipps.

Bunter did not try again. He had a strong suspicion that if he was carried again, there would be another bump!

He decided to walk. And the Greyfriars party walked on, to an accompaniment of gasps, groans, and grumbles from the Owl of the Remove.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Getting Hiram K.'s Goat!

"CHANDOS!"

"Sir!"

"I guess," said Mr. Hiram K. Fish, "that I want to chew the rag with you a piece!"

The stately butler of Portercliffe Hall did not betray in his stately countenance what he thought of that mode of address.

Chandos had great powers of self-control.

Chandos, in his younger days, had served a duke. For twenty years and more he had been butler at Portercliffe Hall. He had served the old lord, who had resided at the Hall; and now he served the young lord, who lived in Switzerland because he could not afford to live at the family mansion. After such high service, it must have been a shock to Chandos to serve Hiram K. Fish, of New York.

Since the young lord had inherited the estate the great mansion had been let to a series of tenants, and Chandos and his staff had been, so to speak, let along with it. That was the only means by which young Lord Portercliffe could keep up the mansion, and avoid adding the numerous staff to the ranks of the unemployed.

It could not have been a gratifying experience for Chandos, accustomed to the very best families.

But with Lord Portercliffe taxed out of house and home, the staff, no doubt, were glad to keep their jobs on any terms.

So excellent and stately a butler as Chandos probably could have "placed" himself in some other noble family, not yet reduced to genteel poverty by income-tax and sur-tax and death duties. But Chandos, no doubt, had

reasons of his own for remaining faithful to Portercliffe Hall.

Anyhow, there he was, and his present employer was Hiram K. Fish; and Chandos bore with that energetic gentleman, who was packed with pep and go, as best he could. He was even learning to grasp the meaning of Hiram K.'s remarkable variety of the English language.

He stood at attention—a dignified figure! Chandos was massive and broad and stately. His plump face was as expressionless as a human face could be.

Its stately dignity was a little marred at the moment by a dark shade under the left eye. Chandos had had a knock there, having, as he had explained, unfortunately knocked his head on a bedpost in the dark. The Bounder of Greyfriars had quite a different theory on that subject—which, however, he had confided to no one but Harry Wharton.

Mr. Fish, sprawling in a deep leather chair, with his long legs stretched out, and a long, thin cigar in his long, thin mouth, eyed the stately butler, with his keen, cute eyes.

"You ain't spotted that guy yet, Chandos?" he demanded. "I guess I put it up to you, and I'll mention that I expect results."

Chandos coughed.

"I regret, sir—" he began.

Mr. Fish stopped him with an upraised skinny forefinger.

"Now, you get this, Chandos!" he said. "You been butler here for umpteen years, and you know all the guys in the shebang from A to izzard! You was butler to the late Lord Portercliffe, and I guess you've been longer on the spot than any other galoot in the whole caboodle! You ought to be able to put your finger on the hombre I want!"

"Really, sir—"

"There's a guy in this shebang," went on Mr. Fish, "that I got to get, and that I'm going to get! It must be one of the servants, because it can't be anybody else! He knows all about the secret passages in the place, for since they've been found, and I started exploring them, he's been playing ghost to skeer me off. You're wise to that?"

"You have certainly told me so, sir." Chandos coughed again. "There are many persons, sir, who believe that Portercliffe Hall is haunted by the phantom of the Red Earl, who was killed in the Turret Room in the reign of Queen Elizabeth—"

"I guess that guff cuts no ice with me!" said Mr. Fish, with a snort. "I'll say I was sure surprised a few when I loosed off my gun at that ghost in the vault and never hurt him any. But when I found that my cartridges had been changed for blanks, I guess I got wise to it! That spook has got a side-kicker in this hyer shebang, Chandos, who's got keys to open desks! I guess ghosts don't open desks and mess around with cartridges—not a whole lot! Nope!"

"I can hardly believe, sir, that there is any member of my staff who is unworthy of trust."

"Pack that up!" said Mr. Fish. "I'm telling you! Some guy got at my desk and my cartridges! The same guy, I guess, has been playing ghost! And I'll say it was the same guy cinched the spondulics from young Bunter's room! I want that mystery guy, Chandos!"

"Every manservant, sir, in this establishment came here with the very best of characters!"

"Yep! And one of 'em's a crook!" said Mr. Fish. "And that's the one I want! I figure that you ought to be

able to pick him out, Chandos. I've sure given the whole caboodle the once over, and he's got me beat. But you—"

"I have, of course, made very careful investigation," said the butler. "But I have every confidence—"

"Throttle it down!" snapped Mr. Fish. "You figure that I'm dreaming! Young Bunter raised a heap of golden sovereigns in the hollow oak and parked them in his room. They was rustled! Who rustled them?"

"I cannot undertake to say, sir. Really—"

"Waal, you get to it!" said Mr. Fish. "I'll mention this, Chandos! You got the whole bunch of guys under your eye, and you ought to be able to pick out the galoot that's playing this gum-game! You get on with it, or this shebang will be wanting a noo butler! You get that?"

Chandos coloured faintly.

"You will allow me to point out, sir, that though I am happy and honoured to serve you, I am in the service of Lord Portercliffe!" he answered. "I should accept dismissal only from his lordship!"

Hiram K.'s steely eyes gleamed. He sat upright in his chair, and removed the cigar from his mouth.

"You chew on this, Chandos!" he said grimly. "I got this shebang on three months' tenancy, with option to purchase! I reckon you're wise to that without me telling you!"

"Perfectly so, sir. I am naturally in the confidence of Lord Portercliffe's agents."

"If I buy," said Mr. Fish, "the shebang's mine! Mebbe I can't fire his lordship's pesky servants till then! But I calculate you don't want to be fired,

Chandos, now or in three months' time?"

"I should be sorry to leave Portercliffe Hall, sir," answered Chandos, with unruffled calm. "But I have no doubt that I should be able to secure an equally advantageous position in some other establishment!"

Mr. Fish's lean jaws shut hard.

"Waal, you spot that mystery guy, or you'll be rubbering after that advantageous posish so quick it'll make your head swim!" he yapped.

"Really, sir—"

"You got a crook in your outfit here!" snapped Hiram K. Fish. "I'm telling you! You got a crook here what plays ghost and picks locks, and goes moseying along secret passages and vaults—looking for what don't belong to him, I reckon. If you can't get a line on him, I reckon I'll buy a noo butler who can! Chew on it, old-timer!"

"As I have already observed, sir—"

"Aw! Can it!" snorted Mr. Fish. "Mebbe I can't fire his lordship's pesky menials till I'm through with a trade with his pesky lordship, but I can sure help a galoot off the front porch, with a boot on his pants to give him a lift, and that's what's coming to you, Chandos, if you pass across any more of your back-chat. Got that?"

Chandos gazed at Mr. Fish.

Certainly, not from his former ducal employer; certainly, not from any lord of Portercliffe had Chandos heard this kind of talk before.

The mere idea of being helped out of Portercliffe Hall, with a boot on his pants to give him a lift, seemed to daze the majestic Chandos.

"Sir!" he gasped. "Sir!"

"Chew on it!" snapped Hiram K. "Chew on it, big boy, and get it down! I've said I want that guy! What I say goes! Get down to it! Prop your eyes open! Oil your thinker, and set it working! I'm telling you if I don't get a line on that mystery guy I'll fire every gol-darned galoot in the shebang, beginning with you! Yep! And then some!"

"Sir!" gasped Chandos.

"Now beat it! Git!"

"Sir—" Chandos gurgled.

"I guess I said git!" hooted Mr. Fish.

Chandos, in a dazed state, "got."

Mr. Fish, left alone in the vast library of Portercliffe, snorted! He was angry and irritated, and he had let Chandos have the rough edge of his tongue. He hoped it would do him good.

Chandos was an excellent butler; the vast establishment of Portercliffe Hall ran like clockwork under his able hands. But outside his duties as a butler, Hiram K. figured that he was a honthead, a jay, a big stiff, and a boob from Boobsville.

It was as certain as anything could be that the "mystery man" of Portercliffe Hall was a member of the household staff.

Chandos, Mr. Fish reckoned, ought to be able to lay his plump finger on him. But Chandos seemed quite helpless in the matter.

Indeed, after all that had happened at Portercliffe, Chandos persisted, respectfully, but obstinately, in his opinion that all the members of the staff were above suspicion! Naturally, it got Hiram K.'s goat!

Mr. Fish guessed that he wanted hoss-sense from the guy, not that sort of dope! He snorted as the door closed behind Chandos.

"Dog-gone the big stiff!" growled Mr. Fish. "I guess he's the dumbest

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dumbbell I've struck in this dog-goned dumb island! It sure does get my goat a few! I'll tell a man! But, by the great horned toad, if he don't sort out that crook and tote him along I'll fire him—I'll sure fire him!"

And Mr. Fish snorted again in great wrath.

Cute and spry as he was, it did not occur to Mr. Fish that Chandos might have his own reasons for not sorting out the mystery man and 'toting him along.' With all his outeness and all his spryness, all his push and pep, it was possible that Hiram K.'s wits were not the sharpest in Portercliffe Hall!

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Alonzo Takes the Medicine!

"**A** TCHOOOOH!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Beast! Atchooooo!"

Bunter went it.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were drenched as well as Billy Bunter; but they were drying in the hot August sun and they were not sneezing.

Bunter seemed to be catching a cold.

The three drenched juniors had packed into a taxicab at Kingsgate to get back to Portercliffe Hall as soon as possible. The rest of the party were walking.

"Atchoo-choo-choo!" sneezed Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I think I'm going to be ill! I can feel pneumonia coming on!"

If Bunter expected the juniors to show signs of consternation at that startling news he was disappointed.

Bunter had endangered the lives of all three by his fatuous folly, and if he had a cold in his fat little nose the opinion of the other fellows was that it served him jolly well right!

"Fathead!" said Harry.

"Ass!" said Bob.

"That's all you care!" said Bunter bitterly. "After all I've done for you! Talk about ingratitude being the thankless child of a serpent's tooth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter. "Cackle! With a fellow—atchoo—dying of pneumonia under your—atchoo-choo—noses! It's what I should expect of you! I can feel it coming on—creeping all over me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of pneumonia creeping all over Bunter seemed to entertain his companions. They roared.

"Well, you beasts!" gasped Bunter.

"I can tell you we've a lot of pneumonia in our family! My grandfather was lame with it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

He sneezed sulkily till the taxi drove up to Portercliffe Hall. Tired as he was, and ill as he was—with pneumonia creeping all over him—Bunter showed activity when the taxi stopped at the steps of that great mansion. He jumped out quite quickly and vanished into the house, before any question could be raised about who was to pay the taximan.

Chandos was coming away from the library door. The butler gazed at the wet and muddy Owl, a faint smile hovering over his plump face.

"An accident, sir?" asked Chandos.

"Those beasts got me caught in the tide!" grunted Bunter. "I believe they did it on purpose! Help me up to my room, Chandos!"

Chandos gazed at him, and apparently decided that Bunter in his present state was not nice to touch.

"James! John!" called out Chandos. "Help Master Bunter up to his room."

Two footmen helped Master Bunter up to his room. Wharton and Bob Cherry did not need assistance to get to their room, and it did not take them long to clean and change. Then they looked in on Bunter.

"Atchooooo!"

A loud and prolonged sneeze greeted them.

Bunter was in bed.

"Turned in!" exclaimed Bob.

"I've gone to bed, as I'm ill!" answered Bunter, with dignity. "Tell Chandos I will have dinner sent up, you fellows. Tell him to send plenty! I believe in feeding a cold!"

"Aren't you feverish?" asked Bob.

"Yes—fearfully feverish!"

"You have to starve a fever, you know!" said Bob gravely.

"I mean, I'm not feverish at all—not a trace of it, luckily! Mind you tell Chandos to send up plenty! Feeding a cold is the best thing you can do with it. Plenty of good food—that's the thing! I don't eat much, as a rule, as you fellows know—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But you have to feed a cold! I'm awfully ill—pains all over—"

"If it's all over, what's the trouble?"

"I mean, the pain's all over me, you silly fathead! I mean, that it's all over—not that it's all over!"

"Lucid, at any rate!" agreed Bob.

"Like to see a doctor?"

"Well, no, I'm not a fellow to make a fuss about an illness, like some fellows! I say—Atchoooh! Give me a hanky! Atchoooh! I say, you fellows, you can sit with me till dinner-time, and wait on me if I want anything, and—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I think I can hear the fellows coming in!" said Bob, as he hurried out.

"Beast! I say, Wharton—"

"Coming!" said Wharton, in response to an imaginary call, and he hurried after Bob.

Bunter snorted!

Nobody seemed keen on sitting in his room, listening to his sneezing and waiting on him if he wanted anything. Perhaps they did not see why he should not wait on himself if he wanted anything!

But Bunter was not left alone long. The rest of the party had come in, and Alonzo Todd came up to see Bunter at once. He had a large bottle in his hand, as his kind and cheerful face beamed in at Bunter's door.

"My dear William—" said Alonzo.

"Isn't it dinner-time yet?" asked Bunter.

"Dinner is at seven-thirty, my dear William, and it is not yet seven o'clock," said Alonzo.

"Oh lor'! Got any toffee?"

"I am very, very sorry—"

"Got any bullseyes?"

"I regret very, very much—"

"Idiot!"

"My dear William, I have something for you much better than either toffee or bullseyes!" said Alonzo, beaming.

"Oh!" said Bunter, sitting up and taking notice. "You're not such a beast as those other beasts, 'Lonzy! What is it—a cake?"

"Oh, no!"

"Caramels?" asked Bunter.

"Something much better than that in your present state, my dear William." Alonzo held up the bottle. "This, my dear Bunter, is Dr. Pooter's Magical Mixture for Pining People! A tablespoonful—"

"You silly ass!" shrieked Bunter.

Almost anything in the eatable or drinkable line was grist that came to Bunter's mill. But he drew a line at patent medicines. He pined for toffee and bullseyes, cake and caramels, but he was not one of the pining people who pined for Dr. Pooter's Magical Mixture.

"In a glass of water—" continued Alonzo.

"Idiot!"

"Pray allow me to give you a dose, my dear William. You will find the effect wonderful—indeed, marvellous!" urged Alonzo. "There is a glass here—"

"Dummy!"

"I will prepare the medicine for you—"

"Chump!"

"My dear William—"

"Get out, and take that rotten muck away!" roared Bunter.

"I assure you, my dear William, that it will do you worlds of good," said Alonzo. "It is really marvellous. I gave some to my Aunt Tabitha's cat in its milk shortly before it died—"

"Gerrout!"

"But, my dear William—"

"Beast!"

Even the good Alonzo could not consider Bunter's remarks kind, or friendly, or grateful. But he was not to be discouraged.

He poured water into a glass, added a tablespoonful of the marvellous mixture, and brought it to Bunter's bedside. The fat Owl glared at him through his big spectacles.

"Now, take it, my dear Bunter!" urged Alonzo. "The effect will be visible immediately."

Bunter's eyes glittered through his spectacles. He took the tumbler in a fat hand. Alonzo beamed.

His impression was that Bunter was going to take the medicine internally. Bunter's impression was that Alonzo Todd was going to take it externally. It was Bunter's impression that was well founded.

With a jerk of his fat paw, he hurled the contents of the tumbler into the kind, beaming face of Alonzo!

Splash!

"Urrrgh!" gurgled Alonzo, as he staggered back from the bedside. "Yurggh! Gurggh! My d-d-dear William—good gracious—urrrrrgh!"

Alonzo was right on one point! The effect of the medicine was visible immediately. Its effect on the hapless Alonzo was to make him gurgle and gasp and splutter frantically!

"Wurrrrgh! Urrrgh!" gurgled Alonzo. "Oooogh! I am very, very—wurrrgh! Oh dear! I can only say—gurrrrgh! Wuuuurgh!"

Alonzo Todd staggered from the room, mopping Dr. Pooter's Marvellous Mixture from his eyes and nose and ears and hair. And he did not return. Alonzo was very, very kind, and very, very sympathetic, but he could not help feeling that kindness and sympathy were wasted on an invalid like William George Bunter.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Smithy's Scheme!

"**C**OFFEE, sir?"

"Thank you," said Harry.

Wharton's eyes rested for a moment curiously on the plump, placid face of Chandos as he handed the coffee. They lingered on the shade under the butler's left eye. And as Chandos moved away to serve the other guests, Wharton's glance followed him—dubiously.

The Portercliffe party were in the hall after dinner, taking coffee there. Only Billy Bunter was absent.

Having gone to bed with a cold, Bunter was staying there—not at all to the grief of the general company. Indeed, Smithy remarked that Bunter could make any party a success by staying away from it.

The radio was on, and most of the juniors giving it their attention. Wibley had a writing-pad open on the arm of his chair, jotting down flashes of inspiration for his play. Fisher T. Fish was regarding the radio thoughtfully. He was not giving ear to the music, however, but calculating the probable cost of the electric current running the wireless. Alonzo Todd was deep in "The Story of a Potato: from the Seed to the Saucepan."

On a settee in the alcove where the bronze statue of Hercules stood, Hiram K. Fish was deep in low-voiced talk with his secretary, Bosanne. Only one matter occupied Mr. Fish's mind—the business proposition which had brought him to Portercliffe Hall.

That business proposition had been a deep secret, but the late happenings at Portercliffe had rather enlightened the Greyfriars fellows. They had a fairly clear idea now why Popper and Son had located themselves in Lord Portercliffe's mansion.

Wharton, as his eyes lingered on the plump, massive figure of the butler, noted that the Bounder was looking at Chandos also. Vernon-Smith lounged across the hall with his coffee-cup in his hand, and sat down beside Harry, who was on a divan by the wall at a little distance from the others. Wharton smiled as the Bounder joined him. He knew what was in Smithy's mind.

Smithy did not speak for a few minutes. His eyes followed Chandos, lingering on him till the butler left the hall.

"You've still got that idea in your head about Chandos, Smithy?" asked Wharton.

"Don't you agree with me?" asked the Bounder quietly.

"Blessed if I know!" answered Harry frankly. "There may be something in it, but it seems awfully thick! I can't quite swallow it."

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders. "Isn't evidence any good to you?" he asked. "You and I ran into the mystery man the other night at the secret door in the picture gallery. We grabbed him in the dark, and I hit him in the eye. I told you afterwards that I believed I had damaged that eye, and that if we found a member of the staff with a gammy eye, we had the man."

"Yes; but—"

"Next day Chandos had a gammy eye—and a yarn of having knocked his head on a bedpost! It wasn't a bedpost he knocked it on, old bean; it was my knuckles."

The Bounder spoke with positive conviction.

But Wharton by no means shared his certainty. It seemed beyond doubt that the mystery man was one of the numerous staff of Portercliffe Hall. But Chandos was surely the least likely to be the man—the stately, massive, irreproachable Chandos!

"We didn't see the sportsman that night in the dark," went on Vernon-Smith. "But we grappled with him. He was a big man—no mistake about that."

"That's so," agreed Harry.

"Chandos is a big man."

"Yes; but—" Wharton shook his head slowly. "You may be right, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,438.

Smithy—I don't say you're not. But I wouldn't say anything if I were you! If Chandos really banged that eye on a bedpost—and very likely he did—"

"I'm not saying anythin', fathead! I've told you because you were with me at the time. I shouldn't dream of speaking without proof. Precious ass I should look if I accused Chandos, and it turned out to be some other man."

Wharton smiled! That remark indicated that at the back of his mind the Bounder admitted the possibility of a doubt.

"But I'm going to make sure," went on Smithy in a low voice. "The mystery man, whoever he is, is a rascal, and up to rascality! There's not much doubt what he's after. Since Bunter found some hundreds of sovereigns hidden in the hollow oak, and somebody pinched them from the suitcase the fat idiot parked them in, it's pretty clear."

Wharton nodded. "Old Fish has taken this place because he knows somehow that the late Lord Portercliffe hoarded a large sum in gold here," said Smithy. "I fancy I can guess how he knows it, too. His secretary, Bosanne, was secretary to the old lord, and lived here for years in the old lord's time. A chap needn't be a giddy detective to guess that Bosanne put old Fish wise; he knew his master's game—spied on him, I suppose. And some other man in the place was spying, too, and learned about the hidden hoard, though not where it was hidden."

Harry nodded again. "Hiram was keeping it dark," went on the Bounder, with a grin. "But when Bunter found the quids and scattered them all over the shop, he couldn't keep that up. I fancy everybody in the place knows what he's after now. Not much secret about it any longer."

"I suppose the hoard will be his, if it's found, as he's bought the place from young Lord Portercliffe!" said Harry slowly.

"Bunter makes out that he hasn't bought it, but only hired it, with an option to purchase!" grinned the Bounder. "He pried into a letter—"

"I shouldn't take the word of a fellow who pried into private letters," said Harry.

"No! But it looks likely enough. I don't believe Hiram could afford to buy the place. But if he spots the hidden hoard, he can buy it—what?"

Wharton frowned. "That's rot, Smithy! He can't buy the place from young Lord Portercliffe with the man's own money!"

"I fancy he would look on that as a smart stroke of business!" said the Bounder, with a laugh.

"I should call it something else!" said Harry, with a curl of the lip. "So near a swindle that it would need a microscope to see any difference. But we've no right to think that Mr. Fish would do anything of the sort. Bunter's a gabbling ass—and ten to one he's got it all wrong."

"No bizney of ours, anyhow," said Vernon-Smith carelessly. "But whether the hidden hoard belongs to old Fish or to young Lord Portercliffe, it certainly doesn't belong to the mystery man—and he's after it."

"Right as rain!" agreed Wharton. "I'd like to spot him, and put a spoke in his wheel. But if he's been looking for it ever since the old lord died years ago, he hasn't had much luck."

"Bunter's had all the luck so far," grinned Smithy. "But it may turn up any time, and I should hate to see it fall into the paws of that sneaking

rotter we call the mystery man—though I should call him Chandos—"

"Better not, till you're sure, at any rate."

"I'm going to make sure! I've been doing some giddy detective work already!" grinned Smithy. "I dare say you may have noticed, once or twice, that when Chandos has been wanted, he was lying down with one of his headaches. He seems to cultivate a headache pretty often. Well, I've found that Chandos takes a long rest in his room every day."

"What on earth has that to do with it?"

"Fathead! If he goes rooting after the old lord's hoard, he can only do it at night, when the house is asleep. But he can't live without sleep, himself. He has to make it up in the day-time."

"Oh!" said Harry. Vernon-Smith slipped his hand into his pocket, and drew out a small object, at which Wharton glanced curiously. It was a squirt.

"What the dickens is that for?" asked Harry.

"Chandos!" answered the Bounder.

"Wha-a-t?"

"I'm going to fill it with indelible marking-ink. I got it to-day in Margate for this little game."

"But what—" ejaculated Wharton.

"I've been studying the lay of the land! We know, from what's happened, that the jolly old mystery man goes rooting into the passages and vaults by way of the secret door in the picture gallery. Well, if he comes from Chandos' room, he has to cross this hall to get to the picture gallery. I'm coming down to-night—"

"Smithy!"

"And, keeping watch in the dark," said the Bounder coolly. "And if anybody stirs in the dark, he will get this squirtful—all over him. And he can explain afterwards what he was doing, up in the dark."

Harry Wharton laughed.

Smithy slipped the squirt back into his pocket. He was evidently very much taken with his idea for spotting the mystery man of Portercliffe.

There was no doubt that, if any man got a squirtful of indelible ink over him, it would be easy enough to identify him afterwards. Whether it was Chandos, or not, the case would be clear.

"Not a word, of course!" added the Bounder.

"Mum's the word!" agreed Wharton.

When the Greyfriars party went up to bed, Herbert Vernon-Smith went to his room—but not to turn in.

His first proceeding was to fill the squirt carefully from a bottle of purple marking-ink.

He placed it in his pocket, fully loaded. Then he shut off his light, turned on the shaded bedside reading-lamp, and sat down to read the "Holiday Annual" while he waited for midnight.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Very, Very Kind of Alonzo!

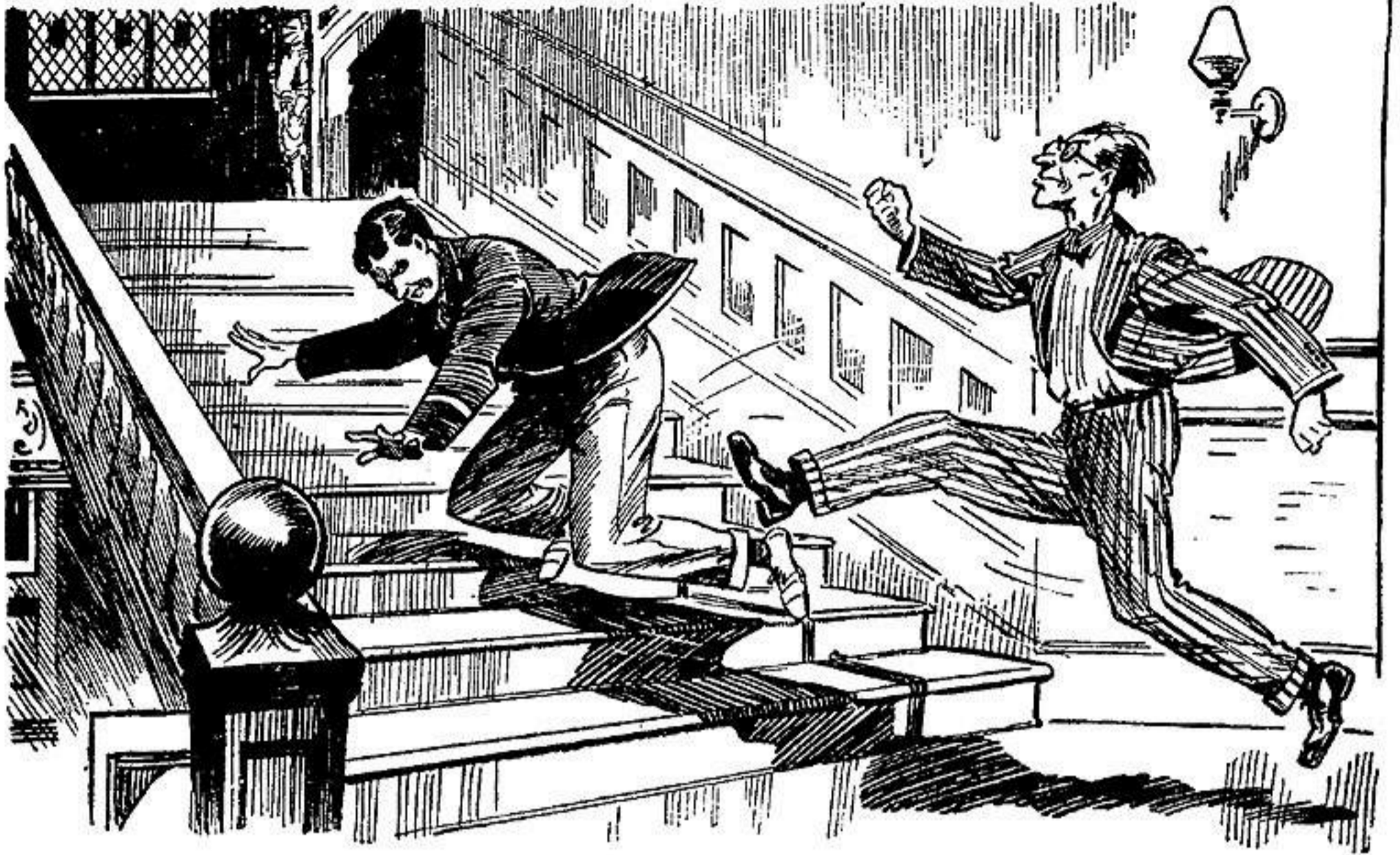
S NORE!

Harry Wharton & Co. looked in on Bunter on their way to bed.

The sound of a deep and resonant snore greeted them as they looked into the fat Owl's room.

The light was on, and it revealed William George Bunter's fat face on the pillow—the eyes shut, and the mouth open.

"Good-night, old fat man!" chuckled Bob Cherry.



Vernon-Smith jumped for the staircase—and he jumped quick! But he did not jump quite quick enough. Mr. Fish's long leg shot out, and his boot clumped on the Bouncer as he jumped. "Yooop!" roared Smithy, as he captured the boot, and sprawled headlong. "I guess there's a few more to come!" hooted Mr. Fish.

Snore!  
Billy Bunter had been feeding his cold. It was not a very bad cold—the sneezing seemed to have passed off. Perhaps feeding it had done it good—Bunter had undoubtedly fed it well! Probably he required a rest after his exertions in feeding the cold. Anyhow, he was fast asleep, and snoring!

On the bedside table was a tray. On the tray was a dish! On the dish was a large cake.

Bunter was not always gifted with foresight. But evidently he had foreseen that his cold might require feeding again during the night. The big plum cake was at hand, ready, in case of need!

Alonzo Todd regarded the sleeping beauty with a kind and sympathetic eye. The other fellows, having failed to obtain any answer but a snore to their cheery good-nights, passed along the corridor to their rooms.

But Alonzo lingered.  
Alonzo could not help feeling very, very hurt by Bunter's ungrateful reception of the dose of Dr. Pooter's Marvelous Mixture for Pining People. It had taken Alonzo quite a long time to wash off that Marvellous Mixture from his kind, simple face. After which he had left Bunter alone. But Alonzo never remembered offences long. He could make allowances for the testy temper of an invalid. Now, as he gazed at Bunter, his kind and sympathetic nature was in the ascendant again.

"My dear William!" said Alonzo, advancing to the bedside.

Snore!  
Alonzo extended a bony hand and shook the fat junior by the shoulder.

Bunter stirred in his sleep.  
"Urrrgh!" he murmured. "Beast! Urrgh!"

"My dear William—"  
Snore!  
Shake, shake, shake!  
Bunter's eyes opened, and he blinked.

"Gerraway!" he gurgled. "Beast! 'Tain't rising-bell! Urrgh! I'm not going to get up yet! Tell old Quelch I'm too ill to get up!"

Then, realising that he was not in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, Bunter sat up, glaring.

"You blithering idiot, what have you woken me up for?" he hissed. "You silly fathead, I was dreaming about a spread in Mauly's study! We had jam tarts and meringues! You howling dunny—"

"I am very, very sorry to disturb your slumbers, my dear William," said Alonzo gently. "But I feel that I cannot seek repose without doing what I can for a dear friend who is ill."

"You silly idiot!"  
"Pray be patient, my dear William, I—"

"You dunderheaded dummy!"  
"I have brought you a packet of Dr. Pooter's Pink Powder for Sleepless Sufferers!" explained Alonzo. He held up a packet in his hand, and Bunter blinked at it with a furious blink.

"If you take one dose, my dear Bunter, you will sleep soundly till morning—"

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter. Alonzo had woken him out of a sound sleep to give him a dose to induce slumber. "You—you—"

"The taste," said Alonzo, "is rather bitter! But you might eat a piece of this cake afterwards, to take the taste away—"

Bunter groped for his pillow.  
"Or the powder may be taken spread on cake," explained Alonzo. "It does not matter how it is taken, provided that it is taken in very, very considerable quantities. I trust, my dear William, that you will— Yaroooooh!"

Bunter's pillow interrupted Alonzo. Grasping it with both fat hands, the Owl of the Remove landed it on Alonzo's kind, simple face with all the force of his fat arms.  
Bump!

Alonzo sat down beside the bed, yelling.

Bunter leaned over the bedside. Up went the pillow, and down it came again, getting Alonzo nicely on the top of the head.

Alonzo rolled over on the floor, gasping.

Bunter made another swipe, and missed.

"Oh dear! Oh goodness gracious!" gasped Alonzo. "My dear William, I—"

"You wait till I get at you!" hissed Bunter. He started crawling out of bed.

Alonzo did not wait till Bunter got at him. He grabbed up the precious packet of powder, which he had dropped in his fall, and bolted out of Bunter's room.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter, as the door closed.

He was sorry that Alonzo had escaped so soon. Exertion did not, as a rule, appeal to Billy Bunter. But he would have been quite glad to exert himself in handing the good Alonzo a few more swipes with the pillow.

However, Alonzo was gone, and the fat Owl settled down to slumber again. In a few minutes his snore was once more awakening the echoes.

If he dreamed, he did not dream that Alonzo's kind, sympathetic ears listened to that snore outside his door.

The door re-opened softly.  
Bunter had left the light on, and Alonzo gazed across the room at his sleeping face. He gazed at him thoughtfully.

Even Alonzo realised that it was no use waking Bunter up again to urge him to take that dose of Dr. Pooter's Pink Powder. But, in spite of Bunter's black ingratitude for his kindly attentions, Alonzo had no doubt that the pink powder would insure Bunter a



(Continued from page 13.)

refreshing night's rest. He knew that it was unfailing in its efficacy, because Dr. Pooter said so in his advertisements, and surely Dr. Pooter ought to know!

Alonzo, with a kind smile on his face—much to his credit, after the pillow-ing—stepped quietly to Bunter's bedside.

This time he did not wake Bunter.

He opened the packet and proceeded to shake the pink powder all over the bedside cake.

If Bunter woke it was certain that he would scoff the cake. On that point there was no shadow of doubt—no possible, probable, shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever! Scoffing the cake, he would take the powder—he would have no choice about that! Then he would go to sleep again, calmly, and peacefully, and refreshingly, if the statements in Dr. Pooter's advertisements were to be relied on.

Alonzo, feeling that he was doing a good deed, beamed over the slumbering Owl!

Bunter snored on, unconscious of the good deed.

To the last whiff, the powder was distributed on the cake. Not a fraction of the cake was left unpowdered.

Having done that good deed, Alonzo Todd quitted the room, with an easy conscience. He was very, very much hurt by Bunter's ingratitude, but he was very, very forgiving; and he was very, very glad that he had thought of that simple method of doing Bunter good, in spite of himself.

He turned off the light and shut the door softly, and retired to his own room in the pleasant frame of mind that naturally follows the doing of a kind and thoughtful action!

Bunter snored on!

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### The Secret Sign!

**H**IRAM K. FISH struck a match and lighted his umpteenth long, thin cigar.

The flame of the match, glimmering through the vast library of Portercliffe Hall, shone for a moment on the pale and worried face of Jonas Bosanne, the secretary. It went out, and Bosanne's face disappeared again. Only the red glow, at the end of the cigar, broke the gloom.

It was long past midnight.

But Hiram K. Fish was not thinking of bed or sleep. Bosanne was thinking of both, but it was H. K. Fish who gave the orders. The little man in black yawned, while Hiram K. smoked and smoked and smoked. They were waiting for one to strike before making a move.

Portercliffe Hall was deep in silence and slumber.

The numerous guests, and the numerous staff, slept in their various quarters. But Hiram K. did not think

of sleep, and Bosanne thought of it in vain.

Hiram K. guessed that there was another guy in the great mansion who was probably wide awake—the mystery man who was his great rival in the quest for the hidden hoard of the late Lord Portercliffe.

And if the mystery man walked abroad that night Hiram K. guessed, reckoned, and calculated that he was going to "get" him dead to rights, as he expressed it.

They sat up in the dark, to give the impression, if the mystery man was on the alert, that they had gone to bed. For more than an hour they sat there, the secretary dismal and sleepy, Hiram K. coldly and grimly determined.

It had cost Hiram K. a good many dollars to take Portercliffe Hall for three months, with an option to purchase; and those dollars were to come back again, with many more added thereunto, when he unearthed the hidden hoard. It got Hiram K.'s goat sorely to find that he had a rival in the quest—an unknown, unscrupulous, and resolute rival. The bare thought of the hoarded gold falling into the mystery man's hands roused Hiram's deepest ire.

"I'll get him!" muttered Mr. Fish, as he chewed his cigar. "I'll sure get him, if I have to sit up on my hind legs and watch for him every night! Yep! I'll sure cinch that hombre!"

Bosanne yawned. The secretary was as keen as Mr. Fish to annex the hidden hoard of gold that did not belong to either of them. But he lacked Hiram K.'s nerve and toughness. He did not like darkness, and still less did he like the idea of shadowy enemies lurking in the darkness.

"This proposition ain't so durned easy as it looked when you put me up to it, old-timer," went on Mr. Fish. "I figured that that pesky old lord would have cached the spondulics all in one spot, and that when we found the secret passages we'd raise the pile. We sure found the secret passages, but we ain't found anything else, except that mystery guy playing ghost there."

Bosanne did not answer; he was nodding in his chair.

"Then that young gink, Bunter, tumbled into the hollow tree and found a heap of sovereigns!" said Mr. Fish. "I guess it proves that the hoard is here O.K., but it sure looks as if that pesky old lord parked the stuff in a lot of different places."

He grunted.

"And that mystery guy cinched the spondulics that that young gink parked in his room! I'll sure make him cough them up when I get a holt on him. You hear me? I'll make him cough up every continental red cent!"

No reply from the secretary. He had nodded off.

Mr. Fish grunted again and smoked in silence till the stroke of one boomed through the silent house.

Then he threw away the stump of his cigar and rose to his feet.

"I guess we got to get busy now, Bosanne!" he said. "Eh? Why don't you answer, you geek? Great John James Brown! You gone off snoozing?"

With an angry snort Mr. Fish groped at the secretary to grasp him and shake him to wakefulness.

In the darkness, it was Bosanne's nose that he grabbed; and the secretary awoke quite suddenly, with a startled squeak.

"Woooooh!"

"Park it!" snapped Mr. Fish. "You want to put the whole shebang wise to it that we're sitting up and keeping tabs? Quiet, you piecan!"

"Oogh!" gasped Mr. Bosanne. "I—I think I—I nodded off for a moment and—"

"I'll say you did!" growled Mr. Fish. "By the great horned toad, I guess you want to cinch a share in a million dollars without taking a lot of trouble. Mebbe you'd like the dollars to rain on you, and only have to hold out your hand to ketch 'em!"

"I—I am ready—"

"Now get it clear!" said Hiram K. "If that mystery guy's at it agin to-night, as I reckon he is most nights, he's gone by this time, by the secret door in the picture gallery. I'm going to squat there and wait for him to come back. For the love of Mike, quit yawning!" added Mr. Fish, breathing hard through his long, thin nose.

Bosanne suppressed a yawn.

"You're going to squat in the hall. If he gets past me he'll run into you. You get me?"

"Oh, quite!" gasped Bosanne.

He did not seem to relish the idea of the mystery man running into him in the dark.

"And you'll grab him."

"Oh! Certainly!"

"I guess I shall be on hand," growled Mr. Fish. "He ain't likely to get past me, but if he does I'll say I'll be as close behind him as his pesky shadder. It's a cinch that he's one of the menservants; and from the picture-gallery a guy can get back to the servants' quarters by way of the hall. We're bound to get him. Now come on!"

There was a door from the library opening on the picture-gallery. Mr. Fish groped to it, the secretary following him.

Having entered the gallery, Mr. Fish closed the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. There was to be no chance of escape for a fugitive by way of the library.

Then he moved along the great gallery to the alcove, where the picture of the Red Earl looked down from its gilt frame. Bosanne followed at his heels.

The picture-gallery of Portercliffe was a vast apartment. Only a dim glimmer of stars came in at high windows.

Bosanne peered to and fro uneasily in the dark shadows. He was thinking of the phantom Red Earl, which had appeared in the vaults. Mr. Fish was convinced that the phantom was a "fake," but in the silence and solitude of midnight, Bosanne did not feel so sure of it.

Hiram K. Fish stepped into the alcove and stood before the tall picture of the Red Earl—the picture that formed the secret door in the wall.

He scanned it with keen eyes, turning on the light of a pocket electric torch.

A glitter shot into those keen eyes.

"Great John James Brown!" he breathed. "We got him!"

Bosanne jumped.

"What—where—" he stammered.

"He's gone through that pesky secret door!" said Mr. Fish in a low voice. "Look here, give that the once-over!"

Bosanne stared, in the glimmer of the electric torch. From the bottom of the great gilt frame, a foot from the floor, hung a broken cotton thread.

"Spot that?" grinned Hiram K.

"Yes. But what—"

"I guess I fixed that up!" said Mr. Fish grimly. "I'll say I gummed that thread on—one end to the frame, and the other to the floor. I guess nobody would notice it there, unless he was a pesky cat! Get the idea? That picture couldn't be opened without snapping that thread!"

"Oh!" breathed Bosanney.  
 "Is it snapped, or ain't it?" demanded Mr. Fish.  
 "Yes, certainly——"  
 "Yep—I'll tell a man! That means that the guy has gone through that secret door!" said Mr. Fish, with deep satisfaction. "And that means that we only got to wait for him to come back. I guess I'll grab him easy in this alcove—but if he gets past me, you'll be in the hall waiting for him."

"Oh, yes—quite!"  
 Mr. Fish shut off the light.  
 "Get going!" he muttered.  
 Bosanney passed down the gallery towards the door that opened on the hall.

He opened that door, passed through, and closed it again.

Mr. Fish remained in the alcove under the picture of the Red Earl—watching and waiting. He was certain of his prey now, and he did not mean to let the mystery man escape his grasp when he emerged. He grinned, a rather ferocious grin, as he waited. That night Hiram K. guessed and reckoned he was going to put paid to the mystery man of Portercliffe.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Man!

**H**ERBERT VERNON-SMITH gave a start and caught his breath.

The great hall of Portercliffe was black as the inside of a hat. The Bounder could hardly see an inch from his nose.

But he could hear.  
 At midnight Smithy had crept down silently from his room in rubber shoes. His squirt of purple indelible ink was in his pocket.

There was no sound in the great house. That Mr. Fish and his secretary were sitting up in the library in the darkness the Bounder, of course, had not the faintest idea.

So far as he knew, everyone in the great house of Portercliffe was in bed and fast asleep—except himself and perhaps the mystery man.

In the thick darkness Smithy groped silently to an armchair and sat down to wait with grim patience. His squirt was in his hand now, resting on one knee.

He was sleepy, but he did not think of closing his eyes for a second. He could make up for loss of sleep by a nap on Margate beach next day. The Bounder was a determined fellow, and when he took a task in hand he was the fellow to get through with it; and, convinced that Chandos, the butler, was the "mystery man" of Portercliffe Hall, Smithy was resolved to make that fact known beyond the shadow of a doubt.

If the mystery man turned up that night he would get him with the squirt of ink; if the man got away after that it would not save him. Mr. Fish would be only too glad to be called and told that there was an unmistakable clue to the night prowler.

Long before the rascal could clean off the traces of the ink he would be found and identified. And it would be Chandos' room that would be looked into first.

And if the mystery man did not turn up that night Smithy was resolved to play the same game again night after night till he did.

But it seemed that he was in luck, as a sound came through the dense darkness of the hall.

It was a quarter of an hour since he

had heard one strike. At a quarter past one, who was stirring in the silence of the great house?

Smithy's eyes gleamed as he rose silently to his feet and listened.

Faintly, but unmistakably, there came the sound of a door that opened and closed again. It was the door connecting the hall with the picture gallery.

Had the man passed him silently in the dark and gone into the gallery? Or was he coming back?

The Bounder could not tell; he could see nothing. But he listened with straining ears for a sound to guide him.

And he caught a sound—a faint rustling movement in the dense darkness. His heart beat.

The unseen man had not gone from the hall into the picture gallery; he had come out of the picture gallery into the hall. That was certain, for the Bounder could hear him.

Silent, inch by inch, the Bounder crept in the direction of the sound.

Dark as it was, he had the faintest of glimpses of a shadowy figure close by the door that led into the gallery; his keen ear caught a sound of subdued breathing.

The Bounder grinned in the dark. Carefully he raised his hand with the squirt in it.

Squissssh!

Splash!

The inky contents of the squirt shot straight at the shadowy figure by the gallery door. There was a startled howl in the darkness.

"Oh! Ow! Oooogh! Grooogh! Ooogh!"

The Bounder chuckled.

Someone was spluttering wildly in the dark. Face and clothes of the unseen man were drenched with a squirful of purple indelible marking-ink. Some, to judge by the sounds, had gone into the unseen man's mouth. He was gurgling horribly.

(Continued on next page.)

(1)  
 Fitzgerald has a charming smile  
 (Except when he meets Coker),  
 A fellow from the Emerald Isle,  
 As upright as a poker,—  
 But, oh, my friends, he's full of  
 guile,  
 A dreadful, dreadful joker!

(2)  
 He practises his ghastly wits  
 Alike on friends and foemen,  
 To see a chap who's scared to bits  
 Is taken as an omen  
 That he's been talking to old Fitz  
 (His usual cognomen).



(5)  
 He swiftly put me at my ease,  
 Did Fitz from Tipperary,  
 But knowing his proclivities,  
 I felt a trifle wary.  
 Said he: "Now sample one of these  
 Nice cakes from Courtfield Dairy."

(7)  
 "Now try a tart!" I heard him say.  
 "No, thanks!" I answered thickly.  
 He gave me one! I backed away,  
 Prepared to dodge down quickly.  
 He ate the tart—'twas quite O.K.  
 At which I looked quite sickly.



(10)  
 Before I found the hanky trick,  
 I'd wiped my face with vigour,  
 And consequently in a tick  
 Was changed into a nigger!  
 I looked, and felt, completely sick,  
 As Fitz began to snigger.

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

I have decided to give the Greyfriars Rhymester another chance. This week's verses are written around  
**TERRENCE FITZGERALD,**  
 the Irish member of the Fifth Form.

(3)  
 He'll never miss a chance of fun,  
 In that he's very zealous;  
 The Fifth Form fellows who've been  
 done  
 By him, are rather jealous;  
 They'll talk to him with Prouty's gun  
 One day,—or so they tell us!



(4)  
 I called to get an interview  
 And found him busy eating,  
 I bowed and murmured: "Howja  
 do?"  
 He said, by way of greeting:  
 "Well, dogsbody, what's up with  
 you?  
 And why this merry meeting?"

(6)  
 I did—and took a hearty bite!  
 There came a great explosion!  
 I tumbled backwards, stiff with fright,  
 Fitz laughed at the commotion!  
 That cake was filled with dynamite,  
 At least, so I've a notion.

(8)  
 I found my pencil on the blink  
 (I'd broke the lead-propeller),  
 Said Fitz: "You'd better take, I think,  
 My fountain-pen, young feller!"  
 I did so, and a stream of ink  
 Shot out upon my smeller!



(9)  
 Said he: "Now wipe your face  
 and scoot!"  
 And handed me a hanky.  
 I longed to give the chump my boot,  
 But only answered: "Thank'ee!"  
 I found the thing was full of soot—  
 Some more dashed hanky-panky!

(11)  
 I saw that something must be done!  
 On that I was decided!  
 I threw a teapot (just for fun),  
 And knocked him all lop-sided!  
 And then the tea began to run—  
 But not so fast as I did!

"Gurrrrrgh! Ugh! Gurrrgh!"  
 "Got him!" breathed the Bounder.  
 The inky one was floundering wildly in the dark. There was a crash as an "occasional" table went over, and a vase of flowers standing on it was shattered on the polished oak floor.

Crash!  
 "Urrrh! Who—what— Urrrh! Help!" came spluttering. "Urrrh! Help! Gurrrgh!"

Smithy slipped the squirt into his pocket and groped along the wall for a light switch, to turn on the electric light.

He had fully expected that when the mystery man got the ink he would run for it instantly, hoping to escape discovery. Instead of which, the man remained where he was, gurgling and spluttering and howling for help. It seemed that the sudden drenching in the dark had knocked him completely off his balance.

Vernon-Smith grabbed the switch at the foot of the staircase and turned it on. Instantly the great hall was flooded with light.

His eyes fixed on the inky figure—and then almost bulged from his head. It was not, as he had fully expected, the massive figure of Chandos that met his view in the sudden illumination.

It was a small, slight figure in black—that of Mr. Bosanne, Hiram K. Fish's secretary!

The face, smothered with ink, was hardly recognisable, and Bosanne was clawing and mopping at it with both hands; but the Bounder knew him at once.

"Oh gad!" gasped the amazed Smithy.

Had he been mistaken? Was the mystery man, after all, not Chandos, the butler, but Bosanne, the secretary? Smithy felt as if his head was turning round with astonishment.

He had got his man, there was no doubt about that—but not the man he had expected to get!

Bosanne's wild howls and gurgles reached other ears than Smithy's. The door from the picture gallery was suddenly torn open, and a tall, angular, bony figure rushed into the hall.

"Great John James Brown!" howled Hiram K. Fish. "What—"

It was the climax of astonishment to the Bounder.

He blinked blankly at Hiram K. Fish.

Bosanne had come from the picture gallery; evidently Mr. Fish had been there with him. Obviously, Bosanne could not be the mystery man.

The truth flashed into Smithy's startled mind; they, like himself, had been up on the watch for the mystery man of Portercliffe. And he had got the wrong man!

"Oh crumbs!" he breathed.

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Bosanne, mopping frantically at purple indelible ink. "Oh dear! Ow! Gurrrgh!"

"What the great horned toad!" shrieked Mr. Fish. "What the—who the—how the— Great John James Brown! What—who—"

"Gurrrgh!"

"What's this game?" howled Mr. Fish. "Who did this? Who's here? Who put the light on? Who—what—"

"I—I— Groogh! I—I— Ooogh!" stammered Bosanne. "I did not see—I do not know. I—I— Oooooch!"

He clawed wildly at streaming ink. Hiram K. Fish glared round the hall and jumped at the sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith standing petrified, staring.

"Say, you!" roared Mr. Fish. "What the great horned toad—" He strode

towards the Bounder with an expression on his face that made Smithy back away towards the stairs.

"I—I say, sorry!" gasped Vernon-Smith, in utter dismay. "I—I—"

"You did that?" hooted Mr. Fish.

"Yes! I—I—"  
 "Urrrrgh!" from Bosanne.

"Gurrrgh!"

"You figure I want you to play your schoolboy larks in this hyer shebang, you young gink!" roared Mr. Fish.

"It—it wasn't a lark!" gasped the Bounder. "I—I was after the mystery man, and I thought—"

"You pesky young gink! Who asked you to get after that guy?" hooted Hiram K. "Who asked you to horn in? What? By the great horned toad, I guess I'll lam you a few, you pie-faced young geck!"

In his boiling wrath, Mr. Fish seemed to forget that he was host and Smithy guest! He jumped at the Bounder.

The Bounder jumped for the staircase! In Mr. Fish's present excited state it was evidently useless to remain and attempt to explain further. He jumped for the stairs—and he jumped quick!

But he did not jump quite quick enough! Mr. Fish's long leg shot out, and his boot clumped on the Bounder as he jumped.

"Yooop!" roared Smithy, as he captured the boot, and sprawled on the stairs headlong. "Oh, my hat! Ow!"

"I guess there's a few more to come!" hooted Mr. Fish. "Yep! And then some! And then—stop, you pesky young geck! Stop!"

The Bounder did not stop! He scrambled up and flew!

In less than a minute he was in ...s room with the key turned in the lock. He sank down on his bed, gasping.

"Oh crikey! Oh, my hat! What a sell! Oh gad!"

It had been a great scheme! Smithy still felt that it had been a great scheme! But the best laid schemes of mice and men "gang aft agley"—and there was no doubt that Smithy's scheme had "ganged agley." He had not "got" the mystery man; he had got Hiram K.'s boot, and Bosanne had got the squirt of ink! Smithy went to bed—rather wishing that he had gone when the other fellows went!

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Hand to Hand!

"P ACK it up!" growled Mr. Fish.

"Urrrrgh!"

"Park it!"

"Wurrrgh!"

Hiram K. snorted with anger. He glared morosely at Jonas Bosanne, mopping his inky face with an inky handkerchief. Bosanne's aspect might have caused almost anyone to smile! But Hiram K. was not feeling like smiling! He was intensely exasperated.

He had landed one kick on the young gink who had caused this disturbance by horning into what did not concern him. He wished he had landed a dozen, and then some! Still, it was satisfactory to remember that the one he had landed had been a very hefty one.

"Oooogh!" gasped Bosanne, still mopping. "I—I will go to my room, Mr. Fish—I am in no state—"

"Aw, can it!" granted Hiram K. "I guess a leetle ink won't hurt you! It ain't spoiled your beauty none—you're jest as good-looking as you was!"

"I am going to my room!" snarled Bosanne. "I have ink in my nose and eyes and ears and hair—groogh! I have swallowed some—ooch! I am going to my room. I will come back later, if you like! But I am going to clean off this ink!"

Another snort from Hiram.

"Doggone that pesky young gink!" he growled. "I sure wish I'd landed him a few more! Look hyer, you pie-can—"

But the "piecan" refused to look there! He tramped away to the stairs, leaving an inky trail after him.

Really, Mr. Fish was expecting rather a great deal from his secretary if he expected him to carry on in that horrible state of drenching ink!

Bosanne, at all events, had no intention of carrying on in that state. He tramped savagely up the stairs and disappeared.

"Carry me home to die!" growled Mr. Fish.

He switched off the light and went back into the picture gallery. With or without the aid of the secretary, he was going to watch for the mystery man.

That interruption was exasperating. If the mystery man had come back from the mysterious explorations while the disturbance was going on, he would certainly have taken the alarm. But there was no sign of him, so far.

The picture gallery, vast and dim, was silent. Mr. Fish passed the long line of portraits of ancient lords of Portercliffe, and got back to the alcove where the Red Earl's picture hung. All was silent and still; the mystery man, clearly, was not coming back yet.

Hiram K. sat down on the ottoman in the alcove, leaned back, waited, and watched. He was not by nature a patient man; he was bursting with push and pep and get and go! But he forced himself to be patient and to wait.

The broken cotton-thread on the picture frame was proof that the mystery man had gone by the secret door. Sooner or later he had to return—and the bony grasp of Hiram was ready for him. He would step from the hidden doorway behind the picture, right into that bony grasp—and Hiram guessed that he would not get out of it again easily.

Mr. Fish would have preferred to have his secretary on the watch in the hall in case the unknown rascal broke loose and ran. But Bosanne had gone to his room, and did not return. Probably the indelible ink kept him busy for quite a long time.

Still, even if the rascal did break loose, even if he got clear, Mr. Fish had his electric torch at hand. He would spot him as he went, at least! He would be able to identify him afterwards! And that would be enough! Impatient as he was, Hiram K. was satisfied that he was going to "get the guy"—and he waited—and waited—and waited!

It was a long wait! He heard two o'clock strike; and then the half-hour chimed in the gloom.

Half-past two! The mystery man was having a good innings in his secret explorations beneath Portercliffe Hall.

Hiram wondered how long and how often the unknown man had gone on those explorations. So far, it seemed that no success had rewarded him. But it might come any time—the hidden hoard of old Lord Portercliffe must be somewhere.

That very night the secret seeker might come back from his quest bulging with gold!

Hiram K.'s eyes glittered in the gloom at that thought.

A sudden faint sound—and Hiram K. Fish's eyes were so accustomed to the gloom by this time that he could discern the outlines of the great gilt frame of the Red Earl's picture. That frame began to move out slowly from the wall.

The secret door was opening!

The mystery man was coming! Hiram K. felt his heart beat a little faster!





Hiram K. Fish jerked Bunter over a bony knee. Then his right hand rose and fell. Smack, smack, smack! "Whoop!" shrieked Bunter, his fat little legs kicking wildly in the air. "Draggimoff!" "Take that, you ornery young piecan!" roared the incensed Mr. Fish. "And that! I guess you've yowled for it, and now you're sure getting it!"

He did not move—he sat silent, still, braced for a sudden spring.

The great picture closed again; the secret door was shut. A dim, massive form passed within a yard of Hiram, crossing the alcove to the open gallery.

And as it passed, Hiram K. Fish leaped at it like a bony tiger, and grasped it with both bony hands!

So sudden and unexpected was the attack in the dark, that the mystery man reeled helplessly under it, panting.

Crash!  
He went down, sprawling out of the alcove into the picture gallery, with Hiram K. Fish on top. A bony, but sinewy knee was planted on a broad chest, pinning him down.

"I guess I got you cinched!" panted Hiram.

He grabbed the electric torch from his pocket and flashed the light on the man beneath him.

But he did not, as he expected, see the face of the mystery man!

What he saw was a cloth mask covering the face from forehead to chin, only a pair of startled, gleaming eyes showing through the eye-holes.

Evidently, the mystery man, though he did not expect to be spotted during his secret prowlings, had taken precautions.

Probably his narrow escape on the night when he had encountered Wharton and Smithy had been a warning to him.

Anyhow, there was no chance of recognizing the face hidden under the mask. All that Hiram had discovered, so far, was as much as the juniors had discovered—that the mystery man was a man of large and powerful build.

"Search me!" panted Mr. Fish, as he red at the mask.

He released the hold of his left hand from the mystery man and grabbed at the mask with it, the electric torch gleaming in his right.

Another second and he would have seen the face.

But the mystery man, utterly surprised as he was by the sudden attack and fall, was quick on the uptake. He struck out, not at Hiram, but at the electric torch in his hand.

The blow sent the torch spinning from Hiram's bony fingers. It crashed on the oak floor of the gallery, and went out.

Darkness rushed on the scene even as the mask, grasped in Hiram's left hand, was torn from the hidden face.

That face would now have been revealed to Hiram's eyes had there been a light to see it by; but in the darkness it was as invisible as if still masked.

"Great John James Brown!" gasped Mr. Fish.

He gripped the struggling man with both bony hands again. But the man underneath was exerting all his strength, and he was, at least, as strong as the lean American, and twice his weight.

Hiram's bony knee was uprooted from the broad chest. Mr. Fish found himself pitched fiercely aside.

The mystery man scrambled up. Hiram was springing at him again in a split second.

But a heavy drive, with all a heavy man's weight behind it, landed on his chest, and he staggered back.

"Aw, wake snakes!" gasped Mr. Fish as he staggered.

The mystery man was running. Big and heavy as he was, he ran fast, sprinting down the long gallery towards the door of the hall. And Hiram K. Fish, panting and furious, pelted after him at top speed.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Got Him!

"MMMMMMMMMM!"  
That mambling sound was audible—had there been ears to hear—in Billy Bunter's room.

Bunter was slumbering. But his slumbers were not so balmy as usual.

A cold in the nose was not conducive to balmy slumber. A sneeze was striving to get under way, and the sleeping Owl gurgled and snorted.

The sneeze got going at last. "Atchoo-oo-hh-ooooop!"

Billy Bunter woko up, sneezing. He sat up in bed in the dark and sneezed and sneezed and sneezed again.

"Ooooooch! Atchooh-chooh-hhooooop!"

It was some sneeze! It seemed, indeed, to be an accumulation of sneezes, which had not been able to get loose while Bunter was asleep. Now they all got going together, and they were going strong.

With streaming eyes and nose Bunter ceased sneezing at last! He groped for a handkerchief, and dabbed his fat face and grunted.

"Peasts! Rotters! Ow! Beastly rotters!"

He was thinking of Harry Wharton & Co., whose fault it was, of course, that Bunter had been caught in the tide that day and drenched, and landed with this beastly cold.

As nothing that ever happened was Bunter's fault, evidently it was the fault of somebody else.

After that Gargantuan sneeze, Bunter was not feeling disposed immediately to resume slumber. And having woko up, he had, of course, woke up hungry. He remembered the cake.

He switched on the shaded electric light at the bed head, groped for his spectacles and jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked round at the bedside table. There lay the cake—a large plum cake—and the sight of it was grateful and comforting.

Bunter lifted the dish from the table to his fat knees, and started on the cake with a huge bite that left a gaping gap in it.

It was his intention to continue till the cake had disappeared, but that intention was never carried out.

With his mouth full of cake he

crunched and munched—for a second. Then there was something like an explosion.

"Urrgh! Gurrgh! Yurrgh!" spluttered Bunter.

He jumped; he fairly bounded. Dish and cake slipped from the bed and crashed on the floor.

Billy Bunter gurgled and gasped and spluttered and puffed and blew. Fragments of that mighty mouthful shot all over the bed.

For the first time on record Billy Bunter took only one bite at a cake! And even that one was a bite too much!

"Oh! Ow! Urrgh! I'm pi-pip-poisoned!" gasped Bunter. "Oooogh! Oooch!"

He gurgled horribly.

Something was the matter with that cake—something awful was the matter with it! It looked all right, but it did not taste all right. It tasted awful, horrible, fearful!

"Groogh! Oooch!"

The taste was something like bitter aloe, something like unripe tomatoes—an awful taste! It lingered on Bunter's tongue, it lingered in his extensive mouth. What on earth had happened to the cake?

"Beasts!" hissed Bunter.

The cake had been all right when he left it by his bedside. That was absolutely certain, for he had taken a bite at it before going to sleep, and it had been delicious then. Somebody had been larking with that cake! Somebody had been putting something on it—goodness knew what. It tasted like some beastly medicine!

Bunter's eyes gleamed with rage through his big spectacles. The cake was uneatable. Hungry as he was, nothing would have induced Billy Bunter to take a second bite at that cake.

He breathed fury.

Some practical joking ass, it appeared, had been larking with that cake. A joke was a joke, but larking with a fellow's food was beyond the limit. Food was a serious matter. It was a very serious matter. If there was anything else as serious in the universe, Billy Bunter had never heard of it.

The wrath of Achilles, to Greece the direful spring of woes unnumbered, was a mere nothing compared with the wrath of Billy Bunter at that moment. A lioness robbed of her cubs could hardly have felt like Billy Bunter deprived of a cake!

And he was hungry!

There was nothing else in his room to eat. Not a stick of toffee, not a solitary bullseye!

Bunter, as usual, was hard-up. A postal order, which he had been expecting for quite a long time, had not arrived. He had not retained a single solitary "quid" of the hidden hoard he had unearthed in the hollow oak. The other fellows, selfish as usual, kept their cash in their own pockets—except the good Alonzo. But the goodness of Alonzo was only temporarily useful. Having lent Bunter all he had, Alonzo could lend no more.

Bunter groaned.

The cold in his head, added to the fact that he had slept all the evening, made him less sleepy than usual. That fearful taste in his mouth added to his wakefulness. And he was hungry—famished! It was impossible to go to sleep again without parking something, and there was nothing to park!

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He laid his fat head on the pillow and wooed slumber. But slumber was coy, and refused to be wooed.

He sat up again.

His watch told him that it was half-past two. Nobody could possibly be up at that hour. It was obviously useless to ring for Chandos.

Even if the butler heard the bell, it was extremely improbable that he would heed it at half-past two in the morning. And downstairs everything would be locked up. Burgling the pantry was not a practical proposition.

But Bunter could not sleep. With a tickling in his fat little nose, hinting of other sneezes to come, with a fearful taste in his mouth, and with an aching void in his extensive inside, it was useless to think of sleep.

He rolled out of bed at last.

Pantry and larder were beyond his reach. But there was the sideboard in

the dining-room where he knew that there were biscuits.

He knew that quite well, for he had helped himself at odd moments from that supply. Biscuits were rather a light diet to a fellow as hungry as Bunter, but it was a case of any port in a storm. A few pounds of biscuits would at least take the edge off his hunger.

The August night was warm—in fact, very warm—and Bunter did not trouble to dress. He pulled on his trousers and slipped his feet into a pair of Nugent's slippers, which he had thoughtfully annexed a day or two ago. Then he opened his door and blinked out into the corridor.

It was very dark and very silent.

Bunter hesitated. He did not like dark stairs and passages at night.

But hunger drove him on. There was a faint glimmer of starlight from high windows over the grand staircase. He could see his way, and it would take him only a few minutes to nip down to the dining-room, which opened off the hall.

In a couple of minutes the fat Owl was in the great hall of Portercliffe. He rolled across it from the staircase.

Suddenly he stopped.

Up to that moment the silence had been unbroken—heavy and tomb-like. It was broken suddenly by a strange outbreak of sound.

Bunter stood transfixed.

In utter amazement he realised that a struggle was going on somewhere. He realised that the sound came from the direction of the picture gallery.

But he had no time to think. The door on the picture gallery, opening on the hall, was suddenly hurled wide. A running figure rushed through.

Who it was, what it was, what it all meant, the startled and terrified Owl had not the faintest idea. He did not realise that he was standing in the way of a desperate fugitive till the crash came.

Something heavy hurtled into him, and Billy Bunter went spinning. He gave a gasping howl, and rolled over on the polished oak floor.

There was a muttered, startled exclamation in the darkness as the running man reeled from the shock. But in a split second he was running again.

Bunter sprawled and gasped.

He did not even know that a second running figure was hurtling out of the doorway on the picture-gallery. But he knew that feet entangled themselves in him as he sprawled on the floor, and that somebody stumbled and sprawled headlong across him in the dark.

The next second a fierce grip was on him.

From the darkness there was a faint sound of a closing door. The mystery man had escaped. But Hiram K. Fish was unaware of that as he grasped and clutched at the wriggling, gasping form beneath him in the darkness.

"Got him!" panted Hiram K. Fish.

There was little doubt that he would have "got" the fugitive had not Billy Bunter been in the way. Now he had got Bunter! Saved by the very skin of his teeth, the mystery man of Portercliffe had vanished, and Billy Bunter, scared out of his fat wits, wriggled and squeaked in the clutch of Hiram K. Fish.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Only Bunter!

"GOTCHER!" panted Hiram K. He had him! There was no doubt about that!

He had, so to speak, the wrong pig

# NEW Full-of-Thrills CARD GAME

HERE'S a game that you and all your friends can play; a jolly good game, too! It's quite new, quite simple, and 100% entertaining. "Bobs Y'r Uncle" will be the cry at many a jolly party. How those dull minutes will fly! The game consists of a highly coloured pack of 54 cards in a novelty container with full rules of the play. Smiles grow into laughs; laughs become roars of hilarity when "Bobs Y'r Uncle" bobs up. Try out the new card game to-day. It's going to be the big hit of the season.

# Bobs Y'r Uncle

Made by John Waddington  
Ltd., Makers of the World's  
Finest Playing Cards.



by the ear! But he had him—hard and fast!

Billy Bunter, dazed and dizzy, in a state of hopeless confusion and funk, collapsed under the lean American. A bony knee planted on him, pinning him down, almost punctured him. His bones almost cracked under the grip of the lean hands.

"Gotcher!" repeated Hiram K., a trill of triumph in his voice. "By the great horned toad, I gotcher!"

In the picture-gallery his mysterious adversary had struggled and pitched him off. In the hall Hiram K. had an easier job of it. His adversary did not struggle at all. He only gurgled and squeaked.

In the dense darkness, Hiram K. could not discern his prisoner. But he had got him. What he wanted now was a light. He roared:

"Wake up! Hallo! You galoots! Chandos! James! John! Hallo! Help here! Wake up, you guys!"

Hiram K.'s powerful voice rang through the sleeping house. He dared not loosen his grip on his prisoner, lest he should twist loose and escape, so he could not turn on a light himself. The mystery man had dodged him once, but this time Hiram K. was making sure of his man!

But it was easy to get help. Hiram K. had a powerful voice, and he put steam on. Portercliffe Hall echoed to his roar.

There was a sound of opening doors, of startled voices.

A light flashed on in the oak gallery above the hall, and Harry Wharton stared down over the balustrade. Wharton was the first out of his room, alarmed by the sudden uproar. But all the fellows were awakened, and turning out.

There was a pattering of footsteps and a shouting of voices.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What's the row?"

"What the thump—"

"Say, you guys, come down here!" roared Mr. Fish. "Get the lights on! I sure got that mystery guy! You hear me? Get here, you! Get the lights on! I've sure got him cinched, and I guess I'm hoping to see his frontispiece—pronto!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

He raced down the stairs.

After him came a crowd of fellows in pyjamas, all wildly excited. Only the Bounder did not turn out. He awakened and heard the roar of Hiram K., but he did not heed. He had had enough of Hiram K. But all the other fellows came rushing down.

Wharton was the first; but fast after him came the Co. and Kipps and Wibley, Alonzo bringing up the rear with Fisher T. Fish. Wharton switched on lights, and ran towards Mr. Fish.

"What—who—" he gasped.

"I guess I got him! I guess— Why—what—what the great horned toad! What the John James Brown!" yelled Mr. Fish, as the light revealed his wriggling prisoner.

He stared down, with bulging eyes, at Billy Bunter!

"Oooooogh!" squealed Bunter.

"Carry me home to die!" howled Mr. Fish.

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

"The esteemed and idiotic Bunter!"

"That ass Bunter!"

"What the dickens—"

"Ooogh!" moaned Bunter. "Ooogh! Wooooogh!"

The bony knee that nearly punctured him deprived the hapless Owl of breath. He could only squeal dismally.

"It's Bunter!" gasped Frank Nugent. "Search me!" gasped Mr. Fish.

He released the fat Owl, and jumped to his feet.

How Bunter had got there he could not begin to guess. But he had to believe the evidence of his eyes. It was Bunter he had captured, and he glared round the great hall for the mystery man.

Bunter sat up and gurgled.

"Say, did you spot that guy?" yelled Mr. Fish. "You seen anything of him?"

"Of whom?" gasped Wharton.

"That mystery guy!" howled Mr. Fish. "I got him in the picture-gallery, and he sure broke loose and ran, and I was right at his heels! I figured I'd got him when I got hold of that fat gink!"

He glared round with searching eyes. But he hardly expected to see anything of the mystery man now. That mysterious personage had had time to make his escape, and he had vanished.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"I guess I'd have had him but for that fat gink!" roared the incensed Mr. Fish. "What was that locoed geck doing here? Say, you, Bunter—"

"Oooooogh!"

"Did you spot him?" howled Mr. Fish.

"Ooooooch!"

Mr. Fish grasped the fat Owl with a bony hand and shook him.

"Spill it!" he roared.

"Urrrggh!"

"What was you doing here?" howled Hiram K. "Was you horning into what wasn't your business, like that other young geck?"

"Wooogh! I kik-kik-kik—" stut-tered Bunter.

"Shoot!" roared Mr. Fish.

"I kik-kik-came down to get something to eat!" gasped Bunter. "Somebody ran into me in the dark—ooogh—and knocked me over! Woogh! Then you fell on me, you beast!"

"Oh, you pesky piccan!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Say, pop, didn't you get a once-over on the guy?"

"I guess I wouldn't know him from Adam!" hooted Mr. Fish.

He turned from Bunter as the service door opened, and Chandos, half-dressed, came through, with a startled look on his plump face.

"What—what has happened?" exclaimed Chandos, staring round at the crowd of Greyfriars fellows. "Is it fire—or burglars—or—"

"Nope!" roared Mr. Fish. "I'll say nunk! I guess it's that mystery guy, Chandos, and I'd sure have cinched him if that locoed goob hadn't got in my way! You seen anything of him?"

"I have seen no one, sir! I was awakened by a loud noise! I thought I heard your voice—"

"You sure took your time to get a move on!" growled Mr. Fish.

"Really, sir," said Chandos, with dignity, "I am quite unaccustomed—"

"Aw! Pack it up! He's got away!" snorted Mr. Fish. "Call up every dog-goned servant in the house, Chandos, and set them hunting him! Find out if any guy was out of bed! Get to it!"

"Oh, certainly, sir! But—but am I to understand that some extraneous person has been here?"

"You bonthead, can't you get it into your cabeza that I had a grip on the mystery guy, and he got loose?" roared Mr. Fish. "Ain't you got the brains of a bunny rabbit in that pesky fat cabeza of yours? I'm telling you to get to it, and root out that dog-goned guy!"

Harry Wharton was watching the butler's plump face. Chandos, half-dressed, had all the appearance of a

man suddenly startled from slumber in the small hours.

Yet, if the Bounder's suspicion was well founded, Chandos must be the very man whom Mr. Fish had seized, and who owed his escape to Billy Bunter's unintentional intervention.

Was it possible?

Wharton shook his head at the thought. It did not seem possible—or, at all events, probable—to his mind.

Mr. Fish turned back to Billy Bunter. The fat Owl had recovered his breath a little. He set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked rather uneasily at Mr. Fish. He had cause for uneasiness. The expression on the American gentleman's face was quite alarming.

"You pesky young bonthead!" said Mr. Fish. "I'd have had him, dead to rights, if you hadn't horned in!"

He grabbed at Bunter.

"I say—leggo!" yelled the alarmed Owl. "I say— Oh, crikey!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Mr. Fish—"

"Esteemed and ludicrous Fish!" gasped Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Hold on!" stammered Johnny Bull.

Unheeding, Hiram K. Fish jerked the fat junior over a bony knee. Then his right hand rose and fell.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Yaroooh! Help!" roared Bunter.

In dealing with Herbert Vernon-Smith, earlier that eventful and exciting night, Mr. Fish had forgotten that he was host and Smith guest. Now he seemed afflicted with the same loss of memory, only more so!

Certainly, nobody would have supposed that Bunter was a distinguished guest at Portercliffe Hall, who had seen him up-ended over the American's bony knee, wriggling and writhing under the swipes of a bony hand.

Smack, smack!

"I say, you fellows!" shrieked Bunter. "I say— Whooop!"

"Take that you ornery young piccan!" roared the incensed Mr. Fish. "And that, and that! I guess you've yowled for it, and now you're sure getting it!"

Smack, smack!

"Help! Whoop! Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, his fat little legs kicking wildly in the air. "Yaroooh! I say, you fellows, draggimoff! Yoo-hoop!"

Smack, smack!

"Yow-ow-ow-woooooop!"

How long Mr. Fish, in his wrath, would have gone on smacking, it is impossible to say. The Famous Five rushed to the rescue of Bunter.

They grabbed him and jerked him away from Mr. Fish's bony knee—so suddenly, that Mr. Fish's bony hand, coming down again, swiping, missed him, and landed on the bony knee instead—and Hiram K. uttered a fiendish yell as he got his own smack!

"Hook it!" gasped Bob.

"Yurrogh!" roared Mr. Fish. "I guess—ow! Wake snakes! I surely guess—"

Harry Wharton & Co. rushed Bunter to the staircase and pushed him up headlong.

The other fellows followed them, grinning. Mr. Fish's voice followed them, also, raised in tones of wrath: but fortunately only his voice followed—his bony person remaining in the hall.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, as the chums of the Remove twirled him into his room. "I say, you fellows— Ow! I say— Wow! I'm hurt! I say, I shall refuse to stay here if that's the way that bony old beast is going to

behave! Ow! I say, I'm hungry! I say, who's going to get me some grub?"

There was no answer to that. The juniors, chuckling, went to their own rooms—leaving the problem of grub unsolved.

Bunter blinked into the corridor after the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows—" he yelled.

Doors slammed along the passage! There was no other reply.

"Beasts!" howled Bunter.

He blinked towards the stairs. But from that direction the voice of Hiram K. Fish could still be heard!

Bunter closed his door. Hungry as he was—famished, in fact, he was not inclined to go on another voyage of discovery. He rolled into bed—and forgot, at long last, his trials and tribulations in slumber!

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Beetles on Bunter!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO. went down to Cliftonville beach to bathe the following morning—without Bunter.

Bunter was ill in bed.

Whether Bunter really was ill, whether he fancied he was ill, or whether he was pretending to be ill, nobody quite knew—but probably the truth was a mixture of all three. Certainly, his illness did not affect his appetite—his performance at breakfast, which was taken up to his room, showed that he was still feeding his cold on a generous scale. Occasionally he sneezed; but more snores than sneezes were heard from his room.

With the selfishness Bunter really expected from them, the Portercliffe party went out to bathe—leaving him on his own! To tell the sad truth, they forgot the fat Owl's fat existence—and did not remember it till they came back to Portercliffe Hall late in the morning.

"Bunter down yet, Chandos?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No, sir!" answered the butler. "I understand that Master Bunter is ill, sir! He has not left his room."

"Poor, dear William!" said Alonzo Todd. "He would have been quite, quite well by this time if he had taken the dose of Dr. Pooter's Marvellous Mixture for Pining People, or if he had eaten the cake on which I spread Dr. Pooter's Pink Powder for Sleepless Sufferers! I wonder if he would take some of Dr. Pooter's Tabloids, if I urged him very, very earnestly?"

"Better give him a look-in!" said Bob.

"Let's!" agreed Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five went up to give Bunter a look-in, with Kipps and Wibley and Alonzo.

Fisher T. Fish did not betray any deep interest in the sad state of his distinguished guest. Neither did the Bouncer.

Smithy was not in a good temper that morning. After what had happened in the night, the Bouncer was strongly inclined to clear off and shake the dust of Portercliffe Hall from his feet.

Still, he admitted that Mr. Fish had had some excuse for getting wild and forgetting the consideration due to a guest. But he had quite dropped his scheme of "spotting" the man he suspected, and he gave Chandos no further attention. If Hiram K. wanted to spot the mystery man of Portercliffe, he could do it without any assistance from Smithy.

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Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed when the juniors came in. He had his fat thumb on an electric bell.

But it was producing no result. Numerous as they were, the staff at Portercliffe Hall seemed to be passing Bunter's summons unheeded. Perhaps they were getting fed-up with Bunter. In the intervals of snoring he had rung that bell about fifteen or sixteen times during the morning. Now it buzzed on unheeding ears—if it was buzzing at all!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Enjoying life, old fat man?"

"I say, you fellows, there's something wrong with this beastly bell!" yapped Bunter. "I've been ringing and ringing, and nobody comes!"

"Why not turn out?" asked Harry.

"I'm ill!"

"Lost your appetite?" asked Wibley.

"The fact is, I'm hungry!" said Bunter. "I believe in feeding a cold, you know. I've had one or two snacks since brekker. One of you fellows go down and tell Fishy this bell doesn't ring."

"Oh, all right!" said Bob; and he went to the stairs and leaned over the banisters to call to Fisher T. Fish in the hall below:

"Fishy, old bean, Bunter says he can't make the servants hear!"

Fishy glanced up at him.

"I guess he's made them hear a whole lot this morning," he answered. "I'll opine that they're sure tired of hearing that bell! Mebbe that's why Chandos has disconnected it."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob.

Neither Popper nor Son yearned for the society of Billy Bunter at Portercliffe Hall; and Chandos and his staff did not regard him with enthusiasm. It was like Bunter to give incessant and unlimited trouble, and though the staff at the Hall certainly were not overworked, they naturally tired of plodding up and down stairs and corridors whenever the spirit moved Bunter to ring.

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Bunter still ill?" he asked.

"Sort of."

"I guess he'd better get well, then!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I've mentioned to Chandos that he needn't take a whole lot of trouble about the fat gink, and I guess Chandos has caught on a few."

Bob returned to Bunter's room. Bunter's fat thumb was still pressing on the bell-push. But it was not likely to bring Chandos, or James, or John, or Robert, or Adolphus, up to Bunter's room. Chandos & Co. had had enough—evidently encouraged by Fishy.

"Better turn out, old man," said Bob. "That bell is—'hem—out of order. Shall I help you out of bed?"

"Keep off, you beast! I'm ill!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, if you've been down to Margate, you might have brought me some toffee, or bullseyes—"

"My dear William," said Alonzo gently, "toffee and bullseyes would be very bad for you when you are so very, very ill! But if you would take a tablespoonful of Dr. Pooter's Marvellous Mixture, in a glass of lukewarm water—"

"Beast!"

"Turn out, you fat slacker!" growled Johnny Bull. "You've got a bit of a cold in the nose—no need to stick frowning in bed for that."

"I couldn't get out of this bed to save my life!" said Bunter feebly. "I'm awfully ill—fading away, I think! I felt pneumonia coming on yesterday, after you brutes got me wet down by the beach. You can cackle—"

"Thanks, we will! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackle!" said Bunter bitterly. "You'll suffer from remorse, if you see me expire! I've got pneumonia in my legs, and plumbago all over me! I think it's double pneumonia!"

"Not treble?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm too weak to move!" continued Bunter. "I couldn't crawl from this bed if the house was on fire—"

"Is that a beetle on your bed, Bunter?" asked Kipps suddenly.

"Eh—what—ooogh—"

"Look here!" Kipps leaned over and grabbed at Bunter's pillow.

A black, wriggling beetle showed in the palm of his hand.

"Ooogh!" spluttered Bunter. "Keep it off me! I—Urrghh!"

"Look here—and here—and here!"

Kipps grabbed blackbeetle after beetle from Bunter's bed—or, at all events, he appeared to do so. Bunter, with a yell of horror, bounded out of the bed.

Quite forgetful that he could not have crawled from the bed if the house had been on fire, the fat junior bounced out like an indiarubber ball. Beetles in the bed were too much even for the fat slacker of Greyfriars.

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed Alonzo. "How very, very unpleasant to have blackbeetles in your bed, my dear William—"

"Urrgh! Are there any on me, you fellows?" shrieked Bunter. "I say, look and see if there's any on me! Yurrrghh!"

"You look, Kippers!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You're the man to find them—if any!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look!" exclaimed Kipps. "And look!" He grabbed a blackbeetle from Bunter's neck, made a motion of tossing it away, and grabbed another—and another! "The beetles seem to like you, Bunter."

"Ow! Grooogh! Take 'em off me!" shrieked Bunter, shuddering from head to foot. "I say, you fellows—grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the fellows, except Bunter and Alonzo, were aware that it was the same beetle all the time—Kipps' mechanical beetle, which the schoolboy conjurer kept in his pocket.

They roared with laughter as Kipps picked beetle after beetle off Bunter—the same beetle reappearing each time.

"How very, very dreadful!" gasped Alonzo. "How very, very—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Beast!" roared Bunter, suddenly enlightened by the laughter and remembering the spiders on the beach. "Oh, you rotter, you're playing a rotten conjuring trick again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me! He's tumbled to it!" sighed Kipps, slipping the mechanical beetle back into his pocket. "Never mind, you've got up now. You could get up, after all, you see! Stay up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

He grabbed the pillow from his bed, whirled it aloft in both fat hands, and hurled it at Oliver Kipps.

Kipps ducked in time and the pillow whizzed over him.

But every bullet has its billet! It landed on the kind, simple face of Alonzo Todd, and Alonzo went over backwards, as if he had been shot.

"Oh!" gasped Alonzo. "Ow! Wooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my goodness!" Alonzo sat up dizzily. "My d-dear William, why did you hurl that pillow at me! I am very, very—Ow! Wow!"



"Yarooop!" roared Bunter. "I'll put out my tongue! Wow!" The fat junior opened a large mouth, projected his tongue, and glared at Dr. Diddle, crimson with fury. The medical man inserted a finger-tip into a small packet, and then placed the finger-tip on Bunter's tongue. "Gurrgh!" spluttered Bunter. "It's mustard! Yarroogh!"

Bunter, unheeding Alonzo, grasped another pillow, and blinked round ferociously for the schoolboy conjurer. Kipps dodged out of the room chuckling. The other fellows followed him, Alonzo tottering after them, with his hand to his nose—which felt very, very painful.

Billy Bunter, snorting, crawled back into bed—an invalid again! He resumed pressing the bell-push. But answer there came none, and the fat Owl gave it up at last, laid his fat head on the pillow, and snored till the gong for lunch awoke the echoes of Portercliffe Hall.

that Alonzo Todd sat with the interesting invalid—self-sacrifice being Alonzo's long suit.

Looking into Bunter's room before starting for Margate, the Famous Five found Bunter in bed and Alonzo sitting by the bedside. Whereupon they urged Bunter, not politely, to turn out and stop slacking.

Which Bunter had no intention of doing. The servants did not answer the bell; but so long as a fellow was there to wait on Bunter, it was all right—for Bunter! And if it was all right for Bunter, nothing else mattered.

"You're a silly ass, Alonzo!" said Bob Cherry.

"My dear Robert—" murmured Alonzo.

"And a burbling chump!" added Harry Wharton.

"My dear Henry—"

"Look here, leave that fat frump to frowst and come down to Margate!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"I should be very, very pleased, my dear John, but dear William thinks that he requires attention—"

"I should jolly well think so!" snorted Bunter. "Go and leave me to suffer, you beasts—lot you care if I peg out while you're gone! After all I've done for you, too! You stay here, Alonzo."

"Certainly, my dear William!"

And the party cleared off, leaving Alonzo to look after the invalid.

Sitting with Bunter on a blazing August afternoon was not grateful or comforting; but the long-suffering Alonzo bore it with meek cheerfulness.

He looked a little tired when the juniors came back for tea, and gave him a look in. Bunter had kept him fairly busy fetching and carrying.

Encouraged by Fishy, the servants absolutely neglected Bunter. But with the good Alonzo to wait on him, Bunter did not miss their attentions. How many times Alonzo had gone up and down the stairs he could hardly have counted.

"You're a silly ass, Alonzo!" Wibley told him.

"Leave that fat frowster to frowst, and come out!" said Kipps.

Alonzo shook his head.

Harry Wharton & Co. tea'd on the lawn, under the shade of the great Portercliffe oak. Alonzo tea'd with Bunter in his room—having his meal in snatches in the intervals of waiting on Bunter.

That evening the juniors intended to go down to Margate to a concert. Bunter did not care for concerts. Nobody cared whether Bunter came or not, but the fellows were concerned for Alonzo.

"It's rotten!" growled Bob Cherry. "Alonzo's a prize ass, but it's rotten to see a silly ass put on like this! I've a jolly good mind to go and roll that fat frowster out of bed on his neck!"

"Let's!" said Johnny Bull.

Wibley had a very thoughtful expression on his face.

"What about getting a doctor to Bunter?" he asked.

"He doesn't want a doctor!" said Harry. "He's got a bit of a cold in the nose—nothing to speak of. It's all humbug!"

"The esteemed humbug is terrific!"

"But a doctor might do him good, all the same!" said Wibley thoughtfully. "I've brought my theatrical props with me, you know—"

"Eh?"

"And I can make up as a medical man easily enough. I'm as good a doctor as Bunter needs—in fact, I think I might be able to do him more good than a real medical wallah."

The juniors stared at Wibley. Then there was a chuckle. Wibley, the great chief of the Remove Dramatic Society, lived and moved and had his being in theatrical stunts. Evidently Wibley saw a chance for displaying his powers now that Bunter was an invalid.

"Bunter ought to be cured!" said Wibley. "A real doctor couldn't cure him."

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Looking After Bunter!

"TURN out!"  
 "I'm ill!"  
 "You fat slacker!"  
 "Beast!"

Lunch had been sent up to Bunter's room. After lunch he did not turn out. Ill or not, Bunter was determined to be ill, and that was that!

That afternoon the Greyfriars fellows were going down to Margate to walk on the pier and listen to the band; and it was a fact that if Bunter stayed behind nobody would miss him to any great extent. Bunter, in fact, was welcome to play the invalid if he liked till the end of the holidays.

But he was not willing to play the invalid on his lonely own. He required attention.

He made the cheery suggestion that the party should take turns at sitting in his room, in case he wanted anything—which was very likely, as Bunter's wants were numerous.

That suggestion was taken as a jest by the Portercliffe party—with the exception of Alonzo, who was very, very concerned about Bunter, and very, very sympathetic. And so it came to pass

because there's nothing the matter with him. But I think I could do it. I'm going to try, anyhow."

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The goodness of the egg is preposterous!" declared Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

And after tea the juniors repaired to Wibley's room, where the Greyfriars actor sorted out his "props." It was agreed that Bunter ought to be cured—if not for his own sake, at least for Alonzo's.

There were many chuckles in Wibley's room as the "props" were sorted out, and Wib proceeded to dress for the part.

The Famous Five went along to Bunter's room to prepare him for the medical man's visit.

They found Bunter sitting up in bed taking a little nourishment. There was a tray on his knees loaded with food-stuffs. Another tray was on the bedside table. Alonzo was on his feet, tired, but still very, very kind, very, very patient, and very, very dutiful.

"You silly fathead, you haven't sugared the tea!" Bunter was remarking, as the Famous Five came in.

"My dear William, I put in three lumps—"

"You know I like six!" snapped Bunter. "I've told you so. It's pretty sickening to be lying here ill and helpless, and nobody taking even the little bit of trouble to put sugar in a fellow's tea."

"But, my dear William—"

"Selfishness all round!" said Bunter bitterly. "Well, I'm used to it. I wonder sometimes whether I may not grow selfish myself in the long run, surrounded by selfishness like this."

Alonzo dropped three more lumps in Bunter's teacup.

"Don't splash the tea all over a fellow!" yapped Bunter. "What a clumsy ass you are, Alonzo!"

"My dear—"

"Oh, don't jaw! Put some more milk in the tea! I should think you could take trouble enough to put in some milk. Don't spill it all over the shop, you silly idiot!"

It was fortunate that Alonzo was a patient youth. A fellow looking after an invalid like Bunter needed patience—quite a lot of it.

"Feeling better, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No!" yapped Bunter. "Worse!"

"Like to see a doctor?"

"No, you silly fathead! Doctors only make a fellow worse than ever. I saw a doctor last Christmas, and the silly idiot made out that I had been eating too much Christmas pudding. That's the sort of rot you get from doctors."

"But we're fearfully anxious about you!" said Bob. "And, in fact, we're calling in a doctor."

"I jolly well shan't see a doctor!" hooted Bunter. "If you've rung up a doctor you can go and ring him off again—see?"

"Too late," said Nugent. "He's here, Bunter."

"Keep him out of my room!" roared Bunter. "I tell you I won't see a doctor! Do you hear? The silly fool would very likely make out that I wasn't ill at all. I refuse—"

"This is the room, sir," said Kipps' voice at the door. "The patient is in bed. Step in here."

"Thank you!" said a deep, rather husky voice.

A slim figure in a black frock coat stepped into Bunter's room. Billy Bunter blinked at him. The Famous Five stared at him. Had they not been aware that it was a jape, certainly they would not have dreamed of recognising Wibley. He wore horn-rimmed glasses, and a short grey beard, and had life-like wrinkles on his brow, and looked about sixty.

"Here you are, Bunter," said Bob. "Dr. Diddle to see you."

"Beast! I—I won't—"

"Ah! Is this the patient?" Dr. Diddle advanced to the bedside. "Bless my soul! What is all this food doing here? Take it away at once!"

## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Complete Cure!

**B**ILLY BUNTER glared at Dr. Diddle through his big spectacles with a deadly glare.

Bunter did not want to see a doctor. He knew doctors of old. Bunter had seen doctors before, and he never saw a doctor without the medical man making out that he ate too much.

This doctor, evidently, was just as bad as the rest.

"Look here!" howled Bunter.

"Take away all that food immediately!" snapped Dr. Diddle.

"Certainly!" said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—" yelled Bunter.

"My dear chap, you have to obey doctor's orders!" said Bob. "Let go that tray, you fat ass!"

"Shan't!" yelled Bunter. "I don't want to see a doctor! I won't see a doctor! Leave my grub alone, you beast!"

Bunter grasped the tray with both fat hands, and held on. Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton grasped it, and pulled.

The result might easily have been expected. The tray up-ended, and the contents shot over Bunter.

There was a fearful howl from the fat junior as he received tea and milk and cake and jam sponge in a shower.

"Ooogh! Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Alonzo.

"My dear William—"

"Yooop! I'm soaked! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! Owl! I'm drenched! That tea's hot—wow! I'm all sticky! Ow!"

Billy Bunter clutched at jam sponge, and dabbed at tea and milk frantically. The juniors chuckled, and a smile glided even over the serious face of Dr. Diddle.

"Calm yourself, my dear boy!" said the medical gentleman soothingly.

"Calm yourself! This feverishness is—"

"I'm not feverish!" howled Bunter.

"Let me feel your pulse!"

"My pulse is all right, blow you!"

"I must feel your pulse! It looks a little like delirium," said Dr. Diddle.

"Has the patient displayed this extraordinary excitement before?"

"Beast! Lemme alone!" hooted Bunter. "Leggo my arm, you beast!"

"Pray hold him while I feel his pulse!"

"Leggo!" he howled. "Leggo! I say, Alonzo, make 'em leggo! Drag-emoff!"

(Continued on page 28.)

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### Into the Depths!

AS far as the public was concerned there was no talk of war nor hint of war in those early months of 1934. But the British Government was aware that, behind the scenes, a great Baltic power was plotting against Britain and her empire, and that unless something unforeseen happened merciless and ruthless hostilities would break out before the summer had passed.

Blissfully unaware of the war clouds which were gathering, Carson and Cribb, two schoolboys from Abbots-court, set out on a cycling tour of the Scottish Highlands, and, hearing of a mysterious monster which was reputed to haunt the waters of Loch Clure, they proceeded to investigate it.

That mysterious monster, however, was nothing more or less than a flying submarine, invented by its commander, Captain Lawless, undergoing secret tests on the waters, and beneath the waters, of the loch.

To their astonishment and indignation, Carson and Cribb were pounced on by a gang of foreign seamen, led by a swarthy-faced fellow named Captain Strom.

Capturing Lawless and the submarine, Strom set off for the Baltic aboard the submarine, taking Carson, Cribb and Lawless with him.

The British Fleet, engaged in manoeuvres off the Firth of Forth, was attacked by Strom, who, having sunk the leading battle cruiser of the line, dived for the safety of the depths.

But Strom was too late, for already lean-hulled and swift little destroyers were dashing to the spot where he had submerged, and as their depth charges exploded deafeningly around the reeling submarine, low-flying aeroplanes from the fleet aircraft carrier added to the craft's peril by dropping aerial torpedoes.

His swarthy face livid with fear and rage, Strom spun the control wheel in a frenzied effort to steady the wildly-rolling submarine as it zigzagged down towards the ocean bottom.

"Blood and fury!" he cried hoarsely. "She's out of control!"

"She's worse than that," snarled Vorsart, one of his officers, "she's filling with gas!"

It was only too true. The acid from the accumulators was splashing on to the steel flooring, and a yellow, pungent fog of death was filling the hull of the stricken craft.

"Take the wheel!" choked Strom, and as Vorsart grabbed the spokes, Strom whipped out his knife and commenced sawing frantically at the bonds of Captain Lawless.

"You've got to take over," he grated. "It's your only chance of life, as well as ours!"

Lying helpless in their bonds, sick and nauseated by the deadly fumes of the gas, Carson and Cribb watched Lawless lurch to the wheel, push Vorsart aside, and take control.

The depth gauge was registering twenty-five fathoms, and, pressing the

---

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO**  
**if you were given the choice**  
**of throwing in your lot with**  
**the enemies of your country**  
**or facing a firing party?**

---

switch which operated the electrically controlled hydroplanes, Lawless took the submarine swiftly towards the surface, the water swishing gurglingly out of the ballast tanks.

"Mein geist!" swore Vorsart. "If we surface we're as good as dead!"

"We're as good as dead if we don't!" snarled Strom. "Stand by to open the hatch the moment we break water!"

He thrust his gun into the back of Lawless.

"Keep her half-submerged!" he warned harshly. "If you surface completely I'll blow you to purgatory!"

Lawless made no reply. His bronzed and clear-cut features were grim and set, and his eyes, cold and hard as chilled steel, were fixed on the depth gauge.

Fifteen fathoms—ten fathoms—five fathoms—

"She's coming up!" cried Strom to Vorsart. "Ready with the hatch!"

He stared over the shoulder of Lawless into the big periscope mirror. Two destroyers dashed across the glass, water pouring from their bows.

The submarine was coming up in the midst of the fleet.

"Remember!" rasped Strom, jabbing his gun hard into the small of Lawless' back. "If you surface—"

He broke off, staggeringly endeavouring to keep his balance as, with a sudden upward swoop, the submarine broke water, leaping out of the sea like some gigantic black seal, to fall and hit the water again with a resounding splash.

Oblivious, for the moment, to everything but the letting of air into the boat, Vorsart whipped open the hatch, and as the clean, fresh tang of the sea came sweeping into the gas laden atmosphere of the hull, he leapt at Lawless.

A smash to the mouth sent him reeling back against a bulkhead, and before he could recover Lawless had sprung at Strom and was fighting desperately for possession of the gun.

"Stand by to close the hatch!" screamed Vorsart, rushing to the wheel.

As two of the seamen leapt to obey he took control of the wildly careering submarine.

Already the swift little fighting scouts of the aircraft carrier were screaming down to the attack.

Yelling to the seamen to close the hatch, Vorsart took the submarine diving down into the depths again.

He drove her under as fast as her powerful motors could take her, and he owed his escape to having dived right beneath the gigantic hull of a monster battle cruiser.

By the time he had cleared the cruiser he was fathoms deep, and the depth charges of the pursuing aircraft exploded harmlessly above him, rocking the submarine as she tore down to the safety of the depths.

Meanwhile, behind him, the fight between Lawless and Strom was being furiously waged.

But the two seamen had rushed to their leader's assistance, as had Roburg, Strom's second officer.

Outnumbered by four to one, and  
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those four savage and desperate men, Lawless put up an amazingly good fight. Roburg had snatched the gun from Strom's hand, but before he could fire it a smashing upper-cut sent him staggering back, to crash, a limp and huddled heap, to the floor.

A vicious kick in the stomach from the panting, snarling Strom momentarily doubled Lawless up, but, recovering himself, he drove a terrific right to Strom's bruised and broken lips, sending that individual reeling back, spitting broken teeth, and cursing.

Next instant, Lawless' arms were pinioned to his sides by the strong, encircling arms of one of the seamen, and before he could free himself a heavy spanner in the hand of the other man crashed sickeningly down on his skull, plunging him into the black oblivion of unconsciousness.

### The Naval Base!

**T**HE submarine did not surface again until it was well out in the North Sea, and then it only broke water when Strom had satisfied himself through the periscope that there was no shipping about.

Skimming across the sea, the submarine spread its metal wings and, soaring into the air, headed swiftly northwards until towards mid morning it glided down to land on the water beside a rusty-hulled freighter which was pounding its way towards the Baltic.

Aboard this old tramp, the s.s. Tawda, were the seamen who had helped Strom to capture the submarine. They had with them as prisoners the engineers and fitters who had been assisting Lawless at Loch Clure.

Receiving a report that all was well, Strom took the air again and, climbing to twenty thousand feet, headed eastwards towards the Baltic.

"So you've come round, then?" he said to Lawless, descending into the hull and crossing to where the commander was lying bound hand and foot beside Carson and Cribb. "I must congratulate you on the performance of this craft of yours. It exceeds even my most sanguine expectations."

"I'm so glad," responded Lawless evenly.

Strom's bruised and swollen lips twisted in a mirthless grin.

"With a fleet of these, we shall have Britain at our mercy," he said. "There is neither a sea fleet nor an air fleet that could withstand an attack by this type of craft. It is a pity that you, as the inventor, will not live to witness its triumphs!"

"I agree entirely," murmured Lawless.

His imperturbability goaded Strom to anger.

"We're heading for Balkoff, our naval base," snarled the latter. "When we get there you'll be given the choice of throwing in your lot with us or facing a firing party. You've got between now and then to make up your mind what you'll do."

He glared at Carson and Cribb.

"And the same applies to you two!" he snapped. Then, turning on his heel, he ascended into the squat observation tower.

So swiftly did the flying submarine devour space that it was shortly after noon that the high-pitched drone of its engines died away to a low hum and it glided down to land on the water

near the submarine piers and iron quays of the big naval base of Balkoff on the eastern shores of the Baltic.

With wings folded back, the submarine surged in towards a steel jetty.

Leaving the prisoners in the charge of Vorsart and Roburg, Strom went ashore.

He was gone about an hour, and when he returned, it was with an armed guard of great-coated soldiers.

The bonds of Lawless, Carson, and Cribb were removed, and in the midst of the guard they were taken ashore and marched past row after row of corrugated iron huts until they came to a long, stone building where they were ushered into the presence of three swarthy and uniformed officers seated at a paper-strewn and blanket-covered table.

"Captain Lawless," said one of them without preamble, "you know why you are here. Some time ago we offered to purchase from you the plans of your flying submarine. You refused to sell. You left us with no other option than to take possession of the submarine by force, for we were determined to have it."

"And what do you think my Government is going to say about this?" demanded Lawless.

"Your Government knows nothing about it," responded the other harshly. "The raid was carried out swiftly and secretly by Captain Strom, and every one of your men are prisoners. Even the attack on the British Fleet cannot be proved to be our work, however much your Admiralty may suspect us."

He paused a moment, then went on:

"You are a man of sterling courage, a brilliant air pilot, and a first-class seaman. If you will work with us, we will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams. If you refuse, you will be shot! Which is it to be?"

"Isn't the question rather an insult?" drawled Lawless.

The man leaned forward across the table.

"You say that now," he said harshly, "but will you say the same when you face the levelled rifles of a firing party? In this war which is to come with Britain we will triumph. Nothing can prevent us. Within twenty-four hours we can put a trained army of millions into the field. We will not fail like Germany did, and in return for your services we are offering you power and wealth."

"You can save your breath," said Lawless.

"Then you refuse to take service with us?"

"Most emphatically!"

"Very good!" nodded the officer.

He turned to Carson and Cribb.

"Captain Strom has explained how he came to take you prisoners," he said. "You are young, you have the whole of life before you, and it is no wish of ours to kill you unless you force us to do so. If you are prepared to remain here with us, to swear an oath of loyalty and allegiance to us, then we will find work for you to do. And when our flag flies over Britain and her colonies you will not go unrewarded for whatever services you have rendered us."

"Thanks very much," said Carson, "but there's nothing doing!"

"You realise," said the officer evenly, "that we cannot allow you to return to England, nor do we intend to keep you prisoners for what would of neces-

sity be an indefinite period. Your refusal to take service with us means that you will be shot. I think you had better change your mind."

"I'm not going to!" replied Carson stubbornly.

The officer looked at Cribb.

"And you?" he demanded.

"I'm not working for you!" said Cribb unsteadily.

"Very good!" nodded the officer. "The three of you will be shot at dawn. If, between now and then, you decide to take service with us you will save your lives!"

Turning to the guards, he rapped out an order and the three prisoners were marched away to another stone building where they were separated and locked by themselves in adjoining cells.

### Escape!

**T**O be shot at dawn!

Not a particularly pleasant thought, reflected Carson, as he sat on his low plank bed staring at the stone wall of his cell.

Even now he could scarcely realise that the events of the past twenty-four hours had actually happened. It was only about this time yesterday that he and Cribb were sitting in a Scottish inn, wading into a substantial tea.

Now they were prisoners on the desolate shores of the Baltic and were to be shot when about another twelve hours had elapsed.

The thing was incredible. He and Cribb would never return to Abbots-court and the silly fools who lived near Loch Clure would swear they'd been devoured by the mysterious monster in the loch.

If it wasn't so beastly tragic, Apsley, editor of the school magazine, would probably give them an obituary notice on the following lines:

"Carson and Cribb have departed this life,

But their names will for ever endure  
As the two bright young lads who,  
on holiday bent,

Were devoured by the beast of Loch  
Clure."

There was one thing absolutely certain and that was that nobody would ever guess the truth. How the dickens could they? Who on earth would have imagined that war was so terribly close? And these fellows must be in deadly earnest when they were going to the lengths of shooting him, Cribb, and Lawless.

But Lawless, pacing up and down his own cell, had no intention of being shot if he could help it.

It was shortly after midnight that he put into action a desperate plan of escape.

Outside in the corridor he could hear the pacing of the sentry, who, every half-hour or so slid back the shutters in the iron doors of the cells to peer at the prisoners.

When next that sentry slid back the shutter of the door of Lawless' cell he got the shock of his life, for he couldn't see Lawless anywhere.

As a matter of fact, Lawless was crouched against the door, below the shutter, and completely invisible to the sentry.

With an oath, the frightened sentry yanked back the bolts of the door and rushed into the cell.



As he did so, Lawless whipped into action. His hand shot up, clutching in vice-like grip upon the sentry's throat, and effectively choking the man's sudden cry of alarm.

Exerting all his strength, and still keeping his grip upon the other's throat, Lawless heaved himself to his feet, bringing his knee up sharply into the man's stomach.

With a choking gasp, the sentry went limp, the wind knocked completely out of him and the life almost choked out of him.

Lowering him to the floor, Lawless dashed to the door, closed it, and returned to the sentry.

Ten minutes later, clad in the man's uniform, and carrying his rifle, Lawless quitted the cell, bolting the door on the gagged and bound sentry.

At the end of the deserted corridor a chink of light shone through a partly open door. Realising that there was no other exit from the building except through that room, which was the guard-room, Lawless cautiously approached it, with rifle levelled.

Reaching the door, he kicked it open and rasped:

"Put your hands up!"

The three soldiers and the sergeant, seated playing cards at the table, stared in open-mouthed astonishment. Then, under the menacing threat of that rifle-barrel, their hands crept waveringly above their heads.

"Stand up!" ordered Lawless. "I will shoot the first man to utter a sound or make a hostile move!"

There was no mistaking the deadly intent in Lawless' words, and obediently the four men rose to their feet with their hands still upraised.

"You"—Lawless nodded towards one of the men—"tie your comrades' hands. Use their bootlaces!"

The man hesitated.

"I shall not ask again!" rasped Lawless.

His finger tightened on the trigger of the gun, and, seeing the movement, the man hesitated no longer.

Bending down, he pulled the sergeant's laces out of his boots and tied his wrists. He did the same to his two companions, after which he gagged them with their handkerchiefs at Lawless' order.

"Now come here!" ordered Lawless.

Fearfully the man approached, and within a few moments Lawless had him tied and gagged.

That done, he examined the fastenings of the other three, and lashed their ankles together. Then, quitting the room, he retraced his steps along the corridor and released Carson and Cribb from their cells.

Swiftly he explained what had happened, and then led the way to the guard-room, where the two schoolboys donned a greatcoat and a soldier's cap apiece.

Lawless himself donned the sergeant's coat, and, when Carson and Cribb had possessed themselves of rifles, he led the

way from the guard-room and out into the night.

With the rifles on their shoulders, Lawless marched the two boys through the darkness towards the jetty where the flying submarine lay moored.

The trio looked like a military picket, and the few sentries whom they passed took them for such, with the result that they reached the submarine without molestation.

"There's sure to be a guard aboard," said Lawless, in a low voice, as he swung himself up into the squat conning-tower, "so look out for trouble!"

There was a guard aboard, two soldiers seated in the control-room, and as Lawless descended the ladder into the room, followed by the two boys, they stared at him questioningly.

Next instant they froze into immobility, as he levelled his rifle at them and rapped:

"Stick your hands up!"



"It is no wish of ours to kill you, unless you force us to do so," said the officer, addressing Carson and Cribb. "But your refusal to take service with us means that you will be shot!"

Uncomprehendingly they looked at him; then, as he grated the command again, their hands crept above their heads.

Under the threat of Lawless' rifle, it would have been madness to refuse, and within a few minutes Carson and Cribb had the pair of them gagged and bound.

Ascending to the outer hull, the two boys assisted Lawless to quickly cast off the mooring-ropes. Then, dropping down to the control-room again, they watched whilst Lawless pulled over the starting-handle of the electric motors.

Slowly the flying submarine commenced to surge away from the jetty, until it was running for the open sea. Higher and higher rose the drone of its motors, until it was hydroplaning at terrific speed across the darkened waters. Then, its wings unfolded, the flying submarine soared up into the night sky.

Shortly after dawn it came gliding down, to land, on the water, near the s.s. Tawda, which it had located.

Through a megaphone, Lawless addressed the stocky figure of the captain on the bridge.

"Put about!" he roared. "You will make for Leith!"

The captain stared in astonishment, for he had thought that Lawless was Strom.

"What's the idea?" he yelled.

of the water if you refuse!" shouted Lawless.

The captain held a hurried consultation with his officers.

"Who are you?" he yelled. "I'm Lawless!" replied that individual. "Put about, or I'll sink you!"

With that, he took off again, circling low over the Tawda, which obediently put about and headed back the way it had come, after Lawless had dropped a warning bomb within a cable's length of it.

Later in the morning, two destroyers, summoned by Lawless' wireless, picked up the Tawda, and proceeded to escort her to Leith, after taking the prisoners off her.

That same afternoon the flying submarine landed in the Thames estuary, and within an hour Lawless was closeted with several high Army and Navy officials in Whitehall.

"They can do nothing," he told

"The idea is that I'll blow you out Carson and Cribb that evening when he had returned to the flying submarine. "Until this Baltic Power declares war on us, Britain's hands are tied, unless she wishes to become the aggressor and declare war herself."

"Well, why don't we declare war?" demanded Carson.

Lawless shook his head.

"War is a dreadful thing," he replied, "and we want to avoid it if possible. Consequently, I am going to use the flying submarine to smash these foreigners."

"You're what?" demanded Carson, staring.

"I'm going to wage a war on them myself!" replied Lawless grimly. "I'll put their fleet out of action, blow their munition works up, and cripple them as completely as I can."

"And we'll help you!" cried Carson enthusiastically. "What d'you say, Cribb, old chap?"

"Rather!" agreed Cribb fervently.

(Captain Lawless is taking on some task—what? Be sure you read how he fares in next week's chapters of this thrilling flying yarn. By the way, have you introduced Captain Lawless and the trusty schoolboys, Carson and Cribb, to your pals? If not, now's the time!)

# THE MAN IN THE MASK!

(Continued from page 24.)

Alonzo shook his head. "My dear William, you must do exactly as the doctor tells you," he said. "A doctor's orders—"

"Yaroooh! He's pinching me!" yelled Bunter. "Whoop! He ain't feeling my pulse! He's pip-pip-pinching me! Wow!"

"Very bad—very bad indeed!" murmured Dr. Diddle.

"Yaroooh! He's pinching lumps out of me!" shrieked Bunter. "Leggo! Make him leggo! I won't be pinched! Yarooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now put out your tongue, my dear boy! I must see your tongue!"

"Ow! I won't!"

"If the patient finds difficulty in putting out his tongue, the difficulty may be overcome by twisting his ears a little," said Dr. Diddle. "Now if you young gentlemen will take an ear each we—"

"Yarooop! Whoop! Leggo my ears, you beasts! I'll put out my tongue! Wow!"

Bunter opened a large mouth, and projected his tongue. Dr. Diddle gazed at it through his horn-rimmed glasses. "Keep it like that!" he commanded.

Bunter kept it like that! He did not want his fat ears pulled again. With his mouth wide open and his tongue sticking out, he glared at Dr. Diddle, crimson with fury.

The medical man took a small packet from his pocket, inserted his finger-tip into it, and then placed the finger-tip on Bunter's tongue.

The effect on Bunter was almost electrical.

He fairly bounded.

"Urragh! Atchoooh-ooop! Gurrgrgh! Yurrgrgh!" spluttered Bunter. "Oogh! Wharrer you putting—groogh—mustard on my tongue for, you beast? Yurrroogh!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Calm yourself, my dear boy!" said Dr. Diddle soothingly.

"Yurrroogh!"

"This feverish excitement is a very serious symptom!" said Dr. Diddle, blinking at the juniors through his horn-rimmed glasses. "I cannot judge definitely as yet, but I fear an accession of rum-te-tum collywobble. There are undoubted signs of rum-te-tum and some indication of collywobble, and, I fear, a touch of fozzie-oozle! Poor, poor boy!"

"Oh, how very, very dreadful!" gasped Alonzo.

"The patient may recover," said Dr.

Diddle. "I am far from giving up all hope."

"Wha-a-t!" gasped Bunter. He ceased to gurgle, and gazed at Dr. Diddle through his big spectacles. "I—I say, mean to say I'm really ill?"

"Courage!" said Dr. Diddle. "You have a chance—not, perhaps, a very healthy chance, but a chance! You may recover—"

"Yaroooh!"

"With care!" said Dr. Diddle. "With constant care and faithful nursing, I do not despair of your recovery."

"Ow! I say, you fellows— Oh dear! Oh lor!"

"My dear, dear William!" exclaimed Alonzo, greatly moved. "You shall have every care. I will watch over you night and day. I will give you your medicine regularly—"

"Beast!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry sadly. "If we're going to lose him—"

"Ow! Oh crikey!"

"The loss will be ferrific and preposterous!" sighed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I will leave full instructions for the treatment of the patient," said Dr. Diddle. "They must be carried out to the very letter."

"Oh, certainly!" exclaimed Alonzo. "I will see to that! Day and night—"

"A thin diet," said Dr. Diddle. "A very thin diet!"

"Beast!"

"My dear, dear William, I am sure the doctor is right! I have very, very often thought that the great quantities of food you consume—"

"You silly idiot!"

"A little dry toast, three times a day, with a glass of cold water," said the medical man. "No butter on the toast. No tea, no sugar, no jam, no cake, no sweetstuffs of any sort—"

"Look here—" shrieked Bunter.

"This treatment to continue for a week—"

"Oh crikey!"

"If my instructions are not meticulously carried out, I refuse to answer for the consequences."

"I will be very, very careful to see them carried out—"

"Shut up, you idiot!" roared Bunter. "Look here, I'm not ill! It was only a j-j-joke! I was pip-pup-pulling the fellows' legs! I'm going to get up!"

"Keep him in bed, on the diet I have prescribed!" said Dr. Diddle. "I will call again to-morrow."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Quiet, Bunter, old man!" said Bob Cherry soothingly. "Remember you're ill—"

"I'm not ill!" yelled Bunter.

"You are! We're going to see the doctor's orders carried out. It's up to us, old chap!"

"Beast! I'm not ill!"

"My dear William," exclaimed Alonzo, "you have been very, very ill all day—you have told me so many, many times—"

"Shut up, you dummy!"

"Oh, my goodness! My dear William—"

"Beast!"

"This way, doctor!" gasped Harry Wharton, and the juniors led Dr. Diddle from the room.

Bunter glared after him, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Alonzo remained to take care of the patient. But Alonzo's task was near its end.

As soon as the door closed on the medical man, Billy Bunter started crawling from the bed.

Alonzo, greatly alarmed, pushed him back.

"My dear William—" he exclaimed.

"Beast! Gerraway!"

"You must not get up—"

"Gerraway!"

"The doctor said—"

"Will you leggo?" howled Bunter. "I want to get up before those other beasts come back! Gimme my trousers!"

Alonzo pushed Bunter back into bed. Billy Bunter clenched a fat fist and hit out!

Crash!

Bump!

"Whooh-hooop!" roared Alonzo.

It was some punch, with Bunter's weight behind it. It landed on Alonzo's nose, and Alonzo landed on his back. He roared wildly.

Bunter scrambled out of bed. Alonzo did not intervene further. Alonzo was knocked out. Bunter dressed in record time, anxious to get out before the juniors came back.

Alonzo was still gurgling on the floor when Bunter whipped out of the room and disappeared.

Ten minutes later Bob Cherry's cheery face looked in. Alonzo was sitting up, feeling his nose tenderly—perhaps to ascertain whether it was still there! It felt as if it wasn't!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Where's the giddy invalid?"

"Ow!" was Alonzo's answer. "Wow! Wooogh!"

Evidently Billy Bunter was no longer ill! The invalid had been completely cured—by Dr. Wibley!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the concluding story in this rattling fine series of holiday yarns, "ON THE TRAIL OF TREASURE!" It's the best of the bunch! Look out for it in next Saturday's MAGNET!)



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