

HARRY WHARTON & CO. in a THRILL-PACKED CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE!

The Magnet ^{2^D}



The **MAN FROM THE SEA!**

The MAN from the SEA!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

Featuring the World-Famous Chums—HARRY WHARTON & Co., of GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Sits Down!

"RAWLINGS!"

"Sir!"

"Bring me a deckchair!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked expressively at Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter, heedless of expressive looks, had his eyes and his spectacles fixed on Rawlings, the steward of the Firefly.

It was a December day—but it was bright and sunny and quite warm. Many a hundred long sea miles lay between the chums of the Greyfriars Remove and the English winter.

They had found it wild and windy on the Atlantic. But since passing the Straits of Gibraltar the Firefly steamed over blue waters under a blue sky.

The Famous Five were enjoying that Christmas-holiday cruise with Compton of the Fifth. So was Billy Bunter. But Billy Bunter's enjoyment did not add to the joy of others.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on deck, watching the hilltops of Spain sinking in the west, when Billy Bunter rolled up from below.

Captain Compton was on the bridge. His nephew, Valentine Compton of the Greyfriars Fifth, was there with him. The steward was standing with the Famous Five, pointing out objects of interest on the Spanish coast, when Billy Bunter happened.

There were half a dozen deckchairs standing, folded, against the rail, ready for anyone who wanted them. Bunter wanted one. Having walked all the way from the saloon to the deck, Bunter wanted to sit down. He did not, apparently, want to walk six more paces and get a deckchair for himself. Billy Bunter saw no reason for exerting himself when there was anybody else upon whom the exertion could be put.

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Bunter's view of employed persons was that they could jolly well work. Besides, Bunter liked to give servants plenty of trouble. He fondly fancied that this made it clear that he was accustomed to being waited on hand and foot by a crowd of menials at Bunter Court.

"A deckchair, sir?" said Rawlings, without moving.

"Yes," said Bunter—"and look sharp!"

"You fat frog!" said Bob Cherry. "If you want a deckchair take one and shut up!"

Billy Bunter gave him a disdainful blink through his big spectacles, but disdained any other acknowledgment of the suggestion.

"I'm waiting, Rawlings!" he said, with dignity.

"Very good, sir!" said Rawlings.

Leaving the juniors, he moved along the rail and picked up one of the folded deckchairs. He carried it to Bunter.

Bunter gave the Famous Five a lofty blink. The steward of the Firefly did not like Billy Bunter—why, Bunter did not know. On more than one occasion he had been cheeky—distinctly cheeky. But Bunter was the man to put a menial in his place.

"Open it, Rawlings!" he said. "Set it up for me! Don't keep me standing up, my man!"

Bunter's tone was unpleasant. He believed in giving cheeky menials the sharp edge of his tongue.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked rather curiously at Rawlings. Several incidents during the cruise had shown them that the man had a temper. They had also observed that he did not seem to be quite on the ordinary footing of a steward on board the yacht. They had heard him address the captain as "Jim Compton." They had heard him speak of the captain's nephew as "young

Compton." They had heard him threaten to "break up" Mr. Swain, the mate, all over the bridge! They had an impression that, in some extraordinary and mysterious way, the steward was of quite as much consequence as any man on board the Firefly. Generally he was polite and attentive and civil—but not at all times. And when he was not he could be very disagreeable, and even aggressive.

For all these reasons the chums of the Remove did not expect him to be very patient with Billy Bunter's swank.

As Compton's guests on the yacht, unwilling to cause trouble or friction if they could help it, they rather treated Rawlings with tact.

But no consideration of that kind appealed to Billy Bunter. Bunter's view was that the more trouble he caused the more important he was understood to be.

Harry Wharton & Co. would not have been surprised had Rawlings "biffed" Bunter with that deckchair, instead of setting it up for him on the deck, as bidden by the lofty Owl of the Remove.

But Rawlings seemed to be unusually submissive.

He opened out the deckchair for Bunter and set it on the deck.

"Is that satisfactory, sir?" he asked.

"No!" said Bunter. "It isn't! Take it a bit farther along!"

"Certainly, sir."

Rawlings lifted the deckchair farther along the deck and set it down again.

Bunter rolled after him.

"That all right, sir?" asked Rawlings.

"Turn it to face the rail a bit more!" said Bunter. "Have a little sense, Rawlings."

Bunter was a fellow who would take an ell if given an inch! The more respectfully and meticulously the

steward obeyed his orders, the more orders Bunter was likely to give.

"Shall we kick him, you fellows?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The kickfulness is the proper caper!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Leave it to Rawlings!" he said. "I don't quite like the look in his eye."

"Are you satisfied now, sir?" asked Rawlings, still respectful. "Will it please you to sit down, sir?"

"Get me a cushion!" said Bunter.

He did not say "please." Bunter had no "pleases" to waste on stewards, especially cheeky ones like Rawlings!

"Very good, sir!" said Rawlings meekly.

He fetched a cushion. The Famous Five smiled. They guessed, if Billy Bunter did not, that the steward of the Firefly was not feeling so meek as he looked.

"Is he going to buff him with that cushion?" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Serve him jolly well right if he does!" growled Johnny Bull. "Why the dickens doesn't he kick him? Bunter has to be kicked!"

Rawlings placed the cushion in the deckchair.

"Anything more, sir?" he asked.

Even Bunter could not think of anything more, anxious as he was to throw his fat weight about.

"No!" he said. "That will do, my man! You can go!"

Rawlings went.

Billy Bunter, standing in front of the deckchair, about to plump down in it, gave the Famous Five a vaunting blink. He fancied that he had shown them how to handle cheeky stewards.

The Famous Five grinned happily. They had observed something that Bunter had not observed. Rawlings had set up that deckchair without wedging in the frame at the back. So long as it was not sat on it stood. As soon as it was sat upon it was likely to be a different story.

Rawlings went back to his duties below, leaving Billy Bunter to sit down, and meet with a sudden surprise when he did.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter called out to the Famous Five. "I say, that's a tip for you! That's how I treat 'em! See? Treat 'em the same, and you will get the same results!"

And Bunter sat down—plump! Bunter always sat down hard and heavy. Had that deckchair been wedged in the safest and securest manner it would have creaked in protest when Bunter's weight dropped into it! But it wasn't!

Crash!

Bump!

"Yarooocoooh!"

Billy Bunter's ample form hit the deck of the Firefly, and hit it hard. The canvas chair folded up over him.

What had happened Bunter hardly knew for a moment. He bumped and wriggled and roared in the embrace of the dismantled deckchair.

"Ow! Wow! Yaroooh! Help! I say, you fellows—Yoo-hooooo!" roared Bunter. "I say, I'm hurt—I'm smashed—I'm bruised—I'm bumped—I—I—Ooooh! Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled over mixed up with the crumpled deckchair. He roared as he rolled.

"Ow! Wow! Help! Beasts! Wow! I say, you fellows—Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anybody going to take Bunter's tip?" asked Bob Cherry. "Anybody want to get the same results?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Wow!" roared Bunter, wriggling.

And the Famous Five, chuckling, strolled along the deck, and left him to roar and wriggle—apparently dissatisfied with the results that accrued from the way he treated 'em!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Sits Up!

"'LL fetch it!" said Billy Bunter.

"Wha-a-t!"

The Famous Five nearly fell out of their deckchairs in their surprise.

It was evening—a bright and starry evening on the Mediterranean. After dinner the Greyfriars fellows had gone on deck, where Rawlings had brought up coffee. It was good coffee, and Bunter suggested more. And Compton of the Fifth, who was seated with the juniors, was about to call to the steward when Bunter made his astonishing offer to fetch it.

Compton smiled and sat down again. Rawlings was a busy man, and if Billy Bunter was smitten with a sudden desire to make himself useful there was no reason why he should not get on with it.

But a desire, on Bunter's part, to make himself useful was so surprising that the Famous Five doubted the evidence of their ears. They gazed at

Who says a Christmas Cruise aboard the steam yacht "Firefly"? Then join up with HARRY WHARTON & Co., of Greyfriars. Thrills follow in rapid succession for them and for you!

William George Bunter. He heaved his weight out of his chair, which looked as if he meant it.

It was all the more surprising, because Bunter had been exceedingly "shirty" since the incident in the earlier part of the day. Sitting down suddenly on the deck and wrapping himself up in a canvas chair had not pleased Bunter. He had told the Famous Five, not once but many times, what beasts they were to cackle when a cheeky steward let a fellow bump on the deck. He had told Compton of the Fifth that he had a jolly good mind to chuck up the cruise and go home by the first steamer at the first port. And the Fifth Former, instead of being overwhelmed with dismay, as Bunter naturally expected, had offered to take his ticket and see him off if he did! Which annoyed Bunter.

Yet here was Bunter jumping up to make himself useful to five juniors and a senior who were all beasts!

And evidently he was in earnest, for he rolled away to the companion and disappeared below with the coffee-pot.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with Bunter?"

"The matterfulness must be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, Bunter ought to make himself useful, as he can't possibly be ornamental," said Frank Nugent. "But I'm blessed if I ever expected Bunter to see that himself."

"Wonders will never cease!" said Johnny Bull.

Valentine Compton laughed his pleasant, good-natured laugh.

"Bunter's not a bad kid really," he said. "Rawlings has plenty to do, and I dare say Bunter's sorry he's bothered him so much—see?"

Which showed that Compton of the Fifth did not know William George Bunter so well as the Remove fellows knew him.

Still, there it was—Bunter had gone for the coffee. He was a good time gone, but nobody, of course, expected Bunter to be quick.

Mr. Swain came up, and went on the bridge to relieve the captain. Captain Compton stood for a few minutes in conversation with the mate before he left the bridge. Then he came and joined the group of Greyfriars fellows on deck by the rail.

"Jolly here, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"Very!" said the captain. "I hope you young fellows are enjoying your cruise."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific, honoured sahib!"

Captain Compton smiled. Seldom his hard-bitten face melted into a smile; but Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's variety of the English language caused it to relax.

"You can give me a cup of coffee, Valentine!" said the captain, seating himself in an empty deckchair.

It was seldom that the captain of the Firefly bestowed his company on the Greyfriars guests, excepting at meals, so they felt duly honoured.

"Bunter's gone for a fresh pot, uncle," said Valentine. "He will be back in a minute or two."

"Here he comes!" said Bob Cherry, as there was a sound of grunting in the companion.

Billy Bunter reappeared, with the coffee-pot in his hand and a fat grin on his face. The coffee-pot was expected; the fat grin was not. So far as the juniors could see there was nothing for Bunter to grin at. However, he was grinning.

He rolled up to the group in deckchairs and plumped down the coffee-pot on the little table where the coffee-cups stood.

"Kept you waiting, you fellows?" asked Bunter breezily. He did not for the moment notice the addition to the group. "Rawlings was rather a long time. Rotten steward you've got, Compton! If your uncle had any sense he'd sack him."

"Shut up, you fat ass!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter independently. "Compton knows what I think of his rotten steward, don't you, Compton? A man like that wouldn't do for Bunter Court, I can tell you. Why the dickens does your uncle keep him on, Compton? He must be rather a fool!"

"Thank you!" said Captain Compton grimly. And Billy Bunter gave a jump.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I didn't see you, sir!" He blinked round at the grim-faced captain of the Firefly. "I—I didn't mean you were a fool, sir! I mean, I didn't mean to call you a fool, sir! I—I hope I'm too polite to say what I think when I'm a guest."

"Here's your coffee, uncle!" said Valentine Compton hastily.

He had poured out a cup of coffee while Bunter was blinking at the captain, and now he handed it over, glad to interrupt the fat and fatuous Owl.

Captain Compton, with a glance at Bunter that was almost a glare, stretched out his hand and took the coffee.

Bunter gave another jump.

"I—I—I say—" he gasped.

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"You had better say no more, I think!" grunted the captain.

"Oh lor'! I—I mean—I—I say, I—I didn't bring that coffee up for you!" gasped Bunter. "I—I brought it for these beasts—I mean, these fellows—"

"Will you shut up?" hissed Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I—I say—"

Captain Compton had the coffee to his lips. From his expression the chums of the *Remove* guessed that he was sorely tempted to pitch it, cup and all, at the head of William George Bunter! The captain, however, repressed that natural inclination and drank the coffee at a gulp.

The next moment there was something like an explosion!

He bounded!

He spluttered!

He roared and howled!

In utter amazement the Famous Five started to their feet, staring at him blankly.

Hitherto the captain had struck them as a cold, quiet, self-contained, and self-controlled man. So far he had never displayed any sort of emotion. Now he displayed quite a lot!

"Urrgh! Oh! Oooogh! Gurrgh!" he spluttered wildly, coughing, sneezing, and gurgling frantically. "Oh! Oooogh! Gurrgh!"

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Uncle James—" gasped Compton of the Fifth. "What—"

"Oooogh! Urrgh! I'm burned—scalded—Oooogh!" The captain almost danced, and fairly raved. "What—ooch!—is the matter with—grrrrrrh!—the coffee? Has Rawlings gone mad? Oooogh! Wurrgh! There is—groogh!—mustard—ooch!—mustard in the coffee—Wooogh!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood rooted to the deck. They understood now. Billy Bunter's surprising desire to make himself useful was explained.

He had fetched up that coffee for his own felonious purposes! He had been so long about it because he had stopped to put mustard in it! He had intended it for the Famous Five and Valentino Compton, no doubt satisfied in his fat mind that they jolly well deserved it.

In his most reckless moments Billy Bunter would never have dreamed of venturing to play such a trick on the grim, hard-faced skipper of the *Firefly*.

But he had! It was the captain who had got it! Quite unexpectedly, to Bunter as well as to himself, he had swallowed coffee doctored with mustard! And his horrible gurgles and gasps and contortions showed that Bunter had not been economical with the mustard! He had put in plenty!

A few moments more, and all the party would have been drinking that extremely hot coffee. They were not likely to drink it now. The captain had the first cup—and the first cup was the last!

"You—you—you—" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Mustard in the coffee!" ejaculated Valentino Compton, in amazement. "Has Rawlings gone out of his senses—"

"Mustard!" roared the captain. "Urrrrgh!" The coffee cup crashed on the deck, breaking into a dozen fragments. "Urrrrgh! I am choked—urrgh!—scalded! Wurrgh! Groogh! Who did this? Urrgh!"

"I—I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, I—I know nothing at all about it! Oh crikey!"

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I say, I never knew there was any mustard in the—the coffee! And—and I tried to stop him drinking it, too. You know I did!"

"You!" roared the captain. "Urrgh! You mad young swab—you! Groogh!"

"No!" howled Bunter. "I never did it! In fact, I—I saw Rawlings do it! And I never knew it was done, either! I never did it to pay these beasts out! I—I wouldn't! Besides, I never knew you were going to have any of the coffee. And—and I tried to stop you, too. I said quite plainly—Yaroooh! Leggo! Help!"

Billy Bunter was a guest on the *Firefly*. Captain Compton appeared to forget that, however. Perhaps such forgetfulness was excusable, with a guest who had such extraordinary manners and customs as Billy Bunter. Anyhow, the captain's next proceedings were not those of a hospitable host in the best circles.

He grabbed Billy Bunter with a powerful hand. A swing of his sinewy arm laid Bunter across his knee.

His other hand rose, and fell like a flail.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Ow! Oh crikey! Stop it!" shrieked Bunter, wriggling wildly, and kicking up his little fat legs. "I say, you fellows—Yaroooh! Rescue! Oh lor'!"

Smack, smack, smack!

"Uncle!" gasped Compton.

His uncle did not heed. He smacked and smacked as if he took Billy Bunter's tight trousers for a carpet that needed beating.

"Ow! Wow! Help! Yaroooh!" yelled Bunter. "I say, draggim off! Stoppim! Help! Whoo-hooop!"

Smack, smack, smack!

Those hefty smacks rang over the *Firefly* like pistol-shots. Mr. Swain stared from the bridge. The watch on deck stared and grinned. Rawlings put his head out of the companion and stared. Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the scene, grinning.

Bunter was getting it hot and strong, and a licking from Mr. Queleh at Greyfriars School had nothing on this. But there was no doubt that he had asked for it, and that he deserved it. He roared and wriggled and yelled, but still the hefty smacks came down like hail. He was getting it hot, and he was getting it strong; but the fellows who had narrowly escaped swallowing coffee, doctored with mustard, had no sympathy to waste on him.

"There, you young rascal—there, you young idiot!" snorted the captain at last, and he pitched Bunter over on the deck. "That may teach you a little sense!"

And he stalked below, still grunting and gurgling from the effects of that very hot coffee.

"Ow, ow! Wow!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, what are you sniggering at, you beasts? Ow! Compton, if you think I'm going to—yow-ow-ow!—stand this, you're jolly well mistaken! Ow! Yow! Wow!"

"You utter young ass!" said Compton.

"Ow! Beast! Ow!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! Ow! Wow! Oh crikey! Wow!"

"Gather round, you men!" said Bob Cherry. "Let's all kick him together, and see if we can lift him right into the companion! When I say three, all of you let him have it! One—two—"

Billy Bunter did not wait for "three."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Mystery of the Locked Cabin!

"A STOWAWAY!"

"I think so, sir."

"Rubbish!"

It was the following morning—a bright and sunny morning on the bright Mediterranean. As it was seven bells—half-past eleven—Harry Wharton & Co. had long been up and about. But Billy Bunter, as usual, had turned out late, and he had not come up from breakfast yet.

The hilltops of Spain were still in sight to the north-west, and the juniors were looking in the direction of that fair but unhappy land, where the embers of civil war still smouldered, when Rawlings came up.

Rawlings had a perplexed and worried expression on his plump face. He went up to the bridge to speak to the captain, and the Greyfriars fellows could hear what was said, and it considerably interested them.

The news of a stowaway on board the *Firefly* was rather surprising. Indeed, it seemed to them almost impossible.

Since leaving England the *Firefly* had touched only at Gibraltar, for a very brief stay. No stowaway, it was certain, could have been on board, undiscovered, all the while since the white cliffs at Dover had dropped astern. If there was one on board, he must have got aboard somehow at Gibraltar, which was so improbable as to seem impossible. Evidently Captain Compton thought so, for he snapped with curt impatience at the steward.

Captain Compton had, no doubt, recovered from the effects of the very hot coffee the previous evening. But his manner was always curt; and now it was sharp and impatient.

Rawlings scowled.

He was evidently worried by his discovery, or supposed discovery. And the captain's tone irritated him.

"You can call it rubbish if you like, Jim Compton!" he snapped. "But I tell you there's somebody locked in Room No. 4."

"If you think so, look in the room, and have him out!" grunted the captain.

"The door's locked on the inside."

"Oh, rubbish! You've locked it, and lost the key! Go below, and don't be a fool!"

Captain Compton turned his back on the steward, with that. The juniors carefully turned their eyes away from that little scene. Rawlings was glaring angrily at the captain's back as no steward, as a rule, ever glared at his captain.

"I tell you, Jim Compton—" he snarled.

"Belay it, and go down!" snapped Captain Compton. "You're getting fancies into your head, Rawlings. One day last week you fancied you heard a dog in the cabin. Then you fancied you heard Swain calling you on deck. If you've been at the whisky, you'd better cut it out! Now clear!"

Rawlings, breathing hard, descended from the bridge, and went below. His plump face was red with anger.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. They knew what no one else on board the *Firefly* knew—that Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist. They knew—and no one else—the true explanation of the dog's growl that Rawlings thought he had heard in the saloon, and of the hail from the deck which he believed had come from Mr. Swain, and which certainly had not.

"Is that fat villain playing tricks again!" breathed Nugent.

"Let's go down," said Harry.

And they followed the steward below. Bunter had finished breakfast, and was reclining, not to say sprawling, on the settee in the saloon. There was a fat grin on his fat face.

The previous day the steward had made him sit down, and the captain had made him sit up. Bunter had found neither experience grateful or comforting. It was quite probable that the fat Owl was resorting to his weird gift of ventriloquism to get his own back on the various beasts who failed to treat him as so attractive a fellow ought to have been treated. He gave the chums of the Remove a fat wink as they came in.

Rawlings was standing by the door

"I heard someone there," he said. "It must be a stowaway. Nobody belonging to the ship could be there. I've lost my key, so I can't look in, unless the captain comes down and opens it with his key."

The Famous Five listened, but they could hear no sound from the locked state-room. But they heard a sound from Billy Bunter across the saloon—a little fat cough, which was very familiar to their ears. They exchanged glances. There was no further doubt that the Greystriars ventriloquist was on the warpath.

"There, listen!" exclaimed Rawlings suddenly.

He had not heeded Bunter's fat cough. But following it came a low moan that seemed to proceed from the locked room.

who greeted him with another fat wink as he came.

"You fat chump!" said Harry, speaking in a low voice, so that Rawlings should not hear. "Chuck it, see?"

"I'll watch it!" grinned Bunter.

"If he spots you—"

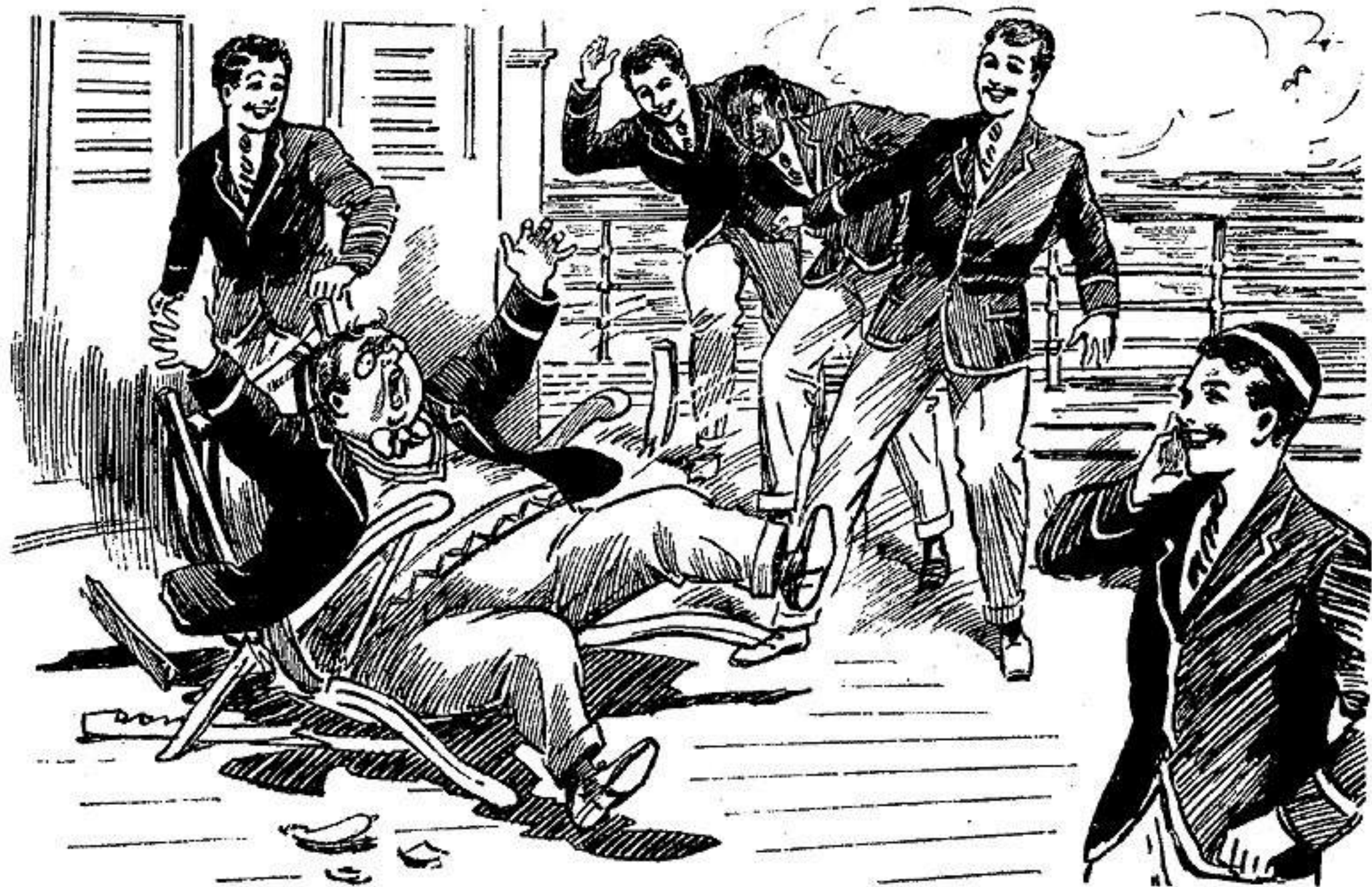
"He won't, if you fellows don't give me away! I suppose you're not going to sneak about a pal to a measly steward!" sneered Bunter.

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"You see, I saw him come out of that cabin, and saw where he laid the key!" whispered Bunter. "So I bagged it! He, he, he!"

"Give it back to him, or leave it where he can find it, you blithering fat idiot!" breathed Harry.

"How can I, when I've dropped it out of a porthole?" asked Bunter.



As Billy Bunter sat down, the deckchair gave way under the strain. Bump! "Yaroooooogh!" yelled the fat junior, as his ample form hit the deck of the Firefly and the canvas chair folded up over him. "Ow! Wow! Help! I'm hurt—I'm smashed—I'm bruised! Wow!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Harry Wharton & Co.

of a state-room that opened off the saloon. That state-room was unoccupied, so far as any passenger was concerned, but the juniors understood that some sort of baggage was kept there. It was always kept locked, and Rawlings had the key.

They had seen him go into that room occasionally; but he always shut the door when he was inside, and always locked it carefully when he came out. It seemed to be a sort of Bluebeard's chamber. And Billy Bunter had surmised a good deal what might be kept in it; but the other fellows, not being deeply interested in what did not concern them, gave it little or no thought.

The steward had his head to the door, listening. Evidently he had an impression that someone was inside.

"Jolly old stowaway located there, Rawlings?" asked Bob Cherry.

The steward glanced round.

"You heard that?" exclaimed Rawlings.

The juniors nodded. They had heard it. They did not feel at liberty to explain to Rawlings whence it really proceeded. It was not for them to give the fat ventriloquist away. Indeed, they hardly knew what was likely to happen if Rawlings discovered the fat Owl's trickery.

They knew only too well that the man had a fierce and savage temper, though it was generally kept in control. Billy Bunter would certainly have been booked for a severe handling, had the steward found him out. Once already he had handled Bunter in a rough, not to say brutal manner, when the fat Owl had persisted in going on deck against orders. The Greystriars guests, naturally, did not want any more incidents of that sort.

Harry Wharton went over to Bunter,

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm making him believe there's somebody in that cabin, see?" grinned the fat Owl. "No end of a lark, what? Ain't it funny?"

Knock, knock!

Rawlings was banging on the locked door with his knuckles. He was angry and excited.

Why, was rather a mystery to the juniors. It would have been natural for the captain to be annoyed by the discovery of a stowaway on his ship. But it was no special concern of the steward's.

But they knew already that Rawlings was no ordinary steward. Harry Wharton, particularly, had reason to know that Rawlings was on a very unusual footing on board the Firefly. He had not forgotten the night when he had gone on deck, and Rawlings, grab-

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bing him in the dark, had accused him of "spying." Neither, he believed, had Rawlings forgotten; for, civil as his manner almost invariably was, his keen eyes were very often on the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, dubiously and searchingly.

There was, in fact, some secret on board the Firefly, as Wharton could not help knowing, and as, he believed, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh suspected, though the dusky nabob had said nothing on the subject.

Smithy of the Remove, at Greyfriars, believed that the Firefly was a smuggling craft. Wharton had laughed at that suspicion—at Greyfriars. Cruising on the Firefly, he was less disposed to laugh at it.

Knock, knock, knock!

Rawlings' face was no longer red. It was almost pale with anger, and, it seemed to Wharton, uneasiness and alarm. It was not merely the fact that a stowaway seemed to be on board, but the fact that he seemed to be in that special room, that troubled the steward. What was in that room, Wharton could not help wondering.

During the run through the Channel he had not been able to avoid the suspicion that a smuggled cargo had been run from France to England. In the Bay of Biscay, he had been as good as certain that there had been gun-running to one of the contending parties in Spain. What was locked in that cabin that no eyes were allowed to see, and that Rawlings feared that a stowaway's eyes might have seen?

Knock, knock, knock!

"Let me in, will you?" said Rawlings, in a deep, savage tone that made the juniors start a little as they heard it. "I know you're there—I've heard

you! I know you've pinched my key and locked yourself in! Will you unlock this door?"

"No, I won't!" came a voice, which even the juniors could almost have sworn proceeded from the locked cabin. "I'm looking through the things that you keep so secret here!"

Rawlings' eyes blazed.

His hand slid round to his hip-pocket, and the Greyfriars juniors realised, with a start, that he carried a weapon there. But if he had intended to draw the "gun," he changed his mind. He turned away, and hurried up to the deck, evidently to inform Captain Compton that there was now no doubt that the locked cabin was occupied by some unknown and surreptitious person.

Five separate and distinct glares were turned on Billy Bunter. Five voices spoke in unison:

"You fat chump! Chuck it!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter.

Evidently the fat and fatuous ventriloquist had no intention of "chucking" it! Harry Wharton & Co. returned to the deck, where Captain Compton passed them, with a face like a thunder-cloud, and stamped below.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nobody!

BILLY BUNTER, sprawling on the settee, grinned cheerfully.

Captain Compton did not even glance at him as he strode in, followed by Rawlings.

The fat junior had a secret dread of the grim, hard-faced captain of the Firefly. He had a deeper dread of the

hard-fisted steward. But all the more for that reason, he liked the idea of puzzling, perplexing, and worrying them, when it was quite safe to do so. And this extraordinary jape was safe enough. Harry Wharton & Co. could like it, or lump it; it was all right, so long as they did not give him away. The captain had spanked Bunter the day before—Rawlings had been cheeky—and Bunter was going to get his own back!

That it was a safe game was certain. So far from suspecting that Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist of unusual powers, the captain and Rawlings would probably not have believed it had they been told. Bunter was, in their eyes, an utterly stupid, obtuse, and negligible young ass. That opinion of him was not flattering; but it spelled safety.

"Utter nonsense!" the captain was saying, as he came, in a low, angry tone. "Stowaway—rubbish! Are you asking me to believe that some Spanish longshoreman hid himself on board at Gibraltar?"

"No!" grunted Rawlings. "Whoever he is, he spoke in English."

"Oh, you're dreaming!"

"See for yourself, Jim Compton!" snarled Rawlings. "You know what's in that cabin, and whether we want it seen!"

"Silence, you fool!" muttered the captain, with a gesture towards the fat junior sprawling on the settee across the saloon.

Rawlings gave Bunter a scowl, but he checked the angry words on his lips. Billy Bunter opened a "Holiday Annual" on his fat knees, and appeared to be reading.

The captain gave a sharp knock at the locked door.

"Is anybody there?" he rapped.

"Go away!" came a voice.

Captain Compton started convulsively.

Rawlings gave him a sneering scowl.

"What do you say now?" he asked.

The look that came over the captain's hard-bitten face made a cold chill run down Bunter's back as he observed it. James Compton's face, at that moment, was alarming.

"Someone is there!" he muttered, between his set teeth.

"I told you so!"

"But how—who—What did you do with your key?" hissed the captain. "He could not have got in without your key, and—"

"I left it on the usual hook. It has been taken—"

"That means that he got into your quarters—unseen by you, you fool! Are you keeping your eyes shut?"

"I can't make it out!" muttered Rawlings. "I've seen nobody! One of the boys could nip in, when my back was turned, of course, but—but they can't be in this—"

"Of course they can't! Do you think my nephew's guests, schoolboys from his school, would help a stowaway to hide on board?" snapped the captain. "Why should they?"

"Well, I don't get it! Somebody's there!"

"Not a stowaway—that's rubbish! A spy!" breathed the captain, too low for Bunter to hear. "It can only be that!"

Their eyes met.

Billy Bunter, blinking at them across the saloon, was conscious of another chill down his fat back. He knew that there was some mystery on board the Firefly; that there was some secret understanding between captain and crew, carefully guarded from the Grey-

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friars guests. At that moment, even the obtuse Owl could see that he was looking at two desperate men.

The captain's hand slid to his hip; but he hastily withdrew it and looked round at Bunter.

"Please go on deck!" he snapped.

"Eh?"

"Join your friends on deck, Bunter!"

"It's rather windy on deck!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I'd rather stay here, if you don't mind!"

Billy Bunter wanted to carry on with his ventriloquism. As a guest on the yacht, he was surely entitled to sit in the saloon, if disposed so to do. A hospitable host could scarcely order him out, Bunter considered.

His own manners and customs, as a guest, left a good deal to be desired, and on the present occasion Captain Compton forgot the manners of a host. He knitted his brows, his eyes gleaming at the fat Owl.

"Go on deck at once!" he rapped, in a voice that made Bunter jump.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "All right!" And he went.

Rawlings shut the door of the companion after him. Captain Compton, with a hard, savage face, reached to his hip again. This time his hand came away with a revolver in it. A similar weapon appeared in Rawlings' hand. It was as well that Harry Wharton & Co. could not see the captain and steward of the Firefly just then. Wharton's mind was full of doubt; but he could hardly have doubted longer had he seen them then—obviously two desperate law-breakers in fear of discovery.

"A spy!" muttered the captain. "And he has found out what he wants to know, Rawlings. The game's up, if he gets ashore with it."

Rawlings gritted his teeth.

"He won't!" he answered significantly. "We're not changing this packet for a prison on shore—not if I know it!"

The captain nodded.

"Valentine must know nothing," he breathed, "or—or the boys! Good gad, who could have foreseen this, or anything like it? Stand ready when I unlock the door! Get him with the butt, if you can!"

"I'm watching."

The captain unlocked the door, and slid it back.

Both of them stood ready, for a rush of the man inside, if it came; but there came no rush.

There was no movement, no sound, in the locked cabin.

"Keep on guard here, Rawlings!" muttered James Compton. And, leaving the steward in the doorway, he tramped into the cabin, revolver in hand.

The state-room was packed with bags and suitcases. They bore various railway and steamship labels.

Had any of the Greyfriars juniors glimpsed the interior of the cabin, they could only have supposed that it contained baggage, though they might have been surprised at its quantity.

They would not have been likely to guess the contents of those suitcases. Neither could even Billy Bunter have peered into them, for all of them were carefully locked.

Captain Compton's eyes glinted round the state-room, his revolver half-raised. The bunk was stacked with suitcases, and others lay on the floor.

But there was no sign of a human occupant of the state-room.

Bitter anger and savage resolve, in the captain's hard face, changed slowly to utter amazement.

He, like Rawlings, had heard a voice from the locked room. But the room was unoccupied, except for himself.

"There's no one here," he muttered, over his shoulder.

"Don't be a fool, Jim Compton!" snapped Rawlings.

"I tell you there's no one here!"

"Fool!"

Rawlings tramped in. He stared blankly round the room. There was no hiding-place of any sort.

But the steward dragged several of the suitcases aside, and stared into every corner, though it was plain that

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To my chums all over the world:—

**A Happy Christmas and  
a Bright and Prosperous  
New Year.**



From

Yours sincerely,

**FRANK RICHARDS.**

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there was no space in the room to hide an infant.

Then they looked at one another, dumb.

Rawlings broke a long silence.

"You heard him, as well as I did," he said.

Captain Compton nodded. He slipped the revolver back into his hip-pocket. Whatever might be the explanation of the mystery, it was clear that no one was there but themselves.

"Is the ship haunted?" muttered Rawlings.

"I can't make it out! I'm beaten! Could that voice have come from another room, and we fancied it came from here?"

"No!"

"Then what does it mean?"

Rawlings shook his head in bewilderment. But there was uneasiness, as well as bewilderment, in his plump, tense face. He backed out of the room.

Captain Compton followed him, and locked the door again.

In the saloon they stood looking at one another. There were beads of perspiration on the steward's face. Hard-fisted and hard-bitten man as he was, there was a streak of sea superstition in him. And the mystery of the locked room seemed utterly inexplicable.

"If a man could come back from Davy Jones' locker—" he muttered.

"Don't be a fool!" said the captain harshly.

"We heard him," muttered Rawlings. "You heard him, Jim, and I heard him. And there ain't a living soul there! What does it mean, then?"

"Trickery of some sort. I don't get it, but—" Captain Compton shook his head. "Nobody's here, at any rate. Leave it at that!"

He went back to the deck.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced at him as he came up. They saw that his face was dark and clouded, and they could guess that he was a puzzled man, though they certainly did not guess how deep his alarm had been. They gave Billy Bunter expressive looks.

The fat Owl gave them a cheery wink in return. Billy Bunter was getting his own back, which was all that mattered to Bunter. And the fat ventriloquist of Greyfriars was not finished yet.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Call from the Sea!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Well?"

"Did you hear something?"

"Only a fat Owl squeaking!"

"Beast!"

It was late in the evening, and the Greyfriars fellows were thinking of going down and turning in.

The night was dark—banks of clouds shutting off the glitter of the southern stars.

The Firefly churned on through the velvety gloom, her lights gleaming out over the shadowed sea.

Billy Bunter leaned on the rail, blinking at the dark Mediterranean. There was a lurking grin on his fat face; a sly twinkle in the little round eyes behind the big round spectacles.

Bunter was feeling quite bucked.

Ever since the strange incident of the locked cabin, Captain Compton had had a gloomy and thoughtful brow, and Rawlings had been plainly in a troubled state of mind. Valentine Compton was not in the best of spirits; his uncle's morose mood affecting him, as well as the mystery of the bodiless voice that had been heard below.

That a voice had been heard, when no one was there, Compton of the Fifth naturally could hardly believe. He put it down to fancy; and such a delusion, on the part of the sea captain, troubled him.

The Famous Five were worried, too. Bunter was causing more than a spot of bother; but there was nothing they could do.

Compton of the Fifth had landed himself with that peculiar guest, and he was getting the benefit of it. Had he learned the truth, probably he would have kicked Billy Bunter off the yacht at the first opportunity. But it was not the business of Harry Wharton & Co. to bring about that state of affairs. At the same time, they were feeling extremely uncomfortable at keeping the secret of Bunter's trickery. Everybody feeling rather uncomfortable and bothered was a state of affairs

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that, in Billy Bunter's opinion, served them all jolly well right.

Now the fat ventriloquist was "at it" again.

Blinking across the dark sea, Bunter appeared to be listening intently. The wash of the waves, and the throb of the engines, were the only sounds that the other fellows heard. Bunter, it seemed, heard something more. At all events, he declared that he did.

Valentine Compton, who was pacing the deck with a knitted brow, turned to him, and stopped.

"What did you think you heard, Bunter?" he asked.

"Well, listen," said Bunter. "If there's a shipwrecked man calling for help, I jolly well think the captain ought to stop for him!"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry. "I heard nothing!"

"Same here!" said Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

Sniff, from Billy Bunter.

"I dare say you fellows don't care if a man's drowning under your noses!" he sneered.

"You fat rotter!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Well, let's listen!" said Harry Wharton. "I never heard anything but the engines."

And the Greyfriars fellows all bent their heads to listen for a sound from the shadowed sea.

Valentine Compton gave a sudden start. Faint and wailing on the wind there came a cry, apparently from the darkness of the sea on the starboard quarter.

"Did you hear that?" he exclaimed.

"I jolly well did!" said Bunter.

"A sea-bird," said Bob doubtfully.

"It sounded human to me," said Compton. "Listen!"

They listened again intently. If it was possible—as, of course, it was—that some shipwrecked man had seen the lights of the Firefly, and was calling for help from the wide waters, every fellow there was anxious to help him.

For some moment they heard nothing but the accustomed sounds; then wailing through the dark came the cry again.

No words could be distinguished; but it was undoubtedly a human voice, and it sounded as if it came from a distance.

Compton caught his breath.

"There's no doubt about that!" he exclaimed.

"By gum! No!" said Bob. "Fancy that fat ass being the first to hear it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Thank goodness he did!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with a deep breath. "We might have passed on and never heard——"

Valentine Compton ran up on the bridge. His uncle was there, a dim figure in the gloom of the cloudy night.

The juniors, leaning on the rail, stared over the sea. They could make out nothing a few yards from the vessel, neither was any further sound to be heard; but the yacht was moving swiftly, and a swimmer—if swimmer there was—might easily have been left out of hearing in a few moments.

"Hear anything, you men?" muttered Bob.

"Nothing——"

"Poor chap!" breathed Nugent.

"Swimming or hanging on to a spar, perhaps. Fancy his feelings at the ship's lights passing on!"

"Compton's uncle will stop for him, of course!" said Harry. "It won't be easy to find him in the dark, but——"

"He, he, he!"

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"You fat dummy what are you cackling at?" hissed Johnny Bull. "Do you think there's anything funny in a man shipwrecked at sea?"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Shut up, or I'll jolly well kick you!"

"Beast!"

"Nonsense!" came Captain Compton's deep, hard voice from the bridge. "Sheer imagination, Valentine! I heard nothing!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances. They had taken it for granted that captain Compton would ring the engine-room instantly at the news that a shipwrecked man was heard calling from the sea. Apparently they had taken too much for granted.

Compton's voice came sharp and excited.

"Uncle, I tell you I heard him! All the fellows heard him! You can't leave him to his fate—you can't!"

"Nonsense!"

Harry Wharton's face set. That Captain Compton was a "tough nut," he was aware. No doubt he did not believe that a cry had been heard from the sea, or did not choose to believe it. Evidently he was going to carry on, and not trouble his head about it.

"That won't do, you men!" said the captain of the Remove in a low voice.

"He's got to stop!"

"He jolly well has!" said Bob Cherry.

"Uncle, I tell you——"

"Nonsense!"

Harry Wharton ran up the steps to the bridge.

"Captain Compton," he called out, "there is a man floating somewhere on the sea, and we all heard him!"

SPECIAL FOR NEXT WEEK:

"THE SHIP OF SECRETS!"

DON'T MISS IT!

"I heard nothing!" growled the captain. "Go back, please!"

"You were not listening for it. We were listening after Bunter heard him, and we all heard him call!" exclaimed Wharton hotly.

"Rubbish!"

"Uncle, you must stop——"

"I have no time to waste on foolish fancies, Valentine!"

The Greyfriars Fifth Former stood silent. Harry Wharton, holding to the handrail, half-way up, stopped, but he was not silent.

"I tell you, Captain Compton, that there is a man calling for help, left behind us now, and you've got to go back for him!" he shouted. "Are you going to leave a man to drown? Do you think we shall keep quiet about it if you do? You cannot—and shall not—leave him to drown!"

Harry Wharton forgot that he was a schoolboy, a guest on the yacht, speaking to a sea-captain—he forgot everything but that there was, as he believed, a shipwrecked man left to his fate behind the gliding yacht. His voice rang with anger and indignation.

"We all heard him, sir!" called out Bob Cherry.

There was a moment's silence, then the captain's voice came snapping.

"If you're sure, Valentine——"

"I'm quite sure, uncle!"

"Then we'll see."

The captain rang half-speed to the engine-room.

Valentine Compton remained on the bridge with him with a pale, set, angry face. He knew what the juniors did not know—how unwilling James Compton was to have strange eyes peering about on board the Firefly.

But the captain, tough nut as he was, was not inhuman. The fixed belief of his nephew and the Greyfriars juniors that a cry had been heard from the sea convinced him against his will, and he was not hard-hearted enough to leave a shipwrecked man to drown; neither certainly would he have cared for such a story to be told ashore—and Harry Wharton had given him more than a hint of what he had to expect if he failed to do a seaman's duty.

Harry went back to his friends, and they watched the sea with beating hearts as the yacht circled back. Mr. Swain came up from below, and was heard to grunt expressively when he learned what was going on. He, no more than his skipper, wanted a stranger on board the ship of secrets. But when the yacht came to a stop, and a boat was lowered, Swain went in charge of it, and Valentine Compton followed him in—perhaps to make sure that the search was not given up too soon.

The juniors watched the boat pull away, with a hurricane lamp glaring light in the bows.

"This is about the spot where we heard him," muttered Bob. "If he's still afloat, they'll find him, I—I hope."

"He, he, he!"

"Will you shut up, Bunter?" shouted Harry Wharton savagely.

Why Bunter was chuckling was an utter mystery to the Famous Five. Even the fat and fatheaded Owl might have been expected to keep serious at such a moment; and it was Bunter who had heard the first cry and drawn attention to it.

But Bunter evidently was amused.

His fat face was wreathed in grins; his eyes twinkled merrily after the light in the boat as it moved far off in the darkness. Clearly Bunter had some joke on.

"He, he, he!" he gurgled.

"Has the fat idiot gone mad—or what?" asked Nugent, staring at him.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, I fancy they won't find that man in a hurry! He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter.

"What do you mean?"

"He, he, he!"

A sudden, startling suspicion struck Harry Wharton.

It was Bunter who had—or said he had—heard the first cry; and now he was grinning and chortling as if the whole affair was a joke!

"Good heavens!" breathed Harry. He grasped the fat junior by the shoulder in a grasp that made Bunter squeak. "You—you—you fool! Have you been playing tricks?"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Is this some of your trickery?" hissed the captain of the Remove. "You mad idiot, have you been taking us in?"

"Wow! Leggo!"

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Even Bunter wouldn't be such a fool——"

"Will you leggo, you beast?" gasped Bunter. "It wasn't me—nothing of the kind! And I was only pulling their leg, too! Think that beast is going to spank me and get away with it? I'll jolly well show him! They can hunt about all night if they like—and be blowed to them! See? Not that it was me, you know! I——"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

He knew now! It was Bunter's fatuous ventriloquism, and there had been no cry from the sea at all!

The yacht had stopped; a boat had gone out to search the dark waters, perhaps for hours—and all for nothing

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

but a fatheaded jape by the Greyfriars ventriloquist!

Wharton's ears burned as he recalled the words he had spoken to Captain Compton; he stood as if petrified.

"That fool!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"That idiot!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"That terrific fathead!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I—I say, you fellows, it wasn't—I mean I didn't— And it was only a j-j-joke!" gasped Bunter. "I say, leggo! I say— Yaroooooh!"

The Famous Five grasped him. There was a howl from Billy Bunter as he was slammed down on the deck.

Bump!

"Yoo-hoop! Owl! Wow! Yoo-hooooo!" roared Bunter.

"Kick him!"

"GOT him?" Captain Compton's voice rang sharply, harshly.

The boat's light was glimmering back to the yacht: the boat was returning. From the dark sea came the plash of oars and a calling voice. The captain stared down over the rail, with puckered brows and eyes that glinted. His voice, never gentle, had never sounded so harsh and strident as now in the ears of the juniors.

Harry Wharton & Co., silent and troubled, exchanged uncertain looks. Billy Bunter, below, gasped and groaned unheeded.

What they had better do was a dis-

Owl's trickery, the sooner they gave it up the better.

A voice was calling from the boat, as it came: but too far off for the words to be distinguished, though the juniors knew Compton's voice.

The captain, leaning over the rail and staring towards the approaching light, hailed again, his harsh voice carrying far.

"Have you got him?"

This time the Greyfriars fellows caught the voice that floated back from the night:

"Ay, ay!"

"You've got him?"

"Yes!"

"Oh!" grunted the captain. "Pull in!"

Harry Wharton & Co. hardly knew

Christmas Customs!



Some Quaint Customs and Ceremonies Unearthed by OUR RELIABLE REPORTER.

CHRISTMAS is kept over all the world and in parts of Russia.

In Scotland, of course, they keep it grimly—they keep everything there. There is a quaint old custom in Scotland of having the Christmas-tree on Christmas Eve, but like all their customs, there is good solid sense at the back of it. They use the Christmas-Tree as a yule log on Christmas Day.

At a place called Upper Gumtree, in Essex, there is a quaint old ceremony every Christmas morning of "putting the turkey through the hoop." A hoop is fixed to the turkey's pen and he is driven through it. When he gets on the other side he is seized and put through the hoop properly; in fact,

and burnt on the village bonfire, amid fireworks and mince pies. The turkey is tied to an old chair and paraded round the village, the people all shouting:

"Remember, remember, the 25th of December,
Gunpowder treason and holly;
I see no reason why this festive season
Should not be exceedingly jolly."

Then there is a grand party in the back garden, with puddings and pies, and jumping crackers instead of Christmas crackers. Most interesting.

In Russia the custom still exists of having a bomb instead of a Christmas pudding. The bomb is put on a dish

his own mother wouldn't know him when they finish with him.

According to the celebrated Irish author, Dr. Ruyters Kramp, people in some parts of Ireland are too poor to keep the two occasions of Guy Fawkes' Day and Christmas Day, which are so close together. So they have combined the celebrations into a special Christmas Fawkes' Day. At midnight on Christmas Eve, Santa Claus is seized

and brandy poured all round it, and the head of the house lights it with a candle. This is the signal for an interesting little dance called "Legging it," and the members usually move very quickly.

In Trinidad, wherever that is, the weather at Christmas is so hot that instead of bringing in the yule log, they bring in the refrigerator. The turkey is stuffed with ice-cream and frozen, instead of baked, and even the ghosts wear bathing costumes when they go out haunting.

The people of Tel-Us-Anuthe, in the desert of Arabia, have no trees to use as yule logs—only sand, which won't burn. They usually obtain their Christmas fires by setting light to each other's houses, and then they sit round and tell ghost stories till the fire brigade arrives. They have no chestnuts to roast, or any other sort of nut (as there are no trees), so they roast the camels, which give off a delicious aroma. For Christmas-trees they use their own beards, tying the presents securely in the fungus.

At a country house called Bunter Court there is still in existence the quaint custom of "expecting a postal order." The family go out in different directions to try and induce shopkeepers to let them have turkeys and things on the strength of the expected postal order. The one who bags the greatest number of things is the winner. Lord Bunter de Bunter was the winner last year. He bagged five pounds from a bank, five birds from a shop, and five years from a judge.

And in magazine circles there is a curious old custom of sending writers a whacking big remittance at Christmas time. All Editors do it as a matter of course. (I can tell you one who doesn't. —ED.)

"Boot him!"

"Burst him!"

"Owl! Beasts! I say, it wasn't me, and it was only a joke, can't you tut-tut-take a jig-jig-joke?" spluttered Bunter. "I say, yaroooooh! Oh crikey!"

He rolled and squirmed and howled, as the Famous Five kicked. There was a yelling, and a bumping, and a thudding, as he was booted into the companion and rolled down!

Captain Compton's voice came rapping angrily:

"What's that? Can't you keep quiet? Keep quiet there! Is this a time for skylarking? Silence there!"

The chums of the Remove were silent, but from below came gasping howls from Billy Bunter. Bunter had been going to enjoy that extraordinary joke, but to judge by the sounds of woe and lamentation that floated up, he was not enjoying it a whole lot!

mayng puzzle to the juniors. Captain Compton had not believed, or had only half-believed, that there had been a cry from the sea: but certainly he had not the remotest suspicion that there had been trickery on board the Firefly. To explain it to him seemed impossible, yet to allow the boat to go on, groping over the shadowed sea, for a shipwrecked man who, they now knew, was not there, was also impossible. With great relief the juniors saw the moving light turn back towards the Firefly.

The boat was returning. That was rather unexpected, for it had been hardly twenty minutes away from the vessel, which certainly was not time enough for an extended search.

But it was, in the circumstances, a relief to the juniors. As Valentino Compton and the boat's crew had been sent on a wild-goose chase by the fat

whether to believe their ears, as they heard the answer back from the boat.

There was nobody, Bunter had owned up that it was a ventriloquial trick, he had heard nothing, and the other fellows had heard only the ventriloquist! Yet both Swain and Compton answered from the boat in the affirmative to the captain's shouted question.

"What the dickens——" stammered Bob.

"They—they can't have found anybody when there was nobody!" stuttered Nugent. "What does it mean?"

The light came closer and closer in the bows of the boat: the boat itself a hardly seen shadow behind it. But it grew clearer as it drew nearer to the waiting yacht.

Lining the rail, the Famous Five

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stared down into it, lost in astonishment and wonder.

"Compton, you've found somebody?" shouted Bob.

"Yes!"

"Great pip!"

Light glimmered down into the boat as it ran alongside. The juniors could see the boat's crew, and another!

They stared blankly.

A rather fat man with a dark, swarthy face and a black moustache lay in the boat, partly supported by one of the seamen.

He looked insensible to the juniors: but a gleam of light on his eyes showed that they were open, jet black, and staring wildly.

He was drenched, and shivering with cold. Obviously he had been in the water. In utter wonder the juniors gazed down at him.

Captain Compton gave him a stare, with perhaps a tincture of pity in his hard face. Smuggler, gun-runner, lawless adventurer as he was, James Compton was a sailorman, and no sailorman could be quite insensible to the distress of a shipwrecked man.

"A Spaniard, uncle!" Compton was speaking, standing up in the boat. "We found him afloat clinging to a spar, by sheer luck, we'd never have seen him, but the light fell on him, he was past crying out I think, anyhow he did not call, but we've got him."

"Ay, ay, we've got him!" barked Mr. Swain, his voice indicating that it gave him no very great satisfaction.

"A Spaniard, sir!"

"Get him aboard," grunted the captain, "and the sooner that boat's at the davits the better."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on in wondering silence while the swarthy man was brought up the side.

He was half-conscious, but evidently very far gone. His black eyes wandered about him, but he did not speak, he was past speech. To Compton and his uncle, he was the man who had cried out from the dark sea: but the juniors knew that no one had cried out, and that the man floating on the spar had been found by the sheerest, wildest chance. Only because Billy Bunter's trickery had caused a search for a man who had no existence, had that hapless, shipwrecked man been found! Only the fat Owl's trickery had prevented the yacht from speeding on and leaving him to death.

"By gum!" murmured Bob.

"The gumfulness is terrific!" muttered the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Who'd have thought it?"

Bunter had been booted, as he thoroughly deserved for playing such a fatuous trick. The juniors had intended to give him some more booting, in fact, a great deal more. But they changed their intention now. That fatuous, fatheaded trick had caused a search to be made, which otherwise would not have been made, and it had saved a man's life!

"Rawlings! Get that man below!" snapped the captain. "See that he's looked after."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Captain Compton, giving the rescued man no further heed, rang to the engine-room the moment the boat was hoisted in. Once more the Firefly churned on her course through the dark Mediterranean.

Harry Wharton & Co. lent a hand getting the rescued man below. He looked a powerful man of muscular build, but he was at the end of his tether, and could not stir without aid.

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He was a good weight, too: but the sturdy juniors handled him easily enough, with the help of the steward and Compton of the Fifth. He was carried down into the saloon.

At the sound of footsteps on the stairs there was a scuttling sound below. Billy Bunter left off moaning and groaning, and scuttled. No doubt he supposed that the juniors were coming down for more booting!

"Put him on the settee!" said Rawlings.

The exhausted man was laid on the settee, and Bob Cherry put a cushion under his head. He lay silent, breathing in spasms, his black eyes darting strange uneasy glances round him.

"Look after him while I get him something!" said Rawlings, and he hurried away, leaving the schoolboys with the Spaniard.

Compton was regarding him with a very puzzled expression on his handsome face.

"It beats me!" he said. "The man's utterly exhausted, he cannot even speak, yet he must have cried out, we heard him! I can't make it out!"

The juniors did not answer that. They knew that the shipwrecked man had not cried out. But less than ever now, were they disposed to give away the fat ventriloquist, whose trickery had had so unexpected and fortunate a result.

"Jolly lucky that Bunter heard him!" said Compton. "That was sheer luck! We heard him afterwards, but if Bunter hadn't drawn our attention, I don't think we should have heard anything. It was Bunter all through."

That certainly was correct, though not in the way that Compton supposed. The Famous Five were uncomfortably silent.

Rawlings came back with a steaming glass. He placed it to the lips of the swarthy man, Compton raising his head and supporting it.

A flush of colour came into the pale face, as the man swallowed the liquor. His lips moved after the glass was taken away, showing that he was trying to speak; but no word came. That, to Compton, made it all the more puzzling, that he had been able to cry out to the passing yacht.

"You're safe now, on board an English ship!" said Compton. "Can you understand me?"

The dark head nodded.

"You understand English?"

Another nod.

"Good! You're on board the Firefly, an English yacht, bound for the Riviera. You're safe, and will be looked after."

The lips moved again. This time a whisper came:

"Gracias! Muchisimas gracias, senorito!"

"That's Spanish for thanks!" said Rawlings. There was compassion in his face. "By gum, he's been through it—not a sailorman, either! A land-lubber—wrecked at sea! Did you see anything of his craft?"

"Nothing!" answered Compton. "Only the spar he was clinging on—a broken mast from some sailing-vessel."

Rawlings nodded, with a puzzled look.

"It's a queer business," he said. "There hasn't been rough weather since we passed the Straits—how the dickens did his craft go to pieces?"

"I dare say he'll tell us later! We must get him into a bunk now," said the Greyfriars Fifth Former. "He had better have the empty bunk in my state-room. We must get those wet things off him—"

The swarthy man, extended on the settee, made a move. As if the English boy's words had endowed him with a sudden power of movement, he shifted an arm, and his dusky hand groped under his drenched coat. In his ghastly face there was sudden alarm.

"He's got a belt on!" said Rawlings, staring at the man. "He's mighty particular about that belt! Money-belt, what?"

The look on the swarthy, pallid face told that the steward had guessed right.

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled. If the Spaniard carried his money in his belt there was no occasion for alarm on his part; the idea made them smile.

"All serene, senor!" said Compton, laughing. "Nobody is going to touch your property! This is an English packet."

The swarthy man nodded, and smiled faintly, evidently understanding. But there was a lurking uneasiness in his eyes. His hand held feebly to the belt that was buckled round him.

As Rawlings and Compton, between them, removed the dripping coat, it could be seen that a leather wallet was attached to the belt, hitherto hidden from sight by the coat. Evidently, from the man's uneasy look, that wallet contained his valuables.

"No toque—no toque!" came a whispering mutter.

Unheeding, the steward and Compton lifted him to the empty bunk in the Fifth Former's state-room, and the Famous Five went to their own quarters, leaving the rescued man to them.

A deep snore greeted Harry Wharton as he entered the room he shared with Billy Bunter.

"You fat owl!" said Harry. "You jolly well ought to be booted all over the yacht, but as it happens—"

"I say, I wish you wouldn't wake me up, Wharton! It's jolly inconsiderate, jawing to a fellow when he's fast asleep!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You benighted idiot—"

Snore!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes a Startling Discovery!

BARRY WHARTON & CO. turned out in the morning, rather keen to hear, and see, something further of the man who had been so strangely rescued from the sea in the night.

But they heard from Rawlings that he was asleep in the bunk that had been assigned to him, in Valentine Compton's cabin. Compton told them that the man, though still weak and unable to turn out, showed signs of recovery, which was satisfactory to hear.

So far, however, he had not been questioned, and even his name was unknown, as well as that of the craft on which he had sailed, and which had, in some mysterious way, gone to pieces and left him afloat on a broken spar. Rawlings had said that he was a landsman, and the juniors supposed that he had been a passenger on a sailing-ship that had come to grief.

Billy Bunter, as usual, did not appear on deck till a couple of hours after the rest of the Greyfriars fellows. When he rolled up there was an unusual expression of thoughtfulness on his fat face.

"I say, you fellows!" he began. He eyed the Famous Five rather warily. "I say, no larks, you know!"



"I—I say—I didn't bring that coffee up for you!" gasped Bunter, as Captain Compton drank the coffee at a gulp. Next moment, there was something like an explosion. In utter amazement, the Famous Five started to their feet, staring at Captain Compton blankly. "Urrgh! Oh! Oooooogh!" raved the skipper of the Firefly. "I'm burned—scalded—ooooogh!"

"You ought to be jolly well booted, you fat spoofer!" growled Johnny Bull. "But as it turned out—"

"Oh, really, Bull! I—I say, you fellows, I've got something to tell you chaps!" said Bunter, blinking at them. The Famous Five grinned.

Bunter had sought refuge in his bunk, the previous night, in apprehension of further booting. So he had seen nothing of the rescued Spaniard. Now they wondered if he was going to tell them, as an item of news.

"What's the latest, old fat man?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I've found something out!" whispered Bunter.

"Mind you don't get found out yourself!" grinned Bob. "If the jolly old skipper spots you, you're for it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows don't know, of course," said Bunter, in a low, cautious tone. "You never see anything! But, I say, it's jolly queer!"

"Talking about yourself, as usual?"

"Beast! I say, a chap can't speak a word on this beastly little packet without some beast hearing him!" said Bunter, blinking round uneasily through his big spectacles. "I say, come over here by the boat, and I'll whisper."

"Whisper and I shall hear!" chuckled Bob.

The juniors had no doubt that Bunter had discovered that there was now a passenger on board the Firefly, and was deeply perplexed and intrigued thereby. As the yacht had been a hundred miles or more from the nearest land, when Billy Bunter scuttled to his bunk, and as he had seen nothing

of the rescue of the shipwrecked Spaniard, probably it was a great surprise to him. Rawlings, certainly could have told him, when he gave him his breakfast, but Rawlings never spoke to the fat Owl if he could help it. Compton of the Fifth was on the bridge with his uncle, and Bunter had not had a word with him yet. So the fat Owl knew only what he had been able to discover for himself.

Smiling, the juniors allowed him to lead them out of the reach of listening ears, to impart to them the startling news, with which they were already acquainted.

"Go it!" said Nugent.

"I say, they've got a man down there!" whispered Bunter. "Yes, you can giggle if you like, you silly idiots, but I can jolly well tell you they've got a man on this ship now who wasn't here when we went to bed last night."

"Not really!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"I've heard him speaking!" said Bunter. "Mind, nobody's told me! They're keeping it awfully dark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! If you don't believe me, go and squint into Compton's cabin!" said Bunter. "That's where he is! Rawlings went in, and I heard him speak! He's a foreigner—"

"Tell us some more!" murmured Bob Cherry. "This is getting interesting! Sure he's a foreigner, Bunter?"

"I heard him speaking in Dutch."

"Oh crikey! Sure it was Dutch?"

"The Dutchfulness was probably not terrific."

"Well, it was some foreign lingo," said Bunter. "If it wasn't Dutch, it was

German or Italian. Might have been Russian, perhaps."

"Not much difference!" remarked Bob. "Think it might possibly have been Spanish?"

"Well, it might have been," conceded Bunter. "I don't know a lot of Spanish—only the word onions—"

"Is that a Spanish word?"

"I suppose you've heard of Spanish onions!" said Bunter. "I say, what language is tokey?"

"Tokey!" repeated Bob. "Ask me another, old fat man! You don't mean Torquay, do you? That's in England."

"No, you fathead! I heard the man say tokey! He was speaking to Rawlings, when he went in!" breathed Bunter. "Mado me jump, I can tell you. That was the first I knew of him being there at all. I say, is tokey Dutch or German?"

"Was it toque?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing. "Did he say 'no toque'? That is Spanish, and means 'don't touch.'"

"Well, that might have been it!" admitted Bunter. "That looks as if they've got a Spaniard on board, doesn't it?"

"Sort of!" agreed the captain of the Remove.

"Well, ain't it jolly mysterious?" demanded Bunter, still in low, cautious tones, and evident fear of being overheard. "I can tell you, this yacht of Compton's is jolly mysterious in a lot of ways. I never told you what I heard them talking about once—"

"Don't now, you eavesdropping worm!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Beast! It's jolly mysterious," said Bunter, shaking his head. "That time THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,507."

when they sent us below, making out it was going to blow, and it wasn't, and didn't. Then that time in the Bay of Biscay, when they put some cargo on the Spanish lugger, and the cruiser chased us afterwards—"

"What is the fat ass burling about?" asked Bob Cherry. "Anybody know?" "I jolly well know what I know!" said Bunter. "I jolly well know something's going on, on this yacht, that you fellows don't know about. They're all in the swim together—the captain, and the mate, and the steward, and Compton of the Fifth, and the crew, too! I don't know what it is, but they're all jolly well up to something or other, I jolly well know that."

"The knowfulness of the esteemed Bunter is preposterous!" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton was silent. He knew better than Bunter that there was something secret and mysterious on board the Firefly. Unlike Bunter, however, he did not want to know, so far as he could avoid knowing. What the Bunder had told him, at Greyfriars, haunted his mind, but not a word of it passed his lips.

But Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Nugent, only stared blankly at Bunter. They were quite unaware of any mystery on the Firefly, though certainly they had wondered a little at the steward's familiar footing.

"And now," went on Bunter, "there's this—a man coming secretly on board, in the middle of the night! How did he get here? That's what I want to know? Did you fellows hear anything in the night?"

At which the Famous Five smiled again.

"I heard something!" said Bob gravely.

"What was it, old chap?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"It was an awfully queer sound, something like a steamer's siren, and something like a man delivering coals," answered Bob.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter. "Don't you know what it was?"

"Oh, yes, I know what it was all right."

"What was it, old chap?"

"Your snore!" explained Bob.

"You—you—you silly idiot!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you silly cuckoo! Can't you be serious?" hissed the Owl of the Remove. "I tell you, it's jolly queer and mysterious, and if that man in Compton's room is a Spaniard, that makes it all the more so. I say, do you think that they're mixed up in the Spanish revolution? Is that it?"

Bunter blinked anxiously at the grinning juniors.

"You see, it's an absolute mystery how the man got here," he said. "We've been nowhere near land. So far as we know, we've not been near another ship! Yet the man's here! He must have got on board secretly in the night! Look here, you can take it from me that the man's on board—I tell you, I heard him speaking to Rawlings in Compton's room! He's there all right."

"Really and truly?" murmured Bob.

"I tell you I heard him! He's there! Now, how did he get on board, and why?" demanded Bunter. "What's up? What does it mean? Can any of you fellows guess?"

"Well, I think we might guess, a bit!" remarked Bob. "The fact is, old fat bean, it's not so frightfully mysterious to us as it is to you, because we helped to carry the man down from the deck last night—"

"Eh?"

"And we knew all about him before we went to bed—"

"What?"

"And he happens to be a shipwrecked man, who was picked up in the yacht's boat after you made them stop by playing your idiotic tricks—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "You—you mean to s-s-say you knew all about him?"

"Sort of!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

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

The expression on Billy Bunter's face was worth a guinea a box! He had drawn the juniors to a secluded spot to whisper the mysterious and exciting news that an unknown man had somehow got on board the yacht during the night. He had expected to startle them with the news, and thrill them with the mystery. Instead of which, it turned out that they had seen the man picked up in the boat, and had helped to carry him below.

He blinked at them blankly.

"That's why we're not booting you any more!" explained Bob. "Your silly trick made them stop, and then they happened to find that chap and pick him up. That's why we're not booting you up and down the deck this very minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Any more mysteries?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" snorted Bunter.

The fat Owl rolled away in disgust, leaving the chums of the Remove roaring.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Giving Bunter His Due!

"SEÑOR DON GUZMAN DIAZ!" said Compton of the Fifth, with a smile.

The rescued Spaniard was still in his bunk in the afternoon. But he was on the mend, and Captain Compton had given him a look-in—for a few brief minutes; and after lunch, Valentine Compton had had a talk with him.

Harry Wharton & Co., naturally interested in the rescued man, gathered round the Fifth Former when he came up after seeing the new passenger, to ask for news. By that time, it seemed, the man had been able to give an account of himself.

"That's his name!" went on Compton. "He belongs to Madrid, and got away from the city when General Franco attacked it with the rebel army. He sailed from Cartagena in a coasting brig. The brig was bombed by a plane—whether Red or Rebel he doesn't know. It went down, and he thinks he was the only survivor. He had been hanging on that spar for more than twenty-four hours when we picked him up. Just a little episode of the Spanish civil war."

"Poor chap!" said Bob.

"The poorfulness of the chap is terrific!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh sympathetically.

"What jolly good luck that you found him!" said Harry.

"Yes—and he owes that to Bunter!" said Compton. "I can't quite make it out. He has no recollection of calling out, or even of seeing the ship's lights passing—he was less than half-conscious when we found him adrift—and he certainly seemed too far gone even to whisper. Yet he must have called out—Bunter heard him, and then we heard him—unconsciously, I suppose. Any-

how, his life is saved—he is pulling round all right now."

"That's good!" said Nugent.

"And he seems to have saved his cash, too!" said Compton, smiling. "I suppose he packed all he could get into his wallet when he scooted out of Madrid. He's fearfully particular about anybody touching it."

"Yes, we noticed that last night!" said Harry. "Has he told you which side he was on in the scrap?"

"Neither side, according to his own account," answered Compton. "Most people in Spain, of course, are on neither side, and would be glad to see both mobs of scrapping swashbucklers kicked out of the country. From what Mr. Diaz says, all he wanted was to keep clear, and he's glad to find himself under the British ensign. He will stay on the Firefly till we reach Marseilles. In a foreign country he will be safe from both gangs."

With a nod to the juniors, Compton went up to the bridge and joined the captain there.

Johnny Bull rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I suppose it's no bizney of ours," he remarked, "and Compton seems to have taken it all in. But it doesn't look quite square to me."

"How's that, old bean?" asked Bob.

"Well, those scrappers in Spain are a lawless lot of rotters on both sides," said Johnny. "But bombing a coasting brig is rather thick! I shouldn't believe that unless I saw it happen."

"But they're bombing one another right and left," said Bob. "I suppose Mr. Diaz knows whether his ship was bombed or not."

"I suppose he does!" agreed Johnny. "But you can depend on it, that if it was bombed and sunk, it was mixed up in the civil war. It wasn't just a coasting craft running from Cartagena to the Balearics, if they took the trouble to bomb it from a plane. It was a vessel on one side or the other."

"If that's so, why shouldn't he say so?" asked Bob.

"No good asking me," said Johnny. "If he's a man on the losing side, clearing off while the going's good, he might have his own reasons for keeping it dark. Still, it's no bizney of ours."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Found out any more giddy mysteries, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, wasn't it jolly lucky I was on the spot to save that chap's life last night?" asked Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "You fellows never heard him—"

"What?"

"But I did!" said Bunter. "If I hadn't heard him—"

"You heard him?" ejaculated Bob.

"Why, you jolly well know I did!" said Bunter warmly. "I hope you fellows are not going to make out that I didn't save that chap's life. You jolly well know that I heard him, and made you fellows listen, and if I hadn't, he would never have been picked up at all, and—"

"Why, you pernicious porpoise, what the thump do you mean?" exclaimed Bob. "He never made a sound, and nobody heard him. It was your rotten ventriloquism that we heard!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Why, you owned up that it was, you fat villain!" exclaimed Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"It was your silly trick that made the skipper stop," said Nugent. "It was sheer accident that the boat found that Spanish chap drifting about—"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"We jolly well booted you for it!"

said Johnny Bull. "And if it hadn't turned out so luckily we'd jolly well boot you again!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"What is the fat and esteemed idiot driving at?" asked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Well, what do you mean, you fat chump?" demanded Harry Wharton. "You knew nothing whatever about that man Diaz being adrift on the sea. What we heard was your ventriloquial spucking, and you owned up that it was. So what do you mean, you bloated blitherer?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors with a disdainful blink. His fat lip curled with scorn.

"That's like you fellows!" he said bitterly. "I save a man's life, when you'd have passed on and left him to it, and all you can do is to run a fellow down! I must say it's like you!"

know that I made them stop the yacht," said Bunter, as the astonished five stared at him blankly. "It was all through me, as you know jolly well. You fellows were jawing, as usual, when I heard him——"

"You never heard him!" howled Johnny Bull. "You fat villain you owned up that you never heard anything, except your rotten ventriloquism."

"Well, I like that!" said Bunter, with a sneer. "You can call it rotten, if you like, but I'd jolly well like to hear you do it, Bull! I'd like to hear you make it sound as if a call came over the water! You couldn't do it to save your life!"

"You blithering idiot——"

"You can call a fellow names!" sneered Bunter. "But you jolly well thought, at the time, it was somebody calling from the sea."

"Then you did it?"

"Oh! No! I didn't do it! I heard that chap calling for help, as plain as anything. That's why I made them stop the ship, see, to save his life. Presence of mind, you know!"

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!"

"And I jolly well think you fellows might let a chap have the credit due to him," said Bunter warily. "I really think that everybody else on this yacht knows what I did. But it's like you fellows not to give a fellow his due! I can tell you I get pretty sick of this jealousy and envy. I tell you that plainly!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Give a fellow his due!" said Bunter scornfully. "Never mind if you have to take a back seat, for once! See? Give a fellow his due!"

"Well, that's only fair!" admitted Bob. He glanced round at his friends.

Got a Few Minutes to Spare?

Good! What about having a shot at these GREYFRIARS TEASERS?

BURIED BOYS.

Some well-known Greyfriars' surnames are buried in these two sentences. Can you excavate them all?

"Showing a teacher a keen attention has no opening for fun, but some chaps are cunning at tying him in knots, which itself is humorous and diverting."

"Trotter, the page, the reader will agree, needs a hand upon the scruff of his neck to help rout him out of slumber."

LIMERICKS.

Can you complete these limericks with the names of Greyfriars fellows, and the words that rhyme with them?

A genial joker named —,
When feeling exceedingly —,
Put holly, it's said,
In his Form-master's bed,
It's a good job the stuff was all —.

A thin, weedy fellow named —,
When sitting one Christmas at —,
Ate six cubic feet
Of pudding and meat,
Yet went out, if anything, —.

There once was a blithering —,
Who rose up from lunch with a —
"This cooking," he cried,
"Is the worst I have tried,
And that chicken is perfectly '—'!"

A certain wise fellow named —,
To his cousin said: "Peter, it's —!
You've the funniest face
In the whole of this place!"
(They're as like as two peas in a —!)

GROWING NAMES.

You start with one letter, and adding one letter at a time, according to the clues, you finish with the name of a Greyfriars fellow. The letters must be added only at the beginning or end of the word, and you must make a word to fit the clue with each addition.
EXAMPLE: "Letter; Church of England, abbrev.; frozen water; cereal; Fifth Former."

This you may solve as: E—CE—ICE —RICE—PRICE. Now try these:
(1) Ejaculation; another ejaculation; rumpus; forehead; Removite.
(2) Letter; French word for "of"; poem; mineral vein; prefect.

(3) Indefinite article; the same before a vowel; conjunction; country; Fifth Former.

(4) Pronoun; within; wrong; to carol; Removite.

(5) Ejaculation; short for "all right"; shorter for short for "all right"; the fool for the Fifth; the fool of the Fifth.

TWO OR THREE LETTERS.

In this puzzle, you are asked to take two letters, or three letters where shown by the figure (3), from each name in each group, and put them together to make another Greyfriars name. The position of the letters in the name is always the correct order.

EXAMPLE: DuPont — StqTT — Skinner. By taking the capital letters and putting them together, you would get POTTER. Now try these:

(1) WHARTON — TOZER — PENFOLD — GREENE (3) —.

(2) TREMAINE — BULL — TREVOR — BUNTER — COKER —.

(3) BUNTER — BOLSOVER — TREVOR — LODER (3) —.

(4) BLAND — SCOTT — RUSSELL (3) — YATES —.

(5) MIMBLE — BUNTER — BULSTRODE — RUSSELL —.

(You will find the answers to these posers on page 28.)

The Famous Five gazed at him. Evidently, since Billy Bunter had learned the facts of the case, he had been doing some thinking.

Everyone on board the Firefly, excepting the Famous Five, believed that Bunter had heard a call from the sea and had been the cause of the rescue of the shipwrecked Spaniard.

It was, therefore, in the general opinion, due to Bunter that the man's life had been saved.

That it was a happy, and utterly unexpected, outcome of his trickery, was true. But that was not good enough for Bunter.

At the time he played that trick Bunter, no more than anyone else on board, had had the remotest idea that there was a shipwrecked man floating on a spar anywhere in the Mediterranean Sea. Not till the middle of the following morning, in fact, had Bunter known anything at all about it.

As it had turned out, however, Bunter was not the fellow to part with any credit that might be going.

"I say, you fellows, you jolly well

"We did," agreed Wharton. "But you didn't, you fat fool, as it was you playing the trick!"

"Eh? I wasn't playing any trick!" said Bunter. "Nothing of the sort! I heard that chap calling for help, as— as plain as anything!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I think even you fellows might give credit where credit's due!" said Bunter contemptuously. "Nobody but me heard him!"

"You owned up that it was you yowling!" hooted Bob.

"What I mean was, that it wasn't— er——"

"What?"

"That's what I really meant to say!" explained Bunter. "The actual fact is that I heard him as plain as anything. I wasn't doing any ventriloquism, or anything of that kind. Besides, I only did it to pay that beast out for spanking me, as I told you at the time. Think I'm going to let that beast spank me on my trousers without getting my own back? No fear!"

"Shall we give Bunter what's due to him, you men?"

"Let's!" grinned Nugent.

"Hear, hear!"

"He's asking for it!" agreed Harry Wharton. "We were going to let him off, but as he asks for it, let him have his due, if he wants it."

"Yaroooh!" roared Billy Bunter, as the Famous Five, with one accord, proceeded to give him his due. "Ow! Yoo-hoop! Leggo!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-woop!"

Bump!

"Ow! Help! Whoop!"

Bump!

"Yurrrrooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, having given Bunter his due, left him to the enjoyment thereof!

The roars that followed, from Billy Bunter, seemed to indicate that even now that he had received his due, he was not satisfied.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER!

Billy Bunter on the Warpath!

"MY esteemed Bunter—"

"Oh!"

"What's that?"

"'Tain't pepper!" said Billy Bunter hastily.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled.

Coming down into the saloon, he happened on William George Bunter there—with a large paper packet in his hand.

That fat hand Bunter immediately put behind him, evidently to conceal the packet.

Standing with his hand behind him, Billy Bunter blinked uneasily at the grinning nabob through his big spectacles.

"Nothing of the sort," he explained further. "If you want to know, Inky, it's toffee. I haven't got any pepper."

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter, if you are thinking of the larkfulness with execrable pepper—"

"Oh, roally, Inky! I've told you it's butter-scotch—I mean toffee! I suppose you can take a fellow's word!" said Bunter warmly. "Think I've been in Rawlings' pantry after pepper? I jolly well haven't—and he never asked me what I wanted there, either!"

"Oh, my esteemed hat!"

"Besides, a fellow can have a packet of pepper if he likes, I suppose, without you barging in! Not that I've got any pepper here! It's caramels!"

"You terrifically potty porpoise—"

"Look here, you mind your own business, Inky! Go and eat coke—see?" grunted Bunter. "You needn't hang about. I'm not going to give you any of this pepper—I mean toffee—that is, caramels! Aren't you going to sit on deck with the other fellows, Inky?"

"I came down to get an absurd overcoat, my esteemed Bunter."

"Well, get it, and be blown!" said Bunter.

He put his fat hand into his pocket, to make sure that the packet of pepper was out of sight of Inky's keen eyes, and rolled out of the saloon.

The nabob glanced after him, with a glimmer in his eyes.

Obviously, Billy Bunter was on the warpath again. He had not had a lot of luck with his little game with the mustard, and apparently he was going to try again with pepper. Pepper was rather a dangerous sort of thing to play tricks with; but that consideration was quite lost on Bunter's fat brain.

Bunter had been bumped. Bunter was wrathful. The worm will turn—and Bunter, being rather a worm, turned!

The sun had set over the hills of Spain and starry night was on the Mediterranean. Harry Wharton & Co., sitting in a row of deck-chairs, were chatting to one another. It was mild and warm, but the junior from India's coral strand was more susceptible to the winds than the natives of a hardier northern clime, so he had gone for a coat.

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Billy Bunter stepped out on deck.

He stepped out cautiously.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, quite interested in Billy Bunter, his packet of pepper, and his mysterious proceedings generally, did not trouble further about the overcoat he had gone down to fetch. With a noiseless step he followed Bunter up to the deck, grinning behind his podgy back.

Unaware of that little circumstance, the fat Owl of the Remove rolled past the row of five deck-chairs, four of which were occupied by the juniors.

He moved behind the chairs with such excessive caution that the chums of the Remove would certainly have wondered what was up, if they had noticed him at all.

Grinning, the fat Owl came to a stop behind the chairs.

Happily unconscious of the fact that the silent-footed nabob was just behind him, Bunter drew the packet of pepper from his pocket.

Up went his right hand, with the packet in it.

Another moment, and a cloud of pungent pepper would have descended on the unsuspecting juniors from behind, and the cheery conversation would have been turned into a volcanic eruption of coughing, sneezing, and spluttering.

But in that moment a dusky hand from behind Bunter grasped a fat wrist.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter, taken by surprise.

What happened next surprised him still more.

A cloud of pepper settling over fellows' heads, and making them sneeze and cough and snort and splutter and gurgle, seemed a screaming joke to the fat and fatuous Owl—and exactly what they deserved.

But as the grasp of that dusky hand fastened on his fat wrist, that fat wrist was twisted, and the packet of pepper fell from Bunter's podgy fingers, and banged on his own fat little nose.

Pepper smothered his fat face.

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh jumped back at once. He did not want any of the cloud of pepper.

Bunter was in the middle of it. He lived, moved, breathed, and had his being in a world of pepper.

"Ooogh! Atchooooo! Chooop! Ooooooh! Atchoooooop!" Billy Bunter sneezed, gurgled and roared: "Oh crikey! Atchooooooh!"

"What the thump—"

"Is that Bunter—"

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped to their feet. They stared blankly across the tops of the chair backs at Bunter.

"Urrrrgh! Grooogh! Oooooh! Atchoooooh, atchoooooh, atchoooooh!"

"What on earth—" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What's the matter, Bunter?"

"Atchoooooh!"

"Smells like pepper," said Bob Cherry. "I can smell pepper. Have you been larking with pepper, Bunter?"

"Atchooooo! Cchook-ook-ooooogh!"

Fairly doubled up, Bunter sneezed and sneezed and sneezed—gargantuan sneezes. His sneezes rang almost like pistol-shots. He gurgled, he gasped, he guggled. He wriggled and he squirmed. And he sneezed and sneezed and sneezed.

"What were you doing with pepper, you fat chump?" roared Bob

"Atchooooo—chooh—choop!"

The juniors stared at him in astonishment. They stared at the grinning dusky face of Hurree Jamset Ram

Singh. Bunter evidently had had a lot of pepper about him; and Bunter, equally evidently, had got the benefit of it. With streaming eyes and nose, he sneezed and sneezed and sneezed.

"Inky, what—" exclaimed Wharton.

The nabob chuckled.

"As esteemed Shakespeare remarks, 'tis sport to see the absurd engineer hoist by his own ridiculous petard!" he remarked. "The excellent and execrable Bunter had a packet of idiotic pepper for your ludicrous nappers, and it has dropfully fallen on his own idiotic head, owing to prompt interposition of humble self."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"Atchooooo! Choo-ooop! Oh, you beast! I never saw you behind me! Oooooh!" gurgled Bunter. "Ow! My nose! Ooooh! Atchooh—chooh—chooh! Wooooog! Oh! Oh lor! Oh crikey! Atchooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oooooh! Wooooh!"

"You pernicious porpoise!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Haven't you sense enough not to play tricks with pepper?"

"Atchooooo!"

"You blithering bloater!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You ought to be jolly well kicked from one end of the ship to the other."

"Urrrrgh! Atchooooo! Oh crikey! Ow! I say, you fellows— Atchooooo! I—I wasn't going to— Atchooooo! That beast Inky— Atchooooo! I was only going to— Atchooh—chooh—choooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five roared.

According to Bunter's programme they had been going to do the sneezing and snorting, while Bunter did the laughing. Instead of which Bunter was doing the sneezing and snorting, and the chums of the Remove yelled with laughter.

"Ow! Beasts! Oooogh!" gurgled Bunter. "Oh, you rotters! Ooooh! I'll make you sit up for this, Inky, you beast! Ooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchooo—chooo—chooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchooooo!"

Billy Bunter squirmed away, sneezing, snorting, and gurgling as he went. His sneezes and snorts and gurgles died away down the companion.

He was still sneezing intermittently when the juniors went to their bunks.

Harry Wharton, when he turned into the upper bunk in his state-room, did not, for once, hear a deep and resonant snore from the lower bunk. Billy Bunter, for once, could not sleep. Instead of snoring he sneezed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Sleep for Bunter!

"HARRY, old chap!"

"Shut up!"

"I can't go to sleep, you beast!"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"Beast!" groaned Billy Bunter.

The sneezing, the coughing, the gurgling had come to an end at long last. But that dose of pepper had left Billy Bunter in an extremely disturbed state. It was seldom that the fat Owl was wakeful. When it came to sleeping, as a rule, Rip Van Winkle had nothing on William George Bunter. Now, however, the fat Owl of the Remove wooed slumber in vain.

Again and again he heard the tinkle of the bell. It was now past six bells

—eleven o'clock. And Bunter could not sleep.

When Bunter could not sleep, it was, of course, sheer selfishness for anybody else to want to go to sleep. Harry Wharton, in the upper bunk, slept the sleep of the just—at intervals. Every now and then Bunter awakened him.

"I say, old chap—" groaned Bunter.

No answer.

"I really can't sleep, old fellow!"

Silence!

"Have you gone to sleep again, you beast? Beastly selfishness all round!" said Bunter bitterly. "Snoring like a pig, while I can't get a wink! After all I've done for you, too!"

"Will you shut up, and let a fellow go to sleep?" came a hissing voice from the upper bunk. "Do you want me to get out and take a pillow to you?"

"Beast!"

Bunter turned over once more and

"I say, I think it might make me sleepy to have a walk on deck. Come along with me, will you?"

Harry Wharton did not answer. Bunter heard him making a movement, without guessing what that movement portended.

He knew, however, a moment later, as a pillow swept through the air, and caught him on a fat ear.

Bump!

Bunter sat down quite suddenly.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Wow! Why, you beast—Ow!"

"Get up, you blithering idiot!" came Wharton's voice. "I want to knock you over again! Get up, you blithering bloater!"

"Ow! Beast! Rotter! Ow!"

Billy Bunter picked himself up, but he did not approach the bunk again. Knocking him over with the pillow seemed to afford the captain of the Remove some satisfaction. It afforded Bunter none whatever.

beast Inky the other fellows would have been in that unhappy state, and Bunter would have been sleeping and snoring. The fact that he had got exactly what he deserved was no comfort to Bunter. He was not even aware of it.

He crawled up to the deck. It was quite possible that a walk on deck in the fresh air would have a soothing effect and that he would be able to go back to his bunk and get to sleep. The dismal fat Owl hoped so, at all events.

The night seemed to him as black as a hat. He blinked up at the bridge, where he made out, dimly, the burly figure of Mr. Swain, the mate. A shadowy figure was half visible here and there. The fat Owl groped along, and gave a squeak as his shin came in contact with something. It was one of the deckchairs, left where they had been sat in when the Greyfriars fellows went below.

For ten minutes or so Billy Bunter waddled up and down by the rail. But

My Worst Christmas!

Greyfriars Celebrities Recall Unhappy Times.

MR. PROUT, Master of the Fifth:

My worst Christmas was spent in the Rocky Mountains, when I was big-game hunting in 1896. Under the impression that I had trailed a grizzly bear to a remote part of the pinewoods, it was a distinct shock when I found that the grizzly bear had, in fact, trailed me. Figure to yourselves the position, my dear readers. I had

dropped my rifle when climbing the tree—did I mention that I had climbed a tree, purely for strategic purposes?—and so I had nothing to harm the monster as it swarmed up after me. In that fearful moment, my dear friends, all my past life came



before me in a flash. What was I to do?

(To be continued in the next 720 issues.—ED.)

HARRY WHARTON, Captain of the Remove:

My worst Christmas? Any Christmas! Can't dodge Bunter!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER:

My worst Crissmus was the first wun I can remember. We had dinner at Bunter Court, with terkey, chicken, roste beef, vegetables, Crissmus pooding, mints pies, cream triphles, jellies, froot, nuts, raysins and wine. And as I was only 4 years old, I had bred and milk! How I ever stood that hart-rending aggerny, I can't imagine. Beests!

LORD MAULEVERER:

Two years ago my car broke down more than a mile from a railway station, and I had to walk! I did it, though; but I can't think of it without a shudder. I was lucky enough to get a lift part of the way, but for quite half the distance I had to use my own feet. Of course, I was laid up over the Christmas holiday with exhaustion; but I have a strong constitution, and I pulled through. That's all! Good-bye now, I'm tired!

BOB CHERRY:

Once, when I was a fag, I was taken ill on the day we broke up for the vae, and I lasted ill until the day we went back to school, when I was passed by the doctor as fit. I wish I could have the gloves on with the germ that bit me!



FISHER T. FISH:

One Christmas I gave a man ten cents for a diamond pin he had picked up in the gutter, and I offered the pin to Moses, of Courtfield, for £20. When I picked myself up, I guess I moseyed out to look for the pilgrim who had welshed my ten cents for a bit of bottle glass. It took me three solid weeks to find him and hammer the cents back off him, so I had no time for Christmas at all.

DICK PENFOLD, the Remove Poet:

This Christmas, so far, is the worst! I've eaten too much tuck to-night! Alas! If I could only burst, My skin would not be quite so tight!

closed his eyes. Harry Wharton slid back into dreamland.

But if Wharton could sleep, Bunter could not. His fat little nose was burning from the effects of the pepper, and felt like a hot cinder. Seldom, very seldom indeed, did Billy Bunter turn out of bed willingly after he had once turned in. But he was fed-up with turning from side to side, and at length he turned out of the bunk.

"I say, Wharton—"

Only steady breathing from the upper bunk answered him. The captain of the Remove was fast asleep.

He woke up, however, as a fat hand groped over him. Billy Bunter had intended to shake him by the shoulder and wake him up. In the dark it was Wharton's nose that he captured. Still, it undoubtedly had the effect of waking Wharton up, which was the thing that was needed.

"Oooooogh!" came a sudden gasp from the fellow in the upper bunk. "What's that? Yurrooogh!"

"Only me, old chap," said Bunter,

"I—I say, dear old chap, don't be shirty, you know!" gasped Bunter. "I—I can't sleep because of that filthy pepper! I wasn't going to chuck it over you, you know—nothing of the kind! Besides, it was only a joke! I say, old chap, come on deck with me, will you? I don't want to go alone! I say, are you getting out?"

"You'll be sorry if I do, you fat frog! Another word from you, and I'll get out and pillow you till you can't squeak!"

Billy Bunter was not quick on the uptake. But he was able to guess from that reply that Wharton was not going to turn out and walk the deck with him at midnight till he felt sleepy.

Wharton settled down again. This time he was able to settle down in peace. Bunter did not want any more of the pillow!

The fat Owl got into trousers and slippers and a coat. Then he left the state-room. Late as the hour was, Bunter was not only sleepless, but never had he felt more wideawake. That was the effect of the pepper. But for that

exertion never had much of an appeal for Bunter, and after that amount of exercise he sat down in one of the deckchairs, pulling it round to face the rail.

Sitting there, with his fat head leaning back on a cushion, and the cool sea wind soothing his fat face and his burning nose, Bunter felt a little better.

He even began to hope that he might nod off, where he was, and go to sleep, after all.

He closed his eyes behind his spectacles and hoped for the best. At the end of half an hour he was beginning to nod drowsily.

Then a movement close at hand disturbed him.

It was the sound of someone sitting down in another deckchair. As the back of Bunter's chair was towards the others he was quite invisible to the newcomer, as the newcomer was to him.

He wondered for a moment or two who it was.

Certainly it was not one of the Greyfriars juniors. They were all asleep in their bunks. It was not Swain—he was

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on the bridge—and it could hardly be the captain, who would naturally go on the bridge when he came up. It was not one of the crew, who had no business in that part of the deck. Rawlings, of course—that cheeky steward! Like his dashed cheek!

Bunter did not tell Rawlings that it was like his dashed cheek, however. He disliked Rawlings very much, but he feared him still more. Having guessed that it was the steward sitting there hardly more than a yard from him, Bunter closed his eyes once more behind his spectacles.

It was some time afterwards, and he had almost forgotten that the steward—if it were the steward—was there, that a whisper reached his fat ears and made him start.

"Well, I'm here."

Low as the whisper was, he recognised the voice of the mate Swain. He opened his eyes wide in surprise behind his big spectacles. Swain generally spoke in a loud, gruff bark. Why he should be whispering now was a mystery to Billy Bunter.

"I've been waiting for you, Swain!" came an answering whisper, and Bunter knew Rawlings' voice, faint as it was.

Rawlings was in the deckchair. He heard another chair creak as the mate's heavy bulk sank into it.

Not a sound came from Bunter.

Obviously neither the mate nor the steward had the faintest idea that the deckchair with its back turned to them was occupied.

They could not see Bunter, and they could not hear him—any faint sound of his breathing being drowned in the wash of the sea and the low, continuous throb of the engines.

So far as they knew, all the Greyfriars guests were asleep in their bunks. And they knew, of course, that none of the crew would be on that spot.

Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big, round spectacles. That cautious whisper revealed that the two men were about to discuss something not intended for other ears.

Any other fellow, probably, would have made his presence known at once. But it did not even occur to Bunter to do so. If they chose to come and sit there to jaw they could get on with it!

Once already on board the *Firefly* Bunter had heard talk not intended for his ears. But that had been a consultation between the captain, the steward, and Valentine Compton. It had puzzled Bunter extremely, making him aware that there was some mysterious secret on the yacht, without enabling him to guess in the least what that mysterious secret was. Naturally, Bunter was very curious to know. As it was no concern of his, he took a very deep interest in the matter.

"Jim's not in this!" went on Rawlings' whisper.

Bunter knew that the steward alluded to the captain as "Jim."

"Put it plain!" came Swain's husky whisper. "I reckon I've got my bearings, from what you've said already, but—put it plain."

Clearly, the captain was now on the bridge, and Swain, instead of going for his watch below, had joined the steward in that dusky corner of the deck for a whispered consultation, from which the captain was to be left out. If Bunter had been curious before, he was doubly curious now. Apparently there was something afoot behind the captain's back.

"It's a matter of thousands." So low was the steward's whisper that Billy Bunter had to strain his fat ears to hear, though the man was not more

than three or four feet from him. "It's a big sum! Stand in with me, Bill! I reckon the skipper will stand for it, afterwards, for a fair share! If not, you stand by me, and we'll see it through together! Jim can't afford to quarrel with us if we stand in together!"

"The Spaniard?"

"You've got it."

"You're sure?"

"I've seen it—wads of it! Not his, I reckon, any more than ours! Oodles of it, Bill Swain, and ours for the trouble of grabbing!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Precious Pair!

BILLY BUNTER hardly breathed. He dared not stir.

He had expected, and hoped, that this whispering in the dark was going to reveal something of the unknown mystery of the *Firefly* and gratify his curiosity on that subject.

But what he heard fairly made his fat flesh creep.

From the talk of the Greyfriars juniors he had heard of the belt and wallet about which the rescued Spaniard was so particular. They had chuckled at the idea of the castaway thinking that perhaps his valuables were not safe on board the ship that had picked him up.

Certainly it had not occurred to them, or to Bunter, that the man had anything of very great value about him. Plenty of travellers carried their money in a belt for safety, and if he were a business man he might also have business papers that he could not afford to lose. Further than that the juniors had not thought about the matter. It seemed that Rawlings had.

There was so sinister a tone in the steward's whisper that it sent cold chills down Bunter's fat spine. He knew, of course, what the man's words meant—what they could only mean. It was not a matter of a hundred pounds or so, such as any traveller might carry. It was a large sum—a very large sum—that Don Guzman Diaz had in that wallet, and Rawlings had found it out.

On the occasion when Bunter had listened to the talk in the captain's cabin he had received a terrifying impression that Rawlings, under his outward aspect of a plump and civil steward, was a dangerous man. He knew now, only too well, that that impression was well-founded. At that moment the fat Owl would have given much to be safe back in his state-room. Even curiosity was forgotten in his deep dread. But he dared not move. Hardly daring to breathe, he listened to the faint whispering from the darkness, with a dreadful terror at his fat heart that if they found him there the deep waters that washed under the rail might be their means of keeping him silent. For he knew that it was a crime that was being planned in his hearing.

"Jim's got his limit!" It was the mate's husky whisper now. "And there's the lad, and his schoolboy friends on board. Jim wouldn't stand for it."

"I know. But afterwards, what choice would he have?" muttered Rawlings. "He can't break with us, Bill Swain. We're three in the game, you and Jim and I, and if two out of three stand in, the other will have to come round."

"But a shipwrecked man—" muttered the mate.

Rough and tough as he was, Swain was not so utterly unscrupulous as the smooth, sleek steward.

"A runaway thief, I reckon!" said

Rawlings coolly. "He's pitched a yarn; young Compton swallows it, but Jim doesn't, any more than I do. It's plain enough. His side in the Spanish shindy is faring the worst, and he was going while the going was good, and taking with him all that he could lay his dago paws on! Lots of them at the same game!"

"You think—"

"It's plain!" grunted Rawlings. "From the way I figure it out, a gang of them got away in the brig, and one of Franco's planes got after them and bombed them. They're a pretty savage crew all round, but they don't sink harmless coasting craft for fun. They knew it was an enemy ship they dropped their bombs on. This man Diaz was the only survivor, and I reckon they wouldn't have left him alive if they'd spotted him afloat. And he'd lined his pockets thick before he slipped his cable out of Spain. He's got the stuff! I tell you, I've had a squint at it—English and French banknotes, in wads. May have cleared out a bank before he scuttled, for all I know. It's no more his own than ours, and you can lay to that, Bill Swain."

"Mebbe. But—"

"Are you standing in with me? Stick to me, and Jim will have to toe the line. Easy enough to get shut of the foreigner after. We could land him on either the Spanish coast or on the Balearics—Majorca's the nearest. I'm not suggesting dropping him over the side with a length of chain cable tied to his feet!" added the steward, with a sneer.

"But figure it out!" muttered Swain. "The man would put up a scrap; he would raise Cain all over the ship. If Jim stood for it, young Valentine wouldn't—and there's his schoolboy friends. This isn't a matter for a lot of publicity, I reckon."

"Hardly!" grinned Rawlings. "But I tell you I've got it fixed. The Spaniard will go to sleep to-morrow, and will wake up on shore without his wallet—an extra long siesta after lunch!"

"Oh!" breathed Swain. "I—I get you!"

"What he gets in his coffee won't hurt him!" said Rawlings. "I've fixed up that sort of thing before, as you know well enough, Swain. He will get a stretch of happy slumber—and wake up feeling as bright as a polished belaying-pin, and never even know there was anything in the coffee. Only he will wake up on shore, with the *Firefly* under the sea-riim."

Swain whistled softly.

"Jim will have to be in that!" he muttered.

"That's where Jim comes in. Up to that point he knows nothing, and need know nothing. When we get as far as that, we put it to him, you and I together, and he can't stand against the two of us."

"That's so."

"Young Valentine will be kept in the dark, and the schoolboys, of course. All they will know is that the man's been taken ashore—at his own request, as far as they know. None of them will be in the boat; they won't know how or where he's landed."

"I reckon we can pick a quiet spot on the north-west side of Majorca—"

"Easy! Mebbe he's got friends there. If not, it's his own look-out! I suppose he knew what he was risking when he took a hand in a civil war!" said Rawlings. "I don't know which side has the upper hand in the Spanish islands at the moment—he can take his chance of that! A man who doesn't want to take chances has only to stick

to honest work, and leave revolutions alone!"

Swain chuckled huskily.

"You stand in?" asked the steward.

"Ay, ay! There's my fist on it!" said the mate.

"Good! Not a word after this; even Jim's not to smell a rat till we put it up to him as a finished fact. Nothing doing till Senor Don Guzman Diaz goes to sleep to-morrow afternoon! These dagos always take a siesta after lunch—and his siesta to-morrow will last a bit longer than he bargains for, that's all!"

There was a creaking of deckchairs. Billy Bunter heard the mate go. He did not hear Rawlings go.

The fat junior remained perfectly still.

Was the steward still there—that smooth, sleek man, who, as Bunter knew now beyond the shadow of a doubt, was a cool, hard-hearted, desperate rascal?

Minute followed minute, and there was no sound. He realised at last that the steward was gone, with his soft, cat-like tread, noiselessly.

The fat junior ventured at last to lift his head and blink round in the gloom.

He was alone.

Both the mate and the steward were in their bunks by that time. The Owl of Greyfriars wiped the perspiration from his fat forehead. Long after he knew that he was alone, terror chained him to the spot.

When at last he stirred, he tiptoed to his state-room, and he fairly gasped with relief when he was inside and the door shut.

Harry Wharton was fast asleep.

Bunter rolled into the lower bunk. He was not sleepy; he was more sleepless than ever after what he had heard. But he did not think of waking the captain of the Remove again. He dared not speak a word or make a sound lest that smooth, sleek scoundrel should hear him.

The dawn was creeping over the Mediterranean before Billy Bunter's weary eyes closed at last and he slept.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Surprising the Senor!

"THE jolly old Don!" remarked Bob Cherry.

It was a bright, sunny morning on the Mediterranean. Harry Wharton & Co. had wondered whether they would see the rescued man that day, and now they saw him.

Senor Diaz had spent a whole day since his rescue in his state-room, and the long rest seemed to have done him good.

He came on deck, leaning on the arm of Rawlings, the steward helping him and looking after him with respectful attention.

Although not yet fully recovered from his terrible experience, there was colour in his dusky cheeks, that had looked so ghastly the night he was taken from the sea, and his black eyes were very keen and lively.

The juniors raised their caps to him politely, and he smiled and bowed in return with Spanish courtesy.

Valentine Compton placed a deck-chair for him, and Rawlings led him to it, and he sat down.

Then the steward brought a rug and cushions.

Had Billy Bunter been present, he might have marvelled, and wondered whether that husky whispering in the

(Continued on next page.)

The STately HOMES of GREYFRIARS

THE GHOST OF MAULEVERER TOWERS

By
The Greyfriars Rhymester



(1)

A tale is told of the days of old
When knights were clad in armour,
And sundry gents fought tournaments
Check full of death and drama;
Of a noble Earl, and a saucy churl,
Who did not hate him merely,
But seized a sword and split my lord
In halves—or pretty nearly!

(2)

This, you'll agree, was bound to be
A trifle disconcerting;
To be so split is just a bit
Uncomfortably hurting.
So all my lord's tremendous hordes
Of henchmen clad in scarlet,
With pikes and spears chopped off the ears
And boko of ye varlet!

(4)

He passed away on Christmas Day,
Split-open, but undaunted!
And since those hours, Mauleverer Towers
Has annually been haunted.
The Red Earl walks, and even stalks
At midnight through the castle,
Amid the cries and ghastly sighs
Of that long-tortured vassal!

(6)

The present Earl avoids the whirl
Of life in school and leisure,
Relapsing deep in wholesome sleep
Is Mauly's greatest pleasure.
It's "too much fag" to work or rag
Or kick a football muddy,
Let others rush about—but hush!
Go tip-toe past his study!

(8)

Then comes the night, and clad in white
The gruesome ghosts assemble;
The phantom crawls along the walls,
And human beings tremble!
Soft whispers float along the moat,
A ghostly bell is pealing,
Then follow shrieks and frantic squeaks,
That tortured varlet squealing!

Once again our long-haired poet
bursts into verse. This week he
has chosen a seasonable subject
—the Ghost of Mauleverer
Towers.

(3)

They tortured him in dungeon grim
All through the Christmas season;
He howled and groaned and wept and
moaned
(No doubt he had good reason).
My lord, meanwhile, in costly style,
Was treated by a wizard,
With spells and charms and magic
balms,
Which did not mend his gizzard!

(5)

For many a mile that noble pile
Mauleverer Towers is sighted,
On Hampshire hills, the castle fills
The view, and we're delighted.
For down its walls the ivy falls,
Its towers are battlemented,
With pike and axe in grim attacks
Its great grey stones are dented.

(7)

He travels home, his sleepy dome
On Rolls Royce cushions resting;
Then, nearly dead, he crawls to bed,
In spite of all protesting.
Beneath the clothes, quite comatose,
He lays there calm and cheery,
Where Quelches cease to break his peace
And rest comes to the weary.

(9)

No groans can make old Mauly wake,
He sleeps in peace unbroken;
A happy smile is on his dial,
Of pleasant dreams a token!
The Red Earl groans in hollow tones,
Till darkness has departed,
Then disappears with bitter tears.
Poor ghost! He's broken-hearted!

Next Week: COKER PLACE.

dark the night before had been all a dream. Rawlings was the respectful and attentive steward now, with a discreet touch of sympathy.

Having bestowed the Spanish gentleman comfortably, he went below to his duties, leaving Senor Diaz with Compton of the Fifth and the Remove fellows.

All the schoolboys were sympathetic enough towards a man who had been through so fearful an adventure, though in more than one mind there was a lingering doubt whether he had given an exactly veracious account of that adventure.

It was possible, of course, that his account was true, and that he was, as he had stated, a non-combatant who had been only anxious to get out of a country torn by internal strife. But as the vessel he had sailed in had been bombed at sea, it was much more probable that that vessel had belonged to one of the contending factions.

However, that was his own affair, and no doubt he had reasons for keeping his own affairs to himself. He might not have felt by any means certain that a neutral skipper would be prepared to risk getting mixed up in the Spanish trouble by helping a fugitive of the defeated side to escape.

That he was not wholly easy in his mind, even on board an English craft, all the fellows could see.

His black eyes were restless, wary, and watchful. Several times they had dwelt searchingly on the steward, sleek and polite as Rawlings was; and several times the juniors noticed their turn on the captain on the bridge in the same searching, penetrating way.

They noticed, too, with amusement, that when Rawlings had placed the cushions in the deckchair, and made him comfortable thereon, his dusky hand had gone to the wallet under his coat, and stayed there till the steward stepped back.

Obviously, he was uneasy on the subject of that wallet and what it contained. That was simply amusing to the Greyfriars fellows.

It did not occur to them that a keen, wary man of affairs, such as Don Guzman evidently was, might have read something in the faces of some members of the ship's company that the schoolboys never dreamed of seeing there.

They were not aware, of course—though Billy Bunter was—that the steward had had a "squint" at the contents of that wallet. Possibly Senor Diaz was aware of it.

But if the senor found any cause for disquietude in the sleek steward, the hard-faced captain, and the bulldog mate, it was probable that he felt a sense of relief in the company of the schoolboys.

It was clear, at all events, that their company pleased him. They could see that he looked them over with keen interest, and was satisfied with the result of his survey. No doubt he realised that, in their company at least, his precious wallet was safe, whatever it might contain.

"You go on a holiday on a ship, senores?" he asked.

"That's it!" said Harry Wharton. "A holiday cruise, sir! It's the Christmas holiday at our school now."

"You are a family of the captain?"

The juniors grinned at the idea.

"Oh, no! Compton is the captain's nephew—we're schoolfellows of his, that's all. Not relations."

"Friends of a school—I see!" assented Don Guzman. "It is a pleasure to meet the little English senors! England—that is a happy country! You talk in

a House of Commons, instead of shooting in a street! Yes? It is a much better way!"

"The jawfulness in the esteemed House of Commons is terrific," remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "But it is better than the ridiculous shootfulness."

Senor Diaz blinked a little at that remark. His own English was not perfect; but Hurreo Singh's seemed rather a surprise to him.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that Bunter?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in surprise. "What have you turned out early for, fatty? It's hardly ten o'clock!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"This is one more boy of a school?" asked the Spanish gentleman, glancing at Bunter as he came rolling up.

"Yes, that's Bunter, sir!"

Billy Bunter blinked at Senor Diaz through his big spectacles. Bunter was not looking his brightest that morning. He had lost a great deal of sleep, and he had a worry—a deep worry—on his fat mind.

"Oh, you're here, Mr. Diaz?" he said.

"I—I say, good-morning! I—I say, have you got your wallet safe?"

The Spaniard gave a start, and the Greyfriars fellows a stare.

"Que!" ejaculated the senor.

"You blithering ass!" whispered Bob Cherry. "Shut up!"

"Eh? Shan't!" said Bunter. He blinked round, to make sure that Rawlings was not on deck, and that the mate was not at hand. "I—I—I say, sir, I—I'd keep an eye on that wallet, if I were you."

"Que es esto?" asked the astonished senor. "What is that? What is a meaning of what you say, little senor?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter, in great haste. "Nothing at all! The fact is, I don't know that you've got a wallet—never even thought of it. All the same, I'd be jolly careful about it, sir! Keep an eye on it—see? Don't mention that I said so! That's important!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat Owl almost in stupefaction. They were glad that Compton of the Fifth had gone on the bridge, and could not hear these extraordinary remarks from the fat Owl.

Senor Diaz looked at Bunter, in utter astonishment at first; and then, with an extremely keen and penetrating look in his sharp, black eyes.

"No entiendo—I understand not, little senor!" he said. "What is it you know of a wallet that belong to me?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter. "Still, a chap can't be too careful with a lot of money, you know."

"You howling ass, Bunter!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Roll away, barrel!" hissed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Billy Bunter was the fellow to barge into what did not concern him. But this was really astonishing. And the juniors did not fail to note the keen, sharp, almost hawkish expression that came over the Spaniard's swarthy face.

A few moments ago he had been a pleasant, chatty gentleman. Now his face was sharp, watchful, suspicious, and alarmed. Instinctively, as it were, his hand went under his coat, to the wallet buckled on the belt.

"What I mean is," said Bunter, "if you've got wads of banknotes about you, sir, you can't be too careful—see?"

"Shut up, idiot!" breathed Nugent.

"You are very kind to give me such warning, little senor!" said the Spaniard, smiling with his lips, though

not with his eyes. "You think that some man on a ship fancy that there is much money?"

"Oh, no! I—I don't know anything about it!" gasped Bunter. "Don't you tell anybody I said anything! These fellows are all right—they're as straight as I am! But—"

"But what, little senor?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter. "Nothing at all, sir! I—I thought I'd mention it."

He blinked round again. To his horror, Rawlings was looking out of the companion. The fat junior trembled.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

"You make a joke with me, is that it, little senor?" asked Don Guzman.

"Oh, yes! That's it!" said Bunter. "Just my little joke! He, he, he! Only a joke, sir! I—I don't know anything! Nothing at all! Never heard anybody say anything, or—or do anything! Only a j-j-joke!"

And Bunter rolled away to the other side of the deck. Harry Wharton & Co. stared after him. What his antics might possibly mean they could not begin to guess.

Rawlings, to Bunter's great relief, took no notice of him. But the fat junior did not venture to approach the Spaniard again. Between his desire to put the Spaniard on his guard and his deep-seated terror of Rawlings, the fat Owl was in an unenviable frame of mind.

During the morning Harry Wharton & Co. talked a good deal with the Spanish gentleman—but none of them had the benefit of Billy Bunter's conversation. Billy Bunter, for once, did not seem to want to talk—he was, for once, thinking instead; and the dismal expression on his fat face hinted that his thoughts were far from happy ones.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Burden!

"I SAY, Franky, old chap—"

"Well, fathead?"

"Suppose—"

"Eh?"

"Suppose—"

"Suppose what, ass?"

"Oh, nothing!" groaned Bunter.

Frank Nugent stared blankly at the unhappy Owl. Bunter had caught him by himself, walking on the deck, joined him, and whispered mysteriously.

But he could not get it out.

The outcome of Bunter's distressed reflections on the subject had been that he would tell one of the other fellows, and put it up to him.

But it was not easy to speak without danger of being overheard. To the terrified fat Owl, Rawlings was here, there, and everywhere. And Mr. Swain, happening to give him a careless glance, quite unconsciously struck terror to his fat soul.

"Potty?" asked Nugent.

"Yes! I mean, no!" muttered Bunter. "I say, suppose you happened to come on deck in the night—"

"I didn't!" said Nugent, staring.

"Well, suppose you had, and you heard— Oh crikey! What does that man want?"

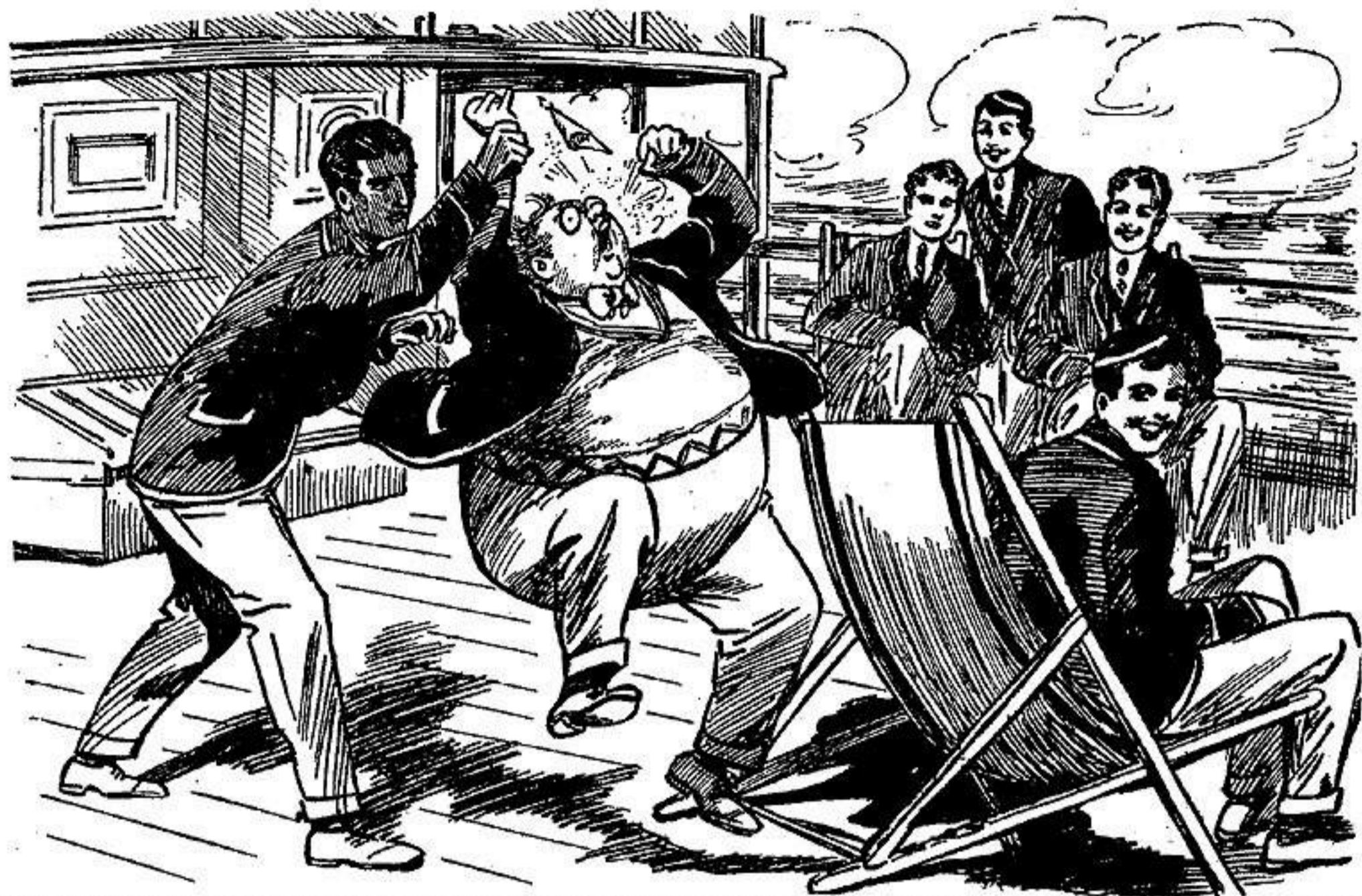
One of the yacht's hands came along the deck, and Billy Bunter broke off. If the man heard, and told Rawlings—

"What the thump—" asked the amazed Nugent.

"Oh! Nothing!"

Bunter rolled away, leaving Frank Nugent wondering whether he was wandering in his mind. Really, it looked like it.

It was getting towards lunch now.



Happily unconscious of the fact that the silent-footed nabob was just behind him, Bunter raised the packet of pepper. Next moment, a dusky hand fastened on his fat wrist and twisted it. The packet of pepper fell from Bunter's podgy fingers and banged on his own fat little nose. "Ooogh! Atchoo-oooooh! Chooop!" The fat Removite sneezed, gurgled, and roared.

Billy Bunter knew what was scheduled to happen after lunch. He could not let it go on. Strongly was the fat Owl tempted to dismiss the whole thing from his mind, and let the hapless Spaniard take his chance. But he knew that he could not.

But what he could do was a mystery to him. Even if he spoke out, it was likely—very likely indeed—that he would not be believed. And then Rawlings would know—and the bare thought of Rawlings knowing made Bunter cringe.

There was a little stir on deck as the Spanish gentleman went below a little before lunch. Valentine Compton came to give him an arm down the companion.

The Famous Five were left on deck, and Bunter debated in his fat mind whether to take the plunge. He made up his fat mind at last.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he began, in a whispering squeak.

"You fat chump!" growled Johnny Bull. "Now Mr. Diaz has gone down, tell us what you meant by playing the fool this morning!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Even Bunter can't have been spying into his wallet," said Bob. "He spies and pries into jolly nearly everything, but that sportsman is too jolly careful of his jolly old wallet to give even Bunter a chance."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Better kick him, I think!" said Johnny. "He must have given Mr. Diaz an idea that somebody was after his money. What else was the man to think, from what he said?"

"The thoughtfulness must have been

terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I—I say, you fellows, do let a fellow speak!" breathed Bunter. "You're all jaw, like a sheep's head! I—I say—" Bunter paused and blinked round cautiously. "I—I say, I couldn't sleep last night owing to that beastly pepper, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" hissed Bunter. "But for that I should have been fast asleep all the time, and shouldn't have heard anything."

"Did you hear anything, fathead?"

"You—you see, I—I came on deck because I couldn't sleep," whispered Bunter. "That beast Wharton wouldn't come with me, though I woke him up and asked him! Selfishness all round."

"Guilty, my lord!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Well, you see, I—I came on deck," breathed Bunter; "I sat down in one of the deckchairs. See? And then Rawlings—"

"Rawlings!" exclaimed Bob.

"Don't shout, you idiot!" gasped Bunter in terror. "He might hear you!"

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Bob in wonder.

"That villain—"

"What villain?" gasped Bob.

"Rawlings, you dummy!"

"Is Rawlings a villain because he let you bump on the deck the other day? You asked him to—in fact, begged for it—"

"I don't mean that! I mean—"

Valentine Compton came along the deck and joined the juniors.

Billy Bunter snapped off as if he had suddenly lost the power of speech.

"Anything up?" asked the Fifth Former in mild surprise. Bunter's expression was extraordinary.

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't telling those fellows anything, Compton. Was I, you chaps?"

"You blithering idiot!" roared Bob. "Are you off your rocker—or what?"

"What the dickens—" said the puzzled Compton.

"Only Bunter wandering in his mind," said Frank Nugent. "You mayn't believe, perhaps, that he has one to wander in—"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! It—it's all right, Compton. I—I wasn't saying anything about Rawlings!" gasped Bunter. "I never heard him speaking to the mate."

"No harm if you did, is there?" asked Compton blankly.

"Oh, no, not at all! What I mean is I—I only heard him say it was a—fine morning!" gasped Bunter. "And—and so it was, you know."

"I seem to have interrupted something," said Compton, laughing. "I'll see you fellows again at lunch." And, with a nod, he went down the companion.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Thank goodness he never heard—"

"Are you potty?" asked Harry Wharton. "What can it matter if Compton hears anything you say?"

"Well, he's the captain's nephew, isn't he?" yapped Bunter. "He might mention it to him, and the beast might mention it to Rawlings. I know Compton ain't in it, but—"

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"He isn't in what?"
 "Oh, nothing!"
 "Mad as a hatter!" said Bob. "Did you have a nightmare last night, Bunter? Is that it?"
 "No, you ass! I—I— Oh lor'! Here comes that villain Swain!" groaned Bunter. "Quiet, for goodness' sake!"

"Is Swain a villain, as well as Rawlings?" grinned Bob.
 "Will you be quiet?" hissed Bunter.
 "Swain doesn't bite—"
 "Shut up, you beast!" groaned Bunter. "How do I know he wouldn't chuck me overboard if he knew?"

"Oh scissors!"
 "I—I say, you fellows, d-d-don't say anything! Not a word—not a syllable!" whispered Bunter.

And, leaving the astonished five, the Owl of the Remove cut away below.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Is he potty—or what?" asked Harry.
 "The pottiffulness seems to be posterous!"

"Goodness knows!" said Bob, quite puzzled. "Beats me!"

"I say, Wharton—" came a fat squeak from below.

"Hallo!"

"I say, I've upset your suitcase all over the shop!"

"You blithering idiot!"

Harry Wharton hurried to his state-room.

Billy Bunter awaited him there, and he shut the door as soon as the captain of the Remove was inside.

But Wharton's suitcase was in its usual place, safe and sound. He stared at it and stared at Bunter.

"It's all right, old chap," said Bunter in a cautious whisper. "Your suitcase is all right. That was only to make you come. See? If Rawlings heard, he wouldn't catch on—"

"You unspeakable idiot!" said Harry Wharton in measured tones. "What did you want to fetch me here for?"

"Look!" whispered Bunter.

To Wharton's utter amazement, he opened a "Holiday Annual," resting it on the edge of a bunk, and started scribbling on the blank flyleaf with a stump of pencil.

Quite alarmed for the fat Owl now, Wharton watched him in silence.

Unless Bunter had gone out of his senses, there seemed to be no accounting for this.

He had pretended that he had upset the suitcase in order to call Wharton to the state-room; having got him there, he was writing what he had to say, instead of saying it—apparently because he feared that walls had ears!

That the fat Owl was in deep—indeed, in terrified—earnest was clear. It was easy to see that he was frightened almost out of his fat wits.

Wharton, in silence watched the words as they grew under Bunter's scrawling pencil. He was feeling uneasy and perturbed. That the fat Owl had spied and pried during that cruise he was aware, and he wondered what he might have discovered. Herbert Vernon-Smith's belief that the Firefly was a smuggling craft was now a suspicion in Harry Wharton's own mind, though he tried to drive it away. Was that what the fat Owl had to tell him?

It was not that: it was something quite different—so different and so amazing that Wharton gazed and gazed, spellbound, at the scrawled words on the blank leaf of the "Holiday Annual." For this is what Bunter wrote:

last nite, and they are gowing to robb the Spaniard of his wollet. Rorlings is gowing to drugg his coffy after lunch, and wile he is asleep he is to bee putt ashore in a bote without his wollet."

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Extraordinary Conversation!

HARRY WHARTON stood still, as if rooted to the cabin floor; his eyes fairly started as he read those amazing words.

Billy Bunter's spelling might have struck any reader as rather comic, but the meaning was clear enough—and the meaning was staggering.

That Bunter knew—or fancied he knew—something, Harry could not doubt; his extraordinary antics through that morning made it plain enough.

He understood now the fat Owl's mysterious remarks to Senor Diaz. That those remarks had made the Spaniard uneasy and suspicious, he knew—or, rather, they had sharpened the uneasiness and suspicion he already felt. Now the fat Owl's secret meaning was clear.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles anxiously; he blinked at the shut door as if dreading to see it slide open and reveal the face of Rawlings looking in.

"Catch on?" whispered Bunter.

"You mad idiot!" gasped Wharton at last. "Did you go to sleep on deck and dream this?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I can see you believe it," said Harry more gently. "But it's mad and impossible! You must have dreamed it!"

Bunter opened his fat lips to reply; then some sound caught his ear and he jumped with alarm. Instead of answering, he took the stump of pencil again and wrote:

"You silley phool!"

Harry Wharton smiled. The first shock of Bunter's statement had startled and almost horrified him; now, however, he was recovering from that shock, and Bunter's remarkable spelling produced its natural effect.

Bunter, unaware that his spelling was remarkable, blinked at him in angry astonishment. It was not a laughing matter, so far as Bunter could see.

"What are you grinning at?" he hissed. "Look here, Wharton—" The fat junior remembered caution and broke off again. Taking the stump of pencil, he wrote:

"I never dreemed it. I herd them."

Harry Wharton shook his head. "It's impossible!" he said. "Whatever they are, they couldn't—they wouldn't— You're potty to fancy such a thing!"

Bunter wrote again hastily:

"Kwiet, you phool! Wisper!"

Harry Wharton laughed. Really, Bunter's orthography was enough to make a stone image laugh.

"You cackling idiot!" hissed Bunter. "Don't you believe me?"

Wharton shook his head again.

"I can't!" he answered.

"Are you going to let them—"
 Bunter broke off as caution supervened, and scribbled:

"Are you gowing to let them robb him?"

"I tell you it's all rot!" said Harry impatiently. "You must have gone to sleep and dreamed it. Is that all you think you heard?"

That Bunter had gone to sleep in a deckchair and had a nightmare, seemed a probable explanation to Harry Wharton. But he was conscious of a feeling of lurking uneasiness. Bunter's statement, on the face of it, was incredible. But it was clear that he believed it himself: it was not one of his fanciful fabrications. It was possible that further details might make the thing clearer, one way or the other.

The fat junior nodded: opened his lips, closed them again; and scribbled once more. Wharton's eyes followed the scrawling pencil:

Rorlings said he had seen it, wods of it, English and French banknotes in the wollet."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips a little. The detail of English and French banknotes was not one likely to have occurred to Bunter of his own volition. If he had dreamed or imagined the whole thing, he would have been more likely to think of Spanish banknotes in possession of a Spaniard.

Bunter blinked at him eagerly.

He could not let the matter rest where it was: and he dared not take the slightest risk of drawing Rawlings' eyes upon him. His only resource was to get rid of his burden by shifting it on to another fellow's shoulders. Certainly, Wharton's were better able to bear it than Bunter's, if he was convinced of the truth of the startling tale.

"Any more?" asked Harry quietly.

The fat Owl reflected for a moment or two: and scribbled:

"Rorlings said the munny wasn't reely his verry likely. The captin isn't to kno till after they've gott it, and then he will stand in with them and putt him ashore on Marjoca."

Wharton breathed harder.

Generally, when Billy Bunter added details to a yarn, it made that yarn more and more improbable. But in this case the added details added to the probability.

Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows in thought. Bunter watched him with almost anguished eagerness. The captain of the Greyfriars Remove spoke at last.

"Is Compton of the Fifth in it?" he asked.

That was a test question! For whether Valentine Compton was mixed up in smuggling, or not, he was utterly incapable of being mixed up in a dastardly robbery, and Wharton was as certain of that as he was certain of his own honesty.

If, therefore, Bunter answered that Compton of the Fifth knew anything of the plot to rob the Spaniard, it would prove that the whole thing was moonshine, and that he need take no further heed of it at all.

But Bunter shook his head promptly.

Had his answer been in the affirmative, Harry Wharton would have dropped the matter there and then. But his answer was an emphatic negative.

"Did they mention him?" asked Harry.

Bunter nodded.

"What did they say?"



"I say, Wharton," said Bunter. "I think it might make me sleepy to have a walk on deck. Come along with me, will you?" A pillow swept through the air and caught him on a fat ear. Biff! "Ow!" gasped the fat Removite, fairly tottering. "Beast! Rotter! Ow!"

Bunter had recourse to the pencil again.

"Rawlings said that yung Valentine and the skoolboys woud be kept in the dark."

"Anything else?"

Bunter scrawled:

"He said they woud only kno he had been taken ashore."

There was a sound of a gong. It was the signal for lunch. For the first time on record Bunter passed such a signal unheeded.

"I say, you know all about it now," he whispered. "I—I can't do anything. If—if—if you can, old chap—"

"It can't be true!" said Harry slowly. "I—I don't know what to think. But—you can't do anything, that's a cert. Leave it to me."

"Mind, you're responsible," said Bunter. "I've told you, and you know now. I—I say, that man Rawlings is a fearful villain. I say—" He broke off, and scrawled again. That fly-leaf of the "Holiday Annual" was beginning to look rather like a map by this time.

"I beleeve he woud have pitched me overbord if he had kерт me last nite! He is a phcerful villin."

"Fathead!" said Harry.

There was a tramp of feet, and Bob Cherry's voice was heard:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Tumble up!"

Bunter snapped the "Holiday Annual" shut.

"You know now!" he said.

And he rolled out of the state-room. Now that his burden was off his fat mind he was feeling relieved.

Harry Wharton followed him more slowly.

He felt as if his brain was almost in a whirl. He did not, and could not, believe that so dastardly a plot had been hatched between the steward and the mate of the Firefly. And yet—

Obviously Bunter could not have dreamed all this! He could not have invented it! His terrified earnestness was a proof that he had not invented it, if that was needed.

Was it true?

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove simply did not know what to think. Unless he was absolutely certain of it, he could do nothing. And he was far from being absolutely certain. Yet he could not discard the matter as impossible or incredible. He could do nothing! Nothing except keep on the alert, and ascertain from his own observation whether there was anything in it.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Up to Wharton!

DON GUZMAN DIAZ joined the party at the lunch table in the saloon.

Captain Compton came down to lunch, but, as usual, his stay was brief. He exchanged a few civil words with the Spaniard, hardly spoke to anyone else, and went back to the bridge.

Valentine Compton, however, talked freely and pleasantly with Don Guzman.

Four members of the famous Co. were in cheery spirits and they joined cheerily in the talk every now and then.

Mr. Swain did not appear; and Wharton could not help the thought

coming into his mind that the bulldog mate shrank from eating at the same table as his intended victim. That thought coming involuntarily, showed Wharton how deep an impression Bunter's strange tale had made on him.

Every now and then he glanced at Rawlings.

But the smooth, sleek face of the steward told him nothing. Rawlings, to all appearance, was the dutiful, attentive steward and nothing more.

If there was, indeed, a plot to administer a drug to the Spaniard, it was easy enough for Rawlings. Don Guzman would naturally take coffee with his cigar after lunch, and the coffee would be made and served by the steward. Easy enough, if he was villain enough, but was he? It was almost impossible for the Greyfriars schoolboy to believe it.

Bunter, now that he had handed the responsibility on Wharton, was obviously relieved. If there was anything to be done, it was up to the captain of the Remove, and Bunter willingly left it at that.

Don Guzman gave the Greyfriars fellows a description of the air-bombing of Madrid by General Franco's forces. Evidently he had been through it: though he made no reference to any part he might have played himself in the civil war. But when he spoke of the black African troops employed by the rebel general against his own countrymen, his eyes flashed and his teeth gleamed under his black moustache in a way which sufficiently showed on which side his sympathy lay. But that was only for a moment or two; then he was the smiling Don

again, cheerful and composed. But that he belonged to the losing side, and was a fugitive from the victors, the juniors did not doubt.

They knew too little about Spanish affairs to have any decided opinion about the rights or wrongs of the civil war; in fact, they rather regarded it as a sort of case of Kilkenny cats! But they rather liked Don Guzman, who seemed a very courteous and agreeable old bean. Certainly they were glad that he had been rescued and was on his way to safety in a foreign country.

Lunch over, Valentine Compton went up to join his uncle on the bridge. Don Guzman sat on the big settee in the saloon, and Rawlings placed a box of cigars at his side, one of which he promptly lighted.

As the juniors had no doubt that, according to the Spanish custom, the senior intended to take a siesta after the meal, they prepared to leave him to it.

Billy Bunter rolled away to the deck to take a nap in a deckchair; a siesta being Billy Bunter's happy custom, too.

Rawlings brought coffee to the senior. Harry Wharton stood by the piano looking over the music as an excuse for lingering. His heart was beating unpleasantly.

If Bunter's tale was true there was a drug mixed in the fragrant coffee, which Senior Diaz was sipping, under his eyes.

Was it true? Wharton could not believe it. He simply could not! According to Bunter, the senior was to be drugged after lunch, and landed, while he slept, in a boat, on the shore of Majorca.

The drug itself, no doubt, would be harmless enough—simply a strong sleeping draught, to keep the man quiet while he was disposed of.

Was it true? It was not, and could not be, and yet—Unless he knew, he could do nothing—and he did not know. Nothing in the coffee, at all events, roused any suspicion on the part of the Spaniard, and he had already shown that he was a suspicious and wary man. He sipped the coffee several times, then, as it cooled, he finished the cup, smoking his cigar the while.

The powerful aroma of that cigar was not particularly grateful or comforting to the healthy lungs of the juniors. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull went on deck.

Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh waited for Wharton. But the captain of the Remove continued to turn over the music on the piano.

"Looking for something, old bean?" asked Frank.

"Oh, just looking it through," said Harry. "Wait for me, Franky."

"Right-ho!"

"There will be no one in the saloon, senior," Rawlings was saying, as he placed some cushions for the Spanish gentleman. "The young gentlemen will be on deck. You can make yourself comfortable here, senior."

"Gracias!" said Don Guzman.

He had finished the coffee, and Rawlings took away the crockery. But he sat finishing his cigar, leaning back on the settee. It was a large, roomy settee, and evidently attracted the Spanish gentleman for his siesta.

Nugent whispered in Wharton's ear: "Better clear, old chap, the old bean would like to go to sleep. You know Spaniards do, after tiffin."

"The clearfulness is the proper caper!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Just a tick!" said Harry.

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Don Guzman finished his cigar. Wharton's eyes lingered on him. Mr. Diaz looked a little drowsy, but that was only natural.

Wharton moved away at last. The three juniors went up to the deck. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull had badminton rackets and a shuttle, and were disporting themselves cheerfully therewith. Nugent took a racket, and the Nabob of Bhanipur followed his example, and joined Bob and Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter, sprawling in a deckchair, with his hat over his fat face to keep off the sun, was going to sleep.

Harry Wharton remained standing by the companion, deep in thought. He had no intention of remaining on deck. He watched his friends for a few minutes. Then he went back to the saloon.

Having been left in sole possession of that apartment, Don Guzman Diaz had placed himself in a recumbent attitude on the settee, his head resting on the cushions.

He was settling down to sleep, and Wharton noted that he was carefully arranging his wallet, to be underneath him when he slept.

Whether he suspected designs on that wallet or not, he was so arranging it that it could not possibly be touched without awakening him—that is, of course, if he fell into a normal slumber.

If he was drugged his precautions were not likely to be of much avail.

Harry Wharton, moving quietly, looked over the bookshelves, as if in search of a volume. There were three or four dozen volumes there, and he looked at them one after another.

The Spanish gentleman did not appear to observe him. But Wharton observed the Spanish gentleman very keenly with the corner of his eye.

Don Guzman's eyes were closed, his head heavily sunk in the cushion. He was already asleep—and looked fast asleep. But there was nothing in that—it was only what was to be expected.

But one thing was certain. If Rawlings had, as Bunter declared, designs on the wallet, the time for action was not far off now. Wharton did not, and could not, know how matters stood, but he would know when he saw the steward make a move—if the steward did make a move.

There was a soft step in the saloon.

"Excuse me, sir"—it was Rawlings' quiet voice—"can I help you find the book you want, sir?"

"No, that's all right, thanks!" answered Harry. "Just looking them through."

"Very good, sir!"

Rawlings hovered about the saloon. He flicked dust here and there, removed an ashtray, and rearranged some flowers. Wharton, affecting to forget his existence, looked at the books, one after another.

He knew—or, rather, he felt in his bones—that the steward was waiting for him to go. Why?

"Excuse me, sir," came Rawlings' voice again, after about ten minutes. "If you have no objection, sir, would you mind joining your friends on deck? I am afraid Mr. Diaz may be disturbed, sir." Rawlings coughed apologetically. "Captain Compton has instructed me to show him every possible consideration."

Wharton's heart beat painfully.

He had said to himself that if Bunter's tale was true he would know when Rawlings made a move. Rawlings was making a move now.

The Greyfriars junior forced himself to answer casually:

"That's all right, Rawlings. I'll be careful not to wake Mr. Diaz. He seems to be jolly sound asleep, anyway."

"The gentleman is hardly in his usual health, after his terrible experiences," said Rawlings. "I think you heard me tell him that no one would be in the saloon. You young gentlemen generally go on deck immediately. May I ask you, sir, to join your friends above?"

Wharton's lips set. What Rawlings said was correct; and no doubt he was puzzled and put out by Wharton remaining in the saloon, instead of going up at once, as was his custom.

But he had no intention of going. It did not matter a straw to Rawlings whether he remained in the saloon or not—unless he had secret designs on the wallet. And if he had, it showed that the man on the settee was drugged, for otherwise, he would resist and call for help, the moment a thievish hand touched his property. And whatever part be played by captain and crew, the Greyfriars fellows certainly would have rushed to his aid at once.

"Come, come, sir!" murmured Rawlings, as Harry did not speak.

"I shan't disturb Mr. Diaz, Rawlings," said Harry quietly. "And, at present, I prefer to stay here."

"Really, sir—"

"Leave it at that, Rawlings," said Wharton, and he turned his back on the steward, cutting short any further discussion.

He heard the man draw a deep breath behind him. A faint snort came from the Spaniard on the settee. Evidently he was deep in sleep now.

More and more it was forced into Wharton's mind that it was a drugged sleep. He was not sure yet—but he was growing sure! Grimly he waited for Rawlings to make another move.

He knew that the man was hesitating—puzzled, irritated, and taken aback. If his design was what Wharton now could not help believing that it was, he had to get rid of the Greyfriars junior—an unexpected and unlooked-for obstacle in his way. How was he going to do it?

The steward, certainly, could not order him out of the cabin. Had he thought of doing so, the junior would have contemptuously disregarded him. The captain could do so, or the mate. According to Bunter, the captain was not in the scheme—not yet. He was to be faced with the accomplished fact after the robbery had taken place, when the two rascals expected him to stand in with them, and carry out the rest of the scheme. The fact that they counted on it was fairly good proof that they could count on it with confidence. Still, so far, Captain Compton was ignorant of the affair, and the steward could not call on him for aid at the moment. Only Mr. Swain was available for that purpose. If the mate came down, and on some pretext or other ordered the schoolboy out, he would have to go. Was that going to be Rawlings' game?

If so, he would go up and speak to the mate!

Wharton waited, idly glancing over the books.

That his thoughts had followed the same lines as the steward's was hardly to be doubted when Rawlings, after a pause, turned away and went up to the deck.

As well as if the man had told him Harry Wharton knew that he had gone to put the difficulty up to Mr. Swain. The last shred of doubt was gone from his mind now. Bunter's tale was true! Harry Wharton set his lips, hard.

The moment the steward had disap-

peared he stepped swiftly across the saloon, grasped the Spaniard by the shoulder, and shook him roughly.

He did not speak, but he shook hard. The man did not wake.

His head sagged heavily on the cushions, and he breathed stertorously. But his eyes did not open.

The junior shook, and shook again. But the man did not wake. He could not wake. Wharton knew now that he was drugged.

He stood, with beating heart.

In a few minutes, he would have to leave the spot. Then—the robbery of the insensible man, to be followed by landing him on a Spanish shore, perhaps to fall into the hands of his enemies there.

Wharton clenched his hands desperately. Force was on the side of the rascals, if he drove them to throw up appearances and use it. What could he do?

He had brief time to think. Brief time to act. But his thoughts raced, and his actions were swift. He rolled the unconscious man a little aside, so that he could reach the wallet buckled to his belt—the wallet which, he had no doubt now, was stacked with banknotes, on which the steward's greedy eye had fallen. Swiftly, he unbuckled the wallet from the belt, and replaced the insensible man in his former position.

Standing beside the piano was a green-painted wooden tub, containing an ornamental palm. He tilted the tub, and slipped the leather wallet underneath it.

The bottom of the tub had an iron rim, to keep it clear of the floor. Inside that circular rim was ample space.

He dropped the palm-tub back over the wallet. It was completely hidden from sight; and certainly no one was likely to think of looking for it there.

With beating heart, but with a calm face, the Greyfriars junior stepped back to the bookcase, and was standing there, looking through the books, when the steward came down, followed by Mr. Swain.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Disappearance!

HARRY WHARTON did not turn his head, as the steward entered the saloon, followed by the mate of the Firefly. He affected to be keenly occupied in his search for a book. He wondered, sarcastically, what pretext the mate was going to invent for turning him out.

Now that the wallet was safe, and the design of the two unscrupulous rascals defeated, he had no desire to remain; but he found a rather grim amusement in giving the rascals all the trouble he could. Without looking round, he knew that Rawlings was scowling at the back of his head—and he heard the mate's surly grunt.

"Here, young feller-me-lad!" Swain had none of the sleek smoothness of the steward. "I hear that Rawlings has asked you to get out of this, and leave Mr. Diaz to have his nap. Clear out on deck!"

Had it been Captain Compton, no doubt he would have contrived to put more tact into it. But there was little tact in the rough-fisted mate of the Firefly. He addressed the Greyfriars junior, a guest on the yacht, almost as he might have spoken to a deck-hand.

Wharton looked round at him.

"Did you speak to me, Mr. Swain?" he asked.

"Deaf?" grunted the mate.

"No, thanks."

"Well, clear out of this," said Swain. "Why the Davy Jones can't you go on deck with the others? Let the dago have the place till he's had his snooze out."

"I hardly think I'm disturbing him, Mr. Swain!" said Harry mildly. "He seems to be quite fast asleep."

"Well, look here, get out!" grunted Swain.

Harry Wharton almost laughed. Appearances had to be kept up; but Bill Swain was no great hand at keeping up appearances. He looked as if he would grasp the junior, and run him neck and crop out of the saloon, if he did not jump to it. Wharton, having rather more regard for appearances than the bulldog mate, decided to get a move on.

"Oh, all right!" he said.

He picked up a book and went out into the companion—Rawlings watching him like a cat, Swain rather like a savage bulldog.

Half-way up the stair, however, he turned back and calmly re-entered the saloon. Rawlings breathed hard; and Swain gave a sort of inarticulate growl.

Unheeding both, the junior put the book back into the bookcase, as if he had decided that he did not want it, after all. Then, with intentional slowness, he strolled out of the saloon again, and this time he went on deck. He had irritated Mr. Swain almost to the point of grabbing him by the collar.

But he was gone at last, and Rawlings shut the door after him. There was a smile on his face as he walked on the sunny deck.

His friends were playing badminton there. There was hardly space for badminton, but there was room for a game "of sorts," as Bob Cherry described it, and the juniors were enjoying the game of "sorts."

Billy Bunter, in a deckchair by the rail, snored peacefully. Two or three of the crew were on deck. Captain Compton was on the bridge, his nephew there with him; and the latter was watching the juniors' game, with a smiling and cheerful face.

Harry Wharton felt a pang as he glanced up at the handsome, pleasant face of Compton of the Fifth.

What would Compton have felt—had he known? Obviously, he had not the faintest suspicion of what was going on. Neither had his uncle, so far—Wharton could see that. The steward and Mr. Swain had their secret to themselves, so far as the after-guard of the Firefly was concerned. What would Valentine Compton have thought—and done?

Wharton hardly knew. Even if he was, as Wharton dreaded to believe, mixed up in a smuggling enterprise, under his uncle's influence, only too well Harry knew how he would have blazed out in anger and indignation, had he suspected what his associates had planned.

But Compton, after all, was powerless. His uncle commanded the Firefly; and if he stood in with the two scoundrels below, the Fifth Former had no more power in his hands than Wharton had, or any other schoolboy on board. A fierce and bitter quarrel, between uncle and nephew, could have been the only outcome.

Captain and crew were hand-in-glove together; and all the power was in the hands of the captain—if he stood in with his confederates. And Wharton

had no doubt that he would. It was useless for Rawlings and Swain to lay their schemes to get hold of the wallet of banknotes, unless the captain saw them through. They left him out of the scheming; but they were going to face him with the accomplished fact, and he would "stand in." They knew that he would, or they would not have taken the chance. And Wharton knew it, too. Silence was his cue.

He had saved the wallet. In these very moments, the two rascals in the saloon were tasting defeat and disappointment.

It was futile—worse than futile—to cause bitter trouble between Compton and the captain, and to cover the handsome Fifth Former with shame, as with a garment.

To prevent a crime had been Harry Wharton's first thought. But, almost as strong, was his desire to spare Valentine Compton the disgrace and shame and bitter humiliation of knowing what he knew.

From below a sound of muttering voices came to his ears. He moved away, and dropped into a deckchair beside Bunter.

His eyes were on the companion doorway, with a faint amusement in them.

The rascals must have looked for the Spaniard's wallet before this. They must have missed it. What would they imagine had become of it? Wharton found a rather sardonic entertainment in picturing their thoughts and feelings. He could guess how puzzled, perplexed, and utterly beaten and enraged they would be. Possibly, they would fancy that Don Guzman had concealed the wallet somewhere—in his state-room, perhaps, instead of carrying it hidden under his coat, as usual. Whatever they fancied, they were not likely to guess that it was under the palm-tub at their very elbows.

There was a tramp of feet in the companion, at last. Mr. Swain came out on deck, with a lowering brow.

Wharton watched him, smiling, as he swung up scowling to the bridge. Rawlings remained below, doubtless still in search of that elusive wallet.

Harry noticed that Valentine Compton glanced curiously at the mate, as if surprised by his black and scowling brow. Swain did not speak to him. He stood leaning on the rail, scowling at the blue Mediterranean. The captain gave him a careless glance.

Obviously, the wallet had not been found, and the rascals could not guess what had become of it.

They were not likely, in the circumstances, to carry on with the rest of the scheme. The Firefly would have had to turn at least sixty miles out of her course to land the Spaniard on Majorca. Captain Compton, no doubt, would have done so had he stood in with his associates to share the plunder. Now there was no plunder to be shared.

Indeed, so far from desiring to get rid of Don Guzman, it was probable that Rawlings would be anxious to keep him on board until he discovered what had become of the wallet.

Wharton could only wonder what the sleek rascal would do. Probably, in his utterly unexpected disappointment and defeat, Rawlings did not know what to do, and was completely at a loss. One thing, at least, was certain; his thievish fingers were not going to touch the wallet of banknotes.

About half an hour later, Valentine Compton went to his state-room. Then Harry Wharton heard his voice, in surprised tones.

"What do you want, Rawlings? What are you looking for?"

Wharton suppressed a chuckle. He had no doubt that Rawlings was searching Don Guzman's bunk, in the hope of discovering a wallet hidden there!

He did not hear Rawlings' reply. But a few minutes afterwards, the steward came on deck. Harry Wharton was apparently watching the brown, patched sail of a schooner in the distance, running down to the Balearics. But the corner of his eye was on Rawlings.

The sleek, plump face was cool and controlled, but the eyes were glinting, the lips set; and it was easy for Wharton to read the suppressed rage and chagrin within.

Rawlings came round the deckchairs, peering among them, and the Greyfriars junior very nearly laughed. The mysterious disappearance of the Spaniard's wallet utterly puzzled and baffled the sleek rascal; and, apparently, it had entered his mind that Don Guzman might have dropped it, unnoticed, while on deck that morning. Considering how watchful and wary the Spanish gentleman was with the wallet, it was rather improbable; but Rawlings simply did not know what to think, or where to look.

"Looking for anything, Rawlings?" asked Harry casually.

Rawlings breathed hard.

"Yes, sir! I have dropped a note-case—I can't find it below—I think I must have dropped it while on deck."

"I'll help you look!"

"Oh, don't trouble, sir!" said Rawlings hastily. If what he was in search of was there, he certainly did not want the Greyfriars junior to see it.

"No trouble at all," said Harry politely. "I'll help you with pleasure, Rawlings!"

And he got out of his deckchair, and glanced round about—affecting not to observe the black look which Rawlings, for a moment, was unable to control.

Nothing, however, was found on the deck. Billy Bunter, fast asleep in his chair, snored on placidly. Rawlings looked at him.

Bunter, as it happened, was seated in the deckchair that Senor Diaz had occupied that morning, and there were a couple of cushions on it—under the fat Owl.

Wharton, with great amusement, guessed what was in the steward's mind. If that wallet had somehow become detached from Don Guzman's belt—as, after all, was possible—it might have been left in the deckchair when he rose, out of sight among the cushions.

And the fat Owl of Greyfriars was fast asleep on those cushions. Bunter had rather a lot of leeway to make up in the matter of sleep. He was going strong, his snore making a more or less musical accompaniment to the throb of the engines.

Rawlings shook the fat junior by the shoulder.

"Grooogh!" came from Bunter.

"Would you mind moving a moment, sir," asked Rawlings, "while I look under your chair for something, sir?"

"Urrgh!"

Shake, shake!

"Grooogh! Leggo! 'Tain't rising-bell, you boast!" came a grunt from Bunter.

"If you please, sir——"

"Grooogh!" Billy Bunter's eyes opened, and he blinked angrily through his big spectacles. "Look here, Bob Cherry, you beast—— Oh!" He jumped as he saw the steward. "Keep off, you beast! Help! Keep him off! Yaroooooh!"

Bunter fairly bounded out of the deckchair.

Rawlings stared at him blankly. Why the sudden sight of him scared the fat Owl, he could not begin to guess.

"What is the matter——" he began.

"What——"

"Ow! Keep him off, Wharton!"

yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows—— Oh crikey!" Billy Bunter rushed across the deck, getting on the other side of the badminton players.

Rawlings blinked after him.

"Is that boy mad?" he ejaculated.

"You seem to have startled him," said Harry, laughing. "I'll move the chair, Rawlings, and you can look under it for your note-case."

Wharton pulled the chair aside. He was quite well aware that Rawlings wanted to look, not under the chair, but under the cushions on the chair. So he pulled the deckchair quite out of the steward's reach.

Rawlings made a pretence of scanning the deck. Then he stepped towards the deckchair. If the wallet was there at all, it was hidden in the cushions, for it certainly was not in sight. Rawlings picked up the chair, folded it with the cushions inside, and carried it bodily down into the saloon.

About a minute later, Wharton, lounging at the companion, heard his voice from below. He was muttering imprecations. Evidently he had looked through the cushions as soon as he had them out of sight—without any luck. Harry Wharton chuckled and walked away. The remarks the baffled rascal was making were really not suitable for a schoolboy's ears.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Trust!

"TALK about Rip van Winkle!" said Bob Cherry.

"Or Bunter?" grinned Nugent.

"Or the jolly old Seven Sleepers!" said Johnny Bull.

The juniors, when they came down to tea, glanced with some amusement at Don Guzman Diaz.

Stretched on the settee, his head resting on the cushions there, the Spanish gentleman was still fast asleep.

"Some siesta!" said Bob. "He's still snoozing."

"The snoozefulness is terrific!"

"Won't you wake him for tea, Rawlings?" asked Bob.

"Oh, better let him have his sleep out, sir!" said Rawlings. He was not likely to explain that Don Guzman could not possibly have been awakened. "Please don't disturb him."

Billy Bunter gave Harry Wharton a startled blink. He knew, as Wharton knew, why the Spaniard was sleeping so soundly. But the fat Owl said nothing. He had put it up to the captain of the Remove; and he left it at that. His chief anxiety was, that Rawlings should not discover that he knew anything. Bunter gave his attention to the foodstuffs.

Wharton noticed that Valentine Compton glanced curiously at the Spaniard when he came down. But the Greyfriars Fifth Former had not the remotest suspicion of the true state of affairs, and there was no reason why the rescued man should not have his sleep out, if he liked. He made no remark.

Don Guzman had not stirred when the Greyfriars fellows went back to the deck after tea.

Harry Wharton did not leave the saloon.

He sat in a chair near the settee, with the "Holiday Annual" open on his knees.

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The fly-leaf on which Bunter had scribbled in that "Holiday Annual," had been torn out, and carefully dropped over the rail. But Wharton had drawn a hint, from Billy Bunter's extraordinary method of conveying information. When Rawlings was gone, he took out a pencil, and wrote a line in capital letters along the top of a page.

Billy Bunter lingered after the other fellows had gone. Having blinked round very cautiously to make sure that Rawlings was not in the offing, he approached Wharton and whispered:

"Have they got it?"

"Shut up, you blithering ass!" breathed Wharton. "It's all right! Leave it to me!"

"Yes; but, I say——"

"Get out!"

"All right! But, I say——"

"Is that Rawlings coming?"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter was out on deck almost in a bound.

Harry Wharton grinned and resumed reading the "Holiday Annual." But he was not giving that attractive publication the attention it deserved. He was keeping an eye on the sleeper on the settee.

How long the effect of the drug would last, he could not, of course, guess. But he had no doubt that it would not last much longer.

The Spanish gentleman stirred once or twice, though his eyes did not open. What was going to happen when he came to?

Rawlings and his confederate had been driven to the conclusion that the wallet was either lost, or hidden, by its owner in some secure spot. They could not, in the circumstances, come to any other conclusion.

But Mr. Diaz, of course, would miss it at once. There was no doubt that, as soon as he awakened, his dusky hand would go to that wallet, to make sure that it was safe.

Harry Wharton had thought out that little problem, and decided what to do. He could only hope that Don Guzman would be quick on the uptake. From what he had seen of him that day, he had judged him to be an extremely keen and wary man.

With one eye on the "Holiday Annual," and the other on the Spaniard's swarthy face, Wharton saw the black eyelashes flicker.

Senor Diaz was awakening at last.

The black eyes opened; and the Spaniard rubbed them, stared, and sat up. As he did so, Harry Wharton lifted the "Holiday Annual," and displayed the page he had written on.

"Look at that, Mr. Diaz!" he said, in quite a casual tone.

Don Guzman stared at the pencilled line in capital letters along the top of the open page.

He gave a convulsive start.

His mouth opened—but it shut again! But he stared at what he read:

"Say nothing! Your wallet is safe, hidden under the palm-tub! You have been drugged! Silence!"

Don Guzman Diaz drew a deep, deep breath. For a moment, Wharton could only wonder what would be the outcome of that startling communication. But, the next, he realised that the stout Spaniard was quick on the uptake.

Mr. Diaz did not speak. He slid his hand under his coat to feel at the back of his belt, where the wallet had been tucked.

If he might have doubted, if he might

have fancied that this was some extraordinary jest, that settled the matter.

The wallet was gone! It could not have been taken from him without awakening him, had his sleep been a natural one. He needed no more proof than that, that he had been drugged. And a glance at the skylight showed him that the sun was setting—that he had been asleep all the afternoon.

A grim look came over his swarthy face for a second. Then he smiled. His eyes flashed in the direction of the palm tub, only six feet away from where he sat.

But, to Wharton's relief, he made no movement in the direction. Startled as he certainly was, he had himself well in hand.

Only for a split second, his eyes flashed at the hiding-place of the wallet. Then they turned on Wharton, with a mute question.

Whether Rawlings was in hearing or not, Harry did not know, but he was taking no risks.

"You've had rather a long sleep, sir!" he said. "Perhaps you'd care to walk on the deck a bit—it's fresher up there."

Mr. Diaz smiled. Undoubtedly he was quick on the uptake. He knew that the English schoolboy wished to speak to him unheard.

"Si, si, senorito!" he said. "Perhaps you will so kindly give me one hand to the deck—I am not yet quite strong."

"Certainly, sir!"

**Fmas Greetings
to
All My Readers
from
The Editor.**

Putting the "Holiday Annual" under one arm, Wharton gave the other to the stout Spanish gentleman, and helped him up the companion. He did not, as a matter of fact, need much help, but he knew the need of caution.

They came out on deck, in the glow of the sunset. Wharton led him to a deckchair by the rail, where he sat down, the junior leaning on the rail by his side. So long as they spoke in low voices, they were out of hearing of other ears.

"Now please to explain, senorito!" murmured Don Guzman.

"I'm glad you caught on so quickly, sir!" said Harry, in a low tone. "Keep your eyes open for the steward."

"Entiendo!" murmured Mr. Diaz. "Already I know that that hombre, he is one bribon—one picaro! He look at a wallet—yes! Oh, yes! Very much I know that he is one picaro."

Evidently the keen-witted Spaniard had "sized up" the steward of the Firefly, and was on his guard against him already—though not to the extent of suspecting the drug in the coffee.

"You know now, sir, there was something in your coffee——"

"Now, too well I know him!" murmured Mr. Diaz. "But you—you shall come to know, is it not?"

"Some talk was heard, sir—the steward and the mate—they're in it together——"

"And el capitan——"

"I can't be sure about that. But—you must not trust him. You must be

on your guard all the while you are on this ship."

"Entiendo!" murmured Don Guzman. "I understand! Si, si, little senor! Already I know I am on a ship where all is not, what you call, square? Yes, it is with surprise that I find you and your friends with such a crew! Oh, yes!"

"The captain's nephew is one of the best, sir!" said Harry. "He would feel the same as I do about this. But you've only to look at him to see that."

"Si, si! I believe you! But el capitan—what you call, a hard case—oh, yes! I use my eyes on this ship!" said Don Guzman.

"I put the wallet under the palm tub, to keep it safe till you came to, sir!" went on Harry in a murmur. "They've been searching for it, of course. Rawlings fancied you might have dropped it, and looked over the deck for it——"

"Muy bien!" grinned Mr. Diaz.

"It's safe where it is, for the present, at least. If they'd got it, they were going to put you ashore at Majorca, while you were still unconscious. You can be sure they'll try again—for the wallet——"

"I believe you very much," said Mr. Diaz, "and if they know that I know so much, perhaps I do not go ashore—perhaps I fall over a rail into the sea?"

Harry Wharton did not answer that. But at the back of his mind, was a thought that Rawlings, at least, was capable of such a deed.

There was a long pause, while the Spaniard sat with his swarthy brows wrinkled in thought.

He spoke at last, in a low voice, with a touch of emotion in it:

"You are one noble young caballero! On this ship of picaros, you I can trust! All this so much money, it belong not to me, but to friends who are ruined in a civil war. I save it for them, the little that is left! You will guard it for me, on this ship of rascals! Si, si! If I take it once more, next time they try this game, I am rob—perhaps put into a sea to keep quiet a tongue! You will take, and keep, in a pocket, and then at Marseilles you give, and I take in a boat! Yes!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"If you care to trust it to me, Mr. Diaz, I will keep it safe—they will never dream of where it is. If you're sure——"

"Cierito, cierto! You put in a pocket with much care! Next time the so good steward give me some very good coffee, he shall find nothing."

Harry Wharton had thought of that solution of the difficulty, but had not cared to suggest it. Now that it came from the Spaniard, however, he was glad to act on it. When, later, he saw Rawlings come on deck, he went below, and a few minutes later, the wallet was locked up in his suitcase in his stateroom.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Surprise for Rawlings!

"SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter squeaked up the companion, in the sunny morning, a couple of days later.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry roared down.

"I say, what has the ship stopped for?" demanded Bunter.

"Ha, ha! Because it's anchored, old fat bean."

"Well, what is it anchored for?"

"Because it's stopped."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,507.

He rolled on deck. He blinked round, in brilliant sunshine, at a busy harbour and a white-walled city. The Firefly had been anchored some time in the harbour at Marseilles, though William George Bunter had been too busy packing away innumerable breakfasts, one after another, to notice that circumstance.

"What's that place, you fellows?" asked Bunter.

"Marseilles!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "We shall get a run ashore here, of course."

"Sure to!" said Wharton.

"I'll tell you what," said Bunter, "when we go ashore I'll stand you fellows a feed at the best restaurant in the Cannon-ball. The only difficulty is that I forgot to bring any money when we started on this cruise; but you can lend me a few pounds. Mind, I'm going to stand the feed! You can leave that entirely to me. All you fellows will have to do is to lend me the money—"

"Merely that, and nothing more!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is the jolly old Don going off first?" asked Bob.

Senor Diaz, standing by the rail, waved his hand to a shore boat, which pulled under the quarter of the Firefly.

Harry Wharton laughed.

Rawlings, standing at a little distance, had his eyes fixed on the Spanish gentleman with an almost hawkish intentness. Mr. Swain, on the bridge, was staring at him grimly. Captain Compton had gone ashore early, taking his nephew with him, so they were not to be seen. But the steward and the mate were watching Don Guzman Diaz, one like a cat, the other like a bulldog.

Wharton, as he noted it, could not help laughing.

Since the affair of two or three days ago, Rawlings had certainly ascertained that Don Guzman was no longer carrying his precious wallet attached to his belt. As Mr. Diaz had made no allusion to it, he knew that it could not have been lost. The only possible conclusion to which he could come was that the swarthy gentleman had concealed it in some extremely safe spot, where it was impossible for searching eyes to unearth it.

But when he left the yacht, of course, he was certain to take it with him. He would have to go to that hiding-place for it, as Rawlings supposed.

In his eager greed, Rawlings was not heeding the juniors. He watched Mr. Diaz like a cat, in the full expectation that he would go below for that wallet. And when he went, Rawlings was going to follow and it was Mr. Swain's cue to

see that the Greyfriars fellows did not leave the deck.

Harry Wharton was as well aware of that as if Rawlings had told him. So, no doubt, was Don Guzman, though his smiling dusky face gave no clue to his thoughts.

What desperate measures Rawlings might have taken, had matters been as he believed, Wharton did not know. Whatever they were, they were not going to be taken, as matters were not as Rawlings believed.

"Adios, little seniors!" said Don Guzman, shaking hands with the school-

ran down to his state-room, and came back in a couple of minutes with his hand under his jacket.

Mr. Diaz smiled up at Rawlings, staring face over the rail.

"The good Rawlings," he said, "before I go I thank you for the kind attention, and especially for the excellent coffee."

Rawlings blinked at him.

"Here you are, sir!" called out Wharton.

He leaned over the rail, his hand coming out from under his jacket.

He reached down, and the Spanish gentleman reached up, and a leather wallet changed hands under the starting eyes of the steward of the Firefly.

Rawlings gave an inarticulate gasp. Mr. Swain stared, mute! The boat shot away from the side of the yacht, Mr. Diaz sitting down, wallet in hand. His other hand he waved back at the juniors, who waved their hats.

"What—what?"—Rawlings found his voice—"what was—that you handed the Spaniard, Master Wharton?"

Wharton smiled.

"Didn't you see?" he asked. "It was that wallet of his. He asked me to mind it for him."

"He—he—he asked you to—to—mum-mum-mind it for him?" stuttered the steward.

"That's it."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "That's rather a compliment to you, old chap, if it's got his jolly old valuables in it."

"Yes, isn't it?" said Harry.

"He, he, he!" from Billy Bunter.

Rawlings stood gripping the rail with a grip that made his knuckles show white. The boat, pulling for the quay, disappeared among the innumerable craft on the crowded harbour. Don Guzman Diaz was gone, and his wallet was gone!

Rawlings, breathing hard, turned from the rail and went silently below.

THE END.

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on page 13.

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(5) O—OK — OKE — COKE —
COKER.

TWO OR THREE LETTERS.

(1) HAZELDENE. (2) MAULE-
VERER. (3) BULSTRODE.
(4) LASCELLES. (5) BLUNDELL.

boys, one after another. "It is a good-bye, after so pleasant one voyage in so happy a company. Yes, I go to a shore where friends wait for me. Adios!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

And, having shaken hands all round a second time, Don Guzman stepped down the side to the waiting boat.

Rawlings made a step forward, staring. Mr. Swain stared and glared.

Both of them were taken utterly by surprise. Mr. Diaz was apparently going without his wallet. That it was not on him, they knew. And he was going!

But he was not going yet. The boat hung on to the side of the yacht, at a word from Mr. Diaz to the boatman. Rawlings and the mate, staring at him, had no eyes for Harry Wharton, who

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