

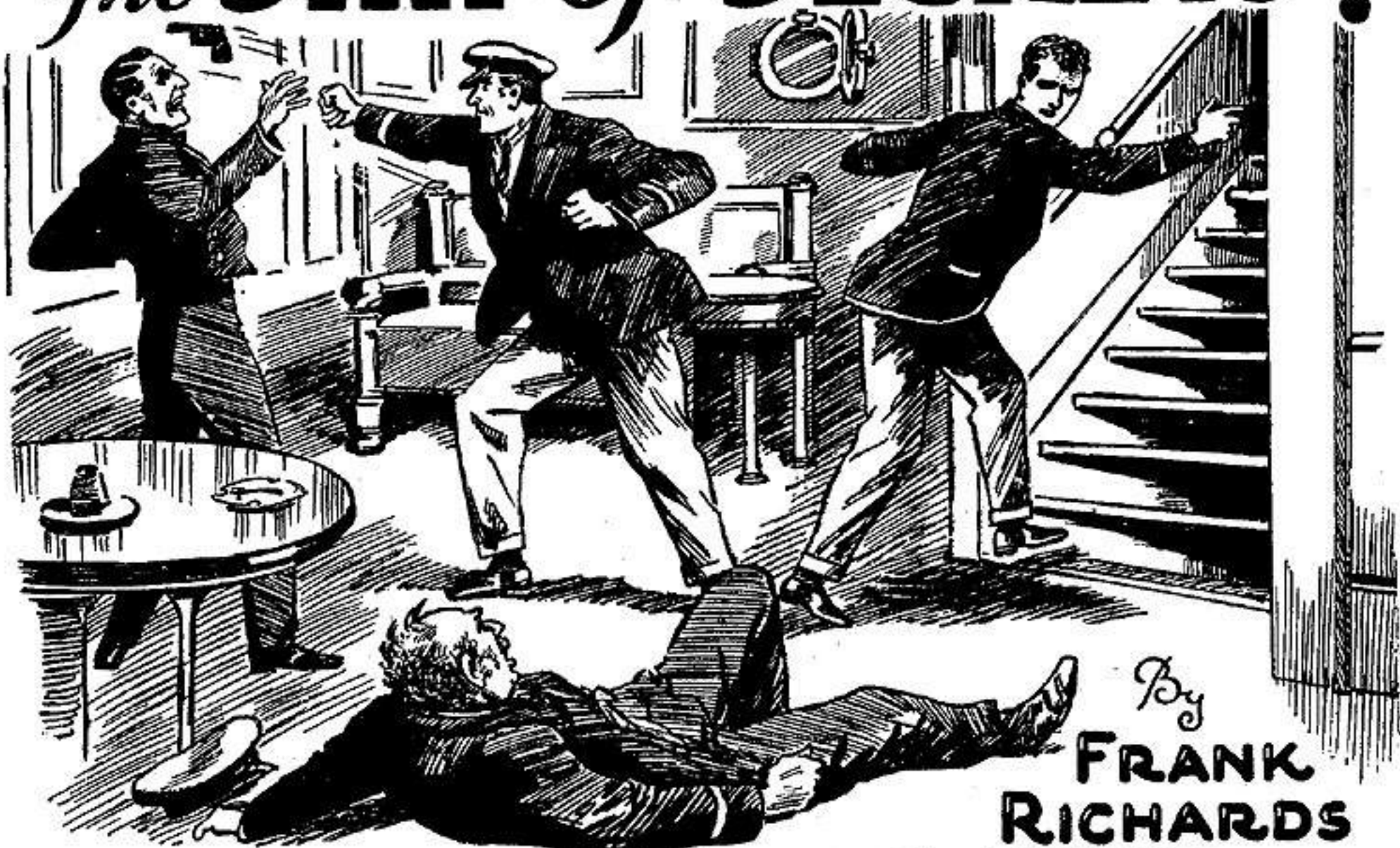
FREE GIFTS! Important Announcement Inside!

The Magnet ^{2^D}



**FURTHER
OUTLOOK
UNSETTLED!**

The SHIP of SECRETS!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

Featuring **HARRY WHARTON & CO., the CHUMS of GREYFRIARS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Disappearance!

WHERE'S my coat?"
"Come on, Bunter!"
"But where—"
"The boat's waiting, fathead!"

"Blow the boat!" roared Billy Bunter. "I tell you I can't find my coat! Somebody's pinched my overcoat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were waiting for Bunter. They were tired of waiting. They were growing rather exasperated. But they had to laugh when Bunter stated that his overcoat had been "pinched." Billy Bunter's overcoat, like all the things that were his, was hardly worth the while of the most needy pincher.

The yacht, *Firefly*, was riding at anchor in the harbour at Marseilles. The boat was alongside, ready to take the Greyfriars party for a run ashore. The Famous Five of the Remove were ready. Billy Bunter was not ready. It was, of course, exactly like the fat Owl of the Remove to be unable to find something he wanted, when everybody else was ready to start.

It was a January day, but brilliant sunshine streamed down on Marseilles and the blue Mediterranean. Still, bright and sunny as it was, it was none too warm, and the Greyfriars juniors had put on their coats to go ashore. There was a keen wind on the sea, and at sunset there would be the usual sharp spell of cold. Billy Bunter could not, or, at any rate, would not, go without his overcoat. And apparently he couldn't find it.

Not till all the other fellows were ready, and waiting, had Bunter gone below for his coat. He saw no reason

why they should not wait a few minutes. Accustomed to Bunter's agreeable manners and customs, the chums of the Remove waited a few minutes with cheerful patience. But when ten minutes had elapsed, they shouted to Bunter to come up.

Bunter did not come up. He wanted his coat.

"I say, you fellows!" came a fat squeak up the companion. "I say, if you've been larking with my coat—"

"The larkfulness has not been terrific," answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Then it's been pinched!" roared Bunter.

"It's worth twopence of anybody's money!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"My dear chap," said Bob Cherry, "don't exaggerate! Only a blind man would give twopence for that coat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" howled Bunter from below. "But if it hasn't been pinched, where is it?"

"You howling ass!" said Harry Wharton. "It's where you left it, wherever that was. Look for it!"

"I've looked everywhere! It's gone!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Owl!"

"Buck up!"

That Billy Bunter's overcoat really was missing seemed improbable to the Famous Five. Bunter was short-sighted, and he was lazy, which, they had no doubt, accounted for the fact that he could not find his coat.

Bunter's overcoat had seen service. It had, in fact, seen a lot of service. None of the vast wealth at Bunter Court had been expended on a new winter overcoat for the heir of that magnificent residence. And Bunter was

careless with his clothes. That overcoat was, perhaps, worth more than the moderate sum of twopence. But it was not worth a lot more. With so many other coats on board the *Firefly*, a "pincher" was really not likely to have selected Bunter's garment as his prey.

So the Famous Five, having no doubt that that shabby old overcoat was within a yard or two of Bunter's fat little nose and big spectacles, shouted to him to buck up.

"Beasts!" came from Bunter below. "I can't find my coat. I'm jolly well not going without it. I'm not going to catch pneumonia and plumbago to please you fellows, so don't you think it!"

"The boat's waiting, and the captain waiting in it!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Let 'em wait!"

"Compton's waiting—"

"Blow Compton! Let him wait too!"

"You fat, frabjous, foozling frump!" roared Bob. "Get a move on!"

"Beast!"

"Come without your coat!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Well, look here! I'll come without my coat, if you'll lend me yours, old chap. What about that?"

"Idiot!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Mr. Swain, the mate of the *Firefly*, called down from the bridge.

"The boat's waiting!"

Harry Wharton ran across to the rail. Captain Compton was seated in the stern of the boat alongside. His nephew, Compton of the Greyfriars Fifth, was standing up, and he looked up at Harry as the latter looked down.

"Aren't you fellows coming?" asked the Fifth Former. "My uncle's got an appointment to keep ashore—"

"That ass Bunter can't find his fat-headed coat!" answered Harry. "Sorry, Compton! Just like the fat chump!"

Valentine Compton smiled, and glanced at the hard-faced man sitting in the stern. Captain Compton did not smile. It was seldom that a smile relaxed the grimness of his hard visage. "A few minutes, uncle—" said Compton.

"I've an appointment to keep!" said the captain tersely. "And so have you, Valentine. You've booked a ride ashore, and the groom will be waiting with your horse. I'll send the boat back for the boys."

"Yes—yes; that's all right—quite all right!" said Harry Wharton hastily.

Unlike Billy Bunter, he disliked giving his host trouble.

"Well, I thought the boys might like a ride, too," said Compton of the Fifth, hesitating.

"They would be safer in a car. I'll send the boat back. Give way!"

The boat pushed off at the captain's order. That settled the matter. Compton of the Fifth frowned a little. His own manners were unexceptional; and had never failed him during that holiday cruise, even in dealing with Billy Bunter. But the captain, though generally polite enough to the Greyfriars party, never allowed politeness to stand in the way of business.

Compton called back across the widening space between the boat and the yacht's side.

"Only about twenty minutes or so, Wharton."

"Right as rain!" called back Harry. And he rejoined his friends at the companion.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Take your time, you fat ass!" said Harry. "The boat's gone, and we shall have to wait a good twenty minutes for it."

"Gone without us? Rotten bad manners!" said Billy Bunter, with a snort. "Not that I expected much in the way of manners on this ship."

"You didn't bring any on board with you, anyhow!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Yah!"

"Now find that rotten old coat, and be ready when the boat comes back, Bunter," said Bob Cherry.

"Come and help me look for it."

"Rats!"

"Beast!"

The Famous Five lined the rail, finding ample entertainment in watching the busy shipping in the port of Marseilles, and the crowds on the quais, while they waited for the return of the boat. Ships of all nations, and all rigs, were to be seen there, from towering liners to rakish little feluccas. From passing craft calling voices in many languages could be heard—English and French, Spanish and Italian, and Greek.

It was a scene of great interest to the schoolboys from the far-off island in the North Sea. Still, they were rather keen to get going, for it was the last day of the Firefly's stay at Marseilles, and they wanted to make the most of their time there. At sunrise the following day the yacht was pulling out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the jolly old boat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, at last.

Amid innumerable other craft, he picked out the yacht's boat, pulling back, after landing the captain and his nephew.

Harry Wharton glanced round across the deck. By that time, he had no doubt, Billy Bunter had discovered the elusive overcoat, and he expected to see

the fat junior. But Bunter was not to be seen.

He crossed to the companion, and shouted down:

"Bunter!"

"Beast!" came the courteous reply.

"The boat's coming back; it will be here in a few minutes! Come up, you fat fooler!"

"I can't find my coat!"

"What?" roared Wharton.

"Are you deaf, you fathead?" hooted Bunter. "I tell you I can't find my coat!"

"You blithering Owl! If we have to come down and find it, we'll jolly well bump you!" hooted the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton went down the companion, and his friends followed him. They found William George Bunter seated in an armchair in the saloon. He blinked at them indignantly through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Is that how you're looking for your coat?" roared Johnny Bull.

"I'm waiting for you fellows to come and help me find it!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I've looked everywhere! Now you fellows look, and I'll wait till you've found it, see?"

"You'll sit in that chair, while we're hunting for your coat?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, old chap!"

"Well," said Bob, "you may be right,

~~~~~

**As guests of Valentine Compton, Harry Wharton & Co. are spending the Christmas vacation aboard the steam yacht, "Firefly." But all is not well, for there is some mystery on board, some secret understanding between captain and crew that is being carefully guarded from the Greyfriars guests!**

~~~~~

but I hardly think so. I think you're getting out of that chair, old fat man, and getting out quick!"

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "And I can jolly well say—Yaroooooh! Oh crikey! Yaroooooooooop!"

Billy Bunter did not intend to get out of that chair. But he got out, as Bob Cherry grasped the back and tilted it forward. He landed with a bump and a fearful yell on his fat hands and knees.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-wooop!" roared Bunter.

Bob tilted the chair over a little farther, and it dropped over Bunter. With only his head, his fat face and spectacles emerging from under the high back of the chair, Bunter had a remarkable resemblance to a tortoise poking its head out of its shell.

"Ooooooh!" gurgled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beasts! Wow!"

Leaving the wrathful and indignant Owl to wriggle out from under the chair, the Famous Five proceeded to look for the missing overcoat. They had no doubt that they would find it in a minute or two.

But, to their surprise, they failed to find it. They hunted high, and they hunted low, and they hunted up and down and round about. But that overcoat did not come to light. In great surprise, they had to admit that Billy

Bunter was not, for once, the blithering ass and lazy slacker they had naturally supposed. Strange as it was, mysterious as it was, Bunter's overcoat really was missing!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Rawlings to the Rescue!

"RAWLINGS!"

"Sir!"

"Seen anything of Bunter's overcoat?"

"I'm afraid not, sir!" Rawlings, the steward of the Firefly, shook his head regretfully. "Master Bunter has already asked me, sir."

"I've asked Rawlings two or three times!" growled Bunter. "Look here, Rawlings, you're responsible. Somebody's pinched that coat."

"Shut up, you howling ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I tell you—" roared Bunter.

"The pinchfulness is not preposterous, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Where is it, then?" demanded Bunter. "Think it could walk away?"

Really, it was a puzzle. Nowhere was that overcoat to be found. Billy Bunter was blinking very suspiciously at the steward, through his big spectacles.

Harry Wharton had certain reasons for doubting whether Rawlings had ever realised the truth of that ancient proverb, that honesty was the best policy. But most certainly he could not suspect him of having annexed Bunter's overcoat.

"If it's pinched, somebody's got to pay for it!" said Bunter. "It's the only coat I had with me. I don't generally travel with only one coat, like you fellows—my circumstances are a bit different. But this time, as it happens, it was the only coat I had with me—coming away in a hurry—"

"Shut up!" hooted Bob.

"Shan't! If that coat doesn't turn up, somebody's got to pay for it, and full value, too!" roared Bunter.

"Anybody got a tanner?" asked Johnny Bull.

"You cheeky beast! That coat cost my pater twelve guineas!" howled Bunter.

"Then he was done out of twelve-pound-ten!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, sir, it is rather absurd!" said Rawlings. "If there were a dishonest person on board, he would hardly leave so many good coats, and pick out a shabby old one, which was worth very little when it was new, which was no doubt a very long time ago."

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter. Ever since the Firefly had steamed out of Dover, Bunter had found that steward cheeky. Undoubtedly, Rawlings was being fearfully cheeky now!

"Well, you've asked for that, you fat ass!" said Bob. "What the thump do you mean by suggesting that your silly coat's pinched?"

"Of course, nothing of the kind has happened," said Harry Wharton hastily. "But it's a jolly old mystery what's become of the dashed thing!"

"Master Bunter is sometimes a little careless, sir!" suggested Rawlings. "He may have hung his coat on the rail, and it may have slipped overboard—"

"I haven't!" roared Bunter.

"Well, it's just the sort of idiotic thing you would do!" growled Johnny Bull. "You hung my coat on the rail one day at sea, when you shifted it off a deckchair you wanted—"

"That was your coat!" said Bunter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,508.

"I shouldn't hang my own coat on the rail. Think I'd risk losing it overboard?"

"Why, you fat scoundrel——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I can hear the boat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Look here, we can't hang about here all day, the last day at Marseilles——"

"I'm not going without a coat!" roared Bunter.

"Perhaps I can help, sir!" suggested Rawlings. "If Master Bunter would allow me to lend him a coat——"

"Catch me wearing a steward's coat!" sneered Bunter, doubtless by way of graceful thanks for the offer.

"Kick him!" said Harry.

"Yaroooo!" roared Bunter. "Keep your hoofs away, Bob Cherry, you beast! You kick me again, and I'll—yooo-hooooop!"

"You're awfully good, Rawlings," said Harry, "but you're about twice as tall as Bunter, though you're not quite so wide. Your coat——"

"I do not mean one of my own coats, sir!" said Rawlings. "I happen to have a coat that once belonged to Master Valentine, when he was smaller, sir. He kindly gave it to me when he grew out of it, and I have kept it since, sir, in the hope of selling it at some convenient time."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"It is packed away at the bottom of a chest in my quarters, sir, but I could get it out in a few minutes, if your friend cares to avail himself of it," said Rawlings.

"Rawlings, old bean, you're the right man in the right place," said Bob Cherry. "Trot it out! Thanks no end! I'm thanking you, because Bunter always forgets little things like that."

Rawlings grinned.

"Very well, sir! I will not keep you waiting many minutes." The steward slid away.

"Well, that's all right!" said Bunter. "I don't mind wearing one of Compton's coats—if it's anything like a fit, of course. I'm not used to wearing other fellows' clobber, I must say——"

"Whose is that necktie?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"If you're going to make a fuss about a chap borrowing a necktie, Bull, because he happens to be travelling light——"

"Whose are those socks?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Mine!" roared Bunter. "They happen to be the same colour as yours, that's all. If you think they're yours——"

"Whose is that collar?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"Can't you lend a pal a collar?"

"Whose are those shoes?" asked Bob Cherry.

"If I've put on your best shoes by mistake, I've no time to change them now——"

"Whose is that absurd and excellent handkerchief, my esteemed Bunter?"

"Not Bunter's," said Bob, "it's clean!"

"Well, it's not one of yours!" sneered Bunter. "I may have borrowed a few hankies from Compton. I say, you fellows, all this is rather sordid! I had no time to send for my suitcases before we came on board——"

"Only the time was lacking," said Bob Cherry solemnly—"not the suitcases."

"Exactly! But, as I was saying, I'm not used to wearing other fellows' clobber. That sort of thing may suit you fellows—I dare say you're used to second-hand things—but it's a bit different with me. Still, I'll look at that coat. Rawlings had better be tipped if

he lends it to me. I don't want to be under any obligation to a steward."

"Well, nobody's going to stop you from tipping him."

"Oh, really, Cherry, I've no small change, as it happens, and I'm not going to give him a banknote! One of you fellows tip him half-a-crown. Dash it all, make it five bob!" said Bunter generously. "I believe in being liberal with servants when——"

"When it's somebody else's five bob?"

"No, you beast! When they're obliging and respectful. Still, you can be mean with the man, if you like!" said Bunter scornfully. "I dare say he's noticed already that you're a mean lot!"

Rawlings came back into the saloon with an overcoat over his arm. He held it up for Bunter's inspection. It was quite a nice coat, thick and warm and well lined. If it was, as he had said, a coat that had belonged to Valentine Compton when he was younger, it had been well cared for and little worn, for it looked as good as new.

Billy Bunter blinked at it with approval. It was undoubtedly a much better and handsomer coat than his own vanished one.

"Well, that's all right, my man!" said Bunter. "If it fits—I'm rather particular about the fit of my coats——"

"Oh, shove it on, and dry up!" said Johnny Bull.

Rawlings held the coat, and Bunter put his fat arms into the sleeves. Except for a little difficulty in making it meet in front, it was quite as good a fit as Bunter's old coat. The fat Owl certainly looked better dressed than usual when he had got it on.

"Well, I think I could make this do," said Bunter. "Any port in a storm, you know. I suppose you can handle a needle and thread, Rawlings? You can shift all the buttons, so that I can button it a bit more easily. You fellows won't have to wait more than half an hour."

"No," said Bob; "I rather think not. I jolly well know that I'm not going to wait even half a minute! You fellows coming?"

"Yes, rather!"

The Co. tramped up to the deck.

"I say, you fellows——" yelled Bunter.

"Good-bye, old fat man!"

"Beasts! I'm coming!"

Billy Bunter discovered that he could manage, after all, with the overcoat as it was. He bolted on deck after the Famous Five.

They were already going down the side into the boat. Apparently, they had some idea that they had wasted enough time on Bunter that morning. That, of course, was the sort of selfishness that Bunter really expected from them.

Anyhow, they were going, and Bunter rolled after them. He plumped into the boat, gasping, and the seamen pushed off from the Firefly. The fat Owl blinked, with severe reproach, at the cheery five as the boat rocked away on the water.

"I shall have to wear this coat open," he said, "and if I catch pneumonia or plumbago, it will be your fault! I dare say you'd like to see me laid up in my bunk for the rest of this cruise!"

"No such luck!" said Bob.

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton, glancing back at the Firefly as the seamen pulled to the quay, saw Rawlings go up to the bridge, where he joined Mr. Swain. The mate and the steward stood together, gazing after the boat as if interested in the shore-going party. There was a grin on Mr. Swain's bulldog visage and a faint smile on Rawlings' sleek face, both of which

rather puzzled the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. Certainly it did not occur to him that either had any connection with the fact that Billy Bunter was wearing an overcoat kindly lent him by the steward. Harry Wharton had his doubts about the yacht, her captain, and her crew; but it did not occur to him that there was more in that handsome grey overcoat than met the eye.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Day at Marseilles!

"I SAY, you fellows, got any tongs?" "Tongs?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes, tongs!" said Bunter irritably. "I suppose you know what tongs are?"

The Remove fellows had been strolling about Marseilles for an hour or so. They had rather expected to see Captain Compton or Compton of the Fifth when they landed, but neither the captain nor his nephew had turned up.

However, they were quite prepared to walk about the sunlit city and see the sights on their own. During that hour's walk Bunter had twice suggested stopping to feed, and twice had his comrades turned deaf ears to the suggestion. Now he had stopped at a stall where picture-postcards were sold, and was making an extensive selection of the same.

The other fellows bought a few picture-cards, to address and post to the old folks at home. Bunter was not content with a few. He had a pack in his fat hand that looked as numerous as a pack of playing-cards.

Bunter could afford to be a little extravagant, as he was not going to pay for the purchases. So the Famous Five were not surprised. But they were surprised when he blinked round and demanded tongs. What on earth Bunter could want tongs for was a mystery to them.

"Well, got any?" asked Bunter.

"Are you more than usually potty?" inquired Bob Cherry. "What the merry thump do you want tongs for? Do you mean a pair of tongs?"

"Don't be an ass, Cherry! What's the good of a pair of tongs when I've got forty or fifty postcards to send?"

"What do you want tongs at all for?" shrieked Bob.

"I can't post the cards without tongs, you ass! Think I want the chaps to pay double for them when they're delivered?"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "He means timbres—stamps!"

"Stamps are called tongs here," said Bunter. "If you fellows had been a bit more careful in the French class at Greyfriars, you'd know that they call stamps tongs in France!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, have you got any tongs, or haven't you?" demanded Bunter.

"You can get stamps from the Johnny who sells cards," said Harry, laughing—"that is, if you call them timbres! I don't know what you'll get if you ask for tongs."

"I don't want you to teach me French, Wharton!" Bunter sniffed disdainfully, and turned to the dusky, smiling shopman. "Tongs!" he said.

"Plait-il?"

"What the dickens does he mean?" grunted Bunter. "Play till when? We haven't come here to play that I know of! Does he mean pay?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tongs!" repeated Bunter. "Understand? Comprenez? Tongs! Les tongs pour pttrez on les postcards—see?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry. "If the chap understands that French, he's some lad at the language!"

"Do shut up, Cherry! Look here, my man, Je want some tongs!" explained Bunter. "Vous handez over some tongs—see?"

"Timbres, s'il vous plait!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oui, m'sieur!" The shopman produced stamps. "I wish you wouldn't butt in, Wharton!" said Bunter crossly. "The man understood me all right. He's handing over the stamps. You fellows never can mind your own business!"

"You fat ass—" "Mind your own business!" hooted Bunter. "Leave a chap alone—see? Shut up, and don't barge in!"

Bunter turned the back of the handsome grey overcoat on the Famous Five.

Five. They smiled genially, but did not answer.

"Gone deaf?" hooted Bunter. Five heads were shaken, but the juniors did not speak.

Bunter blinked at them in irritated perplexity.

"Why don't you answer, you fat-heads?" he demanded.

"You told us to shut up!" said Wharton mildly. "We're shutting up!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" yapped Bunter. "Look here, pay the man his ten bob and let's get on. I'm getting hungry."

Five heads were shaken again.

"Will you pay that man ten bob?" hooted Bunter.

"No: we're minding our own business."

"To hear is to obey!" explained Bob Cherry solemnly.

"I say, you fellows—" he yelled. "Ta-ta, old fat bean!"

"Oh, crikey! I say, Harry, old chap, I say, Bob, old fellow, Franky, dear old chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. turned back, much to the fat Owl's relief. As Bunter was in his usual state of impecuniosity, he would have been left in rather a difficult position had they persisted in shutting up and minding their own business.

"Now, you fat frog!" said Harry. "You can have a bob's worth of cards and stamps to match. Pick them out, and look sharp!"

"I've got about fifty here," said Bunter. "I can't do with five or six like you fellows! I've got lots of friends to send them to, rather different from you chaps."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time for us to



Billy Bunter was disturbed by a shake at his fat shoulder. He grunted and grunted again, and finally opened his eyes behind his big spectacles and glared. "Go away!" he yapped, blinking at the black-browed chauffeur. "What the thump are you waking me up for, you beast? Vous goez away! Bunkez! See? Gettez vous out!"

His extensive assortment of picture-postcards and a sheet of stamps were placed in a large envelope by the smiling shopman.

"Cinquante-cinq francs, monsieur!"

"What does the man mean by song-kong-song-frong?" said Bunter irritably. "They speak rotten French in Marseilles! I can't understand them!"

"He means fifty-five francs, fat-head!"

"You shut up! I know what the man means all right! I wish you'd mind your own business, Wharton!"

"Cinquante-cinq francs, m'sieur!"

"That's not dear for this lot, with the exchange at a hundred," said Bunter. "Only about ten bob! Oh, I say, I've left my notecase on the Firefly! It—it was in my overcoat pocket, you know. All my currency notes and banknotes in it, too! I say, you fellows, pay the man, will you, and I'll settle when we go on board?"

Bunter blinked round at the Famous

"The heartfulness is the idiotic obcy-fulness, my esteemed Bunter."

"Come on, you fellows!" said Johnny Bull. "We're wasting time."

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

"You coming, Bunter?" asked Nugent over his shoulder.

"I can't come without paying the man for his postcards and tongs!" hooted Bunter. "Are you going to pay him or not?"

"Not! We're going to mind our own business, as per instructions!" explained Harry Wharton. "See you later, if you're staying here."

The Famous Five walked on.

Billy Bunter glared after them, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Having told the juniors to shut up and mind their own business, Bunter really might have expected them so to do. But he did not seem satisfied by this careful observance of his instructions. He seemed annoyed.

mind our own business again!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Come on, old beans!"

"I say, you fellows, hold on! If you're going to be mean—"

"The meanfulness is going to be terrific."

"That's the sort of gratitude I expect after getting you an expensive cruise with my friend Compton!" said Bunter scornfully. "Look here, Wharton, are you going to lend me ten bob or not?"

"Not!"

"Beast!"

Ten bob for picture postcards seemed rather too lavish for the fellows who had to provide the necessary bobs. With deep indignation, Billy Bunter made a new and diminished selection. Five francs, instead of fifty-five, were handed over for the same, while Bunter snorted scornfully. Still snorting contempt he rolled on after the Famous Five.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the jolly old steward!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,508.

suddenly, as Rawlings appeared in the crowded street.

Rawlings came up and touched his cap very civilly.

"I've been looking for you young gentlemen," he said. "Captain Compton has instructed me—"

"Look here, come on and never mind Rawlings!" grunted Billy Bunter. "Ow! Wow! Stop stamping on my foot, you beast!"

"Go it, Rawlings!" said Frank Nugent.

"The captain thinks you might like a motor drive," said Rawlings. "He is rather busy to-day, and Master Valentine has gone for a ride: but if you young gentlemen would like a drive, a car is ready, and the captain has instructed me to accompany you. There is a very pleasant place in the hills where you might care to have lunch—"

"Good!" said Bunter.

"I am very well acquainted with this city," said Rawlings, "and if you have no objection I will sit beside the chauffeur and point out places of interest—"

"Jolly good of you, old bean!" said Bob.

"I say, you fellows, better go straight to lunch—"

"This way, young gentlemen!" said Rawlings.

The juniors followed the steward. After an hour's walk they liked the idea of doing the sights in a car: especially Bunter.

"Jolly good idea," said Bunter. "But I don't see that we want Rawlings on the car. That man's cheeky."

"Well, I don't suppose the jolly old captain wants a lot of schoolboys wandering over a foreign city entirely

on their own!" remarked Nugent. "I dare say he feels responsible for us."

"That's rot!" said Bunter. "I'm with you! I suppose I can look after you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look here, we'll jolly well order Rawlings to clear," said Bunter. "All he need do is to pay for the car. See?"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

The juniors expected Rawlings to lead them to a garage. But they found the car waiting at a little distance down the street, with a black-browed Marseilles chauffeur sitting at the wheel. It was a large and handsome car, and there was plenty of room for the six juniors in it. Rawlings took his seat beside the driver. Bunter gave a grunt of satisfaction as he sat down on soft leather.

"Not a bad turn out!" he remarked. "Not like our Rolls at Bunter Court, of course, but not bad! I say, you fellows, tell the man to drive straight to that place where we're going to have lunch."

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yah!"

And the car rolled away with the Greyfriars party.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Lunch at Last!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. quite enjoyed that drive round the great Mediterranean city of Marseilles.

Rawlings was well acquainted with the city, and he played the part of cicerone with sleek politeness. Billy Bunter almost forgot that he was cheeky: and Harry Wharton hardly remembered his deep distrust of the

man. Certainly, at present, Rawlings seemed to have no idea but to make himself useful and agreeable.

In the course of three hours the chums of Greyfriars saw quite a lot of Marseilles, the Cathedral of Sainte Marie; the Palais de Longchamp, the Promenade du Prado, and other well-known sights; above all, the famous Rue Cannebiere. They went up the lift to Notre Dame de la Garde, on its high, limestone rock, whence there was a magnificent view of the city and the harbour, and whence they spotted the Firefly and unnumbered other craft in the Bassin du Lazaret, the Bassin de la Joliette, and the Vieux Port.

After which, the Famous Five were almost as ready as Bunter to head for the spot where they were to lunch.

Leaving the city behind, the car ran by a long, white road, and turned into a chemin that led away into the hills. Billy Bunter having been provided with a bag of sticky cakes, the fat junior had tolerated the sightseeing with more or less fortitude: but his thoughts were on lunch, on which they concentrated more and more after the cakes had disappeared.

"I say, you fellows, we're fearfully late for lunch!" grunted Bunter. "I say, I don't see why we couldn't feed at one of the big restaurants along the Cannonball."

"Do you mean the Cannebiere, fat-head?" asked Bob.

"No, I don't, and I don't want you to teach me French, either," grunted Bunter. "I say, I'm hungry."

Rawlings glanced round.

"We shall reach the place very soon now, sir," he said. "It is a very pleasant and picturesque spot, called the Soleil d'Or—"

"That's a jolly queer name for a place," said Bunter. "What do they call it the Solid Door for?"

"Soleil d'Or, fathead!" said Bob Cherry. "The Golden Sun! Or, to be exact, the Sun of Gold, which is the way the Froggies put it."

"Teach your grandmother!" grunted Bunter. "Think I don't know that Solid Door means Golden Sun? I say, I'm hungry."

"We've heard that one!" remarked Nugent.

"The heardfulness is terrific and frequent."

"Yah!"

From the chemin the car turned into a narrower and more rutty chemin, and rocked up an acclivity. The last white-walled villa had disappeared from view, and the schoolboy tourists seemed to be penetrating into solitude—a strange contrast to the busy, humming city they had left behind.

Billy Bunter blinked disparagingly from the car. Sloping hills, and vines, and patches of woodland might be picturesque in their way, but the view that Bunter really enjoyed was the view of a well-spread table, piled with food-stuffs.

However, the Soleil d'Or was reached at last: a little inn and restaurant half-hidden by a great plane tree. The car halted, and the Greyfriars fellows turned out.

A plump, smiling innkeeper and a fat, rosy-checked waiter greeted them with polite bows. Apparently they were expected, no doubt Rawlings had sent word, for a table was laid for lunch in the courtyard under the spreading plane tree: and both innkeeper and garcon got busy at once.

Billy Bunter's fat brow cleared when the foodstuffs came in sight. It was a small place in a remote spot, but the

JIMMY SILVER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY!



Who's for an exciting Christmas holiday with Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood? Join up with Jimmy's jolly party today and enjoy their Yuletide fun and adventure. It will cost you only fourpence—and you'll vote it as good as another Christmas holiday! Make sure of this book...

Ask for No. 284
of the

SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

Now on sale at all Newsagents and Bookstalls 4d

provender was good—and, still more important, it was unlimited in quantity. Bunter sat and smiled.

But he gave Rawlings a suspicious blink through his hi spectacles. If that cheeky steward supposed that he was going to sit down to lunch with an aristocrat like William George Bunter, he had another guess coming, and Bunter was ready to tell him so.

But Rawlings discreetly disappeared into the auberge with the black-browed Marseilles chauffeur, and the fat aristocrat was relieved.

For the next hour Bunter was busy.

Harry Wharton & Co. packed away a very good lunch, and then strolled about the place, while Billy Bunter continued his gastronomic operations, keeping the garcon very busy, and no doubt causing him to wonder where the fat junior put it all.

Even Bunter, however, was finished at last, and he leaned back in his chair, breathing hard after his exertions.

Rawlings reappeared from the auberge.

"If the young gentlemen would care for a walk, there is a ruin of a Roman villa at a short distance," he suggested.

"Jolly good idea!" said Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come on, Bunter old fat bean!"

"If you fellows think I'm going to tramp about just after a meal, you're mistaken!" grunted Bunter. "I say, if we go straight back to Marseilles in the car we can go to the pictures."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Yes, we've travelled a thousand miles or so to go to the pictures," he remarked—"I don't think!"

"It is not more than a mile or so, Master Bunter," said Rawlings. "Perhaps a little hilly—"

"If you think I'm going to walk up hills—"

"Oh, get a move on, you fat slacker!" said Johnny Bull.

"Can we get there in the car, Rawlings?"

"Hem! No, sir. The way is a little rugged—"

"Then I'm not going!" grunted Bunter. "You fellows can walk all over the South of France if you like. I'm sitting here till we go back."

"If Master Bunter would prefer to take a rest—" said Rawlings.

"I jolly well would!" grunted Bunter. "One of you fellows can stay here with me, in case I want anything."

"Don't all speak at once, you fellows," said Bob. "I can see that you're all going to jump at the chance of sitting here and listening to Bunter snoring, in case he may happen to want anything."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, look here, if you're walking off and leaving a fellow, get me some cushions," said Bunter. "I'll have a bit of a nap under this tree. See?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Rawlings.

Cushions were provided, and the Owl of the Remove settled down for a nap. The Famous Five, not in the least inclined for a nap after lunch, and still less disposed to sit and listen to Bunter's snore while he napped, walked out of the gateway with Rawlings.

Harry Wharton's brow was rather thoughtful as he went.

He had something to say to his comrades before they went back to the yacht, and it was something that could not be said in the presence of the steward of the Firefly; it was something that had been on his mind ever since the yacht had steamed into the harbour of Marseilles two or three days ago, but he had hesitated till now. Now, how-

ever, it was the last day at Marseilles, and the matter had to be settled.

The juniors followed Rawlings by a hilly path, and the inn disappeared from sight. Rawlings had said that it was about a mile, but they had covered more than twice that distance by winding ways before the steward came to a halt in a rocky valley down which a torrent brawled and splashed. He stood looking about him in a dubious way.

"Where's the jolly old Roman villa, old bean?" asked Bob, with a grin. "Lost it?"

"I am sorry, young gentlemen," said Rawlings apologetically. "It is many years since I was here last, and I seem to have forgotten the way. It cannot be far distant. Perhaps you young gentlemen would like to rest here for a few minutes while I look round?"

"Right-ho!"

Two miles on rugged, hilly paths had made the schoolboys ready for a rest. They sat down on the rugged boulders beside the torrent, and Rawlings moved away. He remained in sight for a few minutes, looking about him, as if in search of a path, and then disappeared from view among the rocks.

"Jolly here!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Topping!" agreed Nugent.

"The topfulness is terrific."

GREAT NEWS!

FREE GIFTS

coming along
SOON!

Watch the

MAGNET,

Boys!

"I hope Rawlings hasn't lost his way," said Johnny Bull. "It would be no joke trying to find our way out of this."

"He isn't the man to lose his way," said Bob. "Fact is, I'm rather glad of a rest. Jolly old solitude, isn't it? Who'd think that we were only about ten miles from the busiest seaport on the Mediterranean?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dark eyes were on Harry Wharton's face, with a rather amused glimmer in their dusky depths.

"Get it off your esteemed chest, my absurd Wharton," he suggested.

Harry gave a start.

"Eh?" he ejaculated. "What?"

The nabob grinned. He was rather keener in observation than the other members of the Co., and he had been aware for some time past that the captain of the Remove had some unuttered thought on his mind.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob looked round. "Anything up?"

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Well, yes," he said. "I've got something to tell you fellows, and there's a chance now that Rawlings has cleared."

"Something that Rawlings mustn't hear?" asked Bob in wonder.

"Well, yes, rather."

"Cough it up; he may heave in sight any minute. We've got to get back to the yacht at sundown, you know."

"That's the problem," said Harry quietly. "We've got to decide this after-

noon whether we go back to the yacht at all."

At which the Co. stared at him blankly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grunted. Under the plane-tree in the courtyard, sprawling on cushions, the fat Owl of Greyfriars was sleeping the sleep of the just.

As the more strenuous members of the party had gone on a walk to see some fatheaded ruin or other, Billy Bunter expected to be left in peace and to have his nap out in comfort.

Instead of which, he was disturbed by a shake of his fat shoulder, and he grunted, and grunted again, and finally opened his eyes behind his big spectacles and glared.

"Lemme alone, you beast!" he yapped. "I'm not going to move yet! Go for another walk—and be blowed to you!"

Then he became aware that it was not one of the juniors who had awakened him; it was the black-browed chauffeur who had driven the car up from Marseilles to the Auberge Soleil d'Or.

Bunter blinked at him, then he blinked round. None of the juniors was in sight. The Famous Five had not returned from their walk. Neither was Rawlings to be seen. Why the French chauffeur was awakening him was a mystery to Billy Bunter, and a very irritating mystery.

"Go away!" he yapped. "What the thump are you waking me up for, you beast? Go away! Vous goez away!" added Bunter, putting it in French—his own remarkable French. "Bankezi! See? Gettez vous out!"

"Venez, monsieur!" said the black-browed one.

"I don't know what you mean by venez—and I jolly well don't want to!" grunted Bunter. "You goez! Cuttez vous off! Leavez moi alone!"

"Vous venez avec moi, monsieur, dans l'automobile!" said the chauffeur. Then he put it in English that bore a striking family resemblance to Bunter's French: "You go to come in one automobile."

"Eh? I'm not going back yet!" snapped Bunter. "I'm waiting here for the other fellows to come back!"

"No go to come!" explained the chauffeur. "Les messieurs—zese ones go Marseilles anozzer vay."

Bunter sat up and took notice at that. His very spectacles glowed with indignation.

"My hat!" he gasped. "Mean to say that the beasts have gone back another way, and left me on my own?"

"Zey valk viz a foot!" said the chauffeur.

"Well, of all the blithering idiots!" gasped Bunter. "Walking back, when they could go in a car! Just like them, too! And leaving a fellow on his own! After all I've done for them, too!"

"Vous venez!" said the black-browed chauffeur. "You want go Marseilles—yes? You stay here all one night? Moi, je m'en vais! Me, I go! You come or you stay?"

Bunter rose to his feet.

If those blithering idiots had walked back to Marseilles, certainly Billy Bunter did not want to remain at the Soleil d'Or on his lonely own.

"Oh, the beasts!" he gasped. "Of course I want to go back, you ass! Think I want to stick here all night, when the yacht sails at dawn? I

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,508.

thought we were going to have tea here."

"Je ne comprends pas—"

"Oh, you Froggies don't compring anything!" granted Bunter. "I suppose Rawlings has paid for the lunch? I jolly well know I'm not going to pay for anything. I was going to address my cards here, after I'd had a nap!"

"Comment?"

"What's common?" snapped Bunter. "Don't talk rot, even if you are a Froggy. I suppose I'd better get back, and I'll jolly well tell the beasts what I think of them, too!"

"Venez, s'il vous plait, monsieur."

The car was ready. The chauffeur opened the door for Bunter, and he rolled into it. Innkeeper and garcon bowed him off, as the car rolled out of the courtyard. Evidently the lunch had been paid for.

Bunter sat frowning wrathfully as the automobile rocked away down the rugged chemin. He was deeply and intensely annoyed.

The beasts had gone for a walk, and naturally he had expected them back. He had been going to address his collection of picture postcards, and stack away an ample tea, before he left the Soleil d'Or, taking it for granted that the chauffeur and the car would wait.

Instead of which, they had not come back, and the chauffeur had announced that he was going back to the city, and that Bunter could go or stay, as he liked!

Naturally, he went! Certainly he did not want to remain at the lonely auberge after his only means of transport had disappeared.

But he was deeply annoyed. Generally, Billy Bunter grouched without reason; but on this occasion, he really felt entitled to grouse. This really was not the way to treat a fellow!

He was glad at all events that the chauffeur had woke him up, and told him he was going, before he went. But he soon discovered that there was no cause for gladness in that circumstance.

About a mile from the Soleil d'Or, the car came to a sudden halt. The black-browed man stepped down and opened the door.

There was a faint grin on his olive face.

Billy Bunter blinked at him angrily and with a vague uneasiness.

"Venez, monsieur!" said the black-browed man, signing to Bunter to step out of the car.

"Eh! What am I to get out for?" demanded Bunter.

"Vite!" snapped the chauffeur.

"What the dickens do you mean by vite?" snarled Bunter.

The chauffeur showed him the next moment. He grabbed Bunter by a fat shoulder, and hooked him out of the car.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he landed, tottering on his feet. "I—I say, what's the game? Keep off, you beast! Laissez moi alone, you rotter!"

Instead of letting him alone, as requested, the grinning rascal whipped off the handsome grey overcoat and pitched it into the car.

Hitherto, he had looked on the black-browed Marseillaise simply as a chauffeur; a sort of human machine that worked the car. Now it was driven into his fat brain that the man was far from being wholly and solely a chauffeur. Obviously, it was his intention to seize Bunter's overcoat, and leave Bunter stranded on that lonely road. Why, was a horrid mystery that the fat Owl of Greyfriars could not begin to fathom.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,508.

The overcoat was quite a good one, worth a few pounds. But it was utterly amazing and extraordinary for the chauffeur to "pinch" it. Evidently he did not want anything else of Bunter's. Bunter's pockets would not have rewarded him very richly, if he had searched them, it was true. Still, he was not aware of that; and Bunter might have had money about him, for all the chauffeur knew. Clearly all he wanted was the grey overcoat which Rawlings had so kindly lent Bunter that morning.

"I—I—I say!" stuttered the fat junior, in alarm and bewilderment. "I—I—I say—"

"Allez-vous-en!" snapped the chauffeur, with a scowl that made Bunter jump back in terror.

The man slammed the door of the car, resumed his place in the driving-seat, and started.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He stared after the car through his big spectacles as it vanished down the road.

It was gone from his sight in less than a minute.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

He was glad that the black-browed chauffeur was gone. The man had looked quite dangerous! But the car was gone also—and Billy Bunter was left on foot, on a solitary road, terrified and bewildered, and utterly at a loss. His fat brain seemed to be turning round.

"Oh, the beast!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked round him in utter dismay. There was no sort of a building in sight. The nearest, so far as he could tell, was the inn he had left.

Walking down to Marseilles was an impossible proposition. It was at least ten miles—and Billy Bunter was no ten-mile walker! Moreover, he did not know the way, and had not the remotest chance of discovering it. A long mile uphill lay between him and the Soleil d'Or—but that was his only refuge.

Slowly—very slowly—it dawned on Billy Bunter's fat brain, that his podgy leg had been pulled by that rascally chauffeur. Slowly he realised that the juniors had not, as the man had stated, walked back to the city at all. That had only been the rascal's excuse to get him away from the auberge, while his friends were absent.

For some utterly mysterious and inexplicable reason, the man wanted to bag that overcoat; he had got Bunter away from the inn for that purpose, and now he was done with him. Slowly, but surely, it dawned on Bunter that the juniors had, after all, only gone for a walk, and would return to the inn, expecting to find him there!

That, at least, was a comfort.

Grunting and groaning, the fat Owl started to tramp up the road. The loss of the overcoat did not bother him very much—he was soon quite warm with walking; in fact, rather too warm; and as the coat did not belong to Bunter, it did not matter, of course, what became of it. With a grunt, a groan, or a gasp, at every step, the hapless fat junior tramped, and tramped, and tramped, and wondered whether that beastly auberge would ever come in sight!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Lost!

HARRY WHARTON looked, and felt, uncomfortable, as the surprised stares of his comrades fixed on him.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was not, perhaps, so surprised as the others. But

Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Frank Nugent were blankly astonished. The keen-witted nabob had noted more on board the Firefly than the English schoolboys. Still, he had not expected this—and to the other three it came with startling unexpectedness.

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Bob Cherry. "We're booked for the cruise on the Firefly, for the holidays—what the dickens do you mean, Wharton? We're fixed till the end of the vacation, aren't we?"

"We've had a good time so far!" said Johnny Bull. "Bunter's found plenty to grouse about; but we haven't!"

"Compton hasn't done anything, surely?" asked Frank Nugent. "Considering that he's a senior at Greyfriars, and we're juniors, he seems to me to play up jolly well. Nothing Fifth Formy about him, that I've noticed."

"Not Compton!" said Harry hastily. "Compton's one of the best! But—" He paused. What he had to say was not easy to say.

"You're not worried, like Bunter, because the steward's rather cheeky?" grinned Bob. "He seems to be on rather a queer footing on the packet—calling the captain 'Jim Compton,' and so on. But that's no bizney of ours."

"No, no!" said Harry.

"Swain's a bit of a barking bulldog, but that needn't worry us!" said Frank. "And the skipper is generally as close as an oyster; but that needn't worry us, either. We're on the yacht as Compton's guests; and I'm blessed if I can see a single fault to find in that chap!"

"I'd better speak out plain!" said Harry. "Rawlings, the steward, is a scoundrel, and Swain, the mate, is another. And the captain is more or less hand-in-glove with them."

"But how—what—why—" stuttered Bob.

"I'll tell you. You remember the man who was picked up at sea—the Spanish chap Diaz—and landed at Marseilles? You remember he had a wallet with money in it? You saw me hand it to him when he took the boat on shore—I told you he'd asked me to mind it for him on the yacht. Now I'm going to tell you why! Rawlings and the mate were after it."

"Oh gum!"

"Rawlings sent him to sleep with drugged coffee, and if I hadn't hidden the wallet, they'd have had it. After that he asked me to mind it—which was the only thing that kept Rawlings' hands off it. Of course, he never dreamed that it was in my keeping, or he'd have been after my suitcase fast enough!"

"You're sure?" gasped Bob. "But how did you know?"

"Bunter heard them plotting, and told me! I couldn't believe it at first—till I saw what happened. I've told you what happened. I couldn't tell you on the yacht—and, anyhow, we had to stick on till we touched port. Now we're on land, and can get home, if we like. Think it over."

The juniors sat silent on the rocky boulders by the brawling torrent. It was not easy for the Co. to assimilate that startling and unexpected information. There was a long silence.

Rawlings did not reappear. But the chums of the Remove had, for the time, forgotten Rawlings.

Johnny Bull was the first to speak.

"It beat me why that Spanish chap asked you to mind his wallet, which everybody on the yacht knew was stacked with money," he said. "I wondered why he didn't ask the captain to lock it up for him."



"If you're tired, squat on my gee!" said Compton. "Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. Compton helped the fat Owl to clamber on to the horse. Then, taking the bridle, he led the animal on. Billy Bunter, glad to rest his fat limbs in the saddle, squatted there, and gasped. "Lucky I dropped on you, kid!" said the Fifth Former.

Harry Wharton laughed involuntarily. "He would never have seen it again if he had. He would have been chucked ashore somewhere without it!"

"You mean that Compton's uncle was in with Rawlings and Swain?"

"Not exactly! From what I could make out, they were doing the whole thing, intending to get the skipper in it afterwards. Of course, they could not have carried it through unless he backed them up."

"And Compton—you can't mean——" breathed Nugent.

"No—no, no—a thousand times no!" exclaimed Wharton. "Compton never knew anything. And if he'd known, he would have stood by the dago and stopped it—if he could! He knew nothing—and knows nothing of it. I'm not likely to tell him such a thing. What would he feel like?"

"His uncle is a bit of a hard nut to crack, and no mistake!" said Bob. "But Compton's as square as a die! For goodness' sake, not a whisper to him! He would feel fearfully rotten about it!"

"Not a syllable, of course," said Harry. "I should not have told even you fellows, but we've got to decide whether we can stay on the yacht after what's happened. Nothing of the kind, of course, is likely to happen again, so far as that goes! But sticking on the ship, knowing that a crime was going to be committed, and the rascals still on board——"

He paused.

"We could put up some excuse to Compton, and get home from here by train," he went on. "It would be a rotten ending to the cruise, I know that. I don't know whether Bunter would agree; he's his own master, and very likely he would rather stick on the yacht—he's nearly forgotten it all already,

except that it's left him fearfully afraid of Rawlings. But we've got to decide for ourselves."

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "Whatever we say to Compton, he will jolly well know that there's something amiss if we chuck the cruise half through."

"That's pretty certain!" said Nugent. "After all, so far as you know, the captain had no hand in it. Compton would have felt the same about it as we do. It comes to this—that there are a couple of rogues on the yacht, and the skipper may or may not know the kind of blighters they are. They never got away with it, so there's no harm done. It's not a thing that could happen twice."

"That's so!" said Johnny Bull, slowly and thoughtfully. "We've nothing to do with the mate, and Rawlings is only the steward. We're bound to give the captain the benefit of the doubt, so far as there is any. I don't like the idea of letting Compton down, after he's been so jolly decent."

"Stick it out, then?" asked Harry slowly.

"Well, yes, I think so."

"I think the same," said Bob.

"The samefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head. And Nugent nodded assent.

Harry Wharton sat silent.

He had felt bound to tell his chums how the matter stood, so that they could decide for themselves.

He had told them what he knew. But he had not told them what he suspected. Haunting his mind was what Herbert Vernon-Smith had told him, before Greyfriars broke up for the holidays. Smithy had said that the Firefly was a smuggling craft; and certain incidents on the cruise had driven it into

Wharton's mind that the Bounder had been right.

But he did not feel sure.

He could not help suspecting that Smithy had hit on the truth. But he hated to believe so—he tried not to believe it.

It was, after all, only suspicion, so far. He had no right to utter what were only vague suspicions.

If he told his friends, he could hardly expect them to believe what he only half-believed himself—what he was unwilling to believe, and tried his hardest not to believe!

"If there's anything more——" said Bob, looking at him curiously. "Better put all the cards on the table, old man, while we're on the subject."

"There's nothing more that I can say for certain!" said Harry.

"Well, what you can't say for certain had better be left unsaid, I should think," remarked Johnny Bull. "We've got to deal with the facts! Now, it boils down to this—there are a couple of rascals in the yacht's crew. They'd have pinched that Spanish chap's wallet if you hadn't put paid to it. You know it, and we know, because you've told us; but there's no proof to nail them on. You can't tell Compton—and he wouldn't believe a word of it, if you did! That's not enough to turn the chap down for! He's been thoroughly decent to us, and we all like him, and I vote for seeing the cruise through and keeping our mouths shut."

"That's that, then!" said Harry.

"The thatfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You had to tell us," said Bob. "But I think Johnny's right!"

"It's settled, then!" said Harry, and he rose from the boulder he was seated on. "I'm glad to have had the chance of speaking to you, without Rawlings"

hovering about— But where the dickens has the man got to?"

He glanced round the little rocky valley. The sun was sinking into the west. The juniors realised that it was half an hour since Rawlings had left them. There was no sound or sign of the steward returning.

"He can't have lost himself, surely!" exclaimed Nugent. "If he has, he's jolly well lost us, too. Blessed if I think we could find our way back to the Soleil d'Or!"

"He must be somewhere about!" said Bob. "Let's give him a hail!"

And Bob lifted up the most powerful voice at Greyfriars School, and roared:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Rawlings! Show a leg! Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob's roar echoed back, in a thousand rolling echoes, from rock and wood. But there was no answering hail.

"By gum!" said Johnny Bull. "He's out of hearing! I shouldn't have thought he was the man to lose his bearings!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips.

"He isn't," he answered quietly.

"Looks as if he's lost," said Bob.

"Looks as if we are!" said Harry.

"No need to shout again, Bob—you won't get any answer from Rawlings!"

Bob gave a startled look.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Harry quietly, "that while we've been debating whether to keep on the cruise or not, Rawlings has decided the point for us! That scoundrel brought us here to lose us—and the Firefly sails at dawn."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Meeting!

CLATTER, clatter, clatter! Billy Bunter blinked up through his big spectacles at the sound of horse's hoofs on the winding, hilly road.

Bunter was seated on a rock, by the side of the rutty road. He was feeling in the depths of woe.

After the car had vanished and left him to depend on his fat little legs, he had tramped, and tramped, and tramped, till those little fat legs seemed on the point of dropping off.

Then he sat down to rest.

He was still resting.

The Soleil d'Or was not in sight. Bunter had calculated that it was about a mile away. He had covered more than a mile. But the elusive auberge seemed farther off than ever.

Whether he had taken the wrong road or not, he did not know. It was very probable that he had, for several other rutty lanes turned off from the one that led back to the mountain inn, and the fat Owl was as likely to take one as another.

Indeed, he had a dismal suspicion that that black-browed beast had jolly well known that he would not get back to the Soleil d'Or, or he would have taken him deeper into the hills before stranding him.

Anyhow, he was hopelessly lost; and all that the hapless fat Owl could do was to rest his weary, podgy limbs and groan.

The sun was setting, and the approach of dusk was terrifying to Bunter. Not a single person had passed; and towards night wayfarers were more unlikely than ever.

Now that the sun was going down, and he was no longer in motion, he felt the loss of the overcoat. He shivered, and mumbled, and groaned. The sound of a horse's hoofs was a glad one to his fat ears.

Somebody was coming at last on that lonely road. Bunter blinked at the approaching rider, and rose wearily to his feet. If he could make himself understood in French—which was perhaps doubtful—the man might help him, somehow, out of this awful scrape.

But as the rider came closer, the fat junior gave a jump and a gasp of happy relief.

It was not a man who was riding—it was a boy, though a boy some years older than Bunter, and even at a distance the handsome face and graceful, athletic form were familiar.

"Compton!" gasped Bunter.

The horseman was staring at him, having recognised Bunter long before Bunter recognised him. Bunter was both surprised and delighted to see Compton of the Fifth. Compton of the Fifth was simply astounded to see Bunter.

He came on at a gallop, drew in his horse, and jumped down, staring blankly at the fat junior.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"What the deuce are you doing here, by yourself?" exclaimed the amazed Fifth Former. "Lost?"

"Ow! Yes! Oh dear!"

"Where are the other fellows?"

"Ow! I don't know! Oh crikey!"

Valentine Compton slipped the reins over his arm and stood beside the horse, staring at the fat Owl. So far as he had known, the Greyfriars fellows were doing the sights of Marseilles, and it was utterly amazing to him to find the fat Owl of the Remove on his lonely own, ten miles from the city, lost on a solitary hill path.

"I—I—I say, I'm tired out, Compton!" gasped Bunter. "I say, is it far to the Solid Door?"

"The what?" ejaculated Compton.

"A beastly inn—called the Solid Door, somewhere in these filthy hills!" groaned Bunter. "I've been walking miles and miles and miles—"

"Oh! The Soleil d'Or!" said Compton, with a smile. "Have you left your friends at the Soleil d'Or?"

"They left me there!" groaned Bunter. "They went for a walk, and then that beast of a chauffeur— Oh lor'!"

"But what's happened, exactly?" asked the Greyfriars Fifth Former.

Billy Bunter gasped out the tale of his misadventures.

Valentine Compton listened, in amazement at first, then with a darkening brow. His brow grew darker and darker, and his eyes glinted.

To Billy Bunter, the conduct of the Marseilles chauffeur was a complete mystery. It was no mystery to the schoolboy smuggler, who saw at once the hand of Rawlings in what had happened.

He set his lips hard as Bunter completed his tale of woe.

"Lucky I dropped on you, kid!" he said. "I know the place you mean—a little inn up in the hills. It's a good mile from here."

"Oh crikey!"

"I will take you there, kid—"

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter. "I'm tired!"

"Like to squat on my gee?"

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

Compton smiled, and helped the fat Owl to clamber on to the horse. Taking the bridle, he led the animal away. Billy Bunter, glad to rest his fat limbs in the saddle, squatted there and gasped.

"I say, I suppose the fellows will have got back by now, Compton," he said. "I know that chauffeur beast was only pulling my leg, and they never walked back to Marseilles."

"Oh, we shall find them all right," said Compton cheerily. "If you have to wait for the, I dare say you can do with some supper—"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter promptly. "I say, you ought to speak to Rawlings about this!"

Compton glanced round at him quickly.

"Rawlings?" he repeated.

"Well, he engaged that car," said Bunter, "and the man stranded me, as I've told you, and pinched my overcoat. I thought the beast was being unusually civil when he lent me that overcoat because mine was lost—and then he goes and lands me like this! He ought to have seen that the chauffeur was all right."

"Quite!" assented Compton. "I shall certainly speak to him, Bunter, and you can depend on it that I shall speak very plainly when I do."

"If your uncle would take my advice," said Bunter, "he'd sack that man!"

Compton made no rejoinder to that.

He led the horse onward, finding his way easily enough where all was bewildering to Billy Bunter. The big plane-tree and the red roof of the Soleil d'Or came in sight at length, and the fat Owl gasped with relief.

Compton led the horse in at the gateway of the courtyard, and helped Bunter down. There was no sign to be seen of the Famous Five.

"I say, they haven't got back!" squeaked Bunter. "I say, Compton, do you think they walked back, after all?"

"I think not!" said Compton. "But we shall see! Sit down, while I speak to the aubergiste."

Innkeeper and waiter came out, both surprised to see Billy Bunter again. Compton entered into conversation with them in rapid French, which was a sealed mystery to Bunter.

Then he turned to the fat junior.

"Your friends haven't come back yet, kid," he said. "I've ordered supper for you, and you can park it while you wait for them. I'm going back, to send up a car to take you down to the city. Wait here, and mind you don't leave the place again before the car comes, on any account whatever."

"I'll watch it!" gasped Bunter.

Compton gave him a cheery smile, mounted his horse, and rode out at the gateway, and dashed away at a gallop. But the smile left his face when it was turned from Bunter, and his brows knitted blackly, his eyes glinting under them.

The clatter of the hoofs died away, and Billy Bunter, once more at his fat ease, proceeded to deal with the food-stuffs that the garcon of the Soleil d'Or piled on the table under the plane-tree. The Famous Five did not arrive, but that did not worry Bunter. He had almost forgotten their existence, as a matter of fact. Bunter was hungry—and when Bunter was hungry, less important matters were banished from his mind.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Rogues in Council!

CAPTAIN COMPTON sat on the settee, in the saloon of the Firefly, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth and a dark and thoughtful frown on his face.

Mr. Swain, the mate, sat on a corner of the table, his feet resting on a chair, and a tumbler in his hand resting on his knee. Rawlings, the steward, leaned back in an armchair, his legs crossed, smoking a cigarette.

Had any of the Greyfriars guests witnessed that little scene, they would certainly have been struck, more forcibly than ever, by the fact that the steward of the *Firefly* was not on the ordinary footing of a steward.

There was a faintly sneering smile on the steward's smooth, sleek face. The captain's brow was puckered, his face expressing mingled anger and doubt. Mr. Swain looked, as usual, like a surly bulldog.

"You've taken too much on yourself, Rawlings!" said the captain, breaking a long silence. "It won't do!"

"You can wash that out, Jim!" said Rawlings coolly. "When you've got guests on the yacht, or prying eyes are about, I'm a steward—when we're alone, you can wash the steward right out, and remember that we're three in a Co., with equal rights, and on an equal footing!"

"Ay, ay!" grunted Swain.

"We're three in the game, with

But I tell you, that boy Wharton smelt a rat before we were out of the Channel and I've my doubts about the darky, too. You ask me what Valentine is to say to them back home? Well, I ask you, what are they going to say to the police, if they go back knowing too much?"

"They know nothing."

"That's your belief—not mine. I've read a dozen times in young Wharton's face that he knows more than he says. More than that, I've a shrewd idea that he knew something—or, at least, suspected something—before he ever set foot on this packet."

"That's impossible, and you know it."

"It's not impossible, and I don't know it," said Rawlings. "And Bill stands in with me."

Swain nodded.

"Ay, ay," he said. "Leave it to him, skipper! Ted Rawlings has twice the brains of either of us. He's as cunning as a sackful of monkeys! I stand in with Ted!"

The captain sat silent, chewing his unlighted cigar. Swain finished his tumbler and placed it on the table. Rawlings lighted another cigarette.

"Where are the boys, Rawlings?" he asked, in a low, very distinct tone.

"They left it to me to say their good-byes," said Rawlings. "They've gone home."

"Gone home!" repeated Compton.

"Just that."

Compton stood looking at him.

"Keep a steady keel, kid!" came Swain's deep growl. "Ted figured that they were getting to know too much, and he's sent them home. Safe in a train, with a man in charge—all O.K."

"I don't think you believe that, Swain," said Compton quietly, "and I doubt whether my uncle does."

"Rawlings took this out of my hands," said the captain. "I had nothing to do with it, Valentine! He may be right in thinking they saw things."

"That's rubbish!"

"I don't think it rubbish!" sneered Rawlings. "I've explained to the young swabs that the cruise had to end for unforeseen reasons, paid their fares, seen them safe into the train, and that's that!"

The Fifth Former of Greyfriars gave him a look of loathing.

On the Way—

GRAND FREE GIFTS

—For All Readers of the MAGNET!

equal shares, and a whack for every man in the crew!" went on Rawlings. "I'm as keen on keeping up appearances as you are, Jim Compton—it means the safe side of chokey for all of us! But when we're alone, don't come the gentleman-yachtsman with me, because I don't stand for it!"

The captain's grim face grew grimmer, and his deep-set eyes glinted at the steward. But he did not speak.

"You get all the fat!" went on Rawlings. "You swank as a captain and a yachtsman, while I wash dishes and serve coffee. You've not got a lot to grouse about!"

"I am a captain and a yachtsman, and you are a dirty dish-washer, Rawlings!" said James Compton grimly. "More than once I've been sorry that I ever came into this smuggling game with you, and, still more, that I dragged my boy into it."

"Not sorry enough to chuck it!" sneered Rawlings.

"No," said the captain, after a long pause—"not sorry enough for that! But what you've done—it cuts no ice with me, as I suppose you know, but Valentine will not stand for it. Valentine asked the schoolboys on this cruise. They're useful enough—a party of schoolboys on a holiday cruise help to cover up a lot of things. They're decent lads, and I like to see them on the packet. Anyhow, Valentine won't stand for what you've done!"

"Is your nephew running this packet?" sneered Rawlings. "Are we three old hands at the orders of a schoolboy?"

"He's got to see the boys again when he goes back to his school next term, only two or three weeks off. What is he to say to them?"

"Anything he likes!" said Rawlings, with a shrug of his plump shoulders. "I've not denied that they were useful, as camouflage, on the yacht. I'd have stood it out if it had been judicious.

"What are you going to tell Valentine when he comes back?" asked the captain, breaking the long silence.

"Oh, the facts!" drawled Rawlings. "I explained to the boys that owing to a change of circumstances it was impossible for the cruise to be continued, and that I had the captain's instructions to pack them off home. I saw them safe into the train, under charge of a Cook's guide—safe and sound."

"Is that the truth?"

"Why not?"

"I don't believe the boys would have gone at your word, without seeing me—or, at least, Valentine!" growled the captain. "Leaving their baggage, too."

"You don't believe it?"

"No!" growled Captain Compton.

"Then let us hope that Valentine will be less unbelieving, for that's all he will get from me!" said Rawlings coolly.

Swain made a sudden movement.

"That's a boat!" he said.

"Valentine's coming back!" muttered the captain.

He made an uneasy movement. Swain's square jaw jutted, as if in preparation for a row. Rawlings sat up-right, a sneer on his sleek face.

There was a tramp of feet on the companion stairs, and Valentine Compton came into the saloon. He looked dusty, out of breath, and showed every sign of haste. The three men looked at him.

The Fifth Former of Greyfriars stopped in front of Rawlings, and fixed his glinting eyes on the steward's sleek face. Rawlings compressed his lips, daunted, in spite of his nerve and impudence, by the Greyfriars man's steady eyes, and angry with himself for being daunted.

"So you've got back from your ride, Valentine!" said the captain uneasily.

Compton of the Fifth did not answer.

"That is a lie!" he said. "I should not have believed it, even if I had not known it to be false. And I do know."

"I reckon you know what Ted's told you, and no more!" growled Swain.

Compton's eyes flashed.

"You can't imagine that Rawlings has let the boys come to any harm, Valentine!" grunted the captain.

"I will tell you," said Compton. "I've no doubt that the cur would have packed them off by train, if they would have gone; but I know that they would not have gone at his direction, and he knows it. They think that Rawlings is the steward of this packet. They don't know that we're a gang of crooks, and that villain is on an equal footing with the rest of us."

The captain started to his feet.

"Valentine!" he exclaimed.

"You're calling me some pretty names, young Compton!" said the sleek rascal in the armchair, with a glitter in his eyes.

"I'm going to call you some more!" said Compton, panting. "I'm going to call you a liar and a scoundrel and a treacherous villain! And unless you undo at once what you have done, I'm going ashore to the bureau de police, to denounce you as a smuggling scoundrel, to answer for the contraband goods you sent ashore this morning hidden in the lining of an overcoat. I'm going to tell the police of Marseilles the whole story, and we're all going to a French prison together—to stay there till we're kicked out and sent to an English one. That's what I'm going to do, Rawlings, if the Greyfriars boys are not all safe and sound on this yacht before the second dog-watch!"

Valentine Compton's voice rang through the saloon. It was followed by a dead silence.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,508.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The sound of footsteps on the rocky path by the torrent came as a relief to the ears of the Famous Five.

Four of them, at least, had no doubt that it was Rawlings returning. Harry Wharton's words had startled his chums, and they seemed to be borne out by the fact that the steward had disappeared and left them. Yet they could not believe that Rawlings really had led them to that lonely and desolate spot with the intention of losing them. That footstep, ringing up the rocky valley, reassured four of the party, and made the captain of the *Remova* wonder whether he had been mistaken.

Whoever was coming was not yet in sight. He was hidden by the rugged rocks along the bank of the torrent. But they could hardly doubt that it was the steward returning for them.

Bob Cherry grinned a little.

"It's all right, old bean!" he said. "I don't wonder that you don't trust the man, after what you've told us about him; but, dash it all, he couldn't strand us here like this! We don't know our way back to the *Soleil d'Or*, but we've got legs and tongues. We jolly well shouldn't stay lost!"

"And if we didn't turn up on the Firefly, Captain Compton couldn't possibly sail without us, Harry!" said Nugent.

"Even if he would, Compton of the Fifth wouldn't," said Johnny Bull. "We can rely on him all right."

Harry Wharton did not speak.

If the man whose footsteps echoed up the rocky path was the steward returning, he had been mistaken. He waited to see the newcomer arrive in sight.

"It's Rawlings all right!" said Bob.

"Well, we shall see in a minute!" answered Harry.

"You can't fancy they'd sail without us, old chap. So even if Rawlings wanted to get shut of us, what good would a trick like this do him?"

"He would stuff them with some yarn, I suppose," said Harry. "I can't help thinking that the captain is more or less hand-in-glove with him, and Compton is under his uncle's orders. Rawlings could invent some yarn—might tell them we'd gone home, perhaps. If we'd decided to do so, we might have sent a message by Rawlings. He may have invented it."

"But you he's coming!"

The juniors stood looking down the rugged path. A figure emerged into view past the rocks. But it was not the steward of the *Firefly*.

Four faces fell, and Wharton's grew grimmer. He had been sure of it, or almost sure. Rawlings was not coming back.

Yet, as Bob had said, if the steward had deliberately "lost" them, they were not going to stay lost. They were not helpless duffers like Billy Bunter. The spot was a solitary one, but sooner or later, if they tried to find their way, they must fall in with some wayfarer who would guide them or give them directions. In fact, such a wayfarer was now coming up the bank of the torrent. And there were some hours of daylight yet. Wharton's suspicion of the steward did not change, but he had to admit himself perplexed.

"Well, that's not Rawlings," said Bob slowly. "But it's somebody, and we can ask him the way back to the

Soleil d'Or. Tip him to guide us, perhaps."

The man, as he approached, was seen to be an olive-skinned, burly fellow, with a red beret on his dark oily head, and something of the sailorman in his looks. The juniors had seen plenty of such men about the quays at Marseilles. He looked like a long-shoreman. His dark face, with its black eyes sharp as a hawk's, was not very prepossessing. But all the party were extremely glad to see him, whoever and whatever he was.

The man slowed down as he came nearer, and glanced at the schoolboys. He touched his beret civilly, and they returned the salute.

Harry Wharton stepped towards him, and he stopped.

"Bonjour, monsieur!" said the man politely. "Monsieur desire quelque chose?"

"Yes," said Harry. "Do you speak English?"

"Speak of few words, sir. I work sometimes on vaisseau anglais—English ship."

"Oh, good! We've lost our way here. Can you tell us how to get back to the *Auberge Soleil d'Or*?"

"Mais oui, monsieur," said the man at once. He paused. "C'est un peu difficile, d'ici, si monsieur ne connaît pas la route. Mais moi, je viendrai aussi, si monsieur veut." He grinned, with a gleam of white teeth. "Cela vaut cinq francs, monsieur, comme je suis pauvre homme, n'est-ce pas?"

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Dix francs, mon ami, pour trouver l'auberge *Soleil d'Or*," he said at once, "et je vous remercie."

The man in the red beret swung round.

"Allons, monsieur! Venez avec moi! Come wiz me!" he said.

"What does all that mean?" asked Bob Cherry.

Bob was not one of Monsieur Charpentier's best pupils at Greyfriars School, and his French was hardly equal to the strain.

"He says it is difficult from here, if we don't know the way, but that he will guide us for five francs," answered Harry. "I've offered him ten."

"Good egg!"

Greatly relieved, the juniors followed the man in the red beret.

He led the way down the rocky valley, which, so far, they knew to be the way they had come. After about a quarter of a mile, however, they would have been quite at a loss without a guide, as Rawlings had led them, not by regular "chemins" or "sentiers," but by scarcely marked paths over the rugged hillsides.

But the man in the red beret was evidently well acquainted with the country, for he swung actively on without a pause, the schoolboys following him.

It was a great relief to them to be on the way back to the mountain inn, where Bunter, they supposed, was beginning to wonder what had become of them—if he was not still asleep under the plane-tree.

But they saw no sign of Rawlings.

Four members of the Co. had little, if any, doubt that the steward of the *Firefly* had lost himself. Harry Wharton did not think so. He was still convinced that Rawlings had deliberately led them to that lonely spot, and deserted them there, and that it was a trick to keep them from sailing on the yacht when she pulled out of Marseilles for Monte Carlo. He knew that Rawlings doubted and suspected him, if not his friends. And he was sure,

too, that the sleek rascal had not forgotten or forgiven the episode of the Spanish gentleman's wallet.

Yet it was hard to believe that so cunning a rascal as Rawlings had laid a scheme that could be knocked to pieces by so simple and probable a chance as the schoolboys falling in with a native to guide them. He must have known how likely that was to happen, yet, if Wharton was right, it seemed that he had never calculated on it. So Harry had to admit himself completely puzzled.

"By gum, this is rough going!" remarked Nugent, after a time. "I shan't be sorry to be on a road again, and sitting in the car."

Wharton glanced at him, but did not speak. If he was right in what he believed, they would not find the car at the *Soleil d'Or*—the black-browed chauffeur was at Rawlings' orders. Still, there was little doubt that they would be able to find some other conveyance, if a slower one, by paying for it.

But they had not reached the *Soleil d'Or* yet.

More than a mile passed under their tramping feet, while the sun sank lower in the west. They emerged upon a lane at last—a rugged, rutty chemin scored by the wheel marks of heavy country carts. On the farther side, a little distance back from the road, was a building—a miserable-looking cabin of one story, with a walled yard in front, in which a muddy cart was up-ended. The man in the red beret crossed the road, and headed for the building.

The juniors paused, and he glanced back at them.

"Venez, messieurs!" he called out. "Suivez-moi!"

"Is he going to ask the way, or what?" said Bob, puzzled.

"Might be going to get us a lift," said Johnny Bull. "I'd be jolly glad to get a lift in anything."

They followed the olive-skinned man into the yard. To their astonishment, he slammed the crazy old gate after them, shrieking on its rusty hinges.

"Pierre!" he called out. "Pierre!"

A bull-necked man, in a dirty neck-cloth, emerged from the cabin. He glanced at the schoolboys, and grinned at the man in the red beret.

"Voilà, Pierre!" said the latter, grinning also.

"Allons!" grinned Pierre. "Ca va! Ca va bien, Louis, mon vieux!"

He stepped aside from the low doorway, bowing his bullet head mockingly to the juniors.

"Entrez, s'il vous plait, messieurs!" he said.

Harry Wharton caught his breath. His comrades looked blankly puzzled. But Wharton knew now.

His eyes gleamed round at Louis of the red beret. He was standing between them and the gate. Their retreat was cut off.

"Trapped!" said Harry, between his teeth.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Prisoners

"TRAPPED!"

"What—"

"Oh, my hat!"

Wharton clenched his hands savagely.

"Can't you seen it now? That scoundrel knew that we shouldn't stay lost! He put up this rascal to meet us and guide us, and he's led us here!"

"Oh crumbs!"



"Entrez, dans la maison!" snarled Louis. "Entrez!" The two ruffians closed in on the dismayed Greyfriars juniors, driving them back towards the cabin. Harry Wharton & Co. backed away slowly—but they had to back. Unarmed, they had no chance against the deadly weapons in the hands of the two rascals.

The juniors stood in a group in the dirty, muddy yard, between the bull-necked ruffian at the doorway of the cabin and the man in the red beret guarding the gate.

Startled as they were, amazed and confounded, there could be no doubt. Now that they were in the trap the olive-skinned rascal was grinning at them, with a gleam of white teeth in evident amusement.

Johnny Bull looked grim.

"We're not sticking here," he said. "If they think that they can bag us like rabbits in a trap, they've got to think again."

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth. Sure as he was that Rawlings had planned to leave them stranded when the yacht sailed, he had not foreseen this, or thought of anything of the kind.

He had been puzzled by the scheming rascal leaving a point unguarded. He knew now that Rawlings had not left a point unguarded. The man in the red beret was not a chance way-farer, as the juniors had naturally supposed. He had been sent by Rawlings to make assurance doubly sure that they did not find their way back to Marseilles.

"Entrez, donc!" said the bull-necked Pierre, grinning.

"We're getting out of this!" said Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

"Come on, shoulder to shoulder!" said Harry.

And the juniors, in a bunch, turned on the man in the red beret at the gate. Louis waved them back.

"Allez! You go in a house!" he said.

"We're going out of this, you scoundrel!" roared Johnny Bull. "And if you stand in the way, you'll get

knocked out of it—see? Stand aside, you rotter!"

"Knock the brute over!" said Bob.

Another moment and Bob Cherry would have suited the action to the word. But as he rushed at Louis, with his clenched fist up, the grin faded off the man's olive face, and he flashed out a knife from the back of his trousers. Bob had just time to jump back from the slash of the blade.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

Louis gave them a savage scowl.

"Entrez, dans la maison!" he snarled. "Go in a house, ma foi! La maison, alors, ou le couteau dans le coeur! Allons!"

The bull-necked man came running across the muddy yard to the gate. There was a knife in his hand, also, and a threatening scowl on his face.

"Entrez!" he snarled.

And the two ruffians closed in on the dismayed Greyfriars juniors, driving them back towards the cabin with the knives.

They backed away slowly; but they had to back. Unarmed, they had no chance against the deadly weapons in the hands of the two rascals.

"Look here!" muttered Johnny Bull. "They dare not—"

A whipping knife-edge grazed his shoulder, and he jumped back. It was likely enough that the ruffians were both unwilling and afraid to use the deadly weapons if they could help it. But that they would use them, if it came to a desperate struggle, was not to be doubted.

There was no help for it, and the schoolboys backed into the doorway and into the low-ceilinged, dirty cabin within.

Louis, restored to good-humour now that he had them safe, grinned in after them.

"N'ayez pas peur, mes garçons!" he

said. "Not to have fear! No! Vous restez—you stop along a house, one night—c'est tout! Demain—morrow—you go—you walk free, comme vous voulez—all right! Voyez?"

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily.

"Rawlings has paid you to do this!" he said.

"Je n'en sais rien, monsieur!"

The door slammed, and the olive face and red beret disappeared. A rusty key turned in the lock.

The juniors could hear chuckling in the yard outside. The two dusky rascals were evidently pleased with their easy catch. That sound died away, though they did not suppose that Louis and Pierre were gone. They were not likely to leave the prisoners unguarded.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "What a day ashore!"

Harry Wharton looked round the cabin.

It had only one room, in which the juniors stood. There was a small, dirty, cobwebby window, but it was closed by a wooden shutter outside. Within, twilight reigned.

By way of furniture, there were two or three rough wooden benches, and a rickety table, and a number of empty wine-flasks thrown in a corner.

The juniors sat down on the benches. They were glad to rest their tired limbs, at least. They looked at one another—grimly!

"We're for it!" said Bob.

"That villain Rawlings—" muttered Harry.

"You think Rawlings is at the bottom of this?"

"Who else?" growled Wharton. "Do you think those rotters outside kidnap

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,503

The SHIP of SECRETS!



FRANK RICHARDS

(Continued from page 13.)

trippers they've never seen before, for amusement?"

"Well, I suppose you're right!" said Bob, with a nod. "By gum, we've had our jolly old legs pulled! I suppose the captain never sent Rawlings after us this morning at all—it was all gammon! I can't believe that Compton's uncle knows anything about this."

"No!" agreed Harry.

"No!" said Nugent. "After all, if he was fed-up with us on the yacht, he could get shut of us any time he liked. Rawlings has done this, because Compton's uncle would not have agreed to clearing us off."

"That's it!" said Harry.

"What the dickens is Rawlings on that craft?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Can he be part-owner, or anything of that kind?"

Wharton was silent. Stronger than ever was his suspicion that Smithy had been right; that the Firefly was a smuggling craft, and that it was for that reason that the steward was a man with whom the captain could not, and dared not, break. But if that was true, Valentine Compton was in the smuggling game; and that was a dismaying and miserable thought. He said nothing.

"Well, we were debating whether we'd go back to the jolly old yacht," said Bob. "It seems to be settled now! Smithy won't see us at Monte Carlo this vac, after all."

"Rawlings won't get by with this, if it was Rawlings!" growled Johnny Bull. "Whatever yarn he may spin on the Firefly, Compton of the Fifth won't sail without us."

"His uncle may!" said Harry.

"If he does, Compton will stay behind to see that we're all right," said Johnny. "And I'll bet the old bean won't sail without him. I tell you men, we can bank on Compton of the Fifth."

"Bunter may get back, and give him the tip, too!" said Frank Nugent. "He won't stay asleep at the Soleil d'Or for ever, if we don't get back there."

"They're not likely to give him the chance!" said Wharton dryly. "You can depend on it that Bunter's being looked after, as well as us."

"Oh, I—I suppose so! Poor old Bunter!"

The twilight deepened in the hut as the dusk fell outside. Night was falling. Harry Wharton rose from the bench and moved about restlessly.

There was no escape—no hope of escape! Even if the trapped school-boys could have forced a way out of the building, their captors were on the watch, and they could not have hoped to get away.

They were booked for a night in that dismal hotel. And on the morrow—what? Obviously, they were not to be released till the Firefly had pulled out of Marseilles—and if she delayed sailing, it would only mean a prolongation of their imprisonment. But when the yacht was gone, they would be set free,

and then they could find Bunter, wherever he was, and make the journey home. But for his bitter resentment and indignation at Rawlings' treachery, Harry Wharton would not have been wholly sorry for the cruise to have come to an end. He could not tell his friends of his dark suspicions of the real character of the yacht, but those suspicions made him feel that it might be all for the better if the Firefly sailed without them.

But to have the matter decided by Rawlings, and in this lawless and brutal manner, was too bitter to be tolerated—if it could be helped! But there was no help for it.

Darkness thickened.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. He started to his feet, listening.

Honk, honk, honk!

It was the sound of a motor-horn, ringing and echoing through the night.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Compton Takes Control!

VALENTINE COMPTON stood panting for breath in the saloon of the Firefly. Dead silence followed his ringing words.

Swain, with a muttered oath, slipped from the corner of the table and stepped towards the companion—and stood there, with knitted brow and jutting jaw, evidently prepared to dispute the way, if Compton made a move to carry out his threat. The captain stood silent, looking from one to another. Rawlings, sprawling in his chair, blew out a little cloud of smoke from his cigarette. But cool as the sleek rascal looked, the glitter in his eyes told of his rage, mingled with uneasy fear. Three of the four in the saloon were lawless adventurers, smugglers, and worse. But Valentine Compton was a Fifth Form man of Greyfriars School, as well as a smuggler—and it was not the boy smuggler, but Compton of the Fifth, with whom they had now to deal.

His eyes turned from Rawlings and flashed round at the burly Swain.

"Are you going to stop me, Bill Swain?" he said between his teeth.

"I reckon!" said Swain in a deep growl.

"You ruffian and fool, I'll knock you spinning, if you dare to lift a finger against me!" snapped the Greyfriars Fifth Former contemptuously. "I'm no more afraid of you than of that greasy rascal sitting there."

"Valentine!" said the captain, quietly and coldly. "Keep your temper, my boy. You've heard what Rawlings has said. If the boys are in the train, on their homeward way, the matter ends."

"They're not in the train, on their homeward way, uncle! That false rascal has lied to you!"

Captain Compton turned to the steward. Probably he had some doubts himself. Rawlings shrugged his shoulders.

"Is it straight, Rawlings?" muttered the captain. "Where are the school-boys?"

"I've told you!" drawled Rawlings. "They're safe in their train—by this time nearly at Lyons, I should say."

"You hear that, Valentine?"

"I hear that car lying!" said Compton scornfully. "I should not have believed it, whether you do or not. But I know that it is false, because I have met one of them, who has told me what has happened."

Rawlings gave almost a bound. That

unexpected disclosure startled him out of his cool effrontery.

"You've met one of the young swabs!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean? Where? If those fools have failed me—"

"Now we're getting at the truth!" said Compton bitterly. "You rascal, I know that you joined them in Marseilles this morning, pretending that my uncle had sent you—I know you took them up in a car to a lonely auberge in the hills—and now I want to know what you have done with them."

Rawlings was cool again at once. He stared at the handsome, angry face of the Greyfriars Fifth Former, with a bitter sneer.

"You know more than I supposed, young Compton!" he said between his teeth. "How you know, beats me—I thought you were safely booked on a day's ride, and clear of my course! Now you've chosen to butt in, I'll put my cards on the table! Five of them are being looked after by Pierre and Louis—and if they give either of those apache rats any trouble, I'm sorry for them. The fat little swab, Bunter, was left to wander. I've stood insolence from that young scoundrel ever since we pulled out of Dover, to keep up the appearances you and your uncle are so keen on. Now I'm making him squirm for it."

Rawlings almost hissed the words.

"Now you've got it clear!" he snarled. "Pierre and Louis will guard Wharton and his friends till we've pulled out of Marseilles. Bunter will wander on the hills till he falls down exhausted, or tumbles over some cliff—I care nothing which. None of them will ever step on the Firefly again."

"By gad, Rawlings!" Captain Compton's voice came harsh and husky. "You scoundrel, you've dared—"

"Cut it out, Jim Compton!" snarled Rawlings. "You're not master here! I'm taking no slanging from you!"

"You're taking it from me!" said Valentine Compton. "Fool and rascal, it was Bunter that I met, wandering on the hills, as I came back from my ride! I've left him safe and sound at the Soleil d'Or. It was from him that I learned of your trickery, though he doesn't know it."

"You found Bunter?" stammered Rawlings.

"I tell you, yes. Now I am going to find the others, and you are going to tell me where to find them!" roared Compton.

"Am I?" said Rawlings, between his teeth. "I'll watch it! I'll tell you this—they're parked safe, with knives at their throats if they try to get away; and if you've taken that fat fool Bunter back to the auberge, I'll see that he's taken away fast enough and parked with the others!"

Valentine Compton, clenching his hands, made a stride towards the steward.

The captain caught him by the shoulder.

"Keep cool, my boy!" he said in his cold voice. "We've got the truth now, it seems. And what's the rest, Rawlings, if the Firefly sails without them?"

"They'll come to no harm," answered Rawlings sullenly. "They'll be let loose when we're at sea, and they've got sense enough to take a train home, I reckon."

"So that's it?"

"That's it—and that's final!"

"Final?" Compton gave a savage laugh. "Now, listen to me, Ted Rawlings! I'm going to fetch the boys back, and at once! They're going to finish this cruise, and you're going to play steward, and keep a civil tongue in your head! If they don't know what

you've done, I shan't tell them. I don't want them to know they're on a ship of scoundrels."

"Is that all?" sneered Rawlings.

"No!" said Compton. "That's not all! This morning, as I've heard from Bunter, you tricked him into going ashore with an overcoat that was not his—with contraband stuff sewn up in the lining! I know your game! Something you dare not step ashore with, you scoundrel—"

"Right in one!" said Rawlings coolly. "The sharpest spy of the Douane would not dream of ripping open the lining of a fat schoolboy's overcoat. I've had eyes on me; Bunter was safe. Why shouldn't the fat fool pay for his keep by making himself useful for once?"

"Listen to me! Once is once too often! I warned you, and you disregarded my warning! No more of it! No more smuggling at all while the boys are on the yacht! Understand that, Rawlings, and you, Swain, and you, too, Uncle James! I mean every word of it! You stood for the boys coming; and while they're on this packet, it's going to be an honest ship!"

"Are you giving me orders, Valentine?" asked Captain Compton coldly.

"I am!" said Compton. "You've given me orders, and I've carried them out, though it's made me ashamed to look any fellow in the face at my school. But if you do not agree to what I've said, I go ashore, and take the schoolboys with me, and I'll never set foot on the Firefly again!"

The captain stood silent.

"And now, Rawlings, where are the boys?" asked Compton.

"Find out!" said Rawlings coolly.

"Will you tell me?"

"No!"

"That does it!"

"Rawlings, you fool, speak!" snapped the captain. "Can't you see that the boy means what he says? Can't you understand that a dirty dog like you has to knuckle under to his betters?"

Rawlings' eyes burned.

"Not a word!" he said, between closed lips. "Not a syllable!"

Valentine Compton did not speak to him again. He strode across to the companion.

Swain growled like a bulldog in his way.

"Where are you going?" he snarled.

"I've told you! I'm going to the Bureau de Police, in Marseilles, to tell them where to lay hands on a smuggling gang that's been wanted in England and France for five years!"

"I reckon not!" said the mate of the Firefly; and he put out a hand that was like a ham and pushed the excited schoolboy back.

The next instant Compton was springing at him, with blazing eyes and lashing fists. Burly and bulky as he was, Bill Swain staggered under that fierce attack, lost his footing, and went down with a crash.

He sprawled on his back on the cabin floor, panting for breath.

"Lie there, dog!" snapped Compton of the Fifth.

And he rushed out of the saloon and ran up to the deck.

Rawlings leaped from the armchair. His sleek face was white with fury. He tore a revolver from his hip pocket as he rushed across the cabin. In an instant the captain knocked it from his hand.

"Fool! Fool and villain!" said James Compton, between his teeth. "All is lost now—and it is you who have lost all of us!"

Swain staggered up, red with rage. The captain grasped Rawlings by the back of his plump neck. Muscular man

as he was, the steward shook like a rat in his grasp.

"Stand back, Bill Swain!" said Captain Compton. "Dare to lay a finger on the boy, and I will shoot you dead on the deck!"

"Are we going to let him—?" Swain spluttered with rage.

"That's for this greasy scoundrel to say!" said the captain. "If there's yet time to stop the boy, Rawlings knows how to stop him!"

With an effort, the steward of the Firefly pulled himself together, and recovered something of his coolness. He was beaten, and he knew it, and a pang of terror went to his heart as he heard Valentine Compton leap into the boat that waited alongside.

"Let me go!" he breathed. "I've got to stop him!"

The captain released him, and the steward raced on deck. Already the boat was pushing off when he ran to the side. Compton, with his face white, set, and desperately determined, sat in the stern. With a flying leap, Rawlings landed in the boat, which rocked and shipped water under the sudden impact. Compton gave him one look.

Stand By, Chums,
for the
Splendid Gifts
to be
Presented Free
with the
MAGNET
Shortly!

The steward of the Firefly gave him a look of hate in return. He did not speak. But it was not necessary to speak. The sleek rascal had given in, and he was at the orders of the schoolboy smuggler.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Compton to the Rescue!

HONK, honk, honk!
"That's a car—"
"By gum, if—"

Harry Wharton ran across to the window. There were cracks in the crazy old wooden shutters that covered it. Through the chinks came a glitter for a moment from the glaring headlights of a car. He clapped his eye to the widest chink and stared out.

Across the muddy, unkempt yard, where the cart lay, he could see the gate. All had been dark before, but now the scene was lit up by the glaring headlights. From some shed attached to the building two startled figures came running—the man in the red beret and the bull-necked man, evidently as startled as the prisoners by the sudden arrival of the car.

The narrow, winding road, used only by country carts, had probably never seen a motor-car before. Of the car Wharton, through the chink in the shutter, could make out only the headlights, glaring like two great eyes through the dark. Was it some touring car that had mistaken the route? That

seemed to him most likely, and he wondered whether possibly a shout might be heard by the motorists as they passed.

It was not likely; but, in point of fact, the car did not pass. The headlights swung towards the cabin and halted. The bright glare fell full upon the gate, the rotten fence beside it, the muddy yard, and the hovel that held the schoolboys prisoners. Wharton blinked in the dazzle.

"It's a car!" he said. "They've stopped!"

"After us!" said Johnny Bull. "Bet you! Compton's found out, and he's looking for us!"

Harry Wharton watched from the chink, his heart beating. It was possible that Johnny was right. By what chance Valentine Compton could have heard anything of what had happened to them he could not guess; but if he had, it was certain that he would not leave them in the lurch.

His friends gathered by him at the window, peering through the chinks in the cracked old shutters. Louis and Pierre were standing within the gate, the latter with a drawn knife in his hand.

There was a heavy blow on the outside of the gate. It was the blow of a thick stick, and it rang like a rifle-shot.

"Ouvrez!" shouted a voice. "Ouvrez, les deux scelerats!"

"Compton!" gasped Harry.

He knew the voice. It was shouting over the gate, and it reached the juniors in the hovel clearly. Compton was calling in French in loud, angry tones, but they knew the voice. They had never heard it ring so loud and so fiercely before.

"Vous m'ecoutez?" came the angry shout; and another crashing blow was struck on the gate. "Coquins, ouvrez donc!"

"Old Compton sounds in rather a wax!" grinned Bob Cherry breathlessly. "What's he calling those two beauties?"

"Scoundrels and rascals, and telling them to open the gate."

"How the thump could he have found out we're here?" muttered Nugent. "He must be here for us, I suppose."

"Bet you!" said Johnny Bull. "He's not the man to leave a fellow in the lurch! Hark!"

The man in the red beret was calling over the gate:

"Allez! Passer votre chemin, alors!"
Crash!

A muscular shoulder was put to the gate from without, and the crazy old timbers parted under the shock. The gate flew open, one side hanging from a cracked, rusty hinge. A black silhouette in the glare of the headlights from the road, Valentine Compton's athletic figure stood there. The breathless juniors caught the gleam of his eyes as he strode in, straight at the two skulking ruffians who barred his way.

That they knew Compton by sight the juniors could see. They were surprised and startled by his coming, but he was no stranger to them.

There was a rapid, angry gabble of French from both of them. Louis waved both hands as he talked, his olive face as red as his beret with angry excitement. The bull-necked man made gestures with his knife.

Compton's eyes blazed angry scorn at them. As they barred his way he thrust them aside, and strode towards the door of the hovel.

They were after him like cats. Pierre's knife was half-raised—Louis waving his hands more excitedly than ever.

Wharton could guess what it all meant. The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,503.

meant, whether his friends could or not. They had had their orders from Rawlings, and were not disposed to disregard them at new orders from Compton. The latter they evidently knew as the nephew of Rawlings' captain; and it was fairly evident, too, that they were angry and perplexed by his taking a line so different from Rawlings.

"Mais pourquoi?" Louis was shrieking again and again. "Mais pourquoi, donc? Expliquez!"

"Expliquez donc!" snarled the bull-necked man. "Allons! La porte est fermée—on ne passe pas par cela, je vous dis!"

"Ouvrez cette porte, coquin!" rapped Compton savagely.

"Jamais!"

Compton put his shoulder to the door, as he had put it to the gate. The timber creaked and groaned under his hefty shove.

Louis still gesticulated; but the bull-necked ruffian ran at Valentine Compton, brandishing his knife. Whether it was a threat, or an intended attack, never transpired, for the Greyfriars Fifth Former whirled round the heavy stick he carried, and struck Pierre with full force, crashing the stick on the side of his bullet head.

There was a gasping howl from the bull-necked ruffian as he went down like a felled ox. The breathless juniors, from the chinks of the shutter, saw his burly form stretch in the mud—and stay there. That crashing blow had stunned him. His knife rolled from his relaxing hand.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

The juniors pushed desperately at the shutters. To get out and help their rescuer was their one thought. But old as the shutters were, they were held fast by an iron bar outside.

But Compton of the Fifth did not need their aid. The man in the red beret was gesticulating and jabbering, his hand on his knife; but he backed away as Valentine Compton advanced on him, his eyes glittering, his stick upraised.

"Ouvrez la porte, coquin!" snapped Compton. "Les garçons sont ici, je le sais bien—ouvrez!"

And, as Louis of the red beret still jabbered and gesticulated, the angry Fifth Former struck him across the face with the stick. Evidently he was not disposed to stand on ceremony with the dock rats of Marseilles.

There was a scream of rage from Louis, and his knife came out like a streak of light as he leaped at the Greyfriars Fifth Former, with murder in his flaming face. Compton of the Fifth sprang back a pace or two, and struck again, and the ruffian's arm dropped to his side, the knife flying from his hand. Then the stick whirled over his head.

"Ouvrez la porte—ou—" Compton did not need to finish the sentence. It was so clear that, if the man did not obey, he would crack his skull with a blow, that no more words were needed.

Muttering curses, the man in the red beret drew a rusty key from his pocket and unlocked the door.

Compton kicked it open.

"You here, you fellows?" he called out.

"What-ho!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The hercfulness is terrific, my esteemed Compton!" gasped Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

The Famous Five crowded to the doorway. Compton of the Fifth gave them a smile and a nod. He was breathing hard; but the fierce anger and excitement had faded out of his face.

He was almost his usual cool, calm, cheery self as the juniors crowded out of the hovel. No doubt he was unaware

that they had been watching the wild scene from the chinks in the shutter, and did not know that they had seen him in his berserker mood. His swift self-control was amazing.

"Sorry you fellows have been through this," he said, in almost a casual tone, "but it's all right. Trot along to the car."

Louis, nursing his damaged arm, was spitting like a cat with rage. The bull-necked man still lay like a log in the mud. The juniors hurried across the yard to the gate, Compton following them, and hurried down to the road. They packed into the car, and Compton dropped into the driving-seat. A few moments more and the car was roaring away down the rugged chemin through the night.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rawlings Tells the Tale!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Hop in, Bunter!"
"Yes, but I say—"
"Say it in the car!" said Compton, with a smile.

"Oh, really, Compton—"
Billy Bunter was standing at the gateway of the Soleil d'Or, blinking down the shadowy road through his big spectacles, when the car arrived, with a rush and roar, and stopped at the gate.

Bunter was getting anxious. He had parked several suppers, one after another, and was feeling satisfied, so far as that went. But on other points Bunter was not satisfied.

"I've been waiting a jolly long time!" he said warmly. "From what you said, I thought you'd come straight back with the car. You didn't! I've been waiting hours and hours!"

"Better late than never!" said Compton. His unfailing good-humour with the fat Owl was a perpetual surprise to the Famous Five. "Hop in, kid!"

"There's a bit of a bill to pay here," said Bunter. "I've had a few things, and I left my money on the yacht, you see, and—"

"That's all right; I'll see to that! Hop in!"

Bob Cherry threw open the door of the car.

"Hop in, you fat ass, and don't jaw so much!" he said.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The lawfulness is truly terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter."

"Beast!"

Bunter clambered into the car. He blinked at the Famous Five, as he settled down.

"You might give a fellow room," he said. "Can't you hang one of your feet out of the window, Cherry? He, he, he! I say, you fellows, I've had an awful time! I say, that beast of a chauffeur robbed me of my overcoat and left me stranded, and I should have been lost if Compton hadn't found me, and since then I've been waiting and waiting and waiting—"

"And eating and eating and eating!" said Bob.

"And now you're jawing and jawing and jawing!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Yah!" snorted Bunter. "Lot you care! Going off for silly walks with cheeky stewards and forgetting all about a chap! Why didn't you come back for me, I'd like to know?"

"We've had rather a rough time, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "And we could do with one of those suppers you've packed away."

"I haven't had much," said Bunter. "A cold chicken, some ham and sores,

some pate-de-foi-gras, a pudding, and a pie or two. I've been feeling too upset to eat!"

"Oh crikey!"

The car backed and turned, and Compton drove away down the dark road. Billy Bunter related—several times over—what had happened to him that afternoon.

The fat junior had no knowledge of Rawlings' complicity, and the other fellows did not enlighten him. Indeed, they were not feeling so sure of it themselves now.

To Harry Wharton it was clear enough that Compton, after the meeting with Bunter, must have learned from Rawlings where to find them, and he had no doubt that the Fifth Former had forced Rawlings to give up his scheme as soon as he learned of it.

But to the other fellows that did not seem by any means so clear; and they were curious to know what the steward was going to say when they met him again.

The car covered the ground quickly. Billy Bunter blinked with great relief at the lights of Marseilles when they gleamed on his spectacles.

Compton drove at a slower pace through the lighted streets. The car halted at last close to the quais, a forest of masts and funnels looming against the starry sky.

A shadowy figure loomed up, and the door was opened. To the surprise of the Greyfriars fellows, it was Rawlings. Apparently the steward of the Firefly had been waiting there for them.

Harry Wharton looked fixedly at the sleek, sly face. But Rawlings had all his accustomed blandness; he touched the peak of his cap respectfully as he stood at the door of the car.

Billy Bunter gave him an angry blink.

"Oh, you!" he snorted.

"Yes, sir," said Rawlings. "And I am sorry—"

"I should jolly well think you are!" snorted Bunter. "That chauffeur of yours pinched my overcoat, and I've been without one, and—"

"Master Valentine has already told me, sir," said Rawlings, "and I have reported the matter to the police."

"You should have been more careful about the chauffeur," said Bunter. "Why, I might be wandering about now if Compton hadn't found me!"

"It is very fortunate that Master Valentine found you, then, sir," said Rawlings. "I cannot be sufficiently thankful for that."

"Sure!" murmured Bob.

"I hope you young gentlemen will excuse me," went on Rawlings. "I did not know my way about so well as I supposed, and I am ashamed to say that I completely lost myself."

"Oh!" said Bob uncomfortably.

"I hope you will excuse my blundering, sir, especially as it was really through me that Master Valentine was able to find you," said Rawlings.

"Through you?" repeated Harry Wharton, his eyes on the steward's face.

"Yes, sir," said Rawlings smoothly. "I had just succeeded in finding a road, when I caught sight of you young gentleman from a distance being hustled into a lonely cabin by two dangerous-looking rascals. Being alone and unarmed, I did not feel that I could come to your aid, but I lost no time in getting back here and informing Master Valentine. I suggested calling in the aid of the gendarmes, but Master Valentine rushed off at once in the car, and I am very happy, sir, to see that he has brought you back safely."



"You asked us to chuck you over an orange," said Bob Cherry, innocently. "Then here goes!" Swung by two pairs of sturdy arms, Billy Bunter flew over the orange, spluttering wildly. "Ow! Beasts!" he roared. "Ow! Oh crikey! You mad idiots, I never—ow—meant—" "We did, though!" said Bob, with a smile.

I have been feeling very anxious and uneasy."

Harry Wharton looked at him almost in wonder. As the matter, evidently, was to be patched up, Rawlings had to tell some story—and he had told a plausible one. How the man could stand there and lie so glibly was a mystery to the Greyfriars junior.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dark eyes met Wharton's. The nabob, no more than Wharton, believed a word of it.

But Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Nugent were dubious. They hardly knew what to think.

"The boat is waiting, gentlemen," added Rawlings.

The juniors descended from the car in silence. Valentine Compton had stepped down and walked across the quay towards the water.

Rawlings accompanied the juniors to the boat and got in after them.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Bunter, as the boat pulled out to the yacht's anchorage, "what did those chaps collar you for? Jolly lucky that Rawlings spotted them at it, anyhow! Why didn't you knock them down?"

"Fathead!"

"Well, I should have!" said Bunter. "Better not wander away from me another time. You fellows want looking after."

"Idiot!"

"Beast!"

Valentine Compton did not speak. The steward had told his tale—which the juniors were at liberty to believe or not, as they liked. Compton left it at that and said nothing.

Immediately they were on board the Firefly he went up on the bridge, and Wharton at least knew that he desired to avoid discussion of what had happened ashore. Rawlings disappeared below.

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly hungry!" said Bunter. "We're back in time for supper, anyhow! Things might have been worse, after all."

"I fancy I could peck a bit," remarked Bob Cherry. "We've had nothing since lunch, old fat man! Anybody here feel peckish?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"That's you fellows all over!" remarked Bunter. "Always thinking of food! I say, I hope supper's ready."

At supper, in the saloon, Rawlings waited on the juniors with polite attention. If he had laid a rascally scheme that day and had been defeated, his looks gave no sign of it.

When the Greyfriars fellows came on deck for a stroll before turning in Bob Cherry nudged Wharton's arm.

"You still think—" murmured Bob.

"Yes!" said Harry shortly.

"Well, I'm blessed if I know what to think!" confessed Bob. "But there's no need, anyhow, to bother old Compton with it. Least said, soonest mended."

And Harry Wharton nodded assent to that. The Greyfriars fellows were on board the Firefly again and booked for the remainder of the cruise, and it was clear that the least said was the soonest mended. And it was left at that.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Chuckling Bunter Over An Orange!

"O NCE more upon the waters,
yet once more,
And the waves bound beneath
me, as a steed
That knows its rider."

Bob Cherry was quoting Byron as the Firefly churned the blue waters in the

sunny morning. Billy Bunter was testing the strength of a deckchair with his weight; but the Famous Five stood by the rail, looking back at the fading shore.

"What rot!" remarked Bunter, blinking at Bob through his big spectacles. "The sea's as calm as a pond."

"Lucky for you it is, after the brekkers you've wrapped yourself round," said Bob. "You'd lose a few of them if it wasn't."

"Well, wharrer you mean by saying that the waves are bounding like a steed?" demanded Bunter. "They jolly well ain't!"

"You howling ass, that's poetry!"

"Rot!" said Bunter. "You can't make up poetry, Bob Cherry! If that's the best you can do, you'd better not try it on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! If you call that piffle poetry—"

"Bob was quoting Byron," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Eh? Who was he?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"A Greyfriars man?" asked Bunter. "I don't remember him, if he was."

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

They had had Byron in "English Literature" in the Remove, with Mr. Quelch, but Billy Bunter's fat mind was a blank on the subject, as on most other subjects. A lesson, to Billy Bunter, was an unwelcome and painful infliction, to be forgotten as soon as possible after it was over. And Bunter, though slow in acquiring knowledge, was a great man at forgetting it.

Bob, evidently in a poetical mood, under the influence of sky and sea, resumed with the celebrated "Apostrophe to the Ocean."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,508.

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee, in vain.
Man marks the earth with ruin; his control
Stops at the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed; nor doth remain
One shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

"Did you make that up?" asked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling ass!" said Bob Cherry. "That's one of the most celebrated bits from Byron. Lord Byron, you blithering bloater, was a poet. You've had him in class with Quelch—if you could ever get anything to stick in that fat head of yours!"

"I fancy I know more about poetry than you do, Bob Cherry. I know all about Byron. He wrote the 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That was Gray, fathead!"

"More likely green than grey, I should think—a country churchyard," said Bunter. "But what does the colour matter? He wrote the 'Wreck of the Hesperus,' too."

"Longfellow!" yelled Bob.

"Eh?" Bunter blinked at him. "What do you mean by calling me long fellow? You've always made out that I'm short!"

"Oh scissors!"

"Not that I'm a short fellow," said Bunter. "Not long and spindle-shanky like you, I'm glad to say. Still, I don't see how you can call me a long fellow. Wharrer you mean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can remember some of it," went on Bunter. "I'll tell you fellows, if you like. Poetry improves the mind—especially fellows like you, always thinking about grub. It goes like this:

"It was the schooner Hesperus,
Beside the River Dee;
The way was long, the wind was cold,
There was a ship, quoth he."

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Haven't you got that a little mixed, old fat man?"

"The mixfulness is terrific!"

"You fellows don't know much about poetry," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I've got a pretty good memory for it, you know. Now I come to think of it, I remember a lot of Byron's works. There's that one called the 'Elderly Seaman'—"

"The whatter?" stuttered Bob.

"The 'Elderly Seaman.'"

"Do you mean the 'Ancient Mariner'?" gasped Nugent.

"Well, an ancient mariner is an elderly seaman, isn't he?" said Bunter. "What's the difference? But I forget whether that was Byron or Scott."

"What about Coleridge?" grinned Bob.

"Oh, no, not Coleridge!" said Bunter decidedly. "Coleridge was the chap who wrote 'Hamlet, the Moor of Venice'—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I remember some of that," said Bunter. "There's a line about 'the

mute forefathers of the hamlet sleep.' I don't quite know what it means by saying that Hamlet had four fathers, unless it means counting his grandfathers—"

"Help!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"You don't think that Hamlet may possibly have been one of the works of jolly old Shakespeare?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, no!" said Bunter. "I'm well up in Shakespeare! You fellows are a bit ignorant of poetry, if you don't mind my mentioning it. I can remember jolly near everything of Shakespeare's, from 'Paradise Lost' to 'Drake's Drum.'"

"What a memory!" gurgled Bob.

"Terrific and preposterous!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Tell us some Shakespeare!" chuckled Nugent.

"Well, I can remember some lines from—from 'King Henry the Tenth,'" said Bunter. "It goes:

"How many thousands of my poorest subjects
Are in six parts, and every part a ducat?"

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

"Oh really, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh cackle!" snorted Bunter. "You fellows never like having your ignorance shown up. Lot you know about poetry—or care, either! Scoffing grub's your long suit. I say, you fellows, how long is it to lunch?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I could do with a snack," said Bunter. "That cheeky rotter, Rawlings, never comes when I call him, and I suppose you fellows are too slack, as usual, to go down and get a fellow something. Chuck me over an orange!"

"Eh?"

"You're not too jolly lazy to chuck a fellow over an orange, I suppose, as there's a dish of them not ten feet away!" said Bunter sarcastically. "My hat! I begin to think that you fellows are too lazy to live."

The Famous Five looked at Bunter. They were leaning on the rail in a cheery row. Bunter was sprawling on a deckchair a few feet away, and farther on was a dish of oranges, placed on a chair. Nice fresh oranges had been taken on board at Marseilles, and Billy Bunter had already disposed of quite a large number of the same.

That dish of succulent fruit was a few inches out of Bunter's reach, as he sat. He would have had to shift a few inches to reach an orange.

So it seemed quite natural to Bunter that one of the other fellows should circumnavigate his deckchair and get an orange for him. That fellow would only have to take two or three times as much trouble as Bunter would have had to take to get one for himself.

"You fat, lazy, slacking, frowsting porker!" said Johnny Bull. "If you want to guzzle an orange, after the dozen you've parked already, reach it for yourself, and be blowed to you!"

Bunter's fat lip curved in a fat sneer.

"That's the sort of thing I expect from you fellows!" he said. "Bad manners and rotten slacking all along the line."

"You can't get an orange for yourself?" asked Bob.

"I'm sitting down," said Bunter, with dignity. "I think you might chuck me over an orange, Cherry, after all I've done for you."

"I hardly think I'm strong enough," said Bob, shaking his head.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly.

"You lend me a hand, Inky, will you?" asked Bob. "If Bunter really wants us to chuck him over an orange, we might oblige him."

"I should jolly well think you might!" granted Bunter. "But I don't see that it needs two of you. You can fetch me a cushion, Inky, if you want something to do. You fellows jolly well know that I like a cushion in a deckchair, but a lot you care!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—"

"Laziness and selfishness all round," said Bunter. "I wonder sometimes whether I may not grow lazy and selfish myself, in the long run, associating with you chaps. Look here, Cherry, are you going to chuck me over an orange?"

"Sure you want me to?" asked Bob, while his comrades grinned. The merry glimmer in Bob's blue eyes hinted that he was understanding Bunter's request in a manner probably not intended by Bunter.

"Of course I do, fathead!" granted Bunter. "If you're not too jolly slack and lazy to walk round a deckchair, chuck me over an orange, and don't jaw!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob. "Lend a hand, Inky!"

"The lendfulness of an absurd hand will be terrific."

Bob Cherry walked round Bunter's deckchair and picked an orange from the dish. Instead of "chucking" it over to Bunter, however, he laid it on the deck a few feet from the fat junior, much to Bunter's surprise.

"What are you up to, you fathead?" asked the fat Owl of the Remove irritably. "Look here, you ass, chuck me over that orange—see?"

"Just going to!" said Bob cheerily.

He stepped to one side of the deckchair, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stepped to the other. Simultaneously they grasped Bunter.

"Ow! I say, wharrer you up to?" howled the fat junior, as the two of them, with a combined effort that taxed their strength to the utmost, heaved him out of the deckchair, wriggling. "I say—what—ow! What are you doing, you idiots?"

"Chucking you over that orange," explained Bob innocently. "Didn't you ask us to?"

"Ow! Leggo! I didn't mean—I meant—"

"It's a bit of a job of work, but we're not slackers, old fat man; we can do it. Go it, Inky!"

"Yaroooh! I say—yarrrooop!"

With a swing of their arms, Bob Cherry and the nabob chucked Bunter over the orange!

Bunter certainly had meant that it was the orange that was to be chucked over. Still, what he had said he had said. He had asked Bob to chuck him over an orange, and Bob was doing exactly that!

Swung along by two pairs of sturdy arms, Billy Bunter flew over the orange, spluttering wildly, and sat down on the deck beyond. He sat with a bump that almost shook the firefly.

Bump!

"Yoo-hoo-hooooop!"

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

"Ow! Boasts!" roared Bunter. "Ow! Oh crikey! You mad idiot! I never meant you were to chuck me over that orange—"

"That's what you said!" chuckled Harry Wharton.

"But I never—ow!—meant—"

"I did!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ow! Beasts! Wow! Rotters!"
 "Yow! Wow!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 The Famous Five strolled along the deck, leaving Bunter sitting where he had landed, and still yowing and wowing!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Seasick!

"LOOKS like a squall!" remarked Bob Cherry.

It was the following day. A sunny day and a starry night had passed, while the Firefly churned on over blue waters, in sight of the famed islands of Hyeres and the beautiful Cote d'Azur.

But with another day came a sudden change in the weather, which reminded the Greyfriars fellows that even in the sunny South, January was January. The morning had dawned bright and clear, the Maritime Alps barring the blue sky, behind the coast-line for which the yacht was heading, and the juniors had had glimpses of olive-clad hills and the white walls of villas. Now dark clouds blotted out the blue of the heavens, and the Alps disappeared in a mist of vapour.

Harder and harder the wind blew off the shore, and the sea—smiling only an hour ago—rolled in angry swells. Here and there, in the distance, the juniors spotted sailing-craft running for shelter from the coming storm. The Firefly rocked to the swell on the sea, and Billy Bunter, who, as usual, had done not wisely but too well at breakfast, repented him of his eleventh helping.

"It's going to be rough, you fellows!" Compton of the Fifth said, with a smile. "If you'd rather go below—"

"No jolly fear!" said Bob Cherry.

"Not unless we should be in the way, of course!" added Harry Wharton.

"No, that's all right; but you may have to hold on when the wind gets up," said the Fifth Former.

"When!" murmured Nugent.

The wind was coming with a terrific rush, and it seemed to the Greyfriars juniors that it was "up" already!

Compton tapped Bunter on a fat shoulder. Bunter was leaning on the rail, and holding on with both hands. He had a slightly uncertain feeling in his extensive interior, as if his eleventh helping was on bad terms with his tenth.

"Like a hand down the companion, kid?" asked the Fifth Former kindly. He glanced at the varying hues in Bunter's fat cheeks. "Feeling queer?"

"Eh? No! Certainly not!" snapped Bunter. "I'm never sea-sick!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Compton.

As he remembered some of Bunter's performances in the Channel, he was rather surprised by that statement.

"I'm a g-g-g-good sailor!" explained Bunter. "I'm not—o o o g h—feeling queer in the least!"

"Hadh't you better go down?"

"No," snorted Bunter, "I hadn't! If you're trying to make out that I'm sea-sick, Compton, I can only say—Oooogh!"

"You can only say what?"

"Wooogh! Lemme alone, you beast! Oooogh!"

Bunter turned back to the rail and hung on to it. Compton stared at him, and went away to the bridge, to join his uncle and Mr. Swain there. The wind blew harder, and the Famous Five turned up their coat-collars and faced it cheerily. Bunter hardly

(Continued on next page.)

The STately HOMES of GREYFRIARS

COKER PLACE

By

The Greyfriars Rhymester



At Greyfriars they look upon Horace Coker as being a champion chump; but at Coker Place he's the apple of his aunt's eye. Read what our long-haired poet has to say about it all.

(1)

Oh, Greyfriars is a lucky school,
 Though all the world should scorn her,
 For has she not a Champion Fool
 To honour and adorn her?
 This frabjous freak is in the Fifth,
 And what a brilliant scholar!
 (I bet you can't find rhymes for "Fifth"! Come on—I'll bet a dollar!)

(2)

Yes, Horace Coker is a chap
 Whom readers love and cherish,
 And if he ever showed a scrap
 Of common-sense, they'd perish!
 And Prout, in wild surmise, would cry:
 "Unparalleled! Astounding!"
 While from the old grey tower on high
 The bells would all be sounding!

(3)

His home is thirty miles away
 At Coker Place, in Surrey,
 And when he goes on Break-Up Day
 He's always in a hurry;
 For on his stink-bike, Coker shows
 The passers-by no quarter,
 Like Death on his Pale Horse he goes,
 And leaves a trail of slaughter!

(4)

At Coker Place his word is law,
 No servant dare oppose it,
 For all the household stand in awe
 Of him, and Coker knows it.
 Aunt Judy thinks him all that's wise
 And far above correction,
 For in his fond Aunt Judy's eyes
 Our Horace is perfection!

(5)

We can't imagine what induced
 This very strange opinion,
 But since Aunt Judy rules the roost
 In Coker's small dominion,
 The others have to think so, too,
 Or they'll hear all about it.
 They do think so! Of course they do!
 Can any person doubt it?

(6)

At times, perhaps, his father may
 Feel just a trifle moody,
 If so, he keeps these thoughts away
 From reaching Sister Judy;
 One thing—Aunt Judy's very rich,
 And very autocratic,
 And Coker's people know it, which
 Is why they're not dogmatic.

(7)

There's Coker minor—in the Sixth!—
 Who's worth a separate sonnet!
 (See "Fifth" re finding rhymes on
 "Sixth,"
 And one more dollar on it!)
 He sits and swots at Coker Place
 Like some profound old-stager,
 While kindly scorn is on the "face"
 (So-called) of Coker major!

(8)

The house itself is old and quaint
 Within a pleasant garden;
 It's peaceful also—no, it ain't,
 I really beg your pardon—
 For when our Horace is about,
 The air resounds with thunder!
 And Coker's dad and Mr. Prout
 Have both gone bald—no wonder!

Next Week:

COURTMAN SQUARE—the home of Vernon-Smith.

noticed the win^l, keen as it was. He had other matters to occupy his fat thoughts.

"I—I—I say, Kik-kik-Compton!" he stuttered. "I—I think I'll go down! I'm not sus-sus-sea-sick, but I—I think I'll—Grooogh! Wooogh!" He blinked round, apparently expecting to see Compton at his elbow. As the Fifth Former was gone, however, he was not to be seen. "Ow! Oh! Beast!" gurgled Bunter. "Nice manners to a guest, leaving him to—Ooogh! Wooogh! Grooogh!"

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

"Ow! Yes! Never f-f-felt bub-bub-better!" gasped Bunter. "If you fellows think I'm sea-sick, you're a lot of—Oooooooooooch!"

"We're a lot of what?"

"Groooooooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I want to go down!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm not sea-sick, and I feel absolutely jig-jig-jolly as anything—"

"You look it!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"The lookfulness is terrifically jolly!"

"Beast! Kik-kik-can't you lend me a hand?" gurgled Bunter. "I'm not sea-sick, b-b-but I—I feel a little—Wooogh! Just a little—Ooooooooooh! I mean to say—Yurrrrrrgggggh!"

The Co. gathered round Bunter and helped him down to the saloon. They led him to the settee, and laid him thereon. A fellow who had stacked away foodstuffs as if for a siege was bound to feel a little inward trouble when the ship began to roll; but though Bunter had, as usual, asked for it, they were sympathetic. Mal-de-mer is a horrid thing!

"Ow! That's better!" said Bunter, when he lay extended. "I—I don't feel it so much now. Not that I was feeling anything, you know. I'm a pretty good sailor—not like you fellows. Gimmo a cushion for my head."

Wharton placed a cushion under a fat head.

"Anything else?" he asked. "A glass of water?"

"Well, you sit there and hold a glass of water, in case I want it," said Bunter. "I may, or may not! Don't go on deck, you fellows."

"Anybody want to sit round and watch Bunter shift cargo?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically. "I'm going on deck."

And he went. Three members of the Co. followed. They were sympathetic. But really they did not want to sit round watching the sad, ultimate fate of Billy Bunter's many breakfasts. Wharton, however, fetched a glass of water.

"Here you are, old fat man!" he said.

"You can sit there and hold it, in case I want it!" said Bunter. "You're more likely to want it than me, I fancy! Grooogh! I feel better lying down—not that there's anything the matter with me, you know. Nothing at all the matter with me."

"You fat ass—"

"Beast! You'd like to make out that I'm sea-sick, as if I were a seedy specimen like you, always getting ill!" sneered Bunter. "I'm nothing of the sort, I hope! I'm feeling fuf-fuf-fine!"

"If there's nothing the matter—"

"Nothing at all! Just like you to make out there was, I know! Nothing the matter with me, that I know of."

"All right, then; I'll get back on deck."

And the captain of the Remove followed his friends up.

"Urrgh! Beast! Wurrrrrgh!"

For a fellow who had nothing the matter with him, Bunter proceeded to utter a remarkable series of moans, groans, grunts, and gurgles. Rawlings came into the saloon to secure loose articles from rolling about, as the yacht pitched more and more on the swelling sea. He glanced at Bunter.

"Feeling bad, sir?" he asked.

"No!" growled Bunter. "Don't be cheeky, Rawlings! Mind your own business!"

The steward looked at him. He did not want any of the Greyfriars party on the yacht—and towards that particular member of it his feelings were

of the strongest antipathy. But he had, perhaps, felt for a moment a touch of sympathy for a fellow in the grip of mal-de-mer. If so, Billy Bunter's grateful reply had the effect of banishing it on the spot.

"Urrrrgh!" went on Bunter.

Rawlings moved about, at his duties.

"Wurrrrrgh!" Bunter gurgled.

"Here, Rawlings, gimmo that glass of water!"

Rawlings did not seem to hear.

"Urrgh! Are you deaf, you cheeky beast?" howled Bunter. "Come here and hand me that glass of water—do you hear?"

Rawlings looked round at him. The glass of water stood within Bunter's reach, where Wharton had left it. The steward came across to him and picked it up.

"Now help me!" granted Bunter. "Don't shove me, you fool—don't drag me about like a sack of coke, you silly idiot—just hold me comfortably while I sip the water, you dunderhead! Haven't you any sense?"

Rawlings supported the fat junior with one hand, and held the glass of water with the other. Perhaps it was because the Firefly gave a roll that he pitched the contents of the glass into Bunter's fat neck! Perhaps it was in acknowledgment of Bunter's polite remarks. Anyhow, Bunter, who had intended to trickle the water down the inside of his fat neck, suddenly found it swamping down the outside!

"Ow! Oh crikey! Wurrrgh! You silly idiot!" spluttered Bunter. "I'm all wet—Urrgh! I'm drenched—Gurrrgh! You silly fool—Yurrrgh! You cheeky beast! Oooooooooooch!"

Rawlings grinned.

"Have another glass of water, sir?" he asked.

"Urrrrgh! No, you beast! Gerr-out!"

Rawlings, grinning, got out. And Bunter, sprawling on the settee, lost one breakfast after another!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

"H!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What—?"

"Look!"

Clinging to the rail with one hand, Bob pointed with the other. The sky was dark, with rushing clouds; a dim twilight reigned on the sea, though it was near noon. The Firefly tossed almost like a cork on the hills of water that roared and foamed. Through the dimness, Bob caught a glimpse of something white that flew on the tumbling waters, and for a moment fancied that it was a sea-bird driven down in the wind. Then he knew that it was a sail.

There was a spatter or rain on the wind. Through rain and wind, the chums of Greyfriars stared over the tossing water.

"It's a boat!" Bob roared, to make his voice heard. "By gum, it's all up with that sportsman!"

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

He clamped himself to the lifting, drooping rail, and watched. It was a small cutter that was tossing on the sea, the sail, blown away by the wind, hanging to the bending, cracking mast by a single rope, and blowing out like a banner.

Hunched in the boat, holding on to the tiller, was a single figure—a boyish figure. Wharton's face grew white as he looked.



THE EARLY ADVENTURES OF LEONARD HENRY

The funniest story of the New Year . . . starring Leonard Henry the radio star! You'll chuckle, you'll laugh, you'll roar as you read the hectic happenings at St. Nick's School when Leonard arrives there as a new boy. Also—a cartoon featuring the comic capers of Stainless Stephen; and "Alex James Schooldays," the boyhood story of a wizard footballer. All in

THE PILOT

Now on Sale at all Newsagents—2d
Every Friday

The little cutter was not a sea-going craft. It was plainly a small pleasure-craft, caught in the sudden gale, and blown out to sea. Probably the fellow on board had been sailing it on the bay of Villefrancé or off Monte Carlo, without a thought of danger, when the sudden Mediterranean storm broke on him, and blew him out to sea.

The Firefly, at that moment, was not more than twenty miles from land; though the land, hidden by rainy mists, was not visible. All that the boy on board could do was to run before the wind, in the hope of escaping swamping; but it seemed, by a series of miracles, that the dancing cockleshell avoided that fate.

Even as the startled juniors stared, the cracking mast went, and mast and sail flew away together on the wind.

"We've got to help him somehow!" panted Harry.

He looked up at the bridge. He saw Compton of the Fifth grasping the captain's arm with one hand, and pointing with the other. Valentine Compton had spotted the cutter at the same time as the Famous Five.

What Compton was saying to his uncle the juniors could not hear. But they caught the captain's answering bark:

"No boat could live in this!"

"A rope!" shouted Compton.

"Try if you like!"

"Oh, look!" groaned Bob Cherry.

The torn sail had helped to keep the cutter steady. Now it was gone, the little craft broached, and the swamping seas flooded it fore and aft. In utter horror, the juniors saw it roll on its beam-ends; but it still floated, and the boy was still clinging to the wreck.

Compton, standing at the rail, had a coil of rope in his hand. He shouted, and his clear voice rose over the roar of the wind; but it was doubtful if the boy clinging to the wrecked cutter, beaten and buffeted by the waves, heard him. The rope flew, uncoiling as it flew, and with so accurate a swing, that the uncoiling end touched the wrecked boy's shoulder as it dropped.

The juniors watched, their hearts in their mouths. If he saw—if he understood—if he grasped the rope in time he—

They could have groaned aloud as they saw it slide from him. He had not seen it—it was doubtful whether he even saw the yacht itself. He clung to the tossing wreck of the cutter, and at every nerve-racking moment they expected to see him torn away, vanishing in the froth of the waves.

Captain Compton had rung instantly to the engine-room, and the yacht was hardly moving now, except for the swing of the sea. But the wrecked cutter was driving past on the wind-driven water, that boyish figure still clinging desperately to it. To lower a boat was impossible; they knew, even if they had not heard the captain, that no boat could live in such a sea.

"Compton!" shrieked Bob.

There was a roar from the captain.

"Valentine! You mad fool, stop!"

Compton of the Fifth had leaped on the swinging rail, and for a split second he stood there, under the eyes of all on board—then he dived.

The tossing sea received him, covered him, swamped him; but the next second he was grasping the boyish figure that clung to the wrecked cutter.

The juniors, spellbound, watched. They saw the captain, with a face like death, hurl himself to the rail and fling a rope; and in a moment more, they

knew that Compton of the Fifth had caught the rope, and was holding on.

The wrecked cutter vanished from their eyes, tossed away by the waves.

Valentine Compton, one hand grasping the rope, the other arm circling the boy from the wreck, pitched in the foaming water like a cork. Three or four of the crew rushed to help the captain with the rope, and rescuer and rescued swept to the side on a rush of water. Twice they thudded on the hull before they could be dragged up; and there was a streak of blood on Valentine Compton's handsome face, through the tossing foam.

"Hold on—oh, hold on!" panted Bob.

It seemed almost impossible that Valentine Compton could keep his grip on the rope, with the whole weight of the rescued boy on his other arm. Strong as he was, with muscles of steel, it was a terrible test to his strength. But he kept his hold; and many hands grasped him and dragged him on board with the helpless, half-conscious figure sagging in his grip.

"Valentine!" The captain's voice came husky, broken. His face, which the Greyfriars fellows had always seen hard as bronze, was white as chalk, his eyes dilated, his lips trembling. "Valentine—you're hurt—oh, you mad young fool—"

"Only a knock!" Compton panted.

"Get that kid below—he's half-drowned. Look after him, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had already relieved him of his burden. The rescued boy, dripping with water, his drenched flannels clinging to his limbs, was lifted in their ready hands, and they rushed him down the companion.

Billy Bunter, on the settee, blinked at them, and ceased to gurgle and groan in sheer astonishment.

"I say, you fellows! Oh crikey! How did Smithy get here?" he gasped.

"Smithy?"

The juniors had hardly looked at the fellow Compton had rescued. In the dimness on deck, they had seen only a dragged figure which they had grasped, and rushed below. But the light was on in the saloon, and the rescued youth was plainly revealed.

"Smithy!"

"Vernon-Smith!"

"The old Bounder! Oh crikey!"

And in utter amazement, Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder on Board!

HERBERT VERNON SMITH did not speak. He was too far gone for that. He had been at the very point of exhaustion

when Valentine Compton's strong arm held him back from death. He could not stand on his feet—he hung a helpless weight on the juniors. But there was a faint grin on his pallid face. The Bounder had recognised the Famous Five before they had recognised him.

Only for a moment they paused in their astonishment at finding that it was Smithy whom

Compton of the Fifth had saved from the sea. Then they rushed him to Wharton's room, and bundled him in. His wet clothes were stripped off, and he was pitched into Harry's bunk, with blankets over him—and Rawlings appeared with a hot-water bottle to put at his feet.

"All serene now, Smithy, old man?" panted Harry Wharton.

The Bounder grinned from the bunk at the excited juniors. Smithy had been through it, hard; in the very shadow of death; but he was the cool, iron-nerved Bounder unchanged. In the mad whirl of stormy waters, with the rustle of the wings of the Angel of Death in his ears, his courage had not failed him.

"You know this young gentleman, sir?" asked Rawlings, in surprise, as he tucked in the hot-water bottle.

"Yes; it's Smithy," said Harry. "I dare say you've heard us speak of him—we expected to see him at Monte Carlo when we got there—he's staying there for the holidays with his father, Mr. Vernon-Smith."

The steward gave Smithy a look of new interest. Evidently he had heard of Mr. Vernon-Smith, the millionaire financier.

Rawlings left the state-room, the juniors remaining with the Bounder. Hard as he had been through it, Vernon-Smith was pulling himself together already, as his strength began to return. In a couple of minutes, Rawlings came back with a cup of hot beef-tea, which Smithy swallowed, Wharton and Bob holding him in a sitting position while he did so. The steward left them again, and Smithy remained sitting up, propped by pillows.

There was a little colour in his cheeks now, and he was able to speak.

"Fancy running into you fellows!" he said.

"Thank goodness you did!" said Harry.

"I suppose this is Compton's uncle's yacht, what?" asked Smithy. "I've been keeping an eye open for it, at Villefranche—expecting to see you when you blew in."

"You blew out, instead!" grinned Bob.

"And the blowfulness was terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"This is the Firefly!" said Harry. He caught a mocking glimmer in the Bounder's eyes, and coloured. He remembered what Smithy had told him at Greyfriars—that the Firefly was a smuggling packet. He knew that Smithy was thinking of it at that moment.

"Who got me out of the water?" asked Smithy.

"Compton of the Fifth!"

(Continued on next page.)

HOHNER

THE WORLD'S BEST



THE WORLD'S GREATEST USE
ARTISTS AND PLAYERS
HOHNER CHROMATIC AND DIATONIC
HARMONICAS.

WHY—Because they have proved by experience that all Hohner instruments are faultless in construction, faithful in tone, perfect in pitch and matchless in quality, which is the standard of the world. Models to suit every taste and pocket. Stocked by dealers everywhere.

HARMONICAS

"I thought so! He's a splendid chap!"

"It was touch and go!" said Bob. "We hadn't the faintest idea it was you, of course, Smithy—all we could see was that it was somebody who'd been blown out to sea. Compton didn't know it was a Greyfriars man he was going in for. By gum, that chap's got pluck!"

"Tons of it!" said Smithy. "If he hadn't got me—"

"Don't think of that!" said Nugent, with a shiver. "Thank goodness he did!"

"The thankfulness is preposterous, my esteemed Smithy."

The Bounder grinned and lay back on the pillows. A thoughtful look came over his face. It was Compton of the Fifth who had saved his life—the fellow he had known at Greyfriars as the Schoolboy Smuggler. It was the "smuggling packet" on which he now lay, rescued and safe. From the bottom of his heart, the Bounder was thankful that he had never given away Compton's strange secret at the school. Only Wharton was aware that he knew anything of it; and Wharton did not know all—far from all.

"I'm all right now," drawled the Bounder at last, in quite his old, cool drawl. "You fellows needn't stick here."

"One of us had better stay with you," said Harry.

"I'm all right, I tell you." The Bounder hated to be made a fuss of.

Harry Wharton smiled. He had not been on the best of terms with the Bounder the last term at Greyfriars; in fact, they had gone as far as punching noses on one occasion. But they had parted friends, and the chums of the Remove had been rather looking forward to meeting Smithy when the yacht put in at the Bay of Villefranche, near Monte Carlo. They had never dreamed that the meeting would take place in these dramatic circumstances, however.

The Co. went back to the deck and the wild wind; Harry remained in the room with Vernon-Smith. The Bounder lay silent for some time, resting while his strength returned; but he was evidently recovering fast.

"Queer that I should run into you like this!" he said at length. "And queerer that Compton should fish me out of the jolly old Mediterranean."

"He was the man to do it," said Harry. "You remember how he swam out on the tide last term to get that fat ass Bunter when he went adrift? By gum, he is a splendid chap."

"One of the best," said Smithy, "though—"

"Though what?" asked Harry, rather sharply.

"Oh, nothing!"

"How did you get into that scrape, Smithy?" asked Harry.

He knew what was in the Bounder's mind, and he shrank from any mention of the subject. During the cruise of the Firefly it had been forced into his mind that Vernon-Smith's suspicion of that craft was well-founded. But there was no actual proof of it, and he rejected the belief as much as he could, and what he was unwilling to admit to himself, he was still more unwilling to admit to the Bounder.

"Oh, my usual reckless fatheadedness!" said Vernon-Smith, with a grin. "I went out for a sail this morning on my own, and ran outside the bay! It looked a beautiful day to me. The Mediterranean is a bit sudden with its storms. It came down on me with a rush, and I was blown away to sea."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,508.

almost before I knew what was happening." He shrugged his shoulders. "I'd rather given up the idea of going back to Greyfriars for the new term! But a miss is as good as a mile—what?"

"Your father will be anxious—"

"Oh, no! The pater's gone up to Monte to-day with a mob of City friends he's met down here, and he won't know that I went for a sail till I get back. I'm jolly glad of that!"

"That's good," said Harry. "We drop anchor at Villefranche this afternoon, if the rough weather doesn't keep us out. And they say on deck that it won't last long."

"Right as rain—I'll be back, I hope, before the pater blows in from jolly old Monte!" said Vernon-Smith. "But—but for Compton—the pater would have had a bad shock when he got back to the Hotel Gloria!" Smithy drew a deep breath. "By gum! It would have given him a knock!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith had plenty of faults, and the captain of the Remove did not always like him. But he liked him at that moment. Smithy was thinking of his father, not of the fearful peril he had been through himself.

But a serious mood, with the Bounder of Greyfriars, never lasted long. He gave a shrug of the shoulders and laughed.

"They say that a man who's born to be hanged cannot be drowned!" he remarked. "Somethin' in it—what?"

"Fathead!" said Harry.

"You're having a good time on this cruise?" asked Smithy, the mocking glimmer coming back to his eyes.

"Yes; topping!"

"You haven't forgotten what I said to you when Greyfriars broke up?"

"No; but I'd rather not speak of it, or think of it!" said Wharton.

"Quite! But I'm thinking of it, and I'm going to speak of it!" said the Bounder coolly. "You can walk off if you like, of course, and leave the sad invalid to pine in solitude—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Nobody can hear us, I suppose?" said Smithy. "Bunter isn't at the key-hole, is he?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Bunter's having trouble with shifting cargo!" he answered. "But—"

"I told you," said Vernon-Smith quietly and coolly, "that Compton of the Fifth was a young smuggler, hand-in-glove with a smuggling gang on board this packet. I never told you more than that—and I'm not going to."

"I wish you hadn't told me that much!" muttered Wharton. "For goodness' sake let it drop!"

"Which means that you're coming round to my way of thinking!" grinned the Bounder. "I read it in your jolly old innocent phiz, old bean."

"Oh, rubbish!"

"Nothing happened on the cruise to put you wise?"

"Nothing that I should have taken any notice of if you hadn't told me what you did, anyhow," said Wharton gruffly.

"Which means something!" chuckled Smithy.

Wharton made no answer to that.

"The other fellows wise to it?" asked the Bounder.

"I'm not sure about Inky—but the others, not the foggiest! For goodness' sake, Smithy, not a word to them of what you fancy!" Wharton spoke earnestly. "You can't want to hurt old Compton—the fellow who risked his life not an hour ago to pull you out of the sea."

"Hardly! I kept it dark at Greyfriars—and I'd keep it darker now if I could! I'm not an ungrateful rotter, I

hope. I've always liked Compton as much as you do—and more than ever now! Facts are facts, all the same!" drawled the Bounder. "I tipped you before we left Greyfriars to be on your guard! It was a friendly tip! If you were spotted going ashore with contraband goods under your arm it would mean pretty bad trouble in a foreign country."

"There's been nothing of that kind, at any rate!" said Harry sharply. "And Compton's incapable of any such rotten trick—"

"I know he is! But the others aren't!" said the Bounder. "I fancy that that's what you're on the packet for as much as anythin' else—though I'll admit that Compton doesn't know it, very likely, and certainly wouldn't stand for it. But the captain, or the mate, or the steward, or the engineer, hasn't asked you to carry anything on a shore trip—"

"No!"

"Not even a harmless little bundle of sandwiches, which might contain something quite different from sandwiches?" grinned Smithy.

"No!"

"Or lent you a bag which might have a false bottom—or an overcoat which might have something sewn up in the lining— Oh, is that it?" Vernon-Smith burst into a laugh as Harry Wharton started violently.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "The—the steward—at Marseilles the other day—he—" He broke off.

The Bounder chuckled.

But Wharton's face was pale and startled. He had been puzzled by the mysterious disappearance of Bunter's coat, and he had thought it odd that Rawlings had kept an old overcoat given him by Compton years before. And he had been still more puzzled by the fact that the black-browed chauffeur at Marseilles, evidently in Rawlings' pay, had taken that overcoat away from Bunter. But he had not put two and two together—till now! He had, indeed, forgotten the matter. Now the Bounder's mocking words brought it back to his mind—in a new light.

Smithy grinned at him from the bunk.

"That touches the spot—what?" he asked. "Ha, ha! Were you really ass enough to fall for such a trick as that after I'd tipped you what to expect?"

"Rawlings lent Bunter an overcoat, and—" stammered Harry.

"Ha, ha! I'll bet somebody got it off him ashore!"

"As it happens, somebody did—"

"Ha, ha!"

"Smithy, I don't believe—I can't, and I won't! Look here, chuck it! I'm a guest on this packet—and so are you at the moment. Shut up, there's a good chap!"

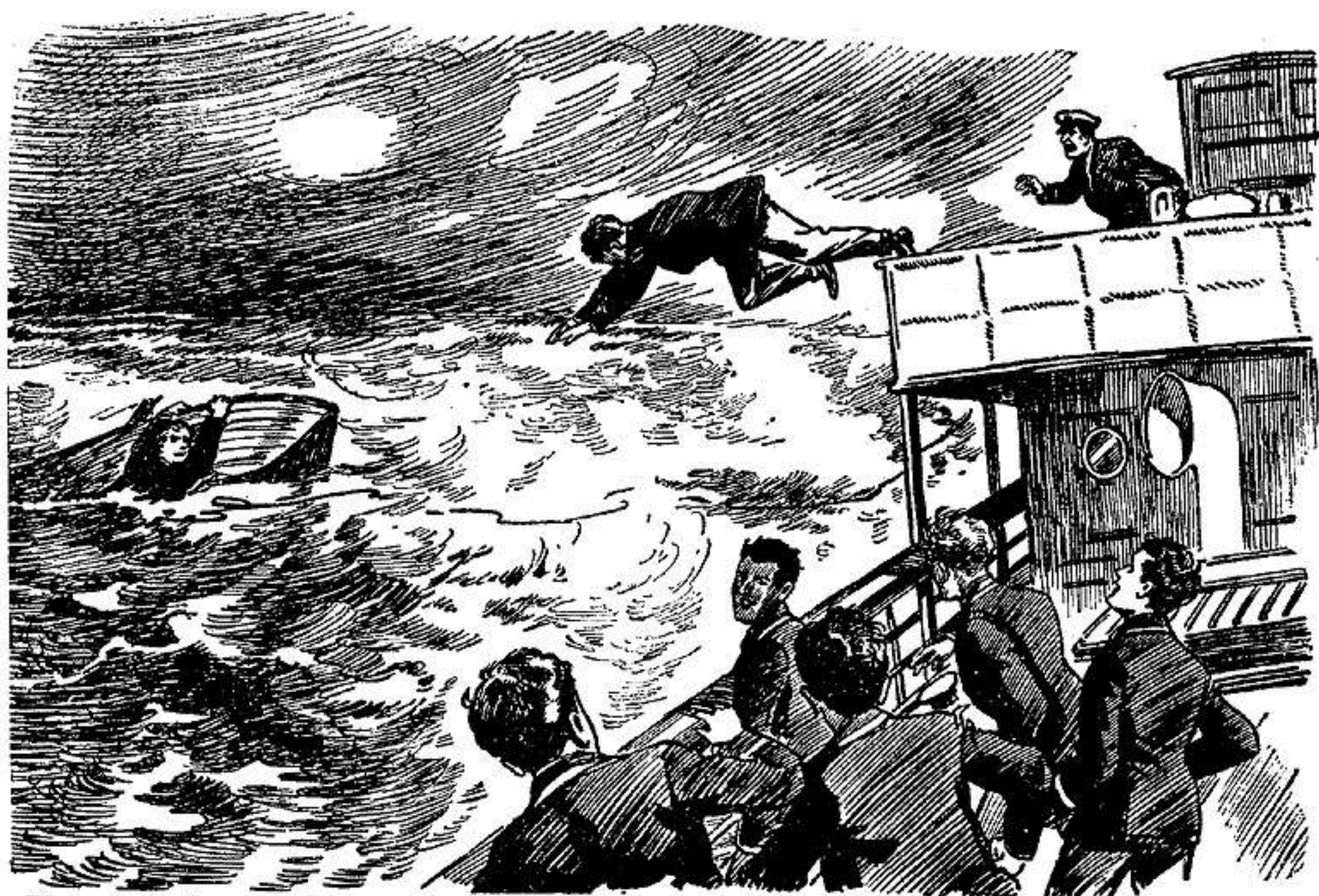
"Right-ho! I'll shut up like an oyster!" grinned the Bounder. "Somebody will have to lend me a change of clothes to go ashore. Can you manage it? I'd rather not borrow anything of that steward! Ha, ha!"

There was a tap at the door, and Compton of the Fifth looked in. He had changed, and looked his usual handsome self, except for a cut that showed under his thick, dark hair. He had had a hard knock in getting aboard. But his face was smiling.

"You seem very merry and bright here," he remarked. "They tell me that it's a Greyfriars kid that was picked up."

"Yes, Smithy of the Remove, Compton," said Harry. "Here he is, not feeling much the worse for it, I think."

Wharton was glad to leave the state-



The wrecked cutter was driving past on the wind-driven water, the boyish figure still clinging desperately to it. "Compton!" shrieked Bob Cherry. There was a roar from Captain Compton. "Valentine! You mad fool, stop!" Compton, of the Greyfriars Fifth, had leaped on the rail. For a split second he stood there, under the eyes of all on board. Then he dived!

room, leaving Compton with the Bounder. He went back to the deck. The fierce, brief Mediterranean storm was already passing over, the sun shone brightly through drifting clouds, and the tall line of the Maritime Alps could be seen to the north. Harry, as he joined his friends on deck, tried to dismiss the Bounder's words from his mind. But it was not easy—and he could not help feeling that, if he had doubted before, he knew now!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Too!

"**W**HAT about Bunter?"
"Blow Bunter!" said Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Then it's off!" he said. "You see, we're on this cruise with Bunter, Smithy, and we can't let a chap down."

"The let-downfulness is not the proper caper, my esteemed Smithy!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur gently.

The Bounder grunted.

Under a blue sky, lit by brilliant sunshine, the Firefly was gliding into the beautiful bay of Villefranche, circled by the Maritime Alps.

The sudden storm had blown itself out, and, except for a swell of the sea, there was no sign of it left. Olive-clad hillsides, white beaches, white-walled villas met the eye, and it was hard to believe that only a couple of hours ago sea and sky had mingled in wild commotion.

Vernon-Smith—in clothes borrowed from Harry Wharton, which fitted him fairly well—was on deck with the Famous Five.

He looked none the worse for his wild adventure in the stormy sea. The Bounder was tough, and his terrible peril seemed to have left no impression

on his mind. Captain Compton had spoken a few words to him; Swain, the mate, had given him a civil grunt; Rawlings had been assiduous in attentions to the millionaire's son—all of which Smithy had received with great politeness—and his tongue in his cheek. Harry Wharton knew what he thought of the yacht, its captain, and its crew, but no one else had the faintest idea of it.

Now, as the Firefly churned on, Smithy looked his usual self, as if he had just stepped out of the old quadrangle at Greyfriars. He pointed out the massive and majestic building of the Hotel Gloria—big enough to be seen from a great distance at sea—where he was stopping with his father.

It was quite flattering to the Famous Five to hear from him that he had been looking forward to their arrival, and they were quite pleased when he asked them to accompany him ashore and put up at the Gloria for the night, and have an evening going "round the town." But when the captain of the Remove referred to Bunter, the Bounder only grunted. He did not want Bunter. Neither, perhaps, did anybody else, but there was a certain fitness of things that had to be observed.

"You see, old man, Bunter's a bit of a cough-drop, but we're on the cruise with him," said Bob. "Chucking a man isn't Greyfriars style."

"Oh, rot!" said Vernon-Smith. "I want you fellows; I don't want Bunter! You don't want him, either."

"Not fearfully!" grinned Nugent. "But—"

"The fearfulness is not preposterous!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the bufffulness is terrific!"

"Oh, rats!" said Vernon-Smith. "Look here, are you coming?"

"Thanks all the same, old chap! But no!" said Harry.

And his comrades nodded assent to that. They would have been quite pleased to enjoy a run ashore in the Bounder's company, to put up at a tremendous hotel, to have the use of Mr. Vernon-Smith's magnificent cars and other gorgeous fixings; but, as Bob put it, letting a man down was not Greyfriars style. If Smithy did not want Bunter, he could not have Bunter's fellow-cruisers.

With another grunt, the Bounder, not taking the trouble to conceal his annoyance, walked along the deck, leaving the Famous Five. They exchanged a rather amused glance. They liked seeing Smithy again, but they had not forgotten his manners and customs, and did not expect him to have changed them during the holidays.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the jolly old fat bean!" said Bob Cherry. "Loaded up again since the cargo shifted, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry, if you're going to make out that I've been sea-sick, you can shut up!" said Bunter. "I say, where's Smithy? Pity I wasn't on deck when it happened! I'd have gone in for him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, I want to see Smithy; it's important! I've no time to waste on you fellows! Where's— Oh, there he is!"

Billy Bunter rolled along to where Vernon-Smith was standing by the rail by himself, frowning. He drew the Bounder's attention by poking a fat thumb into his ribs, and Smithy stared round at him.

"Oh—you!" said Smithy. "Fat as ever!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,503.

"Blow away, bluebottle!"

Billy Bunter paid no heed to that injunction. Instead of blowing away, he bestowed his most ingratiating grin on the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"I say, Smithy, I'm jolly glad to see you!" he said.

"You've got all the gladness on your side!"

"Beast—I mean, I say, old chap, nothing to be shirty about!" said Bunter. "I say, I fancy you're painting the town red here—what? No masters or prefects about, and your pater letting you do exactly as you like! Mine wouldn't, of course; he's a bit more particular. But it's all right for you."

Vernon-Smith looked at him. Bunter was evidently bent on making himself agreeable. This was how he did it.

"Rolling round the town, splashing the money about—what?" said Bunter. "He, he, he! I say, have you been to Monte?"

"Monte?" repeated the Bounder.

"Monte Carlo," said Bunter. "It's just round the corner from Villefranche. I suppose you've been splashing the cash about there—eh? They're glad to see trippers with more money than sense—He, he, he!"

"You're as nice as you were at Greyfriars, Bunter!" said the Bounder, looking at him. "You've lost none of your charming ways! You must be fearfully popular on this yacht."

"Well, yes, naturally," said the fatuous Owl. "Hardly up to my social weight, if you know what I mean; but I keep civil all round. Not much of a show, Smithy—not like my father's yacht. The captain's a bit of a bounder, the mate's a pig, and the steward's cheeky! The whole thing is hardly my style. All right for the other chaps, of course, but not the sort of thing for me, really. I'm thinking of chucking it for a bit."

"That will be rather a blow to them all round!"

"Well, they'll have to make the best of it!" said Bunter, blind and deaf to sarcasm. "They can't expect to take up the whole of a fellow's time, especially when I've just met an old pal like you, Smithy! The fact is, I'm thinking of a bit of a splash at Monte."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I mean to say, why miss a chance like this?" said Bunter. "A man ain't at Monte Carlo every day. I fancy I could rake it in at the tables. All it needs is a cool head, a keen intellect, and iron nerve—that's me all over! You can lend me some money—"

"You're full of good ideas, Bunter!"

"I'm the fellow for them!" said Bunter. "Mind, if you lend me twenty pounds or so, I'll square out of what I snaffle at roulette, of course."

"As good as a gilt-edged investment, then?"

"Exactly!" assented Bunter. "My idea is to land with you, old chap, and put up at the Gloria where you're staying. I'll come as your guest, if you like, or I'll let the bill run till I've been up at Monte and raked in some money—it doesn't really matter which. We'll go together, old fellow, and I'll put you through your paces—what? But, mind, those nincompoops will have to be left out!"

"Eh?"

"You know what they are—soft and spoony!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "All they think of is tramping about, walking up hills and down again! I believe they'd jump at playing footer, if there was any footer here! I believe

in kicking a loose leg on a holiday! I'm a bit of a dog, I can tell you, when I get going!"

Billy Bunter favoured the Bounder with a fat wink.

"We'll paint the jolly old town red together—what?" he asked breezily. "Leave those fatheads on the yacht! I hope you haven't asked them up to your place?"

"As it happens, I have."

"Well, you must be a silly ass, Smithy! Spoiling the whole thing—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter, blinking at him.

"What are you sniggering at, Smithy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's bright and cheery conversation seemed to have restored the Bounder to good humour.

Harry Wharton & Co. had declined his invitation because Bunter was left out of it. Bunter was fishing for one, and making it a condition that the Famous Five should be left out. It struck the Bounder as entertaining, and he roared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the jolly old joke?" called out Bob Cherry.

"You fellows are!" answered Vernon-Smith. "Look here, it's all right! You're coming with me, and you can roll that fat barrel along, if you like. I'm sure you'd feel that you couldn't let him down, if you'd heard what he's just been blethering to me! If you're silly idiots enough to want him, he can come!"

"Oh, really, Smithy, if you put it like that—" snorted Bunter.

"I do put it like that!"

"He, he, he! I can take a joke, old fellow! I'll come. But, I say, you don't really want those noodles—"

"I want them, and I don't want you!"

"You cheeky beast—I—I mean, rely on me, old fellow! I'll stick to you, old bean, and I'll see you through at Monte—"

"Shut up, you blithering idiot!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Smithy walked away from the fat Owl, and rejoined the Famous Five. It was settled that the Greyfriars cruisers were going ashore with the Bounder—Bunter and all. Compton of the Fifth politely declined a similar invitation. And under the golden sunset the juniors landed, and a tremendous car bore them up the winding road to the gorgeous hotel where they were to be the guests, for a day or two, of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

A Wild Night at Monte!

"WHO wouldn't be a jolly old millionaire?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"What-ho!" said Nugent, with a smile.

It was a happy party. Sitting on the balcony in front of the Hotel Gloria, looking down the hill, at the lights round the bay, the starry sky reflected in the dark blue waters, the Firefly and a dozen other craft riding at anchor, the chums of Greyfriars were feeling pleased with themselves and things generally.

They had dined—a magnificent dinner of innumerable courses. As Billy Bunter had made a solid meal of each course, it was just as well for him that he was on firm land, instead of the uncertain sea.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had returned from Monte in time for dinner. He had given the Greyfriars fellows a very hearty welcome, evidently pleased to see them. His own taste probably did not run to boyish society, but he was glad for his son to have his friends with him, and perhaps a little relieved to find that they were such respectable friends. Smithy, in holiday time, was often far from particular about the kind of company he kept.

But the millionaire had disappeared again after dinner, with some plump City friends who were staying at the Gloria. Smithy was left to look after his guests—who did not need much looking after. Harry Wharton & Co. would have been quite content with a ramble under the starry sky on the olive-clad hills, or a stroll round the bay, or a run in the car, and then to bed. Much more hectic thoughts were working in the fat brain of Billy Bunter.

Bunter sat in a deep chair on the balcony after dinner, and the other fellows naturally expected him to go to sleep, after his exertions at table, and to hear his fat snore mingle with the strains of the orchestra from within.

But Billy Bunter did not go to sleep. He was very much on the alert; the other fellows did not know why.

Bunter had been talking about Monte, as he called Monte Carlo, with the air of a really wicked old man of the world. That the fat and fatuous Owl would have jumped at the chance of trying his luck at the celebrated casino, the juniors knew. But as schoolboys were not admitted there and as Bunter had no money, anyhow, they did not think that Bunter was in much danger of playing the goat in that manner.

"Time we got a move on, Smithy," said the fat Owl, as he finished his coffee. "I say, I'll have one of those smokes."

Vernon-Smith had taken out a cigarette-case. Harry Wharton & Co. carefully refrained from observing him. But Bunter's remark perhaps had its effect on the Bounder. He put the case back unopened, colouring a little. He glanced at his watch.

"You fellows feel like a run?" he asked.

"Yes, rather," answered Bob. "Any old thing you like, Smithy."

Bunter blinked at the Bounder through his big spectacles.

"I say, think they'd better come, Smithy?" he asked, in a whisper which was audible to all ears.

"Oh, yes, I think so," said Smithy. "I fancy they'll enjoy it more than you, old fat man, when we get there."

"What's on, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton, a little puzzled, and, perhaps a little uneasy.

Smithy's manners and customs were not his. And the chums of the Remove did not feel in the least entitled to play the fool because they were far from masters, prefects, and parents. Smithy was quite aware of that, and he knew how to suit his manners to his company. With Pon & Co., of Highcliffe, there was little doubt that he would have been "painting the town red." With Harry Wharton & Co. he had to be content to leave it unpainted.

Smithy had puzzled the Famous Five more than a little that evening. He did not want Bunter; but, having swallowed him whole, as it were, he

was making the best of it, with a good humour hardly to be expected of the Bounder.

Bunter was looking unusually well dressed, owing to the simple circumstance that he had raided the Bounder's wardrobe. And, Smithy, instead of kicking him when he saw him in his borrowed plumes, had only laughed. And now, it seemed, he had already laid plans for the evening with Bunter before consulting the other fellows. This, from Bunter's point of view, was very right and proper, as he was the most important member of the party; but the other fellows were a little perplexed.

From the glimmer in the Bounder's eyes they had an impression that he was pulling the fat Owl's leg, somehow. But they certainly could not see how.

"What about a walk?" asked Johnny Bull.

Contemptuous sniff from Bunter.

"Oh, we're going in the car!" said the Bounder. "Walk at the other end." He beckoned to a waiter, and gave an order in French.

"The fact is, you men," went on Smithy, "Bunter, being such a pal of yours, I thought you'd like me to meet his wishes in every way possible."

"Is that so?" asked Bob.

"I hope you fellows will play up," went on the Bounder. "The fact is, I've promised Bunter a wild night at Monte—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You know what Bunter is—a regular sportive dog when he gets going," said Vernon-Smith. "He's fearfully keen on having a wild night at Monte—aren't you, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "You can bet that I'm going to make the fur fly! I'm going to rake it in, you fellows!"

"You blithering fat Owl!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Look here, Smithy!" said Johnny Bull gruffly. "Bunter's a blithering idiot, but you're not. You're bound to see that he doesn't play the goat."

"The boundfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You shut up!" hooted Bunter.

"Why not be sports? Think Wingate of the Sixth will be after you with his ashplant? Yah! We've fixed it up, haven't we, Smithy?"

"We have," agreed the Bounder, with a nod.

"We're going to have a wild night at Monte, ain't we, old chap?" grinned the fat Owl.

"We are."

"You'll have to see me through until I win something, old fellow. That's understood—what?"

"I shall see you through this trip to Monte, certainly."

"You can't be serious, Smithy," said Harry Wharton, staring at the Bounder. "For one thing, fellows under age are not admitted to that gambling den at all."

"That can be wangled, can't it, Smithy?" grinned Bunter.

"It can be arranged for this evening's trip, so far as needful," said the Bounder. "You fellows ready?"

The Famous Five looked at him. Johnny Bull opened his mouth, but he shut it again. That Smithy was seriously proposing to take them for a "wild night" at a gambling den was improbable—probable as it seemed to Bunter. They could only conclude that there was some jape on—though, for the life of them, they could not guess what it all meant.

(Continued on page 28.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

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

"Ring out the Old,
Ring in the New."

A NOTHER year gone, chums! This week's issue of the MAGNET sets the ball rolling for the New Year, and gives me the opportunity of wishing my vast army of chums

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

It would take up far too much space to dwell on the many things that have happened during the past year. But let's not think of 'em; may this new year of 1937 bring about peace and happiness to all men. The very best of luck is what I wish every "Magnetite."

As this is the time for making resolutions, I feel that I must remind you of the resolution I made last year, and that was to improve the high standard of our school stories, and thereby double the circulation of the MAGNET. Well, I say here and now that that has very largely been achieved, thanks to the whole-hearted support of my chums. May the New Year bring further success in its train!

And now I must find room to thank the thousands of readers who have sent me Christmas and New Year cards, which I prize more than they can imagine. If any man ought to feel proud, it's your Editor. Friends come, and friends go—but MAGNET readers remain loyal all the time. Wherever possible I have replied personally to those who sent me cheery greetings. But hundreds of readers remained anonymous. To all of these I take the opportunity of voicing my appreciation in this Chat.

You're real fine pals, every one of you, and my one great pleasure would be to shake you all by the hand. And the same applies to my girl chums, too. It's surprising what a number of the fair sex read and enjoy the MAGNET. May their numbers increase!

I guess that the announcements in this week's number concerning

FREE GIFTS

have aroused your curiosity—what? And no wonder, for it is a well-known fact that the Old Paper has always been well to the fore in this respect. Of course, you are all anxious to know the nature of these FREE GIFTS and when they will come into your possession. Well, all I am going to say at this juncture is: "Keep your eyes on future Chats!"

For close on six months now, I have been running cover-to-cover stories of

Harry Wharton & Co. That they have satisfied a long-felt want is proved conclusively by the letters of thanks that have been, and still are, pouring in from every corner of the globe. "Grand stuff, these long yarns!" says Harold Boyd, a long-standing reader from far-off Australia, and that seems to be the general opinion of all my readers. More power to Frank Richards' elbow—or should I say pen?

That our star school-story author is determined to keep the old flag flying was made clear to me the other day when we discussed the wonderful wheezes he's working on for future yarns.

Before writing this chat, I had the pleasure of reading next week's story. And what a smasher it was, too! The title:

"MUTINY ON THE FIREFLY!"

will give you some idea of the treat in store for you. Smuggler, gun-runner, and lawless adventurer, Captain Compton decides at last to steer the straight and narrow course, with the result that the whole crew of the Firefly is against him. Like ravenous wolves they attack, with the result that— But why spoil your enjoyment by giving away the story? Get next Saturday's MAGNET and read all about it.

The "Greyfriars Herald," as bright and sparkling as ever, together with the Greyfriars Rhymester's contribution, will complete this bumper issue of the MAGNET. Be sure to order your copy early, chums.

"What's in a name?" is a question that is often asked, and if you are thinking of toffee, then "Palm" is a name which suggests to you one of the finest sweets that you can buy. Just consider the ingredients for a moment: pure cane sugar, rich English milk, "Palm" butter and energy-making glucose. Even home-made toffee has a strong rival in "Palm" Toffee. When you call at your local "tuckshop" for your next supply of sweets, don't forget to ask for "Palm" Toffee.

Before winding up this Chat I would like to point out to one of my Richmond chums that I could not reply by post to his letter, as he did not furnish me with his address. Anyway, his query has already been answered fully in the daily Press.

Look out for another cheery chat next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1508.

"Ready!" said Harry.

They left the balcony and got into their coats, and went out to the car. Billy Bunter seemed to be walking on air.

His little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles. He wore one of Vernon-Smith's overcoats, open, so as to display the gleaming white front of one of the Bounder's dress shirts. In that shirt-front gleamed a diamond that was Bunter's very own—almost the only thing that was his own in his present outfit. It had cost Bunter sixpence, but he fondly believed that all the Hotel Gloria fancied it to be real.

The party packed into the car, which rolled away with them, leaving the blaze of lights of the Gloria to fade into the night behind.

The Famous Five were rather silent in the car. The Bounder sat with a cheery, smiling face. Bunter did the talking. Clearly he was looking forward with tremendous anticipation to a wild night at Monte.

The chums of the Remove could not help feeling a little dubious. It was owing to them that Bunter was in the party. And it would be quite in accord with the Bounder's sardonic nature to get his own back, landing them in some disgraceful adventure, by allowing Bunter to take the lead. Certainly, if the car arrived at a casino, the Famous Five were not going to enter it. That Smithy was pulling somebody's leg they could not doubt, but there was an uncomfortable doubt whether it was their leg or Bunter's.

The car stopped on a shadowy road. The French chauffeur got down and opened the door, bowing.

"Voilà, messieurs!" he said.

"We get out here," said Smithy.

They got out. Billy Bunter blinked round eagerly through his big spectacles. There was no sign of a casino yet, at all events. No lights gleamed from the dusky night. Close at hand was a path running up the hill through olive woods, but it seemed, so far as Bunter could see, to lead only into solitude and darkness. He blinked at the Bounder, puzzled.

"I say, Smithy—" squeaked Bunter.

"This way!" said the Bounder cheerfully, and he started walking up the shadowy path.

"But I say, where does that lead?" squeaked Bunter.

"Monte!" answered Smithy over his shoulder.

"Oh! All right! But why the dickens couldn't we go all the way in the car?" grunted Bunter. "I don't like walking."

The Famous Five followed on, wondering but smiling. The car roared away and left them to it. They did not, of course, know a great deal about the local topography: but they did not suppose for a moment that this lonely, hill-side path through the olive groves led to the Casino of Monte Carlo.

They tramped on cheerfully, much more cheerfully than Bunter. Bunter was fearfully keen on a wild night at Monte, but he did not like walking!

Vernon-Smith led the way, whistling as he went. No doubt he knew the locality well enough, and knew where he was going. The other fellows could only follow his guidance.

"I say, Smithy, I'm tired!" gasped Bunter, when a mile had been covered. "I say, I'm fed up with this! What the thump are we walking for?"

"Exercise!" answered the Bounder over his shoulder.

"You silly idiot!" roared Bunter. "Think I've come out for exercise?"

"Yes!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I jolly well haven't, see?"

"Looks to me as if you have!" answered the Bounder imperturbably.

"You're getting it, anyhow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. "Look here, I'm not going to walk any more."

"Please yourself, old fat freak! It's

Read and Enjoy

"A CHALLENGE TO GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards—this week's story dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in the

GEM

a nice night for sitting out! Come on, you fellows; you're not tired out yet, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

The Famous Five walked on with Smithy. Billy Bunter rolled on after them. His fat little legs were feeling like dropping off by this time. But he did not want to drop behind. He had not the remotest chance of finding his way on his own, by those bewildering, shadowy paths on the hillsides; also, he was in momentary expectation of seeing the dazzling lights of the Casino shine through the dusky darkness.

But no shining lights greeted his eyes. By one path after another they threaded the shadowy ways of the hillside. Harry Wharton & Co. were enjoying the walk, so was the Bounder. Billy Bunter was not!

The fat Owl came to a halt at last and leaned on a tree, gasping for breath.

"I—I say, you fellows, hold on! I've got to rest!" he gurgled. "Ow! I'm tired! I say, Smithy you beast, how far is it to Monte from here?"

"No distance at all!" answered Smithy.

"I can't see it!" howled Bunter.

"You're standing on it."

"Eh?"

"It's a bit dark," said Smithy. "But if you can't see it, you can surely feel it, as you're standing on it."

"Standing on what?" shrieked Bunter. "Monte Nero."

"Wh-a-a-at? Wharrer you mean?" yelled Bunter. "You said we were going to Monte—"

"We've come!" said the Bounder.

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

"Every hill hereabouts is called Monte!" explained the Bounder. "This is the monte I meant."

"I thought you meant Monte Carlo!" shrieked Bunter.

"Now I wonder," said the Bounder gravely, "what made Bunter think I meant Monte Carlo? You fellows know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "You said I was going to have a wild night—"

"So you are! You'll find it wild enough before you get back, we've got five miles to walk to get out of this—"

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

Evidently the Bounder had been pulling Bunter's fat leg. Bunter like the wicked old man of the world he was, had stipulated for a wild night at Monte! He was getting it! The Bounder had led him up a monte, and he was getting a wild night, much wilder than he liked, now that he knew.

"You—you—you beast!" groaned Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! Ow! I'm tired! Wow! Beasts!"

Billy Bunter tottered on. The rest of that awful walk over interminable shadowy miles was like a nightmare to Billy Bunter. He gasped, he groaned, he tottered, and he staggered. It was rather a long walk for the other fellows, and they were feeling ready for a rest, when they sighted the Hotel Gloria again. Billy Bunter was almost crawling on his hands and knees.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, between them, helped him in. He had hardly enough breath left to call Herbert Vernon-Smith a beast! He did not even want any supper. He rolled into bed and snored!

Billy Bunter did not come down till noon the next day. And then he only snorted when the other fellows asked him how he had enjoyed his wild night at Monte!

THE END.

(Although the cruise of the Firefly is fast drawing to a close, the most exciting moments are yet to come for Harry Wharton & Co. Note the title of the final yarn in this thrill-packed series: "MUTINY ON THE FIRE-FLY!" Be sure of reading this smashing story by ordering next Saturday's MAGNET to-day, ohums!)

BE STRONG

I promise you Robust Health, Doubled Strength, Stamina, and Dashing Energy in 30 days or money back! My amazing 4-in-1 Course adds 10-25 ins. to your muscular development (with 2 ins. on Chest and 1 in. on Arms), also brings an Iron Will, Perfect Self-control, Virile Manhood, Personal Magnetism. Surprise your friends! Complete Course, 5/- Details free, privately—STEEBING INSTITUTE (Dept. A), 22 Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.

TALL

Your Height increased in 12 days or no cost. New discovery adds 2-5 ins. I gained 4 ins. Guaranteed safe. Full Course 5/- Details: J.B. Morley, 8 Bream's Bldgs., London, E.C.4.

STAMMERING!

Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.

60 Different FREE, including Horseman, Selangor, PERAK, Scarce Airmail, PHILIPPINE Islands, Bohemia, 50 different, Pictorial Trinidad, ANZAC (Cenotaph). Postage 2d., request approvals.—ROBINSON BROS. (A), MORETON, WIRRAL, LL.

BLUSHING,

SHYNESS.—For FREE particulars simple home cure write Mr. HUGHES, 26, HART STREET, LONDON, W.C.1.

INCREASED

my own height to 6ft. 3ins.!! T.H., age 16, to 6ft. 10. I.P., age 21, from 5ft. 6 to 5ft. 10! Ross System is Genuine. Enrol and Watch Yourself Grow! Fee 22/2s. Particulars 1jd. stamp.—P. ROSS, Height Specialist, Scarborough.

OUTFIT

Album, 60 different Stamps, Mounted Pocket Case, Perf. Gauge, Pair Chalks. Send 2d. postage for approvals.—LIVERPOOL & TOWNSEND (U.S.), LIVERPOOL.

STAMPS—50 FREE

—King Edward VIII Morocco, Jubilee (Canadian), etc. Request approvals. 1jd. postage. Pkt. of 10 Air Mails, 6d. H. PRESCOTT, 657, Salisbury House, London Wall, E.C.2.

STAMPS

300 DIFFERENT, incl. Airmail Beautiful Uncommon Sets, Pictorials, Colonials. Price 6d. (Abroad 1/-).—W. A. WHITE, ENGINE LANE, LYE, WORCS.

Complete St. Sam's Yarn
THE CUP-TIE PLOTTER!
By **DICKY NUGENT**

"PLAY UP, THE ROVERS!"

Jack Jolly & Co., of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, fairly jumped, as that cry fell on their ears.

"My hat!" ejaculated Jack Jolly. "That's the Head!"

"So it is!" gasped Frank Fearless. "Fancy the Head, of all people, turning up to a professional football match."

The chums of the Fourth were astonished. It was the last afternoon of their hollerday, and they had decided to spend it watching a cup-tie between Fowlborough Yewnited and Dirthchester Rovers. The last thing they had anticipated was that they would bump into anyone so important as Doctor Birchmell.

But there he was, right enough—sitting in the grandstand just behind them. What was even more surprising, he was actually cheering one of the teams, as they trotted out on to the pitch, just as if he was one of their staunchest supporters!

"Go it, ye cripples!" he roared. "Give 'em six this afternoon, boys! Up, the Rovers!"

"Ahem!" cooed Jack Jolly. "Good-afternoon, sir!"

The Head stopped cheering and looked down. He gave a violent, spasmodic start, when he recognised the cheery Fourth Formers below him and his face culled up like a turkey-cock's.

"G-g-good - afternoon, Jolly! G-g-good-afternoon, boys!" he stammered.

"What a serprize, seeing you here!"

"You're not half so serprized as we are, sir!"

larked the kaptin of the Fourth. "We never dreamed for a moment you were a supporter of Dirthchester Rovers!"

Doctor Birchmell bit his lips.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Jolly, I'm not!"

The chums of the Fourth stared blankly.

"In that case, sir," venchered Frank Fearless, "why are you cheering them as if you were one of their regular fans?"

The Head leaned forward and sank his voice to a meer wisper.

"Mum's the word, boys," he said with a wink. "As a matter of fact, I've given the Rovers to win on my football forecast coupon—and it's the only result about which I'm in doubt!"

"Oh, crums!"

"The other results are dead certs," grinned the Head. "But this one is not quite so certain. For that reason, I've turned up to give the Rovers as much encourridgment as I can!"

"My hat!"

"I hoap you'll join me, boys," went on Doctor Birchmell, "in cheering on the Rovers to viktory."

"Sorry, sir," said Merry. "We're Yewnited supporters ourselves."

"Look here—"

But a deffering roar of cheering from the crowd stopped Jack Jolly & Co. from hearing the rest of the Head's remarks. The teams were lining up for

"THANKS, MR. PROUT!"
WE GOLFERS SHOUT!
Grins **GEORGE BLUNDELL**

I'm jolly grateful to Mr. Prout for giving me an idea of how to play golf. So is everybody else who has had the same experience.

He's a jolly good golfer himself. He must be, because he says he is. So, of course, it's an awful bore to him to have to trot round a course with a novice. And yet he doesn't mind!

What's more, he's full of praise for a chap, even when a chap fails entirely to carry out his instructions.

He told me to do exactly what he did. I watched him carefully and saw that he lashed out as though he was aiming at the ball, hit the air instead, then balanced on one leg, and finally hit the turf with the back of his neck.

Try as I would, I couldn't per-



The GREYFRIARS HERALD
No. 222. EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON. January 9th, 1937.



The Truth About the
FIRE AT WHARTON LODGE!
By **HARRY WHARTON**

In answer to about ten thousand inquiries—YES, there has been a fire at Wharton Lodge!

I should never have thought it possible for news to get about like the news of this particular fire.

Within a second or two of its starting, everybody in the House knew of it, not to mention the gardener and his assistant who were both about 200 feet distant from the house!

From the gardener's assistant it travelled via an errand boy on a bicycle down to the village. It went all round the village in about ten seconds and spread to about six neighbouring villages in less than ten minutes.

I need hardly mention that the original story received a good many alterations and embellishments in the course of its many journeys!

In a quarter of an hour, all the phone wires for miles were jammed with anxious inquirers, and at least two exchange operators had swooned from overwork.

Shortly after that, streams of traffic began to arrive, till the roads were all completely congested.

When the fire-engine eventually reached the scene of the fire, quite a lot of the traffic had to be ditched before it could get past. It got through eventually, however, and stirring scenes were witnessed when the firemen descended and made an onslaught on the front door with their hatchets—not discovering till after they had wrecked it that they could have opened it by turning the handle!

And not one of us has had a moment's peace since. Inquiries have come by phone, wire, and letter—apart, of course, from personal calls. The storm is still raging as thick as ever at the time of going to press!

What, you may ask, was the extent of the damage over which so many people seem to have exercised their minds?

When I tell you, you'll realise that there's certainly no justification for all the fuss we've had to put up with.

As a matter of fact, all that happened was that my uncle accidentally ignited the coat-tails of his dress-suit while standing in front of the fire in the drawing-room!

THAT'S ALL!

the kick-off and the referee was putting his wissle to his lips.

Fee-ee-ce-cep!

Plonk!

The grate game had started!

"Play up, Fowlborough!" yelled Jack Jolly.

"On the bawl, the Yewnited!" roared Fearless and Merry and Bright.

The chums of the Fourth heard an angry snort behind them.

"Yah! The Yewnited can't play footer for toffy! Come on, the Rovers! Smash 'em, boys! Spifficate 'em! Horray!"

The Head finished up with a delited cheer, as one of the Rovers gave a Yewnited man a terrific kick on the nose. But the Head's joy was short-lived, for the ref's wissle shrilled out immediately and he awarded a free kick against the Rovers.

Instantly, the Head was on his feet, loudly protesting.

"Boo! What's the matter with the ref?" he roared. "It was a fare charge! Any fool could see that. I could see it myself! Yarooooo!"

The Head's protests finished up in a feendish yell. His naybours on either side, who seemed to object to his remarks, had each grabbed a half

borough Yewnited were leading by five goals to nil!

Jack Jolly & Co. couldn't help grinning as they turned round to the Head again.

"Looks as if your forecast is going to be a bit off the rails, sir!" said Jolly.

But the Head wasn't half so downcast as the Co., had eggsppected him to be. There was a cunning look in his shifty eyes, as though he was engaged in hatching some deep, dark plot: and at Jolly's words he uttered a low larf.

"Ha, ha, ha! The game's not over yet—in fakt, it's only just begun!" he said, with a leer. And then, to the juniors' serprize, he got up from his seat and made for the eggst!

There was a look of desprit resolve on the Head's fize, as he clattered down the stairs leading out of the stand.

"Aha!" he muttered to himself. "The time has come to do the dirty deed! If the Rovers can't win by fare means, then they must do it by fowl!"

So saying, he opened a door marked "Offshals Only," and walked boidly in.

He pawzed for a cupple of ticks to give a swift, furtive glance round him. Almost immojately he spotted a door on which was painted the sign: "REF'S PRIVIT ROOM."

Chuckling gleefully into his beard, Doctor Birchmell galloped over to this second door and bent down and applied his eye to the keyhole.

"What a bit of luck!" he muttered. "The ref's alone! Now for it!"

With these words, he silently opened the door and stepped in.

The referee, all ignorant of the fate that threatened him, was munching away with grate enjoyment at an apple.

Stelthily and with infinite cawshun, the Head crept up behind the ref. Then, suddenly, like a tiger pouncing on his prey, he sprang—and the serprized ref. found his arms pinioned to his sides.

"Ow-ow-ow! Yarooooo! G-g-gug-gug-grooooo!"



drakes with the laws of football. All the goals scored by the Yewnited he disallowed because he said they were offside. On the other hand, he gave a goal to the Rovers whenever he was given half a chance!

With six men off the field and the ref. on the side of the Rovers, the result was a fourgonous conclusion. First the Rovers drew level, and then they forged ahead—and when the final wissle went, they had won by 14 goals to 5!

"I suppose you're quite certain of the remaining nine, sir?"

"Positive, my dear Jolly! Just to make assurance dubbly sure, however, I will have a look down at the scores," said the Head, as he bought an evening paper from a passing newspaper boy.

Doctor Birchmell stopped and glanced down the stop-presscollum. Then he blinked. Finally, a bitter cry of angwish burst from his lips.

"Something gone wrong with the works, sir?" asked Fearless.

The newspaper dropped from the Head's nerveless hands.

"They've lost—all nine of them!" he moaned. "The only correct result is the one I mannigded to wangle! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jack Jolly.

"Stop it, you cackling idiots!" groaned the Head feebly.

But Jack Jolly & Co. refused to stop it! They considered that it was the best possibl thing that could have happened! It would teach the Head not to be such a blessed swindler in future, they reflected!

So they larfed and larfed and larfed—and for every larf of theirs there was at least one groan from the lips of the Cup-tie Plotter!

The Head started violently; his greenish eyes eyed the Co. uncizily.

"Then you've guessed?" he muttered. "I say, you boys, for goodness' sake don't blew the gaff on me, will you? Come along like good fellows and have tea with me out of the munny I shall win for correctly forecasting those ten re-



blessed ball and held on to my club intact. I did feel a chump! I can tell you! But Prout was kindness itself. He even muttered something about my getting on all right.

And so all through the lesson! I simply could not do it like Prouty. The oasy, professional way in which he broke clubs in half, hit lumps of earth into the air and left the ball standing filled me with envy and despair. But he didn't grumble at mo once.

I'm afraid I shall never play golf like he does. But he did his best with me and he was wonderfully patient.

After which, I hope you'll all understand why would-be golfers always shout "Thanks, Mr. Prout, old scout!"

BLOW MOTORS—I'M STICKING TO MUSIC!
Says **CLAUDE HOSKINS**

Stewart let me try my hand with his pater's car one day during the vac.

I don't know whether it was the car that was at fault or me. One of us certainly was. Yet I find it hard to believe that I, who have so sure a grasp of the technical details of a piano, should fail to understand the mere automatic intricacies of a motor-car.

I pressed the self-starter all right and achieved a crescendo of sound just as if I'd been playing on my own piano at home. Then I stepped on the loud pedal and the absurd vehicleleaped forward like some mad thing!

Stewart shouted something, and I touched lightly on some of the contrivances within my reach. I'm perfectly sure my movements were as smooth and rhythmic as if I had been playing some old-fashioned Viennese waltz. Yet the results were the opposite of smooth and rhythmic. There was one

loud blast of music from the horn, then the car jumped backwards and forwards and backwards again and then turned sharply to the left. The tempo of the thing was most eccentric!

In the finish I became desperate. I passed my fingers through my hair and imagined I was playing Rachmaninoff's "Prelude." This proved to be a prelude to my crashing into Stewart's garden wall and wrecking the car.

I can only copelude that I played a wrong note.

Taking it all round, I've decided that I'm sticking to music. Blow motors!

NO MORE BUMPING!

All those in favour of abolishing bumping amongst schoolboys please assemble in the Remove passage immediately after the holidays. Object: To call on opponents of the No-More-Bumping movement and bump them.

ROLL UP! ROLL UP!

Annual Meeting of the Catapult Shooters and Window Breakers Union in the Rag the first evening of the new term at 7.45 prompt. Harold Skinner, President, will lecture on "Have You An Aim in Life?"