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The Juniors' Enemy



A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.,
By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Startling Greeting.

"HOLD on!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
"Quiet, Bob. Hold on a minute!" whispered Harry Wharton.
"I say, you fellows——"
"Shut up, Bunter!"
"But——"
"Dry up, will you?" muttered Harry Wharton.
"No, I jolly well won't," said Billy Bunter indignantly.

"I'm tired, and I'm awfully hungry, and I want to get in. I tell you—— Ow—ow!"

Billy Bunter broke off. He had no choice in the matter, because Harry Wharton's hand was placed over his mouth, and as Harry's other hand was grasping the back of his collar, the fat junior could not escape the pressure.

"Quiet!" whispered Wharton. "If you make another sound, Billy, I'll—I'll squash you!"

"Groo!" murmured Bunter faintly.

"Quiet!"

Wharton released the fat junior, and Bunter wriggled and

granted softly; but he did not venture to speak. He could still feel the grind of Wharton's knuckles in the back of his fat neck.

Wharton had stopped dead in the shadowed garden, and the other juniors had stopped, too. The moon was sailing high over the Atlantic, which washed with a dull murmur into the little cove at the foot of the cliff. The path up the cliff from the cove ran among dark trees and bushes, which rustled in the breeze from the sea.

Ahead of the Greyfriars juniors the dim form of a house loomed up among the trees, backing on the cliff. It was Black Rock House, the home of Hazeldene's uncle, where the Greyfriars chums were to spend their Easter vacation.

They had arrived a day later than had been their original intention; and the hour was late now, as they picked their way up the path from the sea towards the lonely house in that nook on the coast of Western Devon.

A light was shining through the trees, from one of the lower windows of the house, and Harry was pointing to it, his chums following his glance.

"That's the window of the dining-room," said Hazeldene, in a low voice. "My uncle generally spends the evening there. What's the matter?"

"Look!"

As Wharton whispered the word, a shadow crossed the window.

The dark figure of a man showed up for a moment against the lighted blind, and then vanished.

The juniors started.

The shadow on the blind did not come from the inside of the room—it was not a shadow, but a man's actual form that had crossed the light only a dozen yards from where the Greyfriars juniors stood.

Who was it that was lurking in that lonely garden, outside the window of Captain Cunliffe's room?

At any other time, perhaps, the juniors would not have attached much importance to the sight; but now their nerves were highly strung.

For all the way from London to Devonshire they had been followed by Pedro Ijurra, the South American adventurer who had recognised Hazeldene by his likeness to his uncle, and had dogged their steps to track them to the home of Captain Cunliffe—why, the juniors did not know, excepting that they were sure it was with no friendly intent.

They had shaken off the pursuit of the South American, as they believed, by finishing their journey in a boat along the coast—for the sea left no trail. But the sight of the shadowy form outside the lighted window brought back the sinister face of the South American to their minds at once.

They stood halted under the trees, silent and dubious. Billy Bunter was not inclined to talk now. He had seen the shadowy form, and his teeth were chattering. Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"You saw that, you chaps?" he whispered.

"Yes," muttered Mark Linley. "Who can it be?"

"A giddy burglar, perhaps," said Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook his head.

"A burglar—in a lonely place like this—miles from anywhere. It's not an ordinary burglar, at all events."

"But—but it can't be that chap who followed us from London," said Hazeldene, with an anxious look. "We dropped him when we took to the sea."

"So I thought."

"And he couldn't have got here along the cliffs as fast as we came in a boat, I should think," Bob Cherry remarked.

Wharton shook his head again.

"It doesn't seem likely; but—"

"But I shouldn't be surprised at anything that fellow did, after the way he stuck to our track," said Nugent.

"Exactly."

"I—I—I say, you fellows," quavered Billy Bunter, "I—I think we ought to go back, you know. We don't want to run into that chap."

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yes, but—"

"Be quiet!" said Wharton crisply. "Now, kids, I think we'd better make that chap, whoever he is, explain himself. If it's the South American chap, who was so anxious to learn where Captain Cunliffe lived, he's here for no good; and in any case he can't be up to any good, hanging about outside the house like this, whoever he is."

"That's so."

"We'll collar him," said Mark Linley. "Let's get on."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "There he is again."

The shadowy form crossed the lighted window again. There was a faint gasp from Billy Bunter in the gloom of the trees.

"Hark!" whispered Wharton.

Footsteps!

The sound sent a strange thrill through the Greyfriars

chums. There were footsteps on the path, and the footsteps were coming directly towards them.

In the gloom of the trees it was impossible to see an inch before their faces, the approaching figure was quite hidden; but the footsteps on the shingly path sounded clearly in the stillness of the night.

"Ready!" said Harry Wharton, in the faintest of whispers. "Collar him as soon as he comes near! I—"

"Right!"

The footsteps abruptly halted. Perhaps some faint sound from the juniors had reached the ears of the approaching man.

A sharp voice rang through the darkness, and there was a faint glimmer as of steel, catching the light from the window.

"Stand back!"

The shout rang so suddenly in the silence that the juniors started, and exclaimed. The echo boomed away among the trees towards the sea.

"Stand back, you scoundrel! Mind, I am armed."

"Uncle!" cried Hazeldene.

"What!" gasped Wharton.

"It's my uncle," exclaimed the junior, pressing forward.

"Uncle! Don't you know me? Uncle Hugh!"

"What?"

"I'm Hazeldene—my friends are here!" exclaimed the junior. "You know me, uncle."

"Hazel!"

The voice changed now, and the juniors could detect the deep relief in it. A powerful form loomed up before them, dim in the gloom. A dark lantern suddenly turned on its light, and the rays shot upon the juniors and revealed them. A dark, sunburnt, not unkindly face peered at them in the lantern-light—a face rough from long exposure to sun and wind, with keen and searching eyes.

"So you've come," exclaimed Captain Cunliffe. "I—I must have startled you, my lads. I was looking through the garden—there have been thieves in this neighbourhood, and I was looking—but never mind now. Come into the house. I was expecting you yesterday, as you know; and since I had your wire I did not know when to expect you. Come in!"

The captain's manner was joviality itself. The juniors wonderingly followed him into the house, and gladly enough they laid down their bags in the hall. They had reached the end of their journey at last; but what kind of an Easter holiday were they likely to pass in this lonely house by the sea—with that strange old sea-captain who searched for intruders in the garden, revolver in hand, and the mysterious man from South America seeking their trail? Yet the chums of Greyfriars were not displeased at the prospect. There was a spice of adventure in the affair that appealed strongly to their imagination. Harry Wharton felt that that holiday on the lonely Devon coast was to prove an adventurous one—though how adventurous it was to prove, he did not guess at that moment.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A Good Time for Bunter.

"O H, gorgeous!"

The exclamation broke involuntarily from Billy Bunter as he entered the dining-room of the Black Rock House. The room was very cosy, and a huge fire blazed and roared in the wide old-fashioned chimney.

The table was laid for supper—and such a supper!

Captain Cunliffe had shown the boys to their quarters, where they had removed their coats, and changed their boots, and washed away some of the stains of their long and rough journey.

On descending to supper, they found everything ready.

The captain evidently had great ideas of hospitality. And uncertain as he had been of the time of the arrival of his guests, he had certainly not lacked in preparation for them.

A hot supper smoked on the board that seemed more suitable for the whole crew of a ship than for half a dozen lads, however sharp set.

The juniors were hungry enough, and their faces lighted up at the sight of the cosy room, and blazing fire, and the hospitable table.

Captain Cunliffe was sitting by the fire smoking a pipe, as they came in, and he rose with a smile to greet them.

Now that they could see him fairly in the light, the Greyfriars juniors could not help liking the look of the sea-captain.

He was a man of medium size, of very powerful build, and his thick limbs and deep, broad chest denoted great strength. His face was burnt by the sun almost to the hue of a Spaniard's, and seamed by innumerable lines. There was a deep wrinkle between his eyes, but the eyes



"Look!" As Harry Wharton whispered the word, a shadow crossed the window the juniors were watching. The dark figure of a man showed up for a moment against the lighted blind, and then vanished.

themselves were as keen as steel. His hair was thick and dark, and his short beard untouched by grey. A strong, kindly, good-tempered sailor he looked; and the juniors could not help wondering what could be the cause of quarrel between him and the mysterious adventurer from South America. Whatever it was, it was easy to believe that the wrong had not been done by Captain Cunliffe.

There was a sailor-like joviality in the skipper's manner that went straight to the hearts of the juniors. It was clear that he liked youthful society, and a man who is fond of young people can never be far wrong at heart. He did the honours of the table with a frank and kind manner that won the juniors at once.

Not a word escaped his lips in reference to the strange

scene in the garden. And, indeed, the juniors were thinking more of their supper now than of anything else.

A grizzled old fellow, who had evidently been a sailor waited at the table. He had a face as darkly sunburnt as the captain's, and it was easy for the juniors to guess that he had sailed tropic seas with Captain Cunliffe. The captain addressed him as Ben, and Ben replied to every order by touching his forelock and saying, "Ay, ay, sir!" as if he were still on the deck of the old ship.

As the juniors learned later, Ben's wife was the cook and housekeeper of the establishment, and these two formed all the household of Captain Cunliffe.

The house was one of considerable size, and very old, and not many of the rooms were occupied by the household.

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But several more had been made ready for the reception of the visitors.

"I say, you fellows, this is gorgeous!" said Billy Bunter, in a whisper. "The cook here must be pretty good."

"Yes, rather!"

"And the captain knows that a chap is hungry after a long journey, too," said Bunter. "No blessed stinting about this supper."

"What ho!"

"I say, Hazeldene, I like your uncle," said Bunter, in that tone of insufferable patronage he generally adopted when he felt safe in doing so.

Hazeldene looked at the fat junior.

"What's that?" he asked.

"I like your uncle," said Bunter, with his mouth full.

"Thanks!" said Hazeldene contemptuously.

Contempt, the eastern proverb says, will pierce even the shell of the tortoise; but perhaps Bunter had a thicker rind than a tortoise, for he did not notice the contempt in Hazeldene's voice and look.

"Not at all!" he said. "I like him, and I don't mind saying so. A little rough-and-ready, perhaps, but—Ow!"

Captain Cunliffe looked down the table from his end. He had not, of course, heard the talk, but he could not help hearing Bunter's agonised "Ow!" as Bob Cherry jammed an iron heel upon his foot.

"Ow!" moaned Bunter. "Ow! Ah!"

"Is anything the matter?" asked the captain.

"Ow!" Some beast has jammed his beastly boot on my foot!" groaned Bunter. "Ow!"

Bob Cherry coloured.

"Shut up, Bunter," said Harry.

"Ow!"

"Don't mind Bunter, sir," said Frank Nugent. "He's often taken like that—generally when he's eating, and he's generally eating."

"The eatingfulness is terrific," murmured Hurreas Jamsat Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You won't have time to finish your supper if you talk, Billy," said Harry.

And at that reminder the fat junior wired in with renewed energy.

Supper over, the juniors drew their chairs about the fire for a little chat before going up to bed. Billy Bunter blinked at them.

"I—I'm not quite finished yet," he remarked. "I'll join you presently."

"Ay, ay!" said Captain Cunliffe.

And Bunter tackled the pudding a third and a fourth time, and kept it up, while the wondering glances of old Ben Topman followed all his movements. The old sailor had seen hungry men at sea, and hungry savages ashore, but in the course of sixty years' experience he had never come upon an appetite like Billy Bunter's. That was unique.

The captain lighted his pipe.

"Your sister arrives to-morrow, Hazel," he observed, through clouds of smoke. "Marjorie and her friend—"

"Clara," said Nugent.

"Yes, Clara. They will be here to-morrow. And now, tell me why you were delayed. You should have been here yesterday," said the captain. "Your wire explained nothing."

The juniors glanced at one another.

They had spent twice the time arranged upon the journey, for the purpose of throwing off the track the South American who had shadowed them from London, and Harry felt that it was their duty to acquaint the captain with the circumstances.

Yet he shrank from doing so. He had a feeling that it would be a terrible shock to the captain to hear of the pursuit by Pedro Ijurra. The strange scene on their arrival in the dusky garden, had shown that Captain Cunliffe lived in expectation of being sought by an enemy.

"The fact is—" said Harry. "But perhaps Hazel had better tell you—"

"Go on, Hazel."

Hazeldene coloured a little. But the explanation had to be gone through.

"We met a chap in London," he said. "He saw me, and guessed that I was a relation of yours, by the likeness. You know I'm very like you, uncle."

"So you are, lad."

"Well, the chap wanted to find you out, and we thought it was none of his business, so we dodged him," said Hazeldene awkwardly.

The captain sat bolt upright in his chair.

"He wanted to find me out."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He said he was an old friend of yours."

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The captain set his lips. The juniors did not look at him. But they felt that he had grown pale under his brown skin.

"Do you know his name?"

"A name was on a knife we took from him," said Harry.

"And the name?"

"Pedro Ijurra."

"My Heaven!"

There was a crash on the hearth as the captain's pipe fell from his hand. Hazeldene sprang to his feet. Captain Cunliffe lay back in his chair, breathing heavily, pale as death.

"Uncle! You are ill!"

The captain waved him back.

"It's all right," he muttered thickly. "Let me alone."

"But—"

"I am all right."

The captain recovered himself in a few moments. The juniors sat in awkward silence. The terrible shock the name had given the captain was only too apparent.

"And the man?" said Captain Cunliffe, after a pause.

"What was he like?"

"A dark fellow—a South American."

"Did you see whether he—whether he had a scar upon his forehead?" said the captain, in a low voice. "Perhaps—"

"He had one," said Harry Wharton. "I saw it when he removed his hat."

"Ah!"

There was a long silence.

The captain picked up his pipe with a shaking hand, and relighted it. He smoked on for some minutes without speaking.

The juniors did not know how to break the silence.

"Tell me exactly what happened with that man and yourselves," said the captain, at last. "Spin me the whole yarn from the beginning."

Wharton quietly and concisely related how they had been tracked by the South American, and how they had eluded him finally by taking the boat at a point some miles further up the coast.

The captain nodded approval.

"That was very keen of you!" he exclaimed. "Then the chances are that he has not followed you here."

"I should think not, sir."

Captain Cunliffe nodded.

"You—you startled me a little at first," he said slowly.

"I think I owe you some explanation. I knew this man—long ago—in South America, and I have good reasons for not wanting to meet him again. That is all. I don't suppose you lads will see anything more of him. If you should do so, give him a wide berth. He is a dangerous character."

He rose to his feet.

"It will be time for you lads to be getting to bed now," he remarked.

Bunter rose from the table. Even the fat junior of Greyfriars was finished at last. He moved with a slow and heavy motion, as if any movement was rather an uncomfortable process for him.

"I say, you fellows, I'm ready for bed," he said drowsily.

"Good-night, my lads!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The captain shook hands with the juniors, and they left him. Wharton glanced back involuntarily as they quitted the room; the captain was standing by the fire, staring gloomily into the glowing embers. Bunter grunted as the door was closed.

"I say, you fellows, I feel pretty fagged!" he exclaimed.

"Would you mind carrying me upstairs for once? I don't feel equal to the exertion of walking."

The juniors stared at the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove. Billy Bunter had never wanted for cheek, but this modest request, as Bob Cherry put it, really did take the bun.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Is Carried Up to Bed.

GET on, Billy," said Wharton brusquely. The fat junior leaned against the balustrade. He certainly was tired; they were all tired, Bunter more than the rest. The fat junior was never in good condition, and he was easily fatigued. And he had eaten so enormous a supper that it really required an effort on his part to move at all.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I think you chaps might carry me up," he said. "I'm jolly tired."

"Well, we're tired, too," said Mark Linley.

Bunter sniffed.

"If you're going to be beastly selfish about it, I suppose I needn't say any more," he exclaimed. "I think you might be decent."

Bob Cherry winked at his comrades.

"Perhaps we'd better carry him," he remarked. "If he moves, after that supper, he may have an attack of apoplexy; and what would Greyfriars do if anything happened to its Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Lend me a hand, Nugent."

"Certainly."

"Thanks," said Bunter. "Clasp your hands, and make a seat for me, and I'll sit down. Take care how you carry me, you know—any shock to the system might do me lots of harm. You know I've got a jolly delicate constitution."

"You take his ankles, Frank."

"What-ho!"

"I'll take his ears—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, hold on! I say, you fellows— Oh!"

"On second thoughts, I'll take his shoulders," said Bob Cherry, grasping the fat junior. "Now, then, are you ready?"

"Right-ho!"

"Here goes, then."

"Oh! Ow! I say, you fellows—"

But Bunter's protests were in vain. He had asked to be carried, and Bob Cherry and Nugent meant to carry him.

He was whisked off his feet—no light task, considering his weight—and Bob dragged him up by the shoulders, and Nugent followed, grasping his ankles.

"Ow, ow! Oh!"

"Now, then, up with him!"

"I'm doing my best!" gasped Bob Cherry. "But he's such a blessed weight! Does it matter if we bump you on each step, Bunter?"

"Ow!"

Bump!

"Yow!"

Bump!

"Yarrah!"

"Don't make that row; you'll wake the whole school—I mean the whole house," said Bob Cherry. "We're doing our best."

"Oh, leggo!"

"But you want to be carried up to bed."

"Yah! Lemme alone!"

"But—"

"Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "I'll walk!"

"Nonsense! You're too tired. Bring him along!"

"Yarrah!"

Bump, bump, bump!

The fat junior was bumped on every stair, and every fresh bump brought a fresh shriek from him. The rest of the juniors followed laughing. Billy Bunter struggled hard to escape from the grasp of the humorous juniors but in vain.

"You asked for it, you know," grinned Hazeldene.

"Ow!"

"My hat! He's heavy! It's not so bad, though, if you rest him on every stair," said Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

They reached the landing at last. Hazeldene took the candle in the bed-room—a long, large room, in which seven beds had been placed in a row, curiously resembling a bit of the old dormitory at Greyfriars.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Leggo!"

"Carry him to the bed," said Bob.

"Ow!"

Bunter was carried to the bed. Bob Cherry and Nugent gave him a final swing through the air, and let him go, and he swung upon the bed and bumped there. There was an ominous creak from the bed as the fat junior's heavy weight crashed upon it.

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sat up on the bed, and gasped. He put his spectacles straight on his little, fat nose, and blinked at the laughing juniors.

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

EVERY
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"Ow! You rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave it up. All his remarks were answered by yells of laughter from the juniors, and the more his indignation waxed, the more funny they seemed to consider it. It was impossible to be wrathful with dignity under the circumstances, and Billy Bunter snorted, and relapsed into silence.

"Well, I'm jolly tired," Mark Linley observed, as he took off his boots. "I shall be glad to get to bed."

"The gladfulness will be terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I thinkfully consider that we may sleep in the safe soundfulness, as the esteemed scoundrel Ijurra has quite lost our honourable track!"

Wharton went to the window, and pulled aside the blind and looked out.

The window opened on to the front of the old house, and gave a view to the garden with its shadowy trees, of the rocky path beyond, and the cove where the boat lay moored. Over all sailed the great, round moon.

The scene was almost as light as by day.

Wharton's eyes swept the moonlit scene. At any moment he would not have been surprised to see the form of the mysterious South American start into sight.

But nothing stirred in the moonlight.

He gazed from the window for several minutes. Suddenly there was a sound below, and he started.

A form loomed in the moonlight, but in a moment he recognised it as that of Captain Cunliffe.

There was a clink of a slackening chain, and a deep growl that reached the ear of the junior at the window.

The captain was releasing a dog, and Wharton caught a glimpse of a powerful mastiff as it bounded away into the shadows. It was a proof of the watchfulness that the dweller of Black Rock House incessantly kept.

But why?

What was it that Captain Cunliffe feared at the hands of the South American? Why was it that Pedro Ijurra was so grimly bent on tracking the captain to his home?

They were questions that Harry Wharton could not answer, but he went to bed in a very thoughtful mood, and in his dreams that night he saw again and again the dark and threatening face of the South American.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Chuckling It.

A BRIGHT sun blazing in at the window woke the Greyfriars juniors on the following morning.

Bob Cherry was the first to awake. He sat up in bed, and looked at the window, where the sun blazed through the curtains, and rubbed his eyes.

"My hat! It's jolly late!" he exclaimed.

The juniors had not been called. Captain Cunliffe knew that they were fatigued by their journey, and he had let them have their sleep out.

Bob Cherry pulled his big silver watch out from under his pillow, and looked at it. It was a quarter past nine. The junior gave a whistle.

"My hat! This wouldn't do for Greyfriars!" he exclaimed. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, you chaps!"

Wharton opened his eyes.

"Hallo!"

"It's a quarter past nine!"

"By Jove!"

"Up with you, lazybones!"

"Well, I like that! You're not up yet!"

"I'm getting up!" said Bob Cherry, putting one leg out of bed. "Get up, you slackers! Get up, you lazy bounders!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!" said Frank Nugent, rubbing his eyes.

"Time to get up!"

"Shake Bunter!"

"Ow! I say, you fellows, 'tain't rising-bell!" mumbled Bunter drowsily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pour the jug over him!"

"Here, hold on! I—I say, you know?" exclaimed Bunter, sitting bolt upright in bed suddenly. "Just stop that, you duffers! I say, it's not time to get up yet! We don't want to get up at seven here the same as at Greyfriars!"

"Ha, ha! It's turned a quarter past nine!"

"Rot! Your watch is fast!"

"You're slow, Bunter!" said Bob, with a shake of his head. "Lend me your boot, will you, Marky?"

"Certainly!" said Mark Linley.

"Look here, Cherry—"
 "Lend me your other boot, Marky! And one of yours, Hazel!"

"Here you are!"
 "I'm going to see if I can hit Bunter's nose, at three yards, in three tries!" explained Bob Cherry, swinging one of the boots into the air. "If I can't do it, you can try next. Inky, with three more boots!"

"With pleasure, my worthy chum!"
 Bunter bolted out of bed.
 "Stop it!" he roared. "You silly ass—"
 "Ha, ha, ha! The target's shifted!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's not the proper thing for a target to do! Keep still!"

"I won't! Look here, chuck it—"
 "Certainly!" said Bob.
 And he "chucked" the boot, and Bunter gave a roar as it tapped him on the head.

"Ow!"
 "Well, you asked for it!" said Bob Cherry.
 "Ow! Yow! I'm hurt!"

"Well, you told me to chuck it!"
 "I didn't mean that!" howled Bunter. "When I said chuck it, I meant chuck it, not chuck it, and you know that jolly well!"

"Well, I must say you're lucid!" said Bob Cherry. "It's another case of English as she is spoke. Sorry if there's any damage done—to the boot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Bunter rubbed his head. He was very little hurt, as a matter of fact; but he always made the most of the smallest injuries. Bunter was always on the demand for sympathy, as Bob Cherry put it; and, perhaps for that very reason, he never received any.

"It's a ripping morning!" said Harry Wharton, looking out of the window. "Look at the cove—smooth as glass! We can get a dip before brekker!"

"I'm jolly well not going to have a dip before brekker!" said Billy Bunter sulkily. "I'm hungry!"

And the fat junior dabbed his face with a dab of soap, which constituted his morning's wash. The juniors looked at him curiously.

Billy Bunter had joined the vacation party for Black Rock without anybody having asked him. That was a little way of Bunter's. Towards the end of the term he had boasted of an invitation from a titled friend, apparently expecting that there would be a great deal of keen competition among the Greyfriars fellows to secure him as a guest during the vacation.

If he expected that, he was disappointed. No one was anxious to secure Bunter. And the invitation from the titled friend—which probably only existed in Bunter's fertile imagination—having fallen through at the last moment, it became necessary for Bunter to secure an invitation by hook or by crook; for, though Bunter frequently enlarged upon the greatness and grandeur of his home, it had been generally observed that he was not at all anxious to spend his holidays there.

With his usual coolness, he had attached himself to Harry Wharton & Co. for the vacation, and Hazeldene had somewhat ungraciously consented to take him to Black Rock. He had permission from his uncle to bring as many fellows as he liked. He didn't like Bunter, but somehow the fat junior generally had his way in matters of this kind.

Now that Bunter had come, he was Hazeldene's guest, and so Hazel did not feel quite at liberty to deal with him as he would have dealt with him at Greyfriars. But the chums of the Lower Fourth were already what Bob Cherry called fed-up with the peculiar little ways of William George Bunter.

They had made up their minds that they had stood enough of him, and latterly they had taken to educating Bunter in a somewhat drastic fashion.

They all stood round watching the fat junior while he dabbed a fragment of soap on his nose, dabbed it off again, and then dabbed it with the towel.

That done, Bunter grunted as if he had greatly exerted himself, and sat on the bed for a few minutes to rest.

"I say, Nugent," he remarked, "would you mind lacing up my boots for me?"

Nugent breathed hard through his nose.

"You might put 'em on, too!" said Bunter thoughtfully.

"I get rather short in the breath when I stoop down."

"Anything else?" asked Nugent sweetly.

"Well, yes; you can fasten my collar, too, if you like! It's such a rotten exertion fastening a stud, I think!"

"Anything further?"

"Not just at present."

"Good! Before you finish dressing, aren't you going to wash?"

"I have washed!"

"Aren't you going to have a dip in the bay?"

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"Certainly not!"

"H'm!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry Wharton bluntly, "you weren't wanted to join in this little excursion—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But now you're with us, we're willing to make the best of it, if you behave yourself! I warned you when we left Greyfriars that you would have to behave yourself!"

"I don't want any of your rot!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "As a matter of fact, I expect I shall be the life of the party. I can sing and I can dance better than any of you chaps, and you'll jolly well find your noses put out of joint when the girls come! I can fill up an evening giving a ventriloquial entertainment, too!"

"In the first place," went on Wharton, as if Bunter had not spoken, "you're going to have a proper allowance of washing, and if you don't wash yourself, we'll wash you!"

"Oh, really—"

"Mind, that's a warning!"

"Collar him and wash him now!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. Bunter made a wild dive for the door. He was out on the landing before the juniors could seize him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked in at the doorway.

"I say, you fellows, give me my boots!"

"Come and fetch 'em!" said Bob Cherry.

"I—I won't—"

"Then go and eat coke!"

The juniors went on dressing. Bunter blinked doubtfully in at the door. He wanted his boots, but he had a feeling that if he ventured into the room he would be collared, and washed against his will.

"I—I say, Inky, just chuck me my boots!" he said, in a wheedling tone.

"Certainly!" said the obliging nabob. "Catch!"

"Oh!" roared Bunter.

He caught the boot on his chin, and disappeared outside. The boot was heard clumping down on the landing. The juniors yelled.

"Ow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you have the otherful boot, my worthy chum?"
 But Bunter did not reply. He sat groaning on the landing till the juniors came out. They found him with one boot on. They crowded down the stairs, and Bunter slunk into the bed-room for his other boot.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Morning Dip!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. tramped downstairs, and found Captain Cunliffe talking with Ben Topman in the little square hall. The big door was wide open, and a fresh breeze blew in from the sea. From the doorway glimpses of the deep blue water of the cove could be had, through the green trees and straggling bushes of the garden.

The captain was looking cheerful and bright, and there was no trace in his weatherbeaten face of the emotion he had shown the previous evening at the mention of the name of the South American. It seemed hardly possible to the juniors that this bluff, kindly, old sea dog, was the man they had met under the trees, who had challenged them in a ringing voice and with a levelled revolver.

Indeed, in the bright sunlight the whole affair of the South American seemed less serious than it had seemed in the shadowy night. The juniors were light-hearted enough now, and they hardly thought of the dark face of Pedro Ijurra.

"I thought I'd let you have your sleep out," the captain remarked, with a smile. "You must have been tired. How do you feel now?"

"Fit as a fiddle, sir," said Wharton cheerily.

"Right as rain, uncle," said Hazeldene. "We were thinking of having a dip in the cove before breakfast."

"Good! It shall be ready when you come in. Here, Duke!"

A huge mastiff came up at the call. It was the great animal Wharton had seen released into the garden in the moonlight.

The dog looked dubiously at the juniors, but a few words from the captain soothed him.

"You can pat his head," said Captain Cunliffe. "He will be friends with you; but he would be rough on a stranger who came into the place at night."

Wharton patted the mastiff's huge head. He was fond of dogs, and dogs generally liked him. Billy Bunter came sulkily downstairs, and he blinked in a very doubtful way at Duke through his big spectacles.

"I—I say, you fellows, does that beast bite?" he asked.

The captain looked at the fat junior sharply.

"Duke will not hurt you," he said.



Crack! From the distant cliffs came a report and a sudden puff of white smoke. The South American uttered an exclamation as a bullet crashed into the woodwork of the boat.

"He looks jolly dangerous."

"You need not be afraid of him."

"Oh, I'm not afraid," said Bunter. "I'm a fearless chap, you know; but at the same time—"

"Here, Duke!"

The captain walked away, with the dog following him. Bunter breathed more freely. As a matter of fact, Bunter would have been afraid of a poodle if it had shown its teeth.

"Come on, Bunt," said Bob Cherry, passing his arm affectionately through that of the fat junior.

"Eh?"

"Take his other arm, Inky."

"Certainly—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come on, or we sha'n't have time for a dip before brekker," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

Bunter began to struggle.

"I don't want a dip before brekker!" he roared. "I'm hungry! I've washed, too, and if I had a dip the same morning, it would be a wash wasted."

"Oh, come on!"

"I won't! I—"

"Your mistake," grinned Cherry. "You will."

The fat junior was run down the rocky path towards the cove at a speed that made him gasp.

The juniors surrounded him, and he could not escape. Hazeldene followed, grinning, with towels over his arm.

They reached the pebble ridge, and there they stripped off their clothes. A more solitary spot it would have been hard to imagine. The trees hid the house, and their surroundings seemed as solitary as Robinson Crusoe's island. The waves broke with a gentle murmur upon the edge of the silver sand. On either side of the cove rose huge time-worn cliffs, hollowed here and there into caves by the action of the sea. Between the cliffs, seaward, lay the illimitable blue of the Atlantic.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

"What a jolly ripping place!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as he kicked off his boots. "We shall have a jolly time here, Hazel!"

"The jollyfulness will be terrific!"

"I hope you will," said Hazeldene. "We ought to be able to get some fun, if that South American blackguard doesn't come bothering again."

"Oh, he's gone for good, I think."

"I hope so."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Why, you're not undressing, Bunter—"

"I'm jolly well not going to undress. I—"

"Now, look here, Bunter, it's dangerous to bathe in sea-water with one's clothes on," said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head. "You might catch cold afterwards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, it would spoil the clothes."

"You—you utter ass! I'm not going to bathe at all!" roared Bunter. "I don't like sea-bathing, especially so early in the season. I won't bathe."

"Your mistake, Billy. You can bathe in your clothes, or out of them, but you're going to bathe!" said Nugent.

"I won't!"

"In with him!"

Bunter made a wild run for the path to the house, but he was caught and yanked back in a twinkling. He yelled wildly.

"Ow, ow!"

"In with the porpoise!"

"Ow! Lemme undress first!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You've decided to bathe without your clothes, then?"

"Ow! Yes! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter stripped off his clothes in hot haste, the juniors standing round in a ring to cut off his escape. The circle

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

of them were roaring with laughter, but Bunter did not see anything humorous in the situation.

His jacket and vest came off in a twinkling, and his collar and tie followed. Then his efforts slackened down.

"I—I say, you fellows, you're only joking, of course?" he ventured.

"Of course we are," said Bob Cherry heartily. "It will be a rather wet joke for your clothes, though, if you don't undress pretty quickly."

"The wetfulness will be terrific!"

"I'm not going to—"

"Collar him!"

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter.

He tore off his boots and socks. Then his shirt followed more slowly, and his wide trousers slowest of all.

He shivered as the keen breeze from the Atlantic caught his bare, fat legs.

"Ow! Groo—it's c-c-cold!"

"Jump into the water, then!"

"Is it—is it warm?"

"Dear me, I forgot to order Neptune to have the warm water laid on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, smiting his chest.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Jump in!"

Bunter tested the water with his toe, and drew back. He wrapped his bathing-clothes round him, as if they could keep him warm. Bob had thoughtfully brought them along for him.

"Ow! It's cold!"

"You will catch cold if you shiver like that, you young ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in disgust. "Make a plunge for it!"

"I c-c-can't!"

"You c-c-can!" said Bob Cherry, taking the fat junior by the shoulders and giving him a sudden violent push.

"There!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Splash!

"Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter flopped face downward into the sea. He rolled over and struck out wildly. He could swim—painful lessons at Greyfriars had taught him the art of natation, though his movements in the water were about as graceful as those of a barge.

The Owl of the Remove began to swim, puffing and blowing like a grampus, and turning a crimson, indignant face towards the juniors.

"Go it, Bunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo!" spluttered Bunter, ejecting a large dose of sea-water from his mouth. "Phew! Groo! Booh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beasts! I'm c-c-coming ashore!"

"You'll get chucked in again if you do, Bunt."

"I—I—"

"Here, see who can catch him oftenest with these pebbles," said Nugent, stooping and collecting a handful of round pebbles. "The chap who gets most out of twelve, wins."

"Ha, ha! Good!"

In a moment pebbles were raining upon the water round the spluttering junior. They did not hit Bunter, but he thought every moment that they would, and he puffed and blew and swam as fast as he could out into the bay.

Then the Greyfriars juniors plunged in. Bunter was having his morning dip, whether he liked it or not, and it was probably doing him good. Good or not, he was having it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Enemy Again!

THE Greyfriars juniors plunged into the sea with great zest. A quieter or safer spot for a bathe could not have been desired. The morning was fresh, but not cold; the sea-water, however, felt warm after the crisp air. The juniors swam out cheerily into the deeper water, and splashed and sported to their heart's content. They splashed one another, and splashed Bunter, to an accompaniment of shouts of merry laughter.

"What a ripping place for a swim!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Who's for a race?"

"Good!"

"First man out to the Point!" exclaimed Harry.

The Point, closed in the bay to the north—a jutting tongue of rugged rock, rising abruptly from the sea. It was a good half mile from the beach opposite the house.

"Right you are," exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"The rightfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come on, Bunt—you're going to swim out to the Point."

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JUST OUT. The New Complete Story-Book.

"I'm jolly well not. I'm going in to breakfast."

"Come on!" roared Bob Cherry, splashing noisily towards the fat junior.

He did not really intend to bother himself with Bunter during the race; but Bunter thought he was in earnest, and he splashed hurriedly ashore.

"Come back!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Yah!" gasped Bunter defiantly.

He scrambled out of the water and dashed up the beach at full speed, dripping with water, without waiting for his clothes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob gasped with mirth as he rejoined his comrades. Harry formed them into a line.

"Ready to start?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Go!"

And the juniors struck out.

They were all good swimmers, thanks to their training in the junior Naval Cadet Corps at Greyfriars. They all started well, and struck out manfully. For the first hundred yards or so they kept level.

Then Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dropped behind. He swam on bravely, but the others were drawing steadily ahead of him.

Hazeldene dropped to the rear a few minutes later. The nabob overtook him, and they swam on neck and neck, but the other four were well ahead.

For half the distance Wharton and Nugent, Cherry and Linley kept almost level, and then Nugent slackened down.

The three strong swimmers went ahead, and now the struggle was keen.

Not a word was spoken; they breasted the water in grim silence, all their energies thrown into the contest. Had it been a struggle for a great prize the juniors could not have thrown more keenness into it.

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry at last.

He dropped behind.

It was between Harry Wharton and the Lancashire lad now.

Harry had always been considered the finest junior swimmer at Greyfriars, but he knew that he had a dangerous rival in Mark Linley. The sturdy Lancashire lad, always in the best condition and as hard as nails, was a tough customer to tackle in any way—whether at boxing, wrestling, running, or swimming.

And he seemed to be at the top of his form now.

Wharton fought on steadily, but it was all he could do to keep level with the Lancashire lad.

Mark was doing his best now.

The spit of rock was only a hundred yards away. It was the last lap, and all depended upon the next few minutes.

The extreme end of the point ran out to sea in a tongue of land rising hardly a few feet from the water for a dozen yards or more beyond the abrupt rock. Beyond that low tongue there came a glancing of white.

Both the juniors saw it.

It was the sail of a boat coming down the shore from the north. As yet the tongue of rock hid the boat and the man in it, but the white sail glanced into view over it.

The juniors saw it, but paid it little attention.

Sails, of course, were common enough on the coast, and they only imagined it to be a fisherman's craft from the northern shore.

The boat was evidently hugging the coast when they had observed it, and was, indeed, dangerously near to the rocks if anything like a swell had come on.

Fifty yards more!

Mark Linley was putting on a spurt now, and he drew ahead.

Wharton set his teeth hard.

He was determined not to be beaten.

He put everything he had into that last tussle. Slowly, inch by inch, he drew level again with the Lancashire lad, and then he passed him.

The spit of rock was a dozen yards ahead.

The water shallowed down, and Wharton dragged himself out of it and turned breathlessly to wave his hand at Mark Linley.

The Lancashire lad had just touched ground, a yard behind. He rose from the water with a breathless laugh.

"You've done it, Wharton."

"It was a close thing, though."

The sail glanced under their eyes. Standing on the rock, they could see across into the water on the other side—they could see the boat and the boatman.

Only his legs were visible for the moment, for he was handling the sheets, and the canvas hid the rest of him.

"Hallo!" called out Harry. "Look out for the rocks, my man!"

There was a sharp exclamation in the boat.

"Ha!"

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Wharton started.
It was a hurried exclamation, but he fancied that the tone of it was familiar—that he had heard the voice before.
He changed colour a trifle.
“Linley!”
The Lancashire lad nodded quickly.
“I heard it, Harry.”
“It was—”
“The man who shadowed us from London,” said Mark quietly. “He has found us again. No—it’s no good plunging in. He has recognised your voice.”
“True.”
The man in the boat emerged from behind the sail.
He was a lithe, powerful man, with black hair and eyes, and a face as brown as a berry. His eyes gleamed at the juniors.
“Ha! I have found you!” he exclaimed.
It was the South American!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Three Shots.

HARRY WHARTON compressed his lips. His face was dark and angry. The South American had run them down again—close to the home of the man he was seeking. There was something terrible in the relentless pursuit of this mysterious adventurer. Nothing seemed to baffle him—he had found them again.

He laughed, showing his gleaming teeth under his black moustache, as he stood up in the boat looking at the juniors.

“I have found you again, *sonoritos*.”

Wharton gave him a savage look.

“Yes, you have found us,” he said; “but I warned you yesterday that it would not be safe to run us down.”

Ijurra laughed again.

“Bah! I have found you—”

“And now what do you want with us?” said Mark Linley.

The South American shrugged his shoulders.

“With you, nothing. I want Captain Cunliffe—*El Capitano*, as we called him in the South American waters, when we were shipmates.”

Wharton started.

“Shipmates?”

“Why not?” said Ijurra.

“I do not believe it! You—a scoundrel like you—were never the shipmate of Captain Cunliffe!” exclaimed Wharton scornfully.

“You do not know what you are saying, little *senor*. But where is Captain Cunliffe, for your attempts to elude me convince me that he is near at hand? You are living near, or you would not be bathing in the sea.”

Wharton’s brows contracted.

Again, unconsciously, the juniors had been the means of guiding the South American towards the home of the man he sought. If he had not seen them now—But Wharton reflected that the South American was coasting along and examining the shore with the keenness of a hawk. He would not have failed to explore the cove at Black Rock, and then he would have made the discovery.

Ijurra looked at the juniors with a mocking light in his eyes.

“Well,” he said, “where is my old friend, Captain Cunliffe?”

“He is no friend of yours.”

“But he will be glad to see me,” said Ijurra, laughing.

“That is not true,” said Harry, eyeing him steadily; “and you will get no answer from us.”

“Bah! I shall not lose sight of you again.”

The juniors exchanged a hopeless look. The matter was now in the hands of the South American; there was no baffling him further.

“Let us return,” said Harry quietly.

Mark nodded. They plunged into the sea again, and swam slowly back to the beach. They met the other juniors on the way, but no explanation was needed, for the South American’s boat had glided round the point now, and was entering the bay.

Ijurra handled the boat well. It was clear that he was a seaman. He kept the craft well behind the juniors, but kept them in easy view.

But the swimmers were no longer necessary for his guidance. As he came into the bay he could see the smoke of Black Rock House rising above the trees.

His eyes gleamed at the sight.

He stood up in the boat, his hand upon a sheet, and looked steadily towards the shore, shading his eyes with his free hand.

From the cliff the column of smoke rose against the blue morning sky. Beyond were cliffs on cliffs, here and there wooded at their summits where there was soil, in other places bare and grey.

From the cliffs on the southern side of the bay there came a sudden puff of white smoke, followed a moment later by a report that reverberated strangely among the rocks.

The South American uttered a cry.

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NEXT WEEK: “BILLY BUNTER’S VOTE.”

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The “Magnet”
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ONE
PENNY.

A tiny round hole appeared in the sail of his craft.
“Carambo!”

The juniors were scrambling ashore now. They, too, had heard the gunshot, and they imagined that it was someone shooting gulls.

They could see the puff of smoke curling away against the dark rock.

But as they looked towards the South American they saw that he did not imagine the marksman to be shooting at gulls.

Instead of standing up in the boat he was crouching down in it, concealed as much as possible by the gunwale, and the colour had wavered in his dark cheek.

Harry Wharton uttered an exclamation.

“Good heavens! Look!”

“My hat! The chap on the cliff is firing at the boat!” exclaimed Bob Cherry, aghast.

“At Ijurra, you mean?”

“Great Scott!”

Crack!

Another puff of smoke, another crack, from the distant cliff. The distance was great, but the aim was good. There was a crack from the boat, audible across the silent bay, as the bullet crashed into the woodwork.

The juniors stood looking on with white faces. All of a sudden they were brought face to face with tragedy—with a matter of life and death. Who was firing from the cliff? His deadly intention could hardly be doubted.

The South American did not doubt it. In the boat, if he rose above the gunwale, he was helplessly exposed to the aim of the marksman, but as he crouched he could not control the sail.

The wind caught it, and the boat heeled over and whirled. It drove towards the rocks of the Point, and the South American could make no effort to stop it.

“He’s going ashore,” muttered Linley.

“The safest place for him.”

Crack!

It was a third ringing report from the face of the cliff. Of the marksman nothing could be seen. He was hidden by the rugged rocks.

Crash!

The boat was on the rocky shore now. The South American made a desperate spring to land, and disappeared among the rocks. He had landed two hundred yards or more from the juniors, and they saw him for only a moment as he disappeared.

The boat pounded on the rocks, washed there by the waves, and the mast crashed over the side. The South American did not reappear.

The juniors turned slowly towards the house. The strange and terrible occurrence had given them a shock. Hazeldene was white as a sheet.

“It—it can’t be—” he muttered, and broke off.

Wharton looked at him.

“What do you mean, Hazel?”

“I—I was thinking my uncle—”

Harry started. It had not occurred to him before. But who was firing from the cliff at the boat containing the South American? Who at Black Rock had reason to fear his coming?

Was it possible that the captain—

The dark thought was driven from the juniors’ minds the next moment by a hearty voice breaking the silence.

“Tumble up, my lads! Breakfast is ready!”

It was Captain Cunliffe. He had come down to the beach to meet them. The juniors exchanged glances of relief. Captain Cunliffe was there, and he could not have been a quarter of a mile away on the southern cliff a few minutes before. Whoever had fired those shots across the sunlit bay, it was not their host.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Little Ventriloquism.

BILLY BUNTER was already at breakfast when the Greyfriars juniors came in. He was looking all the better for his enforced bathe, though he was not inclined to admit it. It may have had the effect of improving his appetite; at all events, he was performing wonders at the breakfast-table, to the evident admiration of old Ben. Eggs and bacon and kidneys disappeared at a wonderful rate, and Bunter had already done very well when the juniors came in. But he showed no sign of leaving off.

He blinked up at them as they came to the table. His fat face was assuming an extremely shiny appearance.

“I say, you fellows, the prog. is jolly good here,” he remarked. “I think I shall enjoy my holiday after all, Hazeldene.”

Hazeldene did not reply. He was wearing a worried look;

the mystery of the shots fired from the cliff was weighing upon his mind.

"Someone was out shooting early this morning," Captain Cunliffe remarked. "You heard the shots on the cliff, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Shooting gulls, I suppose," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "I'm rather a dab at shooting gulls, you know. I'll show you after breakfast."

"You jolly well won't," said Bob Cherry. "You're not going to fool about with loaded firearms. I've seen you do that before."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It wouldn't matter very much if you blew your own head off, Bunt, but you might blow somebody else's off, and that makes all the difference."

"I'm a dab at shooting—"

"Rats! You're a dab at drawing the long bow!" said Nugent. "You're no good with a gun."

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly, and consoled himself with a fresh supply of kidneys and bacon.

The coming of the South American was weighing upon the minds of the juniors, and they felt that it ought to be mentioned to Captain Cunliffe. After breakfast, Harry followed the captain into the garden, and told him.

The skipper's bronzed face turned a shade paler as he listened.

"You're sure it was Ijurra?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir! I spoke to him."

The skipper wrinkled his brows.

"And the shots from the cliff were fired at his boat?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But—but why, and by whom?" said Captain Cunliffe, very much puzzled. "Who should do so? I think it must have been some gull shooter, whose shots went near the boat by sheer chance. Don't you think that is possible?"

"The bullets struck the boat or the sail."

"That may have been accident."

"The South American did not think it an accident; he crouched under the gunwale, and let the boat run ashore," said Harry. "Of course, though, it may be as you think. I thought I ought to mention the matter to you."

"Quite right—quite right," said the captain.

And Harry left him. Captain Cunliffe called after him.

"Then Ijurra is ashore here, Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry, turning his head. "He went into the rocks on the north side of the cove."

"Thank you!"

Wharton rejoined his chums. They had come out of the house in cheerful spirits, and Bob Cherry was seen fidgeting his necktie, and trying to get it straight—almost a hopeless task with Bob. Harry smiled as he saw it, and guessed at once what it meant.

"What time is Marjorie coming, Hazel?" he asked.

Hazeldene laughed.

"The girls get to Wynne Station at half-past ten," he said. "That's about a mile from here. It's the nearest railway point."

"We're going to meet them, of course?"

"Well, I am," said Hazeldene. "You fellows can come if you like."

"If we like!" said Nugent.

"The likefulness will be terrific, my worthy chum."

"I don't see that it's necessary for all you fellows to come," Billy Bunter remarked. "I suppose Hazeldene ought to come, as he's Marjorie's brother, and if I go with him it seems to me that that will be enough."

"It will be too much," said Bob Cherry. "You can stay here."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It's not fair on Marjorie and Clara to make them begin

their holiday by seeing a chivvy like yours," said Bob. "Keep out of sight for a bit, and we'll break it gently to them."

"Look here—"

"We'd better start now," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

And Bob Cherry having given his offending necktie a final tug, which made it look more awry than ever, the juniors left Black Rock House, and followed the rocky path down the combe towards the railway-station, a mile away on the inland side of the great, grey cliffs.

The morning was fresh and bright, just the weather for a brisk walk. Billy Bunter lagged behind, and grumbled at having to keep up with the others.

"I say, you fellows, you might walk a little more slowly," he said. "You know I've got a delicate constitution, and hurrying like this may do me some damage."

Bob Cherry quickened his stride.

"Sit down and take a rest till we come back, Bunt," he advised.

"Oh, really—"

"You mustn't overtire yourself, you know," said Bob Cherry, with great consideration. "Think of your constitution."

"If you think I'm not coming to meet the girls—" began Bunter wrathfully.

"My dear ass—"

"You know how disappointed Marjorie would be if she didn't see me. Go a bit slower, you rotters."

But the Greyfriars juniors were not disposed to accommodate their pace to that of the laziest of the party. They strode on, and Billy Bunter dropped behind.

He made some efforts to overtake them, but it was too much, and he gave it up, with an angry gleam in his eye.

"But I'll jolly well stop 'em!" he murmured.

From the bushes beside the track the Greyfriars chums were following, a sudden voice rang.

"Halt!"

And they halted. For in that ringing shout they thought they recognised the well-known tones of the South American. Wharton set his lips.

"He's here again, you chaps!"

"Let him show himself," said Mark Linley. "We'll bump him!"

"Good egg!"

But no one appeared from the bushes. Billy Bunter came panting up, and joined the juniors, but the bushes never stirred.

Harry looked puzzled.

"That's curious!" he said.

"It was his voice!" said Nugent. "I'd know it anywhere."

"Come out of there, you skulking coward!" called out Hazeldene. "Stand out here, and show your face!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! If you're there, Ijurra, stand out!"

But there was no stir in the bushes.

"He's gone!" said Bob Cherry.

"Let's get on."

The Greyfriars chums, greatly puzzled, strode on their way. Billy Bunter, grinning, lagged on in their rear. As soon as the juniors drew ahead, the voice called from the thickets again.

"Halt!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This is a giddy joke, I suppose."

"Yes," exclaimed Nugent, rushing towards Billy Bunter, "and this is the giddy joker!"

"Ow!"

"You young rascal—"

"Yow! Don't shake me like that, Nugent! You may make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken, you'll have to pay for them, so I tell you."

TOM CRIBB

— IS IN —

"PLUCK" 1^D.

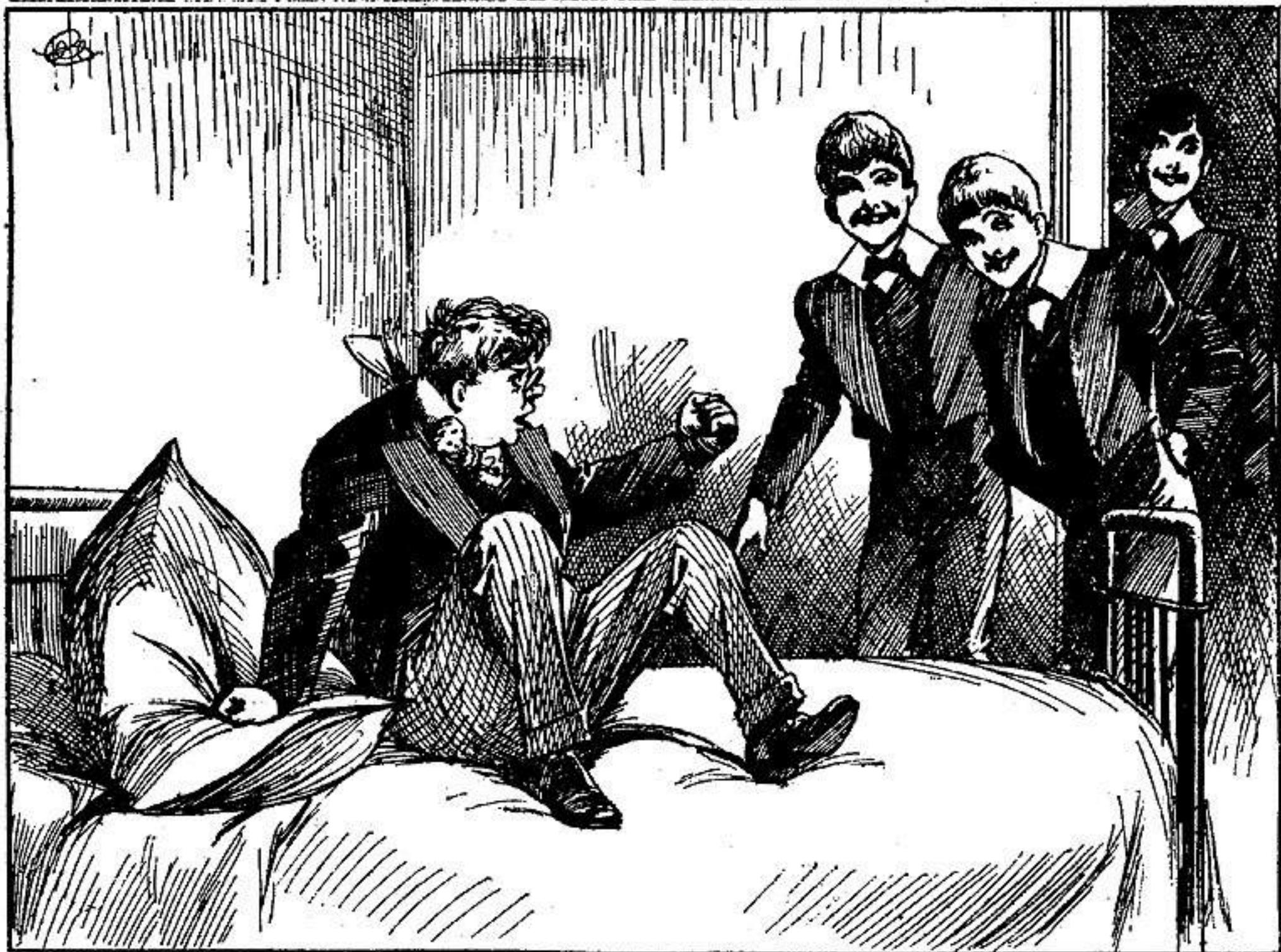
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Billy Bunter sat up on the bed and gasped. "Ow, you rotters!" he exclaimed, blinking at the grinning juniors furiously. "You beasts. Yah!"

"I'll teach you to work off your giddy ventriloquism on us!" said Nugent, shaking the fat junior vigorously. "There—and there!"

"Yow! Ow!"

"Oh, it was that giddy ventriloquist, was it?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I might have guessed it, too. Hold him while I jump on him."

"Ow! Yow!"

Billy Bunter wrenched himself free, and ran.

"Come back and be jumped on!" roared Bob Cherry.

Bunter did not accept that kind invitation. He ran on breathlessly, and the juniors, laughing, resumed their way to the station, and they did not hear any more mysterious voices. Billy Bunter's ventriloquism was stopped, for the time.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Bunter Makes a Bargain.

"O W! Beasts!"

That was the remark Billy Bunter made when, stopping to take breath, he found that he was not pursued, and that the Greyfriars juniors were out of sight. The fat junior stood gasping on the rocky path for a few minutes, blinking indignantly. Then he slowly followed the path the juniors had taken towards the village.

"Halt!"

It was a sudden voice from the thicket along the path. Billy Bunter snorted.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" he exclaimed. "What's the good of working off a stalo wheeze like that?"

And the fat junior tramped on, fully convinced that the challenge had come from one of the Greyfriars juniors who was playing a trick on him.

"Stop!"

"Rats!"

A figure came hastily through the bushes, and a man with a gun in the hollow of his arm stepped into view.

"Stop!" he repeated.

Bunter stopped.

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NEXT
WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

He did not like the look of the stranger at all.

He was a little man—not much taller than Bunter himself—and one of his legs was curiously twisted, and he walked with a decided lameness.

His face was burnt dark by a tropical sun, and his eyes, deep-set and glittering, seemed to burn under his rugged black brows.

The lame man hobbled in his path.

His clothes, which were of a seafaring cut, showed plain signs of rough usage, and the stains on them seemed to indicate that the lame man was accustomed to sleeping in the open air—at least, of late. Bunter guessed that he was a poacher of some sort—though in the neighbourhood there was little to poach, unless it was an occasional rabbit in the wood. The gun, however, showed that the man had been out shooting, and Bunter remembered the shots he had heard on the cliff that morning.

"Well, what do you want?" he said feebly. "I haven't any money to give away. I'm stony broke. I'm treated too jolly meanly by my friends to have any money to spare."

"I don't want your money, you young fool. What is your name?"

"William George Bunter, of Greyfriars School, Remove Form—"

"That's enough. Where are you staying in this neighbourhood?"

"With Captain Cunliffe."

"Ah! At Black-Rock?"

"Yes."

The lame man nodded.

"You know Captain Cunliffe?" asked Billy Bunter.

The lame man laughed with a curious ring.

"Yes, I know him. But that is no business of yours. How is it that you boys are staying with Captain Cunliffe—he is generally alone, I believe?"

"We're spending the Easter vacation here."

"Oh, it is curious! Never mind. Has there been another visitor to Black Rock while you have been there?"

"Not that I know of."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"A foreign man," said the stranger—"a South American—a man with a scar on his forehead. He landed in the cove this morning, some hours ago. Have you seen him?"

"No."

"Then he is not at Black Rock?"

"He can't be without my seeing him," said Bunter. "Is he a friend of yours?"

The lame man chuckled.

"Yes, a friend—and a very old friend," he said. "I'm most anxious to see him. Listen to me, Bunker—"

"Bunter."

"Ah, Bunter! Listen to me. I want to know as soon as that man comes to Black Rock—you understand?"

"Ye-es," said Bunter, though he did not understand very clearly.

"You must let me know."

"I—I'll tell you anything with pleasure," said Bunter, beginning to think that he was dealing with a lunatic.

"Would you like me to send you a postcard?"

"No, fool."

"Oh, really—"

"I am never very far from Black Rock," said the lame man, with another of his curious chuckles. "Do you know the sundial in the garden?"

"I have seen it there."

"Well, as soon as you get any news of the South American, leave a note for me on the sundial in the garden, and I shall find it."

Bunter blinked at him.

"But—but—"

The man came closer to him. His dark face and deep-set eyes assumed a terribly threatening look, which caused Bunter's heart to throb wildly.

"Hearken to me," said the lame man, in a low, hard voice. "I'd as soon blow your brains out as squash a fly. I've come from a country where it's not much thought of. Mind, I don't want to hurt you, but if you don't carry out my orders I'll make you sorry for it. Do you understand? If I find that you have failed to obey me I will put a bullet through your head."

"Ow!"

"Mind, you are to do as I tell you, and not to say a word to a soul," said the lame man threateningly—"not a word!"

"I—I— All right."

"I don't want you to do it for nothing," went on the lame man, his voice softening a little as he saw that he had terrorised the fat junior sufficiently. "I'll pay you for what you do."

Billy Bunter brightened up.

"Now you're talking!" he exclaimed.

The lame man laughed.

"Look you, I will leave money for you on the sundial every evening—five shillings every time," he said. "Does that satisfy you?"

Bunter jumped.

"Five bob a day!"

"Yes."

"I'll do anything you like!" exclaimed Bunter eagerly. "You can rely on me. I'll leave you as many notes on the sundial as you like."

"Good! Leave one every morning, then, telling me whether anything has been seen of Pedro Ijurra, and I will leave the money in exchange."

"Jolly good! Perhaps you wouldn't mind paying the first lot in advance?" suggested Bunter. "I'm awfully short of money. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, you see, and—"

"Take this."

The man thrust a handful of small silver into the fat junior's palm, without even counting it. Bunter's eyes glistened.

"Remember what I have told you. Let me know anything that happens at Black Rock. If Ijurra actually comes there, you must come and tell me at once, without delay."

"But where—"

"I shall be on the cliffs on the south side of the cove. I shall see you coming, if it is in daylight, with my field-glasses."

"Good! I'll do it," said Bunter. "I—I like you very much, you know, and I—I'm going to do it out of friendship. Of course, I regard this money simply as a loan."

The lame man did not seem to hear.

"Mind, not a word to a soul—even to your companions," he said.

"That's all right. They won't let me into all their secrets, and I jolly well won't tell them a word."

"That is right. Don't forget." And the lame man disappeared among the thickets.

Billy Bunter blinked after him in a state of considerable astonishment. Many strange things were happening in connection with that visit to Black Rock, but this seemed to be about the strangest of all. But Billy Bunter was perfectly

satisfied. A new source of income had been opened to him, and that was quite sufficient to elate the fat junior. Billy Bunter counted the money in his hand. There were eight shillings and sixpence.

"By George!" murmured Bunter.

He hurried on towards the village. He was in funds now, and when Billy Bunter was in funds the money always burnt in his pocket till he had spent it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Marjorie Arrives.

"MARJORIE!"

The Greyfriars chums were in good time at the station. They were on the platform waiting when the train came rattling in.

Two pretty faces in charming hats looked from a carriage window.

They belonged to Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn, the girl chums of Cliff House. The juniors waved their caps at once.

Bob Cherry rushed to get the carriage door open, and collided with Frank Nugent, who was bounding forward for the same purpose. Nugent staggered away, and Bob sat on the platform with considerable violence.

"You ass!" he gasped.

"You duffer!" panted Nugent, bringing up against an automatic machine with a crash. "You frabjous duffer!"

"Oh!"

"Oh!"

Bob Cherry staggered to his feet. Harry Wharton meanwhile had opened the carriage door, and assisted the girls to alight.

Marjorie and Clara were all smiles. Perhaps the sight of Bob Cherry's mishap was partly the cause of the smiles.

"So jolly glad to see you!" exclaimed Harry.

"The gladfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The cloudfulness of the esteemed sky is chased farfully by the sunshinoful serenity of your honourable presence."

"Good old Inky!" said Hazeldene. "Doesn't he put it concisely?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're glad to see you all, too," said Marjorie. "I—I hope you were not hurt, Bob?"

"Not at all!" gasped Bob.

"Nor you, Frank?"

"Not the least bit in the world!" said Nugent, rubbing his shoulder where it had bumped on the automatic machine.

"Not at all!"

"Any luggage?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Shall I look after it? You know what these chaps are—they'd like to let it go on to Land's End."

"This is the last station," grinned Hazeldene. "Still, you may as well look for it. It will have to be sent after us to Black Rock. Our own luggage will be along some time to-day, too."

"I suppose we walk to Black Rock?" said Miss Clara brightly.

Harry laughed.

"Yes, that's the only way—except by aeroplane."

"Come on," said Nugent. "If Bob's going to look after the luggage, we may as well start."

Bob Cherry looked a little taken aback as the party walked out of the station. He wanted to make himself useful, but not to be left behind. He didn't spend very much time in looking after Marjorie and Clara's trunks. Then he hurried after his friends. He overtook them in the little old-fashioned High Street of Wynne.

They had stopped outside the station. Billy Bunter had come up breathless, but in the highest spirits. He took off his cap to Marjorie and Clara with a bow which, considering how tightly he was packed into his clothes, really ought to have burst some buttons. But no such catastrophe, fortunately, happened.

"I say, you fellows, I am sure Marjorie and Clara are hungry after their journey!" he exclaimed. "I've found a little shop here—"

"Not at all," said Marjorie.

"Not a bit," said Miss Clara. "We had breakfast in Okehampton, where we stayed the night at my aunt's."

"Yes, but—"

"Dry up, Bunter."

"Rats, Wharton! I think you fellows ought to wait while Marjorie and Clara have a bit of a feed!" exclaimed Bunter. "Of course, I'm going to stand it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Has your postal-order come?" grinned Nugent.

"Well, I'm in funds."

"Found a gold-mine?"

"Look here," said Billy Bunter, showing a handful of silver. "What do you think of that?"

The juniors stared at it.

"Where on earth did you get it?" demanded Hazeldene. "You were stony this morning!"

"Never mind where I got it," said Billy Bunter loftily. "I've got it, and that's the chief thing. There's nothing mean about me, either. You fellows don't treat me very well, but I'm willing to stand you a feed. All of you come into the shop here, and you'll see."

"Where did you get that tin?"

"I may have friends, and I may not," said Bunter mysteriously. "It may be a loan, and it may not. That doesn't matter. Are you coming in to feed?"

Wharton glanced at the girls, and read "No" in their faces. They did not like Bunter, and they would not accept his hospitality. He shook his head.

"No, Billy."

"But, I say—"

"Go in and feed on your lonesome," said Bob Cherry. "You'll soon get to the end of your tin. You know what you are when you once start. And you've only eaten enough for about five or six this morning."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The juniors and the girls walked on. Billy Bunter blinked after them, nonplussed for a moment. Now that he was in funds, he wanted to have the pleasure of standing a feed in a princely way.

"Blessed if I know what's the matter with Marjorie," he murmured. "If I didn't know for certain that she liked me very much, blessed if I shouldn't think she disliked me. But, of course, that's impossible. I know 'em! Marjorie, they have awfully nice jam-tarts in this shop; I've tried 'em already."

But Marjorie did not hear. The girls walked on, and the juniors went with them, and Billy Bunter was left standing alone outside the shop.

He blinked disconsolately.

"Blessed if I know what to make of it," he murmured.

He glanced at the silver in his palm, and his fat face brightened up. After all, there was a feed there; and if he were alone there would be more for him.

He went into the shop.

The tarts were not as fresh as those he was accustomed to at Greyfriars, but the ginger-pop was just as good; and Bunter was not particular what he ate, so long as he did eat. He was soon enjoying himself.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked out of the village, and entered upon the rocky path leading to Black Rock.

Marjorie and Clara were delighted with the scenery, and with the description they received of the lonely house of Captain Cunliffe.

"How jolly it will be!" Miss Clara remarked, in her boyish way. "I suppose there are caves in the cliffs, of course."

"Heaps of them," said Hazeldene, with a grin. "Jolly dark and damp places they are, too."

"Then I shall explore them."

"That's a jolly good idea," remarked Nugent. "We might as well explore the caves this afternoon. It would be great fun."

"I've heard that the caves used to be used by smugglers, in the good old times," Hazeldene remarked. "Old Ben showed me one, when I was here last, that used to have contraband cargoes stored in it, according to his account. You get to it by a path over the cliffs on the north side of the cove."

"Oh, let's explore it!" exclaimed Miss Clara.

"We'll go this afternoon," said Wharton. "Careful of the path there. It's steep."

They followed the rocky path, till suddenly at one end of it the open-wooded combe lay before them, with the sea rolling in the distance. Marjorie uttered an exclamation of delight.

"How beautiful!"

"Yes, rather!"

"But, look! Who is that?" exclaimed Marjorie suddenly. The juniors followed the direction of her glance.

Upon a rock at some distance a figure stood, observing Black Rock House through a pair of field-glasses. It was the form of a small man, and he stood in an awkward attitude, with one leg strangely twisted. He moved as the juniors looked at him, and lowered the glasses. Though they were behind him, he seemed to have become aware of their presence.

"What a strange-looking man!" said Miss Clara.

"A sailorman, I should say."

The man looked down at them, and then limped away among the rocks.

"He is lame," said Nugent.

"Ahoy!" called out Bob Cherry. "Good-morning!"

The lame man did not reply.

He limped on without turning his head, and vanished among the rocks, and was gone in a few seconds.

The juniors looked at one another.

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Another queer customer," said Mark Linley.

Wharton nodded, and they walked on. Who was the lame man, and why was he watching Black Rock House from the cliff path?

It was another mystery; and it seemed to Harry Wharton that a strange shadow of mystery was growing and thickening round that lonely house on the Devon coast. What was to be the outcome of it all?

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Explorers.

CAPTAIN CUNLIFFE was not at home when the juniors reached the house. Neither did he return at lunch, a meal which was taken without him. Billy Bunter came in, and as he was not rattling any money in his pockets, the probability was that he had none left. He did not eat quite so much lunch as usual, either. He only doubled the largest amount consumed by anybody else.

"Uncle's out," said Hazeldene, as he sat down at the head of the table. "He told Ben he would be back soon, but he hasn't come, so I'll take his place. Anything's better than waiting lunch."

"What-ho!" said Billy Bunter.

And the meal proceeded cheerfully enough. Billy Bunter blinked over his glasses at Harry Wharton, as a thought came into his mind.

"I say, Wharton, have you seen that South American chap again?"

Wharton made him an angry sign to be silent.

The juniors had decided to tell the girls nothing of the strange pursuit of the ruffian from South America. It might alarm them, and it could do no good. But they had reckoned without Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was not the kind of person to keep a secret.

"What are you scowling at me for, Wharton?" he asked.

Wharton coloured.

"Oh, shut up, Billy!"

"But I want to know—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Yes, but have you seen—"

"Pass the salt."

"Anything of the—"

"Will you have some more pie?"

"Yes. The South American, Wharton?"

"No!" growled Harry at last.

"Sure he hasn't been here?" asked Bunter. "I want to know particularly. You see, he may be lurking round the house. I know he landed in the cove this morning, after you had your swim."

"Do ring off!"

"After tracking us here all the way from London, I suppose he won't go off without coming here," said Bunter. "I don't know what his game is—but he's bound to show up here, I should think—Ow!"

"Whatever is the matter?" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Ow! Some beast has stamped on my foot."

"Shut up!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Ow! It was you! Look here, you fellows, I'm not going to stand this. If you didn't want me to say anything to Marjorie about the South American, you should have told me so!" howled Billy Bunter.

Wharton turned a crimson face towards the girls.

"It's nothing," he said. "We thought it might alarm you, that's all; but Bunter must put his foot in it as usual. A chap followed us here; we don't know what he wants, and he looks like a rascal. That's all."

"He had a knife—" said Bunter.

"Bosh!" said Wharton. "Shut up!"

And Billy Bunter shut up at last.

Marjorie and Clara were looking very serious. After lunch, when they went out, Marjorie referred to the matter again.

"Im sorry Bunter told me, as you didn't want me to know, Harry," she said. "But who is the man—the South American?"

Wharton shook his head.

"I know his name, and that's all I know about him," he said. "I'll tell you the whole yarn, as you know about the man now."

And he did. Marjorie and Clara listened attentively.

"My word!" said Miss Clara. "It's quite an adventure."

"I am afraid the man must mean my uncle some harm," said Marjorie.

"At all events, he is on his guard now," said Harry.

"And while we are here the South American wouldn't have much chance against all of us."

"No, that is true."

"Are you ready to start for the cliffs?" exclaimed Bob

Cherry, coming up. "It's a ripping afternoon for exploring the caves."

"We're ready."

And in ten minutes the girls were ready, too. The whole party started out from Black Rock, and followed the curve of the little cove towards the northern cliffs. The sea rolled blue and bright under the bright sun, and the waves broke in little ripples on the pebbles.

"You're guide, Hazel!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as they neared the abrupt rise of the cliffs. "Which way now?"

"Follow me, kids!"

Hazeldene clambered up the rocks, and the juniors followed, Harry helping Marjorie, and Nugent Clara. Billy Bunter clambered over the first rock after them, and then stopped and gasped for breath.

"I say, Hazel, isn't there any other way to the caves?" he exclaimed.

"No," said Hazeldene.

"Then I'm jolly well not coming," said Bunter. "I'll sit down here and wait for you to come back."

And he sank down with a sigh of relief, and leaned his back against a rock, and was soon fast asleep in the sun, with his cap over his fat face.

The juniors grinned and left him.

The fat junior of Greyfriars was not in exactly a fit condition to climb a steep cliff-path, and they were not sorry to leave him behind.

Hazeldene led the way, clambering over rock after rock, and the juniors kept on his track, the girls keeping well up.

"Here's the path!" exclaimed Hazeldene suddenly.

It was a narrow ledge winding up the face of the cliff.

It was not more than two feet wide in the widest place, and on one side was the steep cliff rising abruptly; on the other, as they advanced, the rock fell sheer away.

The path was terribly dangerous to any save those who had clear and steady heads. Harry Wharton paused.

"This isn't safe for you girls," he said.

Miss Clara tossed her golden head.

"Stuff!" she remarked.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But it really isn't," he said. "What do you say, Marjorie?"

"Are you going on, Harry?"

"Well, it is safe for us."

"If it is safe for you, it is safe for us," said Miss Clara, in her most decided tone. "Isn't it, Marjorie?"

"Certainly," said Marjorie, smiling.

"Oh, come on!" said Hazeldene, from ahead. "Marjorie's been over rougher paths than this, Wharton. Buck up!"

"Right-ho, then!"

And they pressed on.

Cool and calm-nerved as the Greyfriars juniors were, they became very quiet and serious as they advanced up the rocky ledge.

A slip of the foot meant a fall, and a fall meant certain death upon the hard rocks a hundred feet below the ledge.

"Where's the cave, Hazel?" asked Mark Linley, at last.

"Just ahead."

Hazeldene halted a few minutes later.

In the great looming cliff on the right hand appeared a huge fissure, extending into deep darkness in the depths of the cliff.

The juniors gathered at the opening and looked into it.

"And this is where the smugglers used to store their contraband stuff?" Bob Cherry remarked.

"So the fishermen say."

"Blessed if I know how they got it up the cliff, then," said Bob. "It must have been a pretty good bit of trouble carrying kegs up the way we came."

"They used to sling them up on ropes from the beach," said Hazeldene. "Old Ben says there are still the iron clamps stuck in the cliff that they used to fasten the ropes to."

"Oh, I see!"

Mark Linley was lighting a bicycle lantern. The sun-

light extended for some distance into the cave; but after that all was dark.

"What a jolly place!" exclaimed Miss Clara, clapping her hands, and the clap came back echoing from the cave with a sound like thunder. "How it echoes."

"The echofulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But hark! I thinkfully believe I hear the sound of voices."

Hazeldene shook his head.

"Not likely to be anybody else here," he remarked. "Nobody ever comes here. Why—"

He was suddenly interrupted.

From the interior of the cave came suddenly a deafening report, followed by a fierce cry and the sound of running feet.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Exploring the Cave.

MARJORIE turned quite white, and clung to Harry Wharton's arm.

"What—what was that?" she exclaimed.

"It sounded like a shot."

"It was a shot!" said Bob Cherry.

They stared into the cave.

It was still full of echoing sound, and amid the echoes came that sound of running feet—feet approaching the entrance where the group of juniors stood.

Who was it that was running from the gloom of the cavern towards them?

They did not have to wait long to see.

The lithe form of the South American loomed up in the shadows. He had a broken and extinguished lantern in his hand, and his face was pale and startled.

He did not see the juniors for the moment.

He came running out of the cave, upon the ledge, and then he suddenly halted as he saw them.

A gleam of fury darted into his eyes.

"Stand aside!" he exclaimed fiercely.

The juniors drew aside to let him pass; they had no desire to stop him. Ijurra did not give them a second look.

He ran past them down the rocky ledge, in his haste sending stones clattering over the edge of the steep path, to fall with faint clinking upon the rocks far below.

His speed was so great, in spite of the peril of the path, that he disappeared from the view of the juniors in a few moments.

He left them utterly astonished.

At the bottom of the steep path a fat junior sat upon a rock, asleep, and his eyes opened behind his big spectacles at the sight of the South American.

"By George!" murmured Billy Bunter. "It's the chap!"

Ijurra gave him a savage look, and the fat junior promptly squirmed off the rock, and dodged behind it.

The South American ran on and disappeared.

At the mouth of the cave, high up on the cliff, the Greyfriars juniors were looking at one another in blank surprise.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Bob Cherry, at last.

"What was he afraid of? He seemed to be scared out of his wits."

"He looked like it."

"The pistol-shot explains it, I think," said Harry Wharton quietly. "There is someone else in the cave."

"Can't see anything of him," said Nugent, straining his eyes into the darkness.

"But he's there," Wharton hesitated. "Marjorie, do you feel inclined to go into the cave, after—that?"

Marjorie was still a little pale.

"Why not?" exclaimed Miss Clara. "Whoever is there, has no reason to harm us, I suppose."

"That's so, certainly."

"Let's go on," said Hazeldene. "There are enough of us to be safe, I should think."

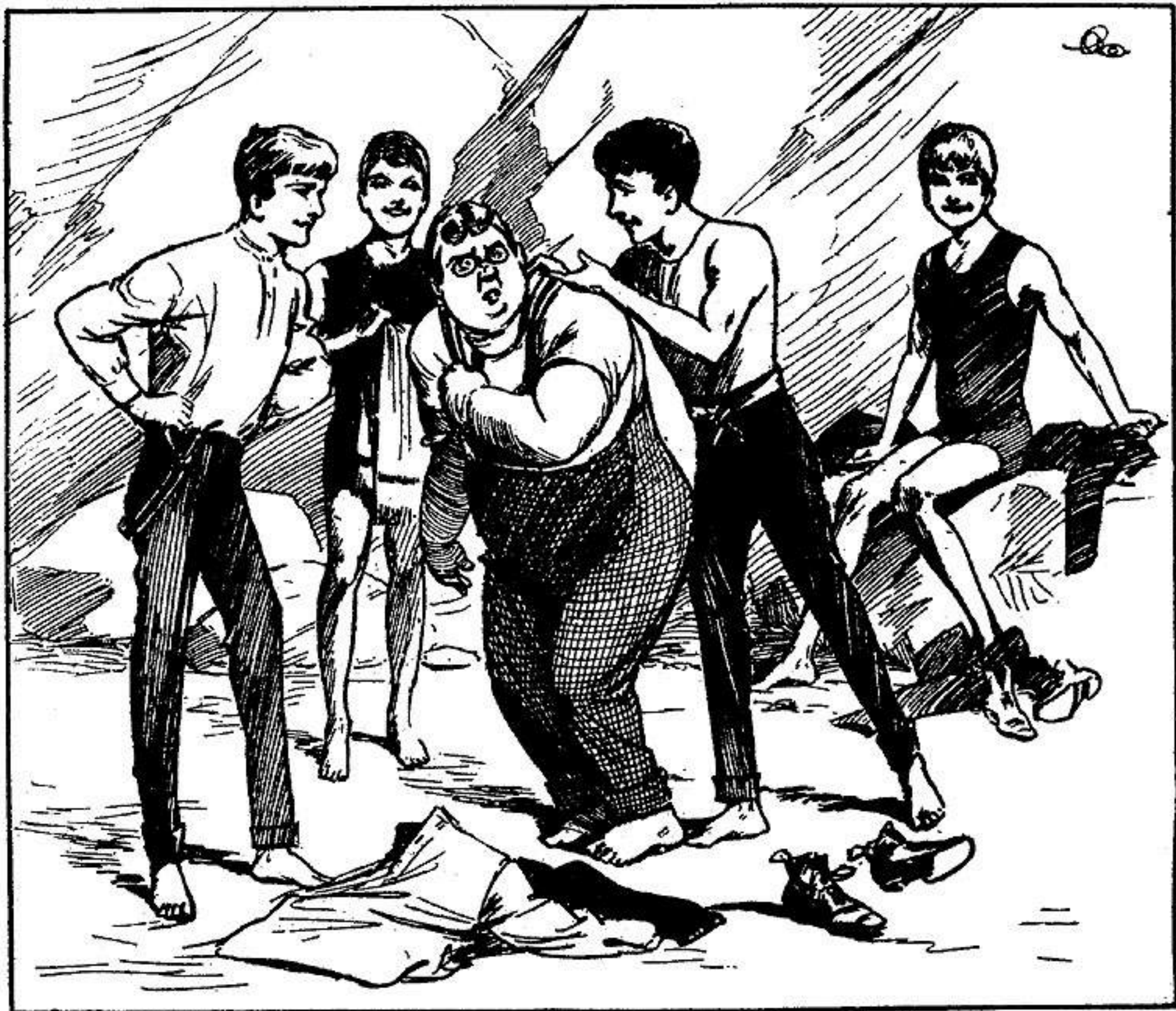
"Quite safe," said Mark Linley.

"Yes, let us go in," Marjorie said.

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"I'm not going to bathe!" roared Bunter. "I won't bathe!" "Your mistake, Billy," said Nugent pleasantly. "You can bathe in your clothes or out of them, but you're going to bathe!"

And they went in. Mark Linley carried the lantern, and flashed the light ahead as they advanced into the gloomy depths of the cavern.

"Look out!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "This is a jolly unsafe place to tumble about in. There's a big gap in the ground here somewhere, and if a chap fell into it, he would never get out alive, I think."

"By Jove, you're right," said Harry, halting. "Here it is."

The lantern light gleamed upon a yawning gap in the rocky floor of the cavern—a black pit, extending to unknown depths. Bob Cherry picked up a stone and dropped it into the opening. The juniors heard faint echoes as it bounded from side to side, striking first one rocky wall and then the other—then silence. They did not hear it touch the bottom.

Marjorie shuddered a little.

"What a dreadful place," she said. "Let us get away."

And they went on their way, taking care to give the pit a wide berth.

The cavern was a huge one, extending deep into the heart of the great cliff, and smaller hollows branched off from it in various directions.

The juniors were peering into one of them, when there

was a sound of footsteps in the cave behind them, and they turned round quickly.

A dim form appeared for a moment as Linley flashed the lantern round—that of a lame man, limping towards the mouth of the cavern.

He was gone in a second.

The juniors stared after him blankly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry, his voice ringing curiously through the deep hollows of the cavern. "Who are you?"

There was no reply.

The stranger had vanished as quickly as he had appeared, and the juniors saw no more of him.

"Who—who could that be?" murmured Marjorie.

"The man who fired the shot we heard," said Nugent.

"I—I think I have seen enough of the cavern," Marjorie said uneasily.

Wharton nodded.

"We'll get back."

And the explorers left the cave.

They descended the rocky path in silence.

The strange happenings in the smuggler's cave had left a curious impression upon them. To all of them it seemed, at that moment, as though some strange tragedy were brooding in the air.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Reports.

CAPTAIN CUNLIFFE was at home when the explorers returned to Black Rock. The captain was looking tired, as if he had been exerting himself during his absence, and he said very little. During the afternoon, the Greyfriars juniors and their girl chums went on the bay in the boat, and spent a very pleasant couple of hours there. In the sunshine and cheery surroundings they forgot the incident of the smuggler's cave, and quite recovered their spirits.

The sun was setting when they brought the boat to shore, and landed, a little tired, but very cheerful.

"We shall have a good time here," Harry Wharton remarked; and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh said that the goodfulness would be terrific.

"I hope so," said Hazeldene. "I wish there wasn't so much blessed mystery about the place, though. That South American is getting on my nerves!"

"I say, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter met them on the beach. Bob Cherry gave the fat junior a hearty smack on the shoulder, which elicited a howl from him.

"Ow! Oh, really, Cherry——"

"So you've woke up?" said Bob genially.

"I've been woke up a long time!" exclaimed Billy indignantly. "It was rotten of you to go off like that while I was asleep."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should have liked to come on the bay," said Bunter. "I could have managed the boat better, too. I say, Wharton——"

But Wharton was walking on with Marjorie, and he did not hear. Bunter turned his spectacles upon Nugent.

"I say, Nugent——"

Nugent marched on with Clara, without turning his head.

"I say, Cherry——"

"Sorry; I'm in a hurry."

"Look here——"

"Good-bye!"

"Hazeldene, old man——"

"Hallo!" said Hazeldene.

"They were getting some fresh tarts in, they told me, at the village," said Billy Bunter confidentially. "I shall have five bob to-night. Will you lend me half-a-crown off it?"

Hazeldene grinned.

"Where are you going to get five bob from, Billy?"

"Well, I'm going to get it; it's a dead cert."

"Expecting a postal-order? Ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"I suppose a chap can have other resources, Hazeldene. As a matter of fact, I shall have five bob to-night for a dead cert."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Honour bright——"

"Rats!"

"Will you lend me half-a-crown?"

"Some other evening," grinned Hazeldene.

Bunter grunted.

"Look here, I shall have five bob——"

"Bosh!"

And Hazeldene walked on. The other juniors hurried on before Billy Bunter could tackle them, and left the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove blinking discontentedly.

"Rotters!" murmured Billy Bunter. "I'll jolly well show them whether I can raise five bob or not."

He went into the house for his coat. Evening was drawing on, and it was chilly by the sea. The juniors looked at him as he took his cap down from the peg in the hall.

"Going out, Bunter?" asked Linley.

"Yes," said Bunter importantly. "I've got an appointment."

"At the grub shop?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't ask questions, and I won't tell you any lies," said Bunter loftily. "I've got an appointment with a friend of mine, and I dare say I shall be able to raise a loan, and I sha'n't want any of your rotten money."

And Bunter stalked out.

"What's on, I wonder?" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose Bunter isn't turning burglar, is he? Blessed if I know any other way he can raise the wind here."

"Oh, it's all gammon!" said Hazeldene.

"The gammonfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Bunter is endeavouring to pull our honourable legs."

And the juniors agreed that it must be so.

But they soon forgot Bunter. Marjorie had produced a Gilbert and Sullivan score from her trunk, and had placed

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it on the rack of the piano. The sounds of merry music soon filled Black Rock House. Marjorie played very well, and the juniors gathered round the piano, all of them singing, sometimes in parts, and sometimes in unison, as fancy dictated, and a very pleasant time they spent.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was taking his way towards the southern side of the cove. He remembered the instructions of the lame man, to go there immediately he saw the South American, and he did not doubt in the least that he had earned the promised reward.

The fat junior made his way over rocks and seaweed with many a grunt, wondering how long it would be before he met the lame man.

The latter had told him to come, and told him that he would see him coming, and Bunter, who was soon tired, stopped at last, standing in full view in the sunset. He thought that the other fellow might as well do the walking.

There was a sound of footsteps on the rocks, and a man scrambled into view, and Bunter gave a grunt of relief at the sight of the lame man.

He blinked at the dark, sunburnt face and deep-set eyes.

"So you've come!" he grunted.

The lame man nodded.

"Have you any news for me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"The South American—he has come?" exclaimed the other eagerly.

"I've seen him."

"Where?"

"On the cliffs on the other side of the cove," said Bunter.

"He came down the path from the cave this afternoon."

A look of disappointment came over the other's face.

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "Is that all?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Isn't that enough? I've carried out your instructions."

"Yes, yes, that is true. But it is nothing. I saw him there." A grim smile flitted over the dark face. "You have nothing else to tell me?"

"No."

"Come again if you have news."

And the lame man turned away.

"Here, I say!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "I say, you know, you haven't settled up yet."

"What?"

"The five bob, you know."

"Ah, I forgot!" said the other contemptuously.

He took out five shillings, and placed them in the fat junior's palm. Bunter's eyes glistened.

"Thank you."

The lame man nodded, and hurried away into the rocks. Billy Bunter counted the money, and found it right, and turned to go back to Black Rock. It was five shillings easily earned, and Bunter was beginning to feel very pleased with his role of reporter. What it was all about, what kind of affair he was getting mixed up in, the fat junior neither knew nor cared. It was enough for him that the money was forthcoming.

As he went back towards the house, several times he heard a faint sound behind him, and he turned his head, with the idea that the lame man might be following him. But he saw no one.

The dusk was deepening over the shore and the bay now, the rocks were growing dim to the view, and the short-sighted junior did not see very clearly. He was within a hundred yards of the house when a footstep sounded close behind, and a hand fell with a grip of iron on his shoulder.

He swung round with a startled exclamation.

"Oh, really——"

The words died on his lips.

Through the dusk a swarthy face was looking into his.

It was the face of Pedro Ijurra.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Changes Sides.

IJURRA looked at the fat junior in silence for a few moments, as if enjoying his terror, as a cat might enjoy that of a mouse. Bunter made a feeble effort to get away, but the grip on his shoulder was like that of a vice.

"Stop!" said the South American.

"Certainly," said Bunter faintly. "I—I shall be very pleased to stop. You see, I—I'm really awfully glad to see you, you know."

The South American smiled grimly.

"Give me the money," he said.

Bunter jumped.

"The—the what?"

"The money."

"I—I haven't any, you know. I—I'm stony broke. My friends treat me very meanly, and I can never raise a small

loan from them. I'm stony. Otherwise, I'd be sincerely pleased to lend you some tin."

"Give me the money—the money Halkett gave you."

"I—I don't know anybody of that name."

"The lame man," said the South American sharply.

"Oh!"

"Give me the money. I saw him give it you. I heard all that you said. I was not half a dozen paces away from you."

Bunter shivered.

Without another word he handed over the five precious shillings, and his dream of jam-tarts at the village shop faded away.

The South American took the money, but did not put it in his pocket. With a sweep of the hand he sent it whirling through the air, and the coins splashed lightly into the bay, and sank under the water.

Bunter watched this proceeding in blank astonishment.

"W-w-what—" he began.

"That is gone," said the South American quietly. "You young hound, you have taken money to spy upon me! Is it not so?"

"Oh, no! I wouldn't do anything of that sort!" said Bunter. "I hope you don't think me capable of anything like that."

"I tell you that I heard all you said!" exclaimed the South American fiercely. "Don't attempt to deceive me. Listen to me. That man, Halkett, wishes to meet me. He wishes you to tell him where I may be found."

"Ye-e-es."

"Now," said the South American, in a gentler tone, "he gives you silver for betraying me. I will give you gold to betray him."

"Oh, really—"

"Listen to me. That man is a murderer. He wishes to see me, to take my life," said Ijurra. "He has fired at me twice to-day."

"Oh, dear!"

"You would be arrested as an accomplice if he succeeded," said Ijurra. "You would pay very dear for the money he has given you."

"I—I—I—"

"You can get more money, and serve the law, by helping me instead of him," said the South American, watching the fat junior's frightened face narrowly. "I want to get him where he can be arrested. You understand?"

"Ye-e-es."

"How are you to communicate with him again?"

"I have to leave a note on the sundial in the garden."

"And he will come and take it?"

"Yes."

"At what hour?"

"I don't know."

"Listen. Will you write a note at my dictation, and leave it for him, so that he may fall into the hands of the police?"

"C-c-certainly!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't know—"

"Exactly. You shall write the note here, and I will give you a sovereign for placing it where he will find it."

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles.

"Of course, I'm jolly willing to assist the law," he said. "If the man is a murderer, he ought to be arrested, of course."

Ijurra smiled sardonically.

"Then you shall write the note now."

"It's—it's dark."

"I will soon alter that. Come into the shadow of the rocks, and I will light my lantern."

"I haven't a pencil."

"I have one."

"Or any paper."

"A leaf from my pocket-book will do."

Bunter followed the South American in silence. It did not occur to him to doubt the South American's statement in regard to Halkett. The proffered sovereign was a potent argument to convince the needy junior.

In the shadow of a great rock the South American turned on the light of a dark lantern.

He set it on the ground, and tore a leaf from a pocket-book, and handed it to Billy Bunter, with a stump of pencil.

"Write, nino."

"All—all right. But what—"

"I will dictate."

"Just as you like. But—"

"Write this: 'I have seen him again, and he is hiding in the cave in the cliffs on the northern side again.'"

"That's done," said Bunter, spreading the sheet on the cover of the pocket-book, and scribbling down the words in his sprawling hand.

"Now sign it."

"All right."

Bunter added his signature—"W. G. Bunter"—to the message.

"Good!" said the South American. "Look you."

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He groped in his pocket, and drew out a sovereign. The gold glistened in the light of the lantern.

"That is yours."

Bunter's fingers closed on it greedily.

"You shall have five times as much as soon as the man is arrested," said the South American, with a curious grin.

"Jolly good."

"You will place this note on the sundial?"

"Yes, rather!"

A terrible look came over Ijurra's face.

"Mind, if you deceive me—"

"It's all right; I want that five pounds."

Ijurra laughed.

"I believe you. Besides, you will be assisting the law to take its course—helping justice, you know. And—and there is a reward out for the arrest of this man Halkett, and you will be entitled to it."

"Jolly good! The villain ought to be arrested!"

"Exactly."

"I'll go and put the note there at once."

And Billy Bunter hurried off. He reached the garden gate of the house. From the lighted windows came the merry sounds of a piano and singing. Bunter did not enter the house, however; he skirted it, and made his way to the sundial, in a secluded part of the gardens.

There he placed the note, with a stone upon it to keep it in place.

He blinked round into the dusk; there was no one in sight. The moon was showing a silver rim over the cliffs now.

Bunter went back to the house.

It was more than a hour later that a dark form appeared among the bushes in the garden and approached the sundial—a dark figure, that limped awkwardly—the figure of the lame man.

He glanced carelessly at the sundial, and then started eagerly as he saw that there was a note there.

He picked it up eagerly and read.

Then his eyes gleamed.

"At last!"

He left a small heap of silver on the sundial in the place of the note, and quitted the garden as quickly as he had come.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Tenor Solo.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"

Billy Bunter came into the brightly-lighted room, blinking.

He was feeling and looking very satisfied with himself, and he was longing to astonish his friends with the sight of the golden sovereign—a coin Bunter very seldom possessed, and never for long.

The piano had just ceased; the juniors had sung the score of "The Yeomen of the Guard" almost through, and had spent a very pleasant time over it.

"Too bad of you to be wandering away, Bunt," said Hazeldene. "Your splendid tenor voice would have come in rippingly."

"Rippingly is the word," said Bob Cherry. "It would have ripped anything within a hundred yards, especially the roof—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The rippingfulness would have been terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh. "But it is not yet too late for the esteemed Bunter to let his honourable voice rip if the worthy Cherry desirously wishes it."

"Oh, yes, it is!" exclaimed Bob hastily. "The performance is over now."

"Stuff!" said Bunter. "I don't mind singing a tenor solo—"

"Rats!"

"I'll do the duet with Marjorie," said Bunter. "There's a ripping duet in that score between Jack Point and Elsie—I'm rather strong on that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked round indignantly.

"I'm accustomed to a rotten lot of jealousy in the study at Greyfriars," he exclaimed warmly, "but I really think you might stop it here. I don't see why my splendid voice should be kept in the shade. I'm rather a dab at tenor songs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I'm jolly well going to sing if I like—"

"Oh, do let Bunter sing," said Miss Clara demurely; "I shall enjoy it so much—I am sure we all shall!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Yes, I am sure of it, Marjorie—especially if he sings a tenor song with some very high notes."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Well, I don't mind," he remarked. "I like a joke as well as anybody—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"So go ahead, Buntie."

"Look here—"

"Laughter only allowed between the acts," said Nugent. "Silence for William George Bunter, the great tenor of Greyfriars."

"Hear, hear!"

"What song will you have, Buntie?" asked Hazeldene.

"I think I'll sing that duet with Marjorie—"

"Oh, no!" said Marjorie hastily. "I have been singing too much already."

"Well, I will sing it with Miss Clara—"

"It's not in my voice," said Miss Clara.

"Oh, well, perhaps a solo would be all right," said Bunter. "Lemme see. Have you got 'Come into the garden, Maud,' here, Hazel?"

"Sorry, no."

"Or the Smithy Song from 'Siegfried?' I'm rather a dab at Wagner."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Well, what have you got, then?"

"Lemme see," said Hazeldene, turning over the music. "There's 'Let me Like a Soldier Fall—'"

Bunter snorted.

"That's hardly up to my mark," he said. "Haven't you anything a bit more classical?"

"My dear chap, if you manage the 'Soldier Fall' you won't do so badly," said Harry Wharton, "especially as you're not a tenor."

"You know a fat lot about voices," said Billy Bunter. "When my voice has finished I expect it will be something like Caruso's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle as much as you like," said Bunter, blinking round at the grinning juniors. "You'll cackle in another way when you see me getting my hundred pounds a night on the stage at Covent Garden."

"My only hat!"

"You just wait a few years till I come out," said Bunter, warming to the subject. "I've thought a lot about being an operatic tenor, and I think it's a jolly easy and certain way of getting money. All you've got to do is to train your voice, and then get engagements, and then rake in the shekels. With a voice like mine a chap would be a fool if he didn't go in for the thing seriously. Besides, an operatic singer has to have personal advantages, such as a good figure and a good set of features. That bars a lot of chaps. And that's where I should score."

The juniors looked at Bunter's tubby figure, and at his dumpling-like face, and simply yelled. His voice was a comic one, but the thought of Bunter making his fortune on the stage through the advantages of his face and figure was too funny.

"Oh, you can cackle!" said Bunter. "I've no doubt you'll be jolly ready to borrow some of the guineas when the time comes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that the solo you're doing, Bunter," asked Bob Cherry innocently. "or is it a recitation?"

"Eh? I haven't started yet."

"Oh! You see, it's rather difficult to tell the difference between your singing and your talking! My mistake!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, is it going to be 'Soldier Fall?'" asked Hazeldene.

"I suppose so."

"Here you are, then."

Bunter took the music and looked it over.

"I hope you've got two copies of this," he said. "I have to have one to sing from—I can't see it on the piano."

"Yes, that's all right. Who's going to play for Bunter?"

"I will," said Harry, who saw that Marjorie did not wish to. "Shall I accompany you, Bunter?"

"Yes. Keep time if you can."

Wharton glared. He was an excellent pianist, and much in request at Greyfriars as an accompanist. Billy Bunter, on the other hand, not only had no voice, but hadn't the remotest conception of time. He would hold one note on to twice its value, and hurry over two or three minims as if they were semi-quavers, and then dwell long and loudly upon a demi-semi-quaver. The way he tackled the easiest song was enough to make a musician weep, and Bunter never tackled very easy songs. He thought they were below his dignity. He preferred to "go for" something really classical.

Wharton's hands came upon the keys.

Bunter fumbled over the music, and Wharton played bar after bar extra until the fat junior thought fit to start.

Billy Bunter started at last—in the wrong place, of course, and Wharton had to buck up to get into time with him.

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"Yes," roared Bunter, "let me like a soldier fall,

Upon some open plain,

This breast expanding for the—the—"

The word "ball" came out in a husky whisper. Bunter couldn't quite manage it. There was a suppressed chuckle from the listeners. They had expected Billy Bunter to burst there, and he did.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Eh?" said the accompanist.

Billy Bunter was a great believer in the ancient maxim: "When anything goes wrong, go for the accompanist."

"Oh, really, you might have given me a chance, Wharton!"

"Eh?"

"How the dickens is a fellow to sing to that sort of a blessed tam-tamming?" demanded Bunter. "Give us a chance!"

"Well, my hat!"

"It isn't a chance you want, it's a voice, Buntie!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Cherry, I don't see how I can be supposed to sing if you're going to keep on interrupting me like this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you ready, Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry resignedly.

"I'm starting again, then."

"If there's much more like the first sample we shall all start," said Bob Cherry, sotto voce, edging towards the door.

"The startfulness will be terrific."

"I wish you chaps would shut up and let a chap sing."

"Oh, go ahead, Buntie!"

"To blot out every stain," said Bunter, going on from the part he had burst upon. "Brave, manly hearts confer my doom—"

"Oh," groaned Bob Cherry, "he's conferring mine, anyway! Did you ever hear such a ghastly voice?"

"Never!"

"Well, hardly ever!"

"And the time!" groaned Mark Linley. "Minims and crotchets and quavers are synonymous terms with Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That everyone may tell,

Howe'er forgot, unknown my tomb,

I like a soldier fell!"

Howe'er forgot—"

Bob Cherry opened the door quietly, and slipped out.

"—unknown my tomb—"

Frank Nugent followed Bob. He simply could not stand it. Hazeldene made a wry face. Marjorie and Clara were at the furthest end of the room, exchanging looks of anguish.

"I like a soldier fell!"

Mark Linley hurriedly bolted, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh followed. It was getting past a joke, and there was another verse to follow.

"I like a soldier fell!"

Hazeldene rose.

"Are you going to stick it out, Marjorie?" he whispered.

Marjorie nodded.

"All right; I've had enough!"

"I li-like a soldier fell!"

Bunter stopped, gasping.

He glanced round the room, expecting applause. But there was no one to applaud. Only Marjorie and Clara were to be seen. Politeness was stronger with them than with the juniors, and they had bravely stood it to the end.

"I say, where are the fellows?" exclaimed Bunter.

"They are—are gone out!" said Miss Clara.

"Huh!"

"Thank you, so much, Bunter!" said Marjorie.

"I'm not finished yet, you know."

"Oh!"

"There's another verse."

"Aren't you tired?" asked Miss Clara demurely.

"Tired! No! I could sing a dozen songs like that without getting tired!" said Bunter.

Marjorie looked alarmed.

"Oh, we wouldn't think of troubling you!" she exclaimed.

"No trouble at all! I like to sing to people who really have an ear for music," said Bunter. "I have an ear myself, you know!"

"Ye-e-es."

"I'm ready for the second lap, Wharton!"

"Oh, go ahead!"

"Do try to keep a little better time this verse!" urged Bunter. "You drag in some places, and hurry in others, you know!"

"Oh, get on!"

The piano struck up, and Bunter started on the second verse. What Bunter didn't know about singing would have filled large volumes. He had no idea of breathing. His habit was to yell till he was out of breath, and then take in a fresh supply with a noise like water gurgling from a

bottle, quite irrespective of the time of the music. For the purpose of renewing his breath, he would allow himself a five-bar rest in the quickest passages.

The fat junior had less breath than ever now, and the second verse was more husky and gaspy than the first.

"My only hat!" murmured Miss Clara.

Hazeldene opened the door.

"Is he finished? Oh!"

He shut it again quickly.

"Enough they murmured o'er my grave, He like a soldier fell!" bawled Bunter.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, outside the door. "It would be worth a fiver to be able to murmur anything o'er his grave!"

"He like a soldier fell!"

"How can Wharton stand it?"

"He like a soldier fell!"

"The girls must have fainted. They're very quiet."

"He li-like a soldier fell!"

"That's the end!"

"Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry threw the door open. The juniors all stood in the doorway, clapping their hands.

"Bravo!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

"Thanks!"

"That's jolly good of you, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors with considerable satisfaction. He had hoped for applause rather than expected it, but an ovation like this could not fail to gratify him.

"I'm glad you like it," he said. "Wharton put me out a good deal, but I think I managed to get through pretty well."

"The pretty-well-fulness was terrific!"

"What part did you like best, Cherry?"

"Oh, the finale!"

"Yes; the finish was splendid, and awfully welcome!" said Nugent.

"I'll sing you another tenor solo, if you like?"

"You jolly well won't!" said Bob Cherry warmly.

"Oh, really—"

"You see, we don't want to be greedy. Besides, you're tired—"

"I'm not a bit tired!"

"Well, we are, anyway," said Bob; "and that's more to the point! Shut the piano!"

"Look here, Cherry—"

Wharton shut the piano, and rose from the music-stool. He was looking quite exhausted. Bunter was not an easy singer to play for, and, besides, Wharton had had his terrible voice bawling in his ear all the time.

"Ain't you going to play for me, Wharton?"

"Not much!"

"Look here—"

"Nuff's as good as a feast! Besides, it's nearly dinner-time!"

Bunter blinked at the girls.

"I'm sorry, Marjorie, I sha'n't be able to give you that other song. You see the jealousy I have to contend with!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

And Marjorie laughed, too.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

On the Cliff Path.

"SINGING gives a chap a good appetite," remarked Billy Bunter, as he sat down to the dinner-table. "I think I shall be able to do justice to the feed this evening."

"A thing you seldom do, of course!" Bob Cherry remarked.

"Well, I'm not greedy, you know, but I like a lot. Besides, a chap ought to do his host justice!" said Billy Bunter.

"Quite so!" said Captain Cunliffe, with his jovial laugh.

"Ay, ay, my lad; I like to see a lad eat!"

"Then I'm sure Bunter will please you, sir," said Nugent.

"He can keep it up for twenty-four hours a day without turning a hair. He could keep it up longer than that, if there were more than twenty-four hours in a day!"

"Oh, really Nugent—"

But Bunter did not finish his remonstrance. He wired into his dinner instead. The meal over, the party went out into the garden, which was brilliant in the moonlight. The full, round moon was sailing over the bay, streaming with silver light upon the cliffs.

"What a glorious night!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "I like a moonlight night; it's so romantic. It always reminds me somehow of plum-cake and lemonade!"

"The romanticfulness is terrific!"

"Speaking of lemonade," said Bunter, "if you chaps like to walk down to the village with me, I'll stand a treat all round!"

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Who have you been robbing?" asked Bob Cherry, in his candid way.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Oh, Bunter went out to get a loan this afternoon! Don't you remember?" said Hazeldene, laughing.

"And I jolly well got it, too!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I got it!"

"You got what?"

"The loan!"

"Ahem!"

"Look there, then!"

The moonlight glistened on the golden coin Bunter held out in his fat palm. The juniors stared at it in amazement.

"It's a sovereign!" said Mark Linley.

"I suppose you don't see many of them, Linley?" grinned Billy Bunter. "It's a sovereign, right enough, and I can jolly well get some more, if I like!"

Harry Wharton looked very serious.

"Where did you get that, Bunter?"

"That's my business, you know!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Wharton sharply. "Where did you get that sovereign?"

"I borrowed it!"

"From whom?"

"From a—a friend—well, an acquaintance!"

"What acquaintance?"

"A chap I—I met!"

"Look here, Bunter, you'd better speak out plainly, and tell the truth! You are always getting into some stupid scrape, and nobody who knows you would lend you a sovereign—and, of course, a stranger wouldn't. Where did you get it?"

Bunter drew himself up with as much dignity as his fat figure would allow of.

"Really, Wharton—"

"Are you going to explain?" demanded Harry.

"No; I'm jolly well not! It's my business!"

Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"I can get some more, if I like, too!" said Bunter defiantly. "You fellows have always treated me meanly! I told you I had other resources! I expect to have plenty of money now for the present! Coming down to the village?"

"No!" said Harry curtly.

"Where could you get any more money from?" asked Nugent.

"That's telling!"

"You young ass—"

"I've got influence!" said Bunter, with an important look. "I've got friends, too! You chaps aren't the only pebbles on the beach, you know!"

"You've been getting into some mischief!" said Wharton angrily. "You couldn't possibly have got a sovereign for nothing—honestly!"

"I hope you don't mean to imply that I might have got it dishonestly, Wharton?" said the fat junior, with a great deal of dignity.

"Well, considering the ways you've sometimes raised money at Greyfriars, I don't see why I shouldn't suspect it!" said Harry tartly.

"Oh, really—"

"You had better make a clean breast of it."

"Rubbish! You chaps would only interfere, and then the game would be up!" said Bunter mysteriously. "I'm going to make a lot more yet!"

"How, and where?"

"That's telling!"

Bunter was evidently determined to keep the secret. It was pretty certain to leak out later, Wharton knew that; but for the present it was useless to ask questions. And the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was worried. Bunter was too stupid to realise clearly the distinction between right and wrong, and many of his methods of raising money at school had been extremely shady. Wharton could not help feeling that the fat junior was in some serious kind of mischief this time.

The others were equally sure of it. For Bunter's own sake they wanted to know about it; but Bunter could be obstinate when he liked.

"Who says a walk along the beach in the moonlight?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Good egg!"

ANSWERS

"Would you like it, Marjorie?"

"Very much."

They strolled out of the garden and upon the pebble ridge. The moon was sailing over the bay, which was almost as light as day. They followed the sands round to the northern side of the cove, under the ledge path that, high above their heads, ran to the smuggler's cave high up the cliff.

Harry Wharton paused and glanced up at the cave.

The great dark opening could be seen in the face of the cliff, high overhead. As Harry looked, he saw a form moving on the cliff ledge towards the cave.

A dark figure, black against the moonlit face of the cliff, limped up the steep path towards the cave.

He was too far off for Harry to make him out clearly, but the limp betrayed him.

It was the lame man—the man they had seen watching Black Rock House through a glass, and again in the cavern when the shot was fired.

"What are you looking at up there?" asked Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton pointed.

"Look!"

"The lame man, by Jove!"

"He's going to the cave," said Billy Bunter. "He'll jolly well be arrested there, and serve him right."

The juniors stared at him.

"What are you babbling about, Bunt?" asked Bob Cherry pleasantly. "Off your silly rocker?"

"Oh, I forgot!"

"You forgot what?"

"Never mind—you fellows don't know," said Bunter.

"I dare say you'll know later."

"What are you talking about?"

"Never mind."

"But I do mind," exclaimed Bob Cherry, shaking the fat junior violently by the shoulder. "If you're not only gassing, explain yourself, you young ass!"

"Ow!"

"What are you jabbering about?"

"Ow! If you shake me like that, you ass, you'll m-m-make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken, you'll have to pay for them."

"What are you—"

"Good heavens!"

"Eh!"

"Look—oh, look!"

Harry Wharton's voice was sharp with horror. His hand trembled as he pointed. The juniors stared up at the face of the cliffs, and their faces grew white.

"Good heavens!" stammered Bob Cherry.

High on the rugged face of the cliff, twenty yards above the ledge that ran along to the cave, was another ledge. On that ledge, clearly visible in the moonlight, was a figure the juniors knew well—that of the South American.

He had a heavy rock poised in his hands, and was about to roll it down the cliff upon the lower ledge, upon the lame man who was unconsciously making his way beneath.

If that stone rolled down upon the lame man, his doom was sealed, and a crushed body would crash down upon the beach beside the Greyfriars juniors.

For a moment horror held them spellbound, then Wharton found his voice.

"Look out!"

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Black Villainy.

"LOOK out!"

The shout rang out in the sudden silence of the cliffs, echoing over the bay. The lame man gave a sudden start and looked down.

In doing so he changed his position, and that change saved his life.

For the stone was rolling down the cliff now—a huge mass of rock, as heavy as the South American could move. It crashed upon the lower ledge where the lame man had been standing, and bounded off, and crashed down upon the beach at the foot of the cliffs.

Marjorie gave a low cry, and covered her face with her hands.

"Good heavens!" stammered Nugent.

The juniors gazed up at the cliff in horror.

It was murder that had been intended, and it might yet come to pass. The lame man, startled by the crash of the rock upon the ledge within a foot of him, staggered back against the cliff, and seemed dazed.

The South American, twenty yards above, gritted his teeth, and as his lips parted in a savage snarl, Harry caught the gleam of his teeth in the moonlight, like those of a wild animal.

"Carambo!"

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JUST OUT.

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The rascal hissed out the word in his savage disappointment. But another ragged rock was in his hands, and he was rolling it to the edge.

Wharton waved his hand wildly to the lame man.

"Look out! Look up!"

Halkett started out from the cliff where he was leaning, and looked upward.

He caught sight of the swarthy face of the South American peering over the upper ledge, and of the rock that was about to roll.

"Ijorra!" he cried.

"Carambo!"

The rock rolled down.

Halkett ran a few paces along the ledge, and the rock crashed where he had been standing, bounced off, and rolled down the cliff. It splintered into a hundred pieces within a dozen yards of the group of juniors.

"The—the villain!" muttered Hazeldene. "He means to kill him."

"He will not succeed now."

The lame man shook his clenched fist at the swarthy face on the upper ledge, and darted into the cavern. There he was safe from the rocks hurled from above, though he could not venture out as long as the moonlight lasted.

The South American ground his teeth.

He had failed.

It was through Harry Wharton's warning to the lame man that he had failed, and he cast a glance of poisonous hatred towards the group of juniors down on the beach.

His hand sought out another rock; but he did not hurl it. Instead, he turned and tramped away up the ledge, and disappeared over the cliff.

The juniors were looking very white.

"You saved that chap's life, Harry," said Mark Linley.

Wharton nodded.

"I suppose so. What a precious villain that South American is! He meant to kill the chap."

"That was plain enough."

"Looks to me like six of one and half a dozen of the other," said Nugent thoughtfully. "That lame chap must be the man who was firing at him in the boat."

"Phew! Of course."

"They must be old enemies, I suppose," said Hazeldene. "But why are they here? What have they got to do with Uncle Hugh?"

"That's a blessed mystery."

"Let us go back," said Marjorie.

"Yes, do," said Miss Clara, with a shiver. "It—it is horrible." Even Miss Clara's insouciance was quite gone for the time.

They walked slowly back towards Black Rock. Billy Bunter's face was a study. Even the obtuse mind of the fat junior could not fail to see the truth now, and he knew why the South American had made him write that note to the lame man; it was to lure him upon the ledge path into a death-trap.

"The awful villain!" murmured Billy Bunter. "The awful wretch! That's what he gave me the sovereign for? I've a jolly good mind to chuck it away!"

But he did not.

Hazeldene and Mark Linley walked on with the girls, the other fellows lingering behind at a sign from Harry Wharton. Wharton's face was hard and set. Bunter, as usual, was bringing up the rear, and he suddenly found himself surrounded by Harry Wharton & Co., and the girls out of sight.

"Stop!" said Harry.

Bunter stopped, blinking inquiringly at the juniors.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"You've got to explain yourself, that's all," said Harry Wharton. "There's enough mystery going on in this show, without your adding to it. That South American villain came very near committing a murder to-night."

"I—I didn't know."

"You knew that lame chap was going up the cliff path," said Harry. "You know something about the matter. You got a sovereign from somebody to-day. It looks to me as if you have been used in some way in the matter. You're going to explain, anyway."

"I—I—"

"Will you explain?"

"You see, I—I—"

"Collar him and duck him in the sea," said Harry.

Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh seized the fat junior. Billy Bunter struggled in their muscular grip.

"Hold on—"

"Duck him!"

"I—I say, you fellows, hold on! I—I don't mind explaining. In—in fact, I was just going to explain, you know. I really meant to confide in you chaps all along."

"Then you'd better begin," said Harry, grimly. "Mind,



Taddy struggled with all his might, but could not hope to do much against the odds he had to face.
(An amusing incident in the splendid, long complete tale of Gordon Gay & Co., in this week's issue of The "Empire"
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the truth, and nothing but the truth. You'll get a ducking at the first lie."

"Oh, really Wharton, if you doubt my word——"

"No, rot! Get on!"

Bunter blinked at the juniors uneasily. Their faces were very grim. He looked at the sea, rolling cold and shining in the moonlight. The idea of a ducking in the chilly water made him shudder.

"Get on—do you hear?"

"All right!" gasped Bunter, in a hurry.

And he explained. The juniors listened with amazement to the story. The scorn in their faces did not trouble Billy Bunter.

"So that's how you got the money," said Harry contemptuously. "You spied for one man, and then betrayed him to the other."

"Oh, really, Wharton, that's a rotten way to put it. I—I thought——"

"Where's the sovereign?"

"In my pocket."

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NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

"Take it out."

"What for?"

"Take it out!" roared Wharton.

Billy Bunter jumped, and obeyed. He took out the sovereign, looking decidedly uneasy.

"Now throw it into the sea," commanded Wharton.

"What!" yelled Bunter, unable to believe his ears. "W-w-what!"

"You heard what I said."

"You—you must be dotty," gasped Bunter. "It's—it's a real sovereign—a good one. I'm not such an ass as to waste it."

"You're not going to keep that villain's money."

"Look here, Wharton——"

"You young rascal! Do you understand that it's blood-money?" exclaimed Harry Wharton fiercely. "Throw it away at once!"

"Well, suppose you give me another for it," said Bunter, "then you can chuck it away as fast as you like."

"I'll give you a thick ear, if you don't do as I tell you!"

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS

"Oh, really—"

"Nuff said. Throw that coin into the sea, or we'll throw you in!" exclaimed Harry.

Bunter reluctantly spun the coin towards the sea. It fell on the sand, and lay there glistening in the moonlight.

Bob Cherry stepped over to it, and kicked it into the sea. It spun round, glittering, over the shining water, and then sank out of sight.

Bunter gave a groan.

"Look here, you jolly well owe me a sovereign, Wharton!"

"I owe you a licking," said Harry, frowning, "and you'll jolly well get it if you play any more of these mean dirty tricks!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Get on, you—you toad! And mind, we're going to keep an eye on you in the future!" said Harry angrily. "You sha'n't go out alone again. I knew you'd jolly well disgrace us somehow if we let you come on this vac. with us, but I didn't expect anything quite so blackguardly as this. Shut up, don't talk any more! You've talked too much! Get on, before I kick you!"

And Billy Bunter, almost bursting with indignation, rolled on ahead, followed by the frowning juniors of Greyfriars.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets His Due!

BILLY BUNTER made several attempts during the remainder of the evening to get out of the house unobserved. The fact that the lame man had followed the path to the cave showed that he must have taken the note from the sundial, and in that case he had doubtless left the promised reward behind him.

And having been deprived of the South American's sovereign, Billy Bunter was extremely anxious to get hold of the five shillings.

But whenever Bunter made a movement to go out, one or another of the juniors quietly but determinedly followed him, and the fat Removite found it impossible to elude them.

"I—I feel sleepy," he remarked presently. "I think I'll go up and lie down till supper's ready."

And he went upstairs.

Bob Cherry saw him safely upstairs, and then returned to the piano, where Marjorie was playing accompaniments again.

"He's gone up," said Bob, in answer to Harry Wharton's inquiring look. "He's all right this time."

But Bob did not guess the scheme that was in the fat junior's mind. He went into the bed-room, and closed the door, and scowled at it, and then crossed to the window.

He opened the lower sash, and looked out into the garden.

It was too far for a drop, and there was nothing to climb down by; but Billy Bunter was not to be beaten.

He twisted some of the sheets from the beds into a rope, tied it to the leg of the nearest bedstead, and let it fall out of window. He tried it carefully by tugging on it—the bedstead did not move.

Then he clambered out upon the sill, and in a very gingerly way allowed his weight to swing on the rope.

There was a creak from within, as the bedstead moved. Bunter gave a gasp of horror, and clung to the rope.

"Oh!" he gurgled.

The fat junior sank lower as the bed slid towards the window. There it stopped, and the junior, hanging on to the rope, found himself only about six feet above the ground. He slid down, and landed upon terra-firma with a gasp of relief.

"That's done!" he muttered.

Leaving the rope of sheets swinging there, Billy Bunter scuttled off through the garden, taking care to avoid the lighted window of the room from which the music proceeded.

The moon was streaming down light upon the garden, and Bunter was not long in reaching the sundial.

He blinked eagerly at the old stone.

There was a little heap of silver on it, glistening in the moon-rays, and Bunter uttered an exclamation of satisfaction as he saw it.

"Jolly good!"

He scooped in the silver, and as he did so, there was a step in the bushes, and the lame man stood before him. Bunter shrank back a little.

Halkett eyed him grimly.

"I thought you would come," he remarked.

"I—I—I'm glad to see you!" stammered Bunter.

"Yes—you look glad."

"I—I'm glad that rock didn't fall on you," went on Bunter, very much flurried. "It—it would have been rotten. I—I—"

"How did Pedro Ijorra know that I should be on that path?" said Halkett grimly.

"I—I suppose he guessed," stammered Bunter.

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JUST OUT. The New Complete Story-Book.

"He was told."

"I—I—"

"You betrayed me!" said the lame man. "You young scoundrel—you took my pay, and betrayed me—nearly to death! I guess you're going to pay for it!"

Bunter made a spring to escape.

But Halkett's grip was upon him, and he was swung back. The lame man had a stick in his right hand. It fell across Bunter's shoulders with a terrific thwack.

Billy Bunter gave a wild yell.

"Ow!"

"Take that, you young hound—and that!"

Thwack! Thwack!

"Ow! Ow!"

Thwack!

"Yow!"

Billy Bunter struggled wildly. The five shillings shot from his hand, and went scattering over the ground. The lame man held the fat junior in a grip of iron, and thrashed him with all the force of a very powerful arm.

"Help!" yelled Bunter, hopping and jumping in wild endeavours to escape the stick. "Help! Murder! Fire! Police! Yow!"

"Take that—and that!"

"Help! Murder!"

A door was flung open at the end of the garden and a light streamed out.

"It's Bunter's voice!"

"Where are you, Billy?"

"Billy! Bunter!"

"Help! Murder!"

Bunter's cries had alarmed the house. Harry Wharton & Co. came dashing down the garden. The lame man bestowed a last cut upon the portly form of the Owl of the Remove, and hurled him away. Then he disappeared into the shadows, and was gone long before Harry and his chums arrived upon the spot.

Bunter lay where he had been thrown, groaning heavily.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Mark Linley.

The Lancashire lad was the first to reach Bunter. He stooped and raised the fat junior's head. Bunter groaned.

"Billy! Where are you hurt?"

"Oh!"

"Are you wounded?"

"Ow!"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton sharply. He knew Billy of old; hurt or not, he was certain to make the most of it. "Bunter! What has happened?"

"O-o-oh!"

"Have you been attacked?"

"Ow—yes! Ow, that lame beast!"

"Where are you hurt?"

"Ow! All over! I've got an ache in every bone!" groaned Bunter. "I—I think my backbone's broken, and my neck sprained!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you heartless beasts!" gasped Bunter. "I—I think I'm dying!"

"I can't see a wound of any sort," said Mark Linley.

"Oh, he's not hurt!" said Bob Cherry, contemptuously.

"He always howls out before he's hurt. It's Bunter's little way."

"Ow!"

"What are you doing out here, anyway?" asked Wharton. "Oh, I remember! You expected to find some money here, on the sundial, eh?"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! And you got a licking instead, and serve you jolly well right!" roared Bob Cherry.

"You'd better carry me in!" moaned Bunter. "I—I can't get up!"

"I'll get some cold water and bathe his face," said Hazeldene. "A good pailful swamped over his chivvy will revive him!"

Bunter sat up suddenly.

"Ow! It's all right—I feel better now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I can get up. You might lend a chap a hand, Bob Cherry."

"I'll lend you two," said Bob at once; and he took hold of the fat junior's ears, and assisted him to rise.

"Ow! Oh! Ow! Leggo!"

"Well, you asked for it."

"Yarrah! I—I can get up alone!"

Bunter staggered to his feet. He blinked round at the juniors. They were all laughing, and the Owl of the Remove, as usual, did not receive any sympathy. He grunted with indignation; it did not occur to him that he did not deserve any. And at supper that evening the fat junior did not speak a word, only blinking indignantly over his plate at the grinning Removites.

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THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

An Alarm in the Night!

AFTER supper the juniors bade Marjorie and Clara good-night, and they went to bed. Billy Bunter went up very slowly; but he did not ask to be carried up this time. Bob Cherry was ready to carry him, in the same way as before; and, indeed, he made the offer, which Bunter declined with an ungrateful sniff. The fat junior was still aching from the castigation he had received in the garden, and he went to bed almost without a word. In spite of his aches, however, he was very soon sleeping quite soundly, and his unmusical snore was audible before the others were fairly in bed.

Bob Cherry gave a portentous yawn as he drew the bed-clothes about him.

"Well, I'm tired!" he remarked.

"Same here," said Mark Linley. "We've had a good day. I wonder——" He paused, without finishing the sentence.

"You wonder what? Whether Bunter will ever leave off snoring?"

"No," said Mark, laughing. "I was thinking of Ijurra. I wonder whether we shall see anything more of him."

"Most likely."

"I was thinking of him, too," said Harry Wharton quietly. "And I was wondering if we should see anything of him during the night?"

"Well, the mastiff's loose in the garden," said Nugent drowsily. "It would be bad for Ijurra if Duke were to get hold of him."

"Yes, rather."

"All the same, I think he might come."

"If one only knew what the villain wanted," said Hazeldene restlessly. "My uncle has not said a word on that subject."

The juniors went to bed. Wharton blew out the candle, and darkness reigned in the room. It was broken only by the gleams of moonlight through the curtained window.

From the cove, the juniors could hear faintly the wash of the sea through the stillness, and nearer at hand they could distinguish the sounds made by the great mastiff as he roamed the garden.

That Captain Cunliffe was uneasy was proved by the fact that he let the great mastiff loose at night. It was quite possible that the South American would come; though what his object was the juniors did not yet know—except that it was an evil one, and meant harm to their host.

Wharton found it difficult to sleep.

The swarthy, evil face of the South American, as he hurled the rock from the upper ledge, was always before his eyes.

The hours passed slowly, and still sleep did not visit his eyelids. He stirred at last, and sat up in bed.

"You fellows asleep?" he asked.

"I'm awake," came Mark Linley's quiet tones.

"And I," said Hazeldene.

There was no other voice.

"Blessed if I can go to sleep," said Hazeldene, sitting up. "I suppose it was seeing that villain this afternoon that's got on my nerves. I can't help feeling that there's danger in the air."

"That's how I feel."

"It is very curious," said Mark Linley slowly. "Have you noticed——"

"Noticed what?"

"Duke was making a noise up to five minutes ago. Since then he hasn't made a sound."

Wharton started, and listened. The sounds of the mastiff moving in the garden, brushing in the bushes and trotting on the paths, had been quite plain in the dead stillness of the night.

He listened intently, but there was no further sound; several minutes passed thus, but the silence was unbroken.

"It's very curious," said Hazeldene, at last.

"Duke may have gone out of the garden."

"I don't think he would. He's been trained to watch the house. I—I wonder if anything's happened to Duke."

Wharton jumped out of bed.

"I'm jolly well going to see!" he exclaimed. "May as well take a turn in the garden as lie here awake."

"Just as well," said Mark, getting up.

Hazeldene turned out, too, and began to dress quickly.

"Don't wake any of the others," said Harry, as he pulled on a pair of rubber shoes. "We can call them if they're wanted. We can drop out of the window."

"Good!"

Wharton quietly opened the window. It creaked a little, and the night was so still that even a faint creak sounded loudly. Wharton looked out and measured the distance with his eye.

It was a drop that had scared Billy Bunter, but it was not much to the young athletes of the Greyfriars Remove. There was a bed of soft mould to fall upon, too.

Wharton clambered out on the sill.

"I'll go first," he muttered.

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

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ONE
PENNY.

"I say, you fellows!" It was a squeaky voice from the gloom—Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed, blinking towards them. "I say——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Where are you going?"

"Only to have a look up and down the garden, to see that all's safe."

Bunter grunted.

"Look here, you fellows, you can leave me my share here. I don't want to get up."

"Eh? Your share of what?"

"The feed."

"Feed! What feed?"

"Oh, no gammon!" said Bunter. "I know you're going to have a feed, of course. A chap wouldn't be idiot enough to get up in the middle of the night except for an important purpose. What have you got?"

"Ass!"

"Porpoise!"

"Rotter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Shut up, and go to sleep!"

"I'm jolly well going to get up and come with you," said Bunter. "You can lower me out of the window on a rope, and——"

"If you come after us I'll pulverise you!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Ring off!"

Harry swung himself out of the window, and dropped. He staggered a little, but kept his feet, and stepped out of the way. Mark followed, and then Hazeldene. Hazeldene rolled over on the ground, and Harry helped him up.

"All right?" he asked.

"Right as rain."

"What about Bunter?" said Mark anxiously.

"Oh, that's all right! He couldn't make that drop, anyway. Come on!"

The juniors moved away from the wall. They listened for the movements of the mastiff, but not a sound was to be heard, save the wind in the trees and the distant wash of the sea.

From the dining-room a bar of light fell out into the darkness of the garden. It came through the French windows. The juniors knew that it was the captain's habit to sit up there and smoke after supper. He was not gone to bed yet, late as the hour was. The juniors did not approach the lighted window; they did not want to alarm the captain, or to let him know that they were alarmed.

They moved quietly down the garden. Harry Wharton whistled softly to the dog, but there was no response.

"Duke! Duke!"

He called the name softly, but only the echo answered him.

Wharton's face was pale now. He was certain that the dog could not have wandered away; yet where was he? What had happened to him?

Suddenly the junior staggered over a dark mass that lay in the path under the shadow of the shrubbery.

He barely saved himself from falling. He stooped, and looked at the object he had stumbled over.

"Good heavens!"

"What is it?" whispered Hazeldene tensely.

"Duke!"

"Oh!"

The dog lay quite still, a black mass in the shadow. Harry Wharton touched him; he did not move. The body was still warm, but there was no palpitation in it.

Wharton withdrew his hand; it was wet. He held it up in the moonlight. There was a red stain on his fingers.

"Blood!"

"Good heavens!" murmured Linley.

"The dog has been killed," said Wharton huskily. "Duke is dead!"

"Then——"

"The villain has been here, then."

Wharton set his teeth.

"If he has been here, he must be here now. Come on."

He ran up the path towards the house.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Takes Cover.

BILLY BUNTER did not go to sleep again after the three juniors disappeared from the window. The fat Removeite was quite convinced that Harry Wharton and his comrades were going to enjoy a surreptitious feast; he could imagine no other adequate reason for getting out of bed in the middle of the night. And if there was a feed on, Billy Bunter did not mean to be left out of it. He was hungry again by this time, and the thought of a midnight feed was very attractive to him.

But he did not think of following the juniors into the garden. In the first place, he could not drop from the window; and making a rope of sheets again would take too much time. And then, he felt that if he followed Wharton, he might meet with a painful reception on reaching the ground. At the same time, he was determined not to lose sight of the chums.

He whipped out of bed, bundled on his clothes as quickly as he could, adjusted his big spectacles, and went to the door. He passed out on the landing, and closed the bedroom door softly behind him.

Then he descended the stairs on tiptoe.

His idea was to get out of the house by the French windows of the dining-room, which should have been quite easy; and which would allow him to follow the three juniors without them being aware of the fact.

Bunter was too short-sighted, and too excited, to notice that there was a light under the door of the dining-room. He took it for granted that at that hour, nearly one o'clock in the morning, the captain was gone to bed.

He opened the door, and a blaze of light struck his eyes.

The fire was glowing in the grate, and the lamps were still alight. Billy Bunter stopped in the doorway, blinking, quite taken by surprise.

He was trying to think of some excuse to mumble out, for he realised now that the captain could not be gone to bed, when he became aware that the room was empty.

The French window stood open on one side, letting in the cool breeze from the sea, which made the lamps flicker.

There was no one in the room.

Bunter's heart had been thumping hard, but he calmed down a little as he saw that he was as yet undiscovered.

"Jolly lucky," he murmured, closing the door behind him.

"I shall be able to nip out into the garden now."

He crossed the room towards the open window.

But before reaching it he paused. Although his mind was occupied with thoughts of the supposed feed, it struck him as peculiar that the lights should be burning, the room empty, and the window open.

Where was the captain?

Had there been an alarm, and had he gone out to seek for an intruder in the grounds?

The thought of the South American flashed into Billy Bunter's mind. He trembled, and drew back from the window. Ijurra's murderous nature had been only too clearly revealed that afternoon, and Bunter would as soon have met Halkett again as the man from South America.

There was a soft footstep outside.

Bunter started.

Was it the captain coming in, or—

The fat junior did not wait to see. He gave a helpless glance towards the door on the hall, but there was no time to reach it undiscovered. Acting rather upon instinct than upon thought, he darted behind a screen that stood in the corner near the window.

He was barely out of sight when the soft footstep stopped at the window. Bunter stood shaking behind the screen, his heart thumping violently.

Who was it at the window? Why did he not enter. The screen was made partly of open work, and Bunter could see through the little openings; and he kept his glance glued upon the window.

A face appeared there, and a pair of glittering, black eyes swept the room.

Bunter popped down immediately; he did not want to see any more. It was the swarthy face of the South American.

The man, quiet and watchful as a cat, remained for several seconds in the open window, scanning the interior of the room.

Then he entered with a stealthy footstep.

His eyes were gleaming with satisfaction, and there was a curious grin upon his face. He stepped noiselessly into the room, and crossed it to the other side. There he sank on one knee, so that the great back of the captain's armchair hid him from view from the window. No one entering from the garden could have seen him.

There he waited, silent.

Bunter was hardly breathing.

What the South American's purpose was he did not know; and he was too scared to think.

His only thought was to keep his own presence a secret and to avoid attracting the attention of the swarthy ruffian.

His knees knocked together as he waited, with thumping heart. Where was the captain? Ijurra was evidently waiting for him.

A heavy tread sounded at last at the French windows.

The powerful form of Captain Cunliffe appeared there, and he came in. Bunter saw him through the slits in the screen. The captain looked weary, and there was a revolver in his hand. Had he been seeking for the enemy—the man who was now hidden within six paces of him?

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JUST OUT. The New Complete Story-Book.

Captain Cunliffe closed the French windows and drew down the blind. He threw himself into the chair, and laid the revolver upon the table.

The South American drew a deep breath. He rose silently to his feet behind the chair in which the captain sat and reached his hand towards the revolver on the table.

The captain caught sight of the hand, and sat petrified for a second. Then he made a wild grasp towards the revolver.

But it was too late.

The dusky fingers were grasping it, and it was snatched away, and as the captain leaped to his feet his own weapon was levelled at his heart.

Over the levelled barrel the swarthy face of the South American looked at him with a mocking sneer.

"Stand back, capitano, or you are a dead man!"

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Face to Face.

CAPTAIN CUNLIFFE stared blankly at the South American. The revolver in Pedro Ijurra's grip never wavered. It needed but the pressure of the dusky forefinger to send a bullet crashing through the Englishman's heart, and the expression on the swarthy face showed that Ijurra was ready to do it.

The captain's hands were at his sides, his fingers clenching and unclenching convulsively. He was taken at a hopeless disadvantage, and he was now unarmed.

"Ijurra!" he said at last, and his voice was husky and broken.

The South American laughed.

"Si, senor."

"You here?"

"As you see."

The captain clenched his hands hard.

"I—I knew you had come when I found the mastiff dead," he muttered, in a choked voice. "I have been seeking you. I—I thought you had gone again as I could not find you."

"I was not gone, amigo—I am here, as you see, ready to settle the old account." And the South American touched with his left hand the livid scar upon his forehead. "That was a narrow escape for me, senor, and this—this will be the payment for it."

"I wish the bullet had gone through your brain."

"As you intended."

"No," said the captain, "I did not intend it. I wanted to drop you, that was all. I did not intend to take your life."

Ijurra gave a sneering laugh.

"A lie will not save you now, senor."

The captain flushed red through his bronzed skin.

"A lie! You cowardly Dago hound, do you think I would lie to you to save a thousand lives? Bah!"

The South American grinned over the levelled pistol.

"I have followed you far," he said. "How long is it since you sailed from the Argentine? Five years, is it not so?"

The captain nodded.

"And all the time you knew that I was seeking you?"

"I knew it."

"And you fled—you fled always! You call me a coward—and it was you that fled!" said Ijurra sneeringly.

"And you are a coward!" said Captain Cunliffe quietly.

"A brave man may fly from an assassin—no courage can guard against a shot in the back—but I am sorry I fled now. I should have met you on your own ground, and finished with you in the true South American way, and left your bones on the pampas for the coyotes to pick."

"It is too late now, senor."

"You are not in the Argentine now," said the captain; "you are in a civilised country, where murderers are hanged. Take care."

"Your English laws will not touch me. I am here to-night, gone to-morrow. When my work is done I shall vanish."

"The law has a long arm."

"It will not reach to the Argentine. But on conditions I may spare your life, mi capitano."

The captain looked at him steadily. There was a deep silence in the room, broken only by the ticking of the clock.

Behind the screen Billy Bunter was trembling like a leaf.

To the horrified mind of the fat junior it was clear that the South American was meditating a terrible crime, but Bunter was too frozen by terror to think or dream of interfering in any way. His voice was dead in his throat—he could not even cry for help. The revolver in the hand of the South American was ready to turn upon a second victim, and Bunter felt that he was in as great danger as the skipper if he betrayed his presence.

And that he did not mean to do, but it was quite possible that in his terror he would make some sound or movement that would betray him inadvertently.

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"What rascal business have you to propose now?" exclaimed the captain at last. "I will enter into no compact with you. I have always regretted my folly in once doing so—in leaguings myself with two scoundrels, neither of whom kept faith with me."

"And with whom you did not keep faith," sneered the South American.

"It is false! I kept faith, or would have done so, but—"

"So you told me on the pampas, and I did not believe you. Listen! You and Halkett and I discovered the nuggets in the Argentine sierras, and as soon as we had found them we determined each to keep the whole of the treasure."

"I did not—"

"Bah! Why lie about it now?" sneered Ijurra. "The same night Halkett fell into an arroyo, where we believed he had gone to his death—"

The captain clenched his hands.

"Wretch! It was you who hurled him there—that I suspected from the first, and I was sure of it when you attacked me."

The South American shrugged his shoulders.

"But you played a better game than I did when I attacked you," he said coolly. "You shot me—I lay unconscious for many hours there in the pampas grass, and dead as you believed."

"I—"

"When I came to myself you were gone, and the nuggets. I have hunted you down, to return the favour you paid me"—the man touched the scar again—"and to recover the gold. Listen! Give it to me and I will leave you as you are, unharmed. It is the gold that I want."

"I tell you I have none of it. I told you on the pampas that Halkett had taken it, that he was fleeing with it when you hurled him into the ravine, and that in doing so you had thrown away a fortune."

"I did not believe you."

"It was true."

"It is not true!" cried the South American fiercely.

"Besides, if it were, Halkett is not dead—"

"Not dead?"

"No. I have seen him."

"He lives!" said the captain, dazed. "I believed—"

"You pretend you did not know, when he is here—when he has twice tried to kill me within sight of your house!" exclaimed the South American fiercely.

The captain looked dazed.

"I did not know."

"I do not believe you. He is alive—lame now, from the injury he received in falling into the ravine—it was his leg he broke instead of his neck, and how he escaped alive I know not. But he is alive, and here, and you must know it."

"I did not know it."

"Come," said Ijurra, "what is the use of wasting words. You know why I have sought you so long, and all the time Halkett was trailing me like a bloodhound. My life is in danger as great as yours. I do not desire to linger here. Give me the gold—give me even my share of it, and I will go."

"I cannot give you what I do not possess."

"Bah! How are you living here? You have left the sea, and you have money—you are rich."

"I have what I have earned and saved in forty years at sea," said the captain sternly, "and not a shilling of it will ever touch your hands, Pedro Ijurra."

The South American gritted his teeth.

"I shall begin to believe you at last," he exclaimed. "It may be that Halkett has the gold, and that is why he is so determined to take my life. Let it be so; but if I can get nothing else here I can get my revenge. For the last time, have you the nuggets, capitano?"

"No."

"Then—"

The South American's eyes blazed along the levelled barrel. Billy Bunter's nerves could stand it no longer.

With a wild shriek he rolled against the screen and sent it crashing to the floor.

The South American started back convulsively, the revolver lowering to his side, and with lightning swiftness the English captain seized his opportunity.

He leaped forward like a bloodhound, and hurled himself upon the South American.

His left hand grasped the right wrist of the swarthy ruffian, forcing the pistol still lower, till the muzzle was pointed at the floor.

Then, with a twist of the wrist that brought a shriek of pain from the South American, he forced Ijurra to drop the weapon.

The revolver fell upon the floor.

"Carambo!"

"Man to man now!" cried Captain Cunliffe. "You scoundrel, look out for yourself!"

And the two men closed in desperate combat.

Billy Bunter blinked at them, and sent forth yell after yell, almost out of his wits with terror.

There came a loud hammering on the French windows.

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"Open—open here!"

"Help!"

"Billy! Open the window!"

Bunter understood at last. Captain Cunliffe and Pedro Ijurra were rolling on the floor now in fierce struggle. Chairs were crashing, and a lamp had gone with a crash to the floor.

Billy Bunter tore aside the blind and unfastened the French window. It was flung open, and Harry Wharton dashed in, with Mark Linley and Hazeldene at his heels.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

The Tragedy of the Cliff.

THE South American was struggling with desperation now—not for victory, but for freedom. The entrance of the Greyfriars juniors had made all the difference. But the captain was not disposed to let him go.

His grasp was like iron on the swarthy ruffian.

Ijurra was making desperate efforts to get at the knife hidden in his breast, but he could not reach it.

Strong as the captain was, however, he was only slowly getting the advantage. The South American fought like a wild cat.

"Wire in!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

And he rushed to the captain's aid.

"What-ho!" said Mark. "Collar him!"

"Got him at last!" said Hazeldene, with great satisfaction.

The grasp of the three juniors fastened upon the ruffian.

Wharton kicked the pistol out of the way. The South American had no chance now. He was forced to the floor, and Mark Linley knelt on his chest.

"You had better give in," said the Lancashire lad.

"Carambo!"

"Chuck it!" said Harry. "You've no chance now."

"Hang you!"

"I say, you fellows, I'll jolly well stun him!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, brave enough now that the enemy was pinned down under the weight of four foes. The fat junior grasped the heavy iron poker from the grate. "Stand clear of his head, and I'll stun him."

The South American gave a yell.

"Keep him off."

"No fear!" said Bunter. "I'm jolly well going to stun you. I—"

"Keep off, Billy!"

"But—"

"Take that poker away—"

"But I—"

"Get away, you dangerous ass. You may kill the man."

"Well, serve him right," said Bunter. "But I'm only going to stun him. It will be lots safer, you know."

"Put that poker back, you young ass," said Harry, laughing. "We've got him safe enough."

"I think you're an ass—"

"Oh, ring off!"

Bunter sulkily threw the poker into the grate, with a clang. The South American had frightened him almost out of his wits, and he would have been glad to give him a crack upon the head with the poker.

The South American gasped with relief.

"Let me up!" he muttered.

"Hardly," said Wharton. "You won't be let go till you're in the police-station. He will have to be arrested, of course, sir."

Captain Cunliffe nodded.

"Yes. I will get a length of rope to bind him with. He's too dangerous a customer to be allowed loose."

"Carambo! I—"

"You came here of your own accord, Pedro Ijurra, boasting that the English laws could not touch you," said the captain sternly. "You shall see."

"I—I will yet hunt you down, if I am put in prison. They cannot keep me there long," said Ijurra savagely.

"You will not escape me that way."

"We shall see."

There was a sound at the open French window.

"Look out!" yelled Billy Bunter suddenly, and he made a wild dive to get behind the big armchair.

The juniors looked quickly towards the window.

From the darkness of the garden the form of the lame man had suddenly appeared, and his deep-set eyes seemed to burn into the room.

It was only for a moment that he stood there, and then he disappeared again. Captain Cunliffe sprang towards the window.

"Halkett!"

But there was no reply.

"Look out!" shouted Mark Linley.

The South American was taking advantage of the sudden consternation. The hold upon him had insensibly relaxed.

With a wrench he tore himself loose, and sprang to his feet. The juniors leaped towards him; but the South American's hand was in his breast now, and the clear steel flashed out.

"Carambo! Stand back!"

And the juniors leaped back from the knife. Wharton made a rush for the poker. Captain Cunliffe seized the revolver.

Ijorra made a savage spring for the window, and in a moment was gone. The lithe form vanished into the garden. The captain rushed after him. He was gone!

Wharton snapped his teeth.

"He has escaped!"

"Gone!"

Crack!

Crack!

Two sharp shots rang out from the darkness, two flashes lit up for an instant the gloom. Who was firing there? They did not need telling. It was the lame man. Ijorra had escaped capture, only to encounter a deadlier danger in the darkness of the garden.

There was a yell, a crash of footsteps, and another ringing shot. Then silence.

The captain's bronzed face was pale.

"Good heavens!" he muttered.

He gazed from the window.

The moon was hidden behind a cloud; in the gloom nothing was to be seen. The juniors crowded out into the garden, with beating hearts. Villain as the South American certainly was, there was something terrible in this relentless pursuit by the lame adventurer, and they sincerely hoped that Ijorra would escape.

But would he?

Another crack from the distance, in the direction of the cliffs. The whole house was alarmed now. Bob Cherry and the rest had come downstairs, half-dressed, eagerly inquiring what was the matter. Marjorie and Clara, wrapped in cloaks and shawls, were with them, pale and terrified.

Marjorie caught Harry's arm.

"Harry! What is it?"

"It is all right now," said Harry, pressing her hand reassuringly. "The South American has been here, but he has done no harm. He has fled."

"But who is firing?"

"The other man—his enemy," said Wharton grimly. "Ijorra will be lucky if he gets away alive to-night. It will be better for your uncle if he does not escape. But —"

"Hark!"

Crack!

"He is firing again."

"Oh, listen!"

From the darkness in the direction of the cliffs came a terrible cry. It rang and echoed through the night, and died away sobbing among the crannies of the cliffs. It was followed by silence—a silence still more terrible.

Marjorie and Clara shuddered.

The moon emerged from behind the mass of clouds—bright, silver, sailing high and round and fair. The light streamed upon the shining cliffs. On the rocky ledge was seen the figure of the lame man, gazing downward towards the beach.

He raised his head, and the juniors saw him make a gesture, and then he limped on over the cliff and disappeared. It was the last time they ever saw him.

What had he been looking at on the beach, from the height of the rocky path? The juniors asked themselves that question with shuddering. The moon sank out of view again in the bosom of the clouds.

"Go in, my lads," said Captain Cunliffe, in a hoarse, strained voice—"go in!"

The Greyfriars juniors went in quietly.

There was a grim silence among them. That cry from the cliffs could only mean one thing—but what it meant they shuddered to think.

Marjorie and Clara went back to their room. They were pale as death. The juniors did not speak till they were in their own quarters again.

"It's awful!" muttered Bob Cherry, at last.

"I'm afraid there's not much doubt what has happened," said Wharton, in a shaken voice. "The South American must have fled by the path up the cliff—the path where he hurled the rock upon the lame man yesterday—"

"It looks like it. And he fell—"

"He fell, or was thrown, down to the beach," said Harry. "It is terrible, but don't let us think about it."

But it was not so easy to dismiss the matter from their minds.

Little more sleep visited their eyelids that night.

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JUST OUT.

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The morning broke over the bay and wide Atlantic, and found them still awake.

The juniors were up with the first glimmer of the sun; with the exception of Billy Bunter, who had fallen asleep at last, and was sleeping as if he never meant to wake again, to make up for lost time.

Leaving him undisturbed, the others dressed themselves quickly, and went down. They knew that Captain Cunliffe would look for the South American as soon as it was light, and they wished to help in the search, and know the truth at once.

The captain was about to leave the house when the juniors came down.

He glanced at them questioningly. His bronzed face was haggard in its expression. It was plain that he had not slept, either.

"Good-morning, lads!" he said, in a husky voice. "I am sorry that all this should have happened while you were on a holiday here—not much of a holiday for you, I am afraid."

"I am glad we were here," said Harry. "It might have ended worse, otherwise, sir."

"Quite true."

"You are going to—to look for him?"

"Yes."

"May we come?"

"As you like."

They left the house together.

Captain Cunliffe led the way in silence to the beach, under the shadow of the great towering cliffs. If the South American had fallen there, his death must have been instantaneous when he touched the rocky earth. He would have had time only for that one wild cry as he fell.

"Ha!"

Captain Cunliffe uttered the exclamation as he halted. The juniors caught a glimpse of the huddled form on the rocks.

The captain waved his hand.

"Go back—go back!"

"It is Ijorra?"

"Ay, ay!"

"And he is—is—"

"Dead!"

The juniors went back. They had no desire to see more. The captain followed them after a few moments. His face was very pale.

"I must go to the village and give information of what has happened," he said. "It is terrible. I shall see you again."

And the captain strode away down the rocky path towards Wynne. Marjorie was down when the juniors came in; she greeted Harry with a questioning glance.

He nodded quietly.

"It is all over," he said. "It was Ijorra, and we shall not see him again. Don't think about it, Marjorie."

Marjorie shivered a little. But the subject was dropped, and was not mentioned again.

The tragic occurrence at Black Rock had certainly broken up the holiday. After what had happened, the youngsters could hardly make a pretence of enjoying themselves on the scene of the tragedy, and Hazeldene's proposition that they should finish the vacation at his father's house was received with relief. With them to Hazeldene's home went Captain Cunliffe, so that for the rest of the holiday the juniors had the company of the old sailorman. And, terrible as had been the end of the South American, there was no doubt that it had lifted a weight from the mind of Captain Cunliffe. The shadow of Ijorra's relentless pursuit was gone from his life now, and he was able to breathe more easily.

And the relief was apparent in his looks and manner. In a change of scene, the dark happenings of the beginning of the vacation faded from the minds of the juniors, and they spent a very enjoyable holiday after all, and were sorry enough when the time came for them to part with their kind friends and return to Greyfriars.

Marjorie and Clara travelled with them as far as Friar-dale, and the juniors saw them safe to Cliff House ere they went on to Greyfriars.

"Well, the holiday's over," Bob Cherry remarked. "But we'll have a jolly time this term—eh?"

"We will," said Marjorie brightly.

"Yes, rather!" said Miss Clara emphatically. "What-ho!"

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled "Billy Bunter's Vote," by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

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STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, having rescued a lad named Tom Winfield from the Thames, into which he had been flung by would-be assassins, becomes interested in the case. He journeys from London to Launceston, Tasmania, where Tom Winfield lives, and there meets his old friend, Professor MacAndrew, who offers to assist him to trace young Winfield's unknown assailants. The three are travelling in the bush together when Tom Winfield is kidnapped. Stanley Dare traces the hand of a rascally lawyer named Silas Warner in the business, and leaving their black tracker, Watoonga, to follow the trail of the kidnappers, the young detective and his friend, the professor, return to Launceston to search out Warner. Stanley Dare confronts the scoundrel in his den, but the lawyer overpowers him, and locks him in a huge oak wardrobe; fails to return, and he interviews a police inspector.

Professor MacAndrew becomes suspicious when Stanley Dare

In the Nick of Time.

Slipping a flask of brandy into his pocket, in case a restorative of that description was wanted, the inspector accompanied MacAndrew back to the house where Silas Warner rented a couple of rooms.

Of course the door of the outer room was locked, but as the inspector had expected it would be, he was provided against the contingency. The lock was picked in quite an expert manner by the inspector, who was not an officer too much bound with the red tape of "usual procedure" when left to himself, and they stepped into the room.

The lamp was lit, and a careful scrutiny made of the apartment. The desk was locked, and there was no sign of it having been touched; but on the dusty and uncarpeted floor there were unmistakable proofs of a human body having lain there recently.

"The place hasn't been cleaned, or even swept, I should think, for months!" exclaimed the inspector, with a shrug of disgust.

"A lucky thing it hasn't," replied MacAndrew. "We can read the signs all the more easily. See here, now. A body has fallen at this spot, and it has been half dragged, half carried up tae that wardrobe that stands in the corner yonder. Ye can see whaur the feet hae trailed through the dust."

"You are right," admitted the inspector.

He tried the wardrobe door, but, as we know, it was closed by a spring lock. Again the inspector brought his picklock into use, but this time without avail. He could do nothing.

MacAndrew set to work in another way. In searching through the room he had found a strong chisel. Inserting the edge in between the door and the fixed frame of the wardrobe, he prised and prised until the door began to give. The inspector aided him with a strong-bladed clasp-knife which he possessed. The space widened, and they then inserted the thin end of one leg of a pair of iron tongs.

"Now, then, both together!"

Crack—crack—crash!

The door was open, but the wardrobe was empty! They looked at each other in surprise and dismay.

"The body of a man," reasserted MacAndrew, "has been dragged across the floor and thrust in here. I wilna' say it was the body of Stanley Dare, but I'm fearing that it was. The signs are plain tae read. What has become of the body?"

"That is a question which it is not easy to answer," said the inspector. "We had better try and move the wardrobe away from the wall."

But it was a heavy piece of furniture, and they could not budge it. MacAndrew wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"We're baith strong men," he said; "and although we couldna' expect to lift the wardrobe far, we ought tae hae been able to move it an inch or so. It maun be a fixture."

"That's very curious," replied the inspector. "It's a separate piece of furniture, and not part of the room fittings. Anybody can see—Listen! What was that?"

MacAndrew had not heard anything, but at the inspector's

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words he strained his ears to catch the slightest sound. The inspector was leaning forward, with his head and shoulders well inside the wardrobe. Presently they both heard a faint groan. It seemed to come from behind the wardrobe.

"There maun be a secret panel or a secret door," cried MacAndrew excitedly, "wi' a recess or something of the kind behind it. If we had a hatchet—"

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed the inspector.

He ran from the room, and in a few minutes returned with an ordinary wood-chopper. It was not very sharp, but it was heavy.

He attacked the back of the wardrobe with vigorous strokes, and the splinters flew in all directions. Then MacAndrew relieved him, and they very soon had an opening large enough for a man to crawl through. The inspector thrust the lamp into the aperture, and a recess was made visible, about the size of an ordinary bed-room cupboard. Huddled up on the floor was Stanley Dare!

"This'll be Silas Warner's work, the murdering hound!" cried MacAndrew.

"A bad day's work for him, then," said the inspector grimly.

Between them they lifted Dare out as tenderly as possible, and, after forcing open the grimy window, so as to let in some much-needed fresh air, set to work to restore him to consciousness.

"Thank Heaven, he is not dead!" said MacAndrew. "Gie him a little weak brandy-and-water. The wounds on his head are not deep, and not dangerous. It was the want of air that was killing him. Guid sakes! What's wrang wi' his eyes?"

He lifted the eyelids. The pupils were shrunk almost to invisibility, while the irises were very much inflamed.

"It looks as if some acid had been thrown into them," said the inspector.

"Ay, ay! I ken weel what it is," cried MacAndrew. "The dastardly brute! He might hae blinded the puir laddie. That's how he got the better of him, then. I can save his sight, but we are only just in time. Can ye get me some warm milk?"

"I'll get anything you require."

"There'll be a heavy reckoning for Silas Warner tae pay over this," muttered the professor; "and I'm thinking he'll pay it in full."

Thanks to Professor MacAndrew's skill, the young detective was recovered sufficiently in three days' time to be able to continue his investigations.

The blows which he had received on his head from the heavy ruler wielded by the lawyer were in a fair way to heal up; and his eyes, although they were still inflamed from the effects of the terrible liquid which Warner had sprayed into them, were otherwise unharmed. Fortunately, no permanent injury to the sight had resulted.

Watoonga had returned to Launceston and brought some satisfactory news. Tom Winfield was still alive, and still a prisoner in the hands of Luke Bastable and his associates, who were all camped in a lonely bit of country near the head waters of the Macquarie River.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S VOTE."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"I canna' understand why the laddie was left behind, or hidden awa' somewhere," said the professor, "during their first day's trek from the hut; and then afterwards fetched, as he must ha' been, for he would never ha' rejoined them of his own free will."

"I can see Jim the Tracker's hand in that business," replied Dare.

Now that the young detective was well enough to resume work, he insisted on starting at once to the rescue of his friend and client, and at the same time to bring Bastaple and the lawyer to justice. They went by train as far as Macquarie Harbour, and then, hiring horses, struck south towards Mount Humboldt.

They had to push their way through some dense bush, in a part of the country but little traversed. There was a "blazed" trail leading through it, which had been marked by Watoonga on his return journey, so that there might be no loss of time, and he would know the exact spot to emerge from the bush so as to strike the swamps where there was a path across them.

A "blazed" trail, it may be as well to explain, is simply a track marked through bush or forest by the expedient of "blazing," or cutting with a knife or axe, pieces from the bark of trees at certain intervals. The white scars left thus form a series of signposts, until the bark grows again.

At the edge of the swamps they had to turn their horses adrift into a small expanse of grass land hemmed in by thick underscrub and a belt of timber. They could not stray very far, and unless there were any horse thieves about, they would be sure to find the animals all right when they returned.

It was a dismal stretch of country in which they found themselves. There were dangerous morasses and swamps, extending for miles in front of them, and to their right and left.

Here and there a path led from one patch of firm ground to another, but without a guide no man who was a stranger in that part of the country could hope to find a way across. Fortunately, Watoonga, when in the police service, had been employed a great deal between Macquarie Harbour and the Little Pine River, and knew the place thoroughly.

Towards the northern end of the most treacherous of all the swamps arose a queer broken hill, and in the heart of it was a curious and almost circular little flat. It was in this flat, according to Watoonga, that Luke Bastaple and his associates had their headquarters.

Years before it had been the stronghold of a noted gang of bushrangers, and the whole neighbourhood around Broken Hill had had an evil reputation since the time when the first white man found a grave in those treacherous morasses.

At the foot of Broken Hill they camped for the night in a big cave, for it would have been dangerous to camp in the open, as the smoke of their fire would possibly be seen by Luke Bastaple or Flinders, both of whom were usually as alert as natives, for they had bushrangers' blood in their veins.

At about ten o'clock that night Stanley Dare crept quietly out of the cave, and, accompanied by Watoonga, made his way towards the crest of Broken Hill. They were absent for about three hours. On returning, the young detective hastily scribbled a note on the inside of a used envelope, and gave the missive to the native.

Watoonga at once hurried off across the swamp path in the direction of Campbell Town, and was soon lost to sight in the grey mists of the early morning.

A Conference—Two Precious Scoundrels.

"See here," growled Luke Bastaple, fastening his sinister eyes on the lawyer, "I'm about tired of this dodging about, and I don't reckon to have the job of looking after a prisoner. And I want to clear out of the country. A thousand pounds I was to have for the job, and I've only touched a hundred of it yet—except the amount you gave for expenses when I went to England."

"The remainder of the thousand is to be

paid on young Winfield's death," replied Silas Warner. "If you had not failed in those first two attempts, all this trouble would have been saved."

"But there'd be no failure now," observed Bastaple. "Any time this past four or five days the job could have been finished. Whose fault is it that he's alive now?"

"Not mine," said Warner.

"It's according to your instructions that I'm holding my hand," pursued Bastaple. "On the road here I left him in Varley's Hollow, and you know what that means. Six hours there would have settled him, and he couldn't have got out without help. Well, what does Jim the Tracker do but ride back and rescue him, bringing him along to camp again. He said that it was your wish that no further attempt should be made upon Winfield's life—"

"He lied!" hissed the lawyer. "But, all the same, I dare not have him put out of the way while that fool Jim the Tracker remains obstinate."

"Why not?"

"Because he is in possession of a certain secret of mine, and, so long as Winfield is alive, I have to pay Jim the Tracker to hold his tongue," snarled Warner. "Therefore it's to his interest to keep young Winfield alive. Do you understand? If Winfield is killed, he swears he will make the secret known to the police, and that will mean—"

"What?"

"It will mean a great deal to me," said Warner bringing his remarks to a somewhat lame conclusion.

"What is this precious secret?" demanded Bastaple.

Silas Warner gave his associate a cunning look.

"You want to know too much, Luke Bastaple," he replied. "There is one person too many in possession of the secret as it is. He found it out by chance, because I had not been sufficiently careful to hide certain important documents—"

"Oh, there are documents, eh?"

"Never mind about that," exclaimed Warner hurriedly, as his face blanched with a sudden fear. "No one else is going to learn the secret, you may take my word for it. And the man who has the knowledge of it now must be silenced. Do you hear me, Bastaple? Silenced! When he is out of the way, the other one can follow as soon as you like. But he is a menace to me, I tell you—a standing menace to me—while he lives."

Silas Warner and Luke Bastaple were seated on the trunk of a fallen pine in their camp in the lonely hollow, with the fantastic crags of Broken Hill all round them.

Flinders was engaged in cutting up wood for the fire, and Jim the Tracker was cleaning his rifle. The latter was cheerfully whistling the tune of a song that was all the rage in the Melbourne music-halls, but he paused and looked up as he became aware, by a sort of instinct, that the lawyer's sinister gaze was fixed upon him.

There was a veiled menace in Warner's eyes, but this did not seem to affect Jim the Tracker in the slightest degree. He laughed loudly, as though at some amusing thought of his own, and then, with great deliberation, began to fix the cartridges in the magazine of his rifle.

Silas Warner cursed under his breath.

"You shall have an additional five hundred pounds, Bastaple," he whispered, "if you will put Jim the Tracker out of the way."

"Why don't you do the job yourself?"

"I can't!" snarled the lawyer. "If once I had him in my power, I wouldn't hesitate; but he is always on the alert. He sleeps as lightly as a cat, and I daren't make the attempt."

"Jim the Tracker is a useful man," said Bastaple; "and although we don't hit it off on many points, I wouldn't mind having him as a partner when I start my big venture over in New South Wales. Still, I won't interfere if you like to tackle him."

"It is useless talking like that!" exclaimed Warner desperately. "I'll make it up to six hundred if you will do what—"

(Another long instalment of this story in next Tuesday's number of "The Magnet" Library.)



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- B * AR A wild animal.
- MI * ER Someone who seeks gold.
- CAP * * * N All sailing ships have one.
- DUE * Something in which two take part.
- P * INTER A well-known occupation.
- WA * ER What many dislike.
- P * * TRY Familiar to every cook.
- A * AM A Scripture name.
- C * * DLE Found in many a happy home.
- PHO * * GRAPHY A useful art.
- I * ELAND An island country.
- B * * CH A tree everyone knows.
- H * * D Part of the human body.
- ACA * IA The name of a flower.

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