

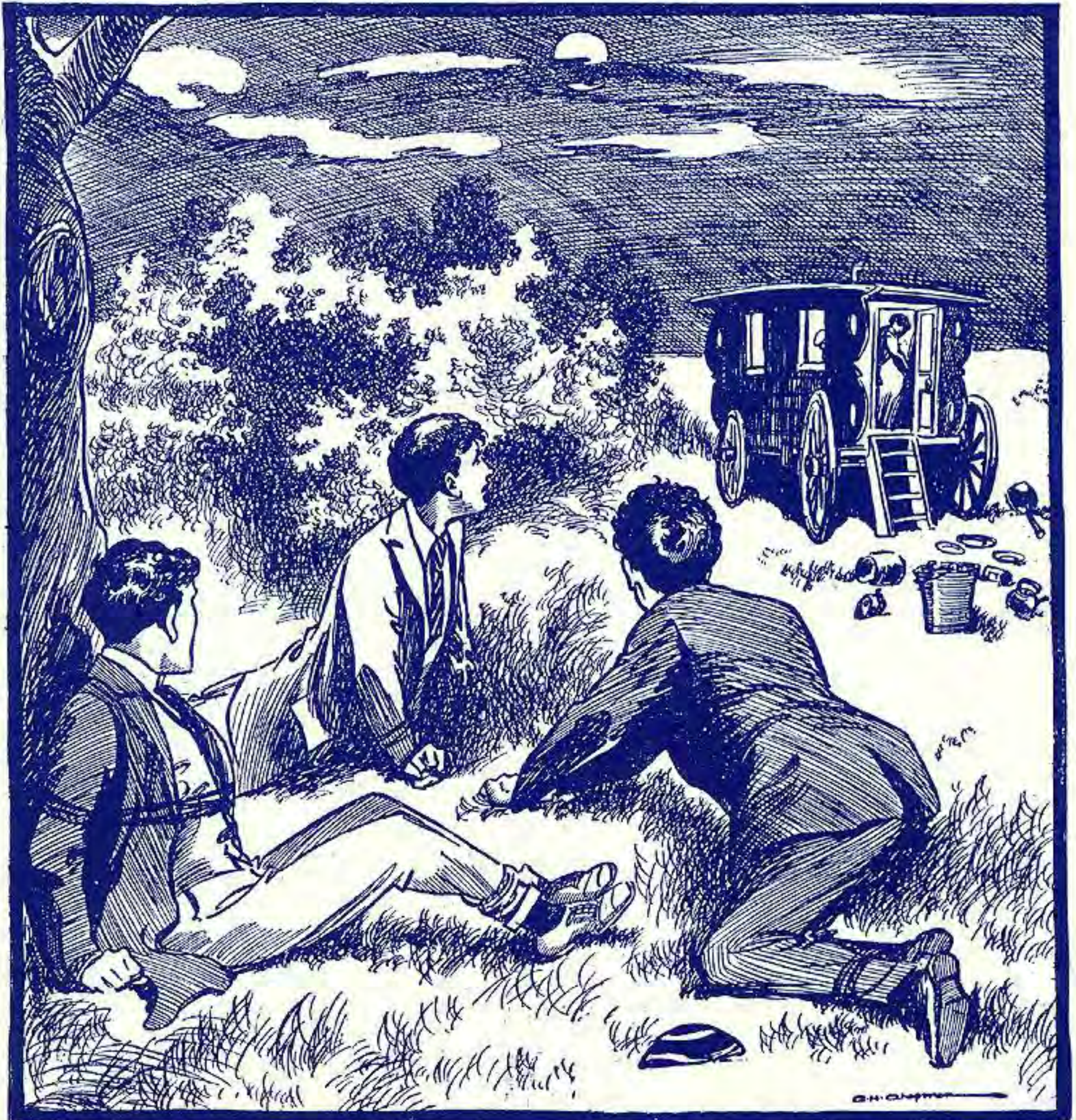
THE GREYFRIARS CARAVANNERS !

The First of a Splendid New Series of Holiday Stories of Harry Wharton & Co.



No. 704. Vol. XX.

August 6th, 1921.



COKER & CO. SEE THEIR CARAVAN RANSACKED!

(An exciting incident from the long complete School Tale inside.)



Address your letters to: The Editor, THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. I am always pleased to hear from my chums.

FOR NEXT MONDAY.

"THE SECRET OF THE CARAVAN!"

By Frank Richards.

The above is the title of our next grand, long, complete story of the chums of Greyfriars on their holiday tour with their caravan.

As you know, there is a great deal of mystery about the caravan the juniors hired from Lazarus, the dealer of Courtfield, and Coker & Co., as raiders of the caravan, found it out much sooner than Harry Wharton and his chums.

But it is really William George Bunter, the unwanted member of the party, who solves

"THE SECRET OF THE CARAVAN!"

and, naturally, he takes all the credit.

This is a splendid yarn, my chums, and I want you all to be sure not to miss it by ordering your copies now. Next Monday may be too late!

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD.

There is to be another of our most interesting supplements in our next issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY, and Harry Wharton & Co. have succeeded in turning out quite a remarkable number.

As we go to press some time before you see your copy, I have the privilege of reading Harry's supplement before the preceding week's issue is published. I am therefore in a position to know what the contributors have written—and I can safely assure you that next week's

supplement is quite one of the very best the chums have edited.

SOMETHING TO WATCH FOR!

Old readers of the MAGNET LIBRARY will remember some of the splendid serials we published years ago. Other readers will know them, as they have appeared in the "Boys' Friend Fourpenny Library."

Well, Mr. Sidney Drew, the most famous of modern boys' fiction writers, has written another serial for the "Popular," which he has called

"THE INVISIBLE RAIDER!"

This story is centred round the adventures of Ferrers Lord, who owned the Lord of the Deep, Ching Lung, the most famous Chinese adventurer of the century, Gan Waga, the Eskimo with a very keen sense of humour, and Prout & Co., the jolliest seamen you ever read about.

Hal Honour, the engineer, by reason of his very reserved ways, is rather inclined to be forgotten by readers. However, he comes very much to the fore in the story of

"THE INVISIBLE RAIDER!"

By Sidney Drew,

which will be appearing very shortly in the "Popular."

Watch for it, readers, and pounce upon it! It is the very finest adventure serial Sidney Drew has written—and that is saying something.

A further announcement on the subject will be made in next week's issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY.

HOLIDAYS.

Is anybody ever irritated by holidays? As if it were likely! And yet to the individual who is tied to a desk there might be something fairly tantalising in being told that such-and-such a place is looking its best, that the fish are large, the effect of the heather and gorse wonderful. But there is not really any feeling of this kind. It is like magic to hear of the country. If you cannot get there you can think of it—the misty gardens where the red and pink dahlias are nodding, and of the dusky evenings in the lanes with the whirr of big moths and the call of the brown owl, and far away the steady plod, plod of the waggon team en route to the farm.

A THUNDERSTORM.

It is quite possible to predict the beginnings of a thunderstorm at wireless stations. Hours before the last big storm the effects had been felt at all wireless stations in the form of loud ticking noises in the telephone. Ordinary telephones will indicate the approach of a storm. Sometimes, in my schoolmaster's telephone, a distinct spark flies off when a thunderstorm is in progress. Squalls make themselves apparent by a hissing noise. At first the sound is quite faint, then becomes louder and louder until the disturbance is immediately overhead.—H. Holmes, 3, Mayfield Grove, Chain Lane, Knaresboro', Yorks.

NOTICES.

Correspondence.

Correspondence is asked for by V. H. Sheppard, 285, Silver Birch Avenue, Toronto, Canada.

William Griffin, 3, Post Office Yard, Pontefract, Yorks, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcard views.

H. C. Hughes, 47, Hereford Street, Marylebone, N.W., wishes to hear from Alfred Howe of Kentish Town, at once.

Miss A. Maguier, 14, Rue Coquelin, Boulogne-sur-mer, Pas de Calais, France, wishes to correspond with readers knowing French. All letters answered.

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Your Editor.



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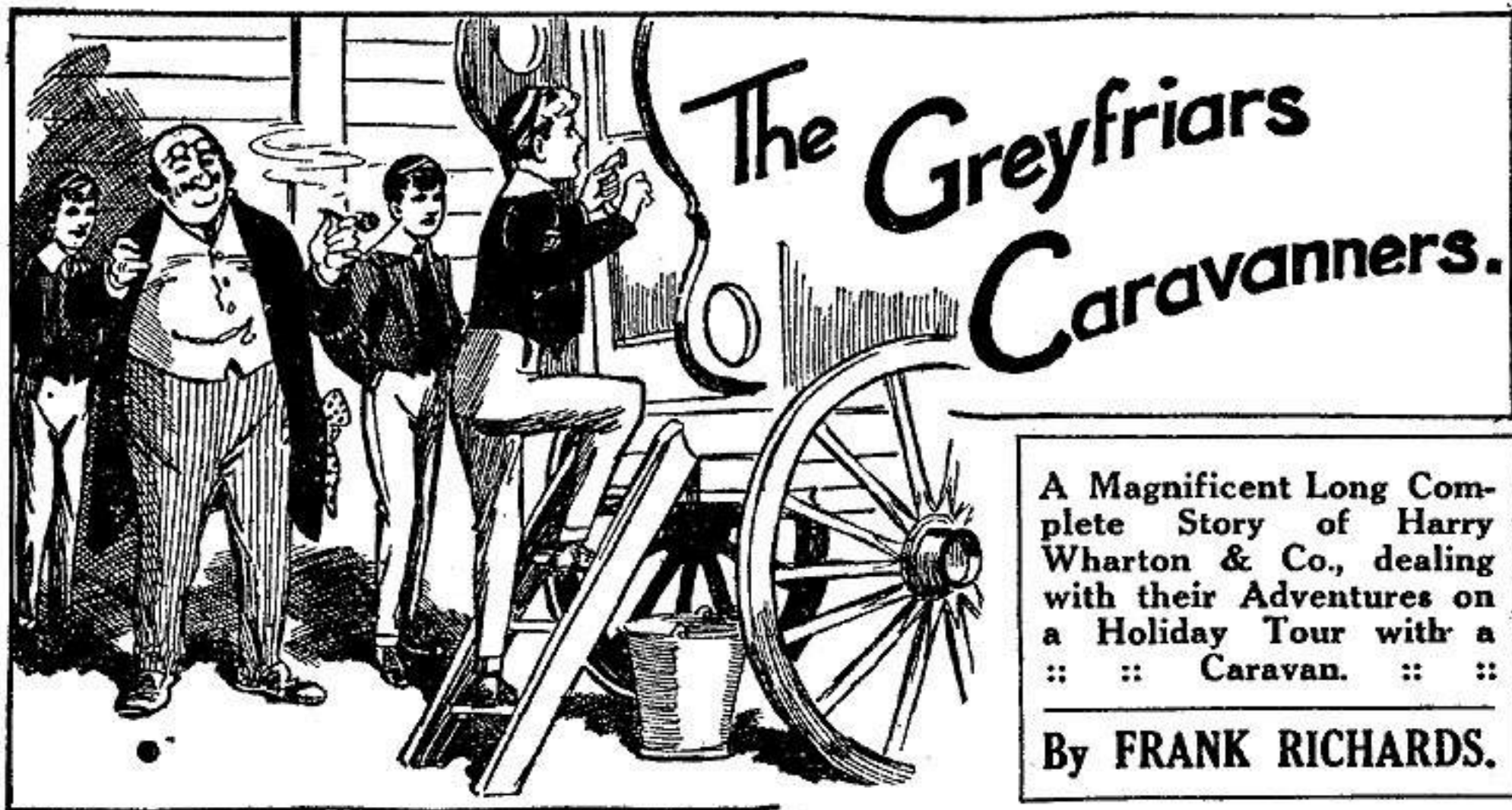
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OF THE CHUMS
OF GREYFRIARS
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A Magnificent Long Com-
plete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co., dealing
with their Adventures on
a Holiday Tour with a
:: :: Caravan. :: ::

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

To Van or not to Van?

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER blinked into the doorway of Study No. 1, in the Remove, and coughed.

Bunter's cough, apparently, was intended to draw attention to the fact that he was there.

If so, it failed to achieve its object.

Of the five juniors in the study, not one glanced in the direction of the doorway—not one seemed aware of the fact that the Owl of the Remove had dawned upon them.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were occupying the window-seat; Frank Nugent sat on the corner of the table; Johnny Bull was astride of a chair, leaning his arms on the back; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh reclined at ease in the armchair, with his feet resting on the table. The Famous Five of the Remove were talking—two or three at a time. Apparently they were too interested in their topic to have any attention for Bunter.

Bunter coughed again.

"The open air!" said Bob Cherry. "That's the idea! I don't care much where and how we spend the vac, so long as it's right out of doors somewhere."

Cough!

"It looks like being decent weather," remarked Harry Wharton. "It's warm enough even for Inky."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

"The present warmfulness is the esteemed boon and blessing," he remarked. "But the uncertainty of this ludicrous climate is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—" hooted Bunter.

"Suppose we get a little rain," said Bob Cherry argumentatively, "it won't

hurt us. It won't wash off your beautiful complexion, Inky."

"I say, Wharton—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, "is that a frog in the study?"

"A frog—"

"I heard a bull-frog croaking—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Why, it's Bunter!" exclaimed Bob, apparently becoming aware of William George's presence for the first time.

"Look here, you fellows—"

"Not unless you put on a mask," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "You can't expect it, Bunter—not with those features!"

Billy Bunter sniffed, and rolled into the study. He gave a wrathful blink round through his big spectacles at five grinning faces.

"You fellows are talking about the vac, I suppose?" he said.

"Right first time!" said Johnny Bull. "Run away and play, Bunter; we haven't finished."

"I'm going to give you a tip about the vac," explained Bunter. "That's what I've come for."

"Not because it's nearly tea-time?" asked Nugent.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"A tip for the vac!" said Bob. "Well, it will come in handy, Bunter. How much?"

"I don't mean a tip, you ass—I mean a tip—"

"The lucidity of the esteemed fat Bunter is—"

"Terrific!" grinned Bob. "If you don't mean a tip when you mean a tip, Bunter, what do you mean, if you mean anything?"

"I mean I've got an idea—"

"Gammon!"

"I've got an idea—a stunt!" roared Bunter. "I'm going to give you

fellows the benefit of it, so that you can have a ripping time this holiday."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob. "Are you going to ask us all down to Bunter Court? Are we to spread ourselves in the lordly Bunter mansion? That will be one way of having an open-air holiday. It's never been built, so—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" urged Bunter. "Just listen to me, you fellows. I've been down to Courtfield, and I dropped into old Lazarus' place. And what do you think he's got?"

"A prize boko," said Bob.

"I saw it in the yard—" continued Bunter.

"What—his boko?"

"No, you ass! The caravan."

"The caravan?" repeated Wharton.

Bunter nodded.

"That's it! Lazarus took me out in the yard and showed it to me. He's just bought it—at a bargain, I expect. It's a jolly good caravan—fitted up tip-top. And he asked me to mention it to any fellows at Greyfriars who thought of going caravanning this vac."

"Is anybody thinking of going caravanning?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, I am," said Bunter.

"Then you'd better mention it to yourself," suggested Bob.

"A fellow doesn't want to go caravanning alone, of course," said Bunter. "I'm thinking of taking you fellows."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I mean it," said Bunter generously. "I'm going to take all five of you caravanning. All you fellows will have to do is to stand the exes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that all?" asked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"That's all," said Bunter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 704.



As Harry Wharton & Co. came out of the bun-shop in a merry crowd, a voice greeted them in fat and friendly tones. "I say, you fellows—" The Famous Five started back with surprise. "Great pip!" gasped Wharton. "Bunter—you here?" (See Chapter 5.)

thought I'd speak to you before I actually engaged the van."

"Well, that was just as well," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "The fact is, you chaps, I was thinking of a caravan. The St. Jim's fellows had one last vac, and they seem to have had a good time. There's quite a lot in the idea."

"Well, so long as we get into the open air—"

"You'll do that—there won't be much room in the van," said Wharton. "We should have to take a tent. Two of us could doss in the van, and three in the tent."

"And what about me?" demanded Bunter.

"You! Nothing about you, old top."

"I should prefer sleeping in the van, I think," said Bunter. "You five could have the tent. But we can arrange all that afterwards. The question is, are we going caravanning?"

"I rather like the idea," said Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "I could play my concertina round the camp-fire of an evening—"

"It would keep off tramps, and wild animals, and dangerous characters," assented Bob Cherry.

"You ass—"

"It's not a bad wheeze," said Frank Nugent. "I don't care much where we go, so long as we go in a bunch. What do you think, Inky?"

"The thinkfulness is not terrific, my esteemed Franky. I also do not mind, so long as we go bunchfully."

"I say, you fellows, the six of us will make a jolly little party," said Bunter. "I shall have to decline Lord Mauleverer's pressing invitation to spend the vac at Mauleverer Towers; but I don't mind, for the sake of you fellows."

"Oh, don't decline on our account," said Bob Cherry hurriedly. "Stick to old Mauly, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good idea," said Johnny Bull. "We've had Bunter before, and Mauly has always dodged him so far. It's only fair that Mauly should have him for once—"

"Why, you cheeky ass!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "Look here—"

"Did old Lazarus say how much he wanted for the bus?" asked Wharton.

"Yes; it's quite cheap," said Bunter. "Only two-pounds-ten a week so long as we have it."

"That's cheap if it includes the horse."

"Ahem! It doesn't!"

"Bunter could send for a horse from the magnificent stables at Bunter Court!" suggested Bob.

"Well, I—I could," said Bunter; "but—"

"Oh, there would be a 'but'" grinned Bob.

"My pater would hardly trust his valuable horseflesh to a lot of school-boys," said Bunter, shaking his head. "Better cut that out."

"Yes, I think we'd better," said Wharton, with a laugh. "We can hire a horse from some farmer, I dare say. We'll think this over—"

"Better make up your minds at once," urged Bunter. "That caravan's going cheap, and somebody else may snap it up. I've heard that Coker of the Fifth is talking about caravanning."

"Bow-wow!"

"Might trot down to Courtfield and see the contraption, anyhow," said Bob Cherry, rising from the window-seat. "Plenty of time for a spin before locking-up."

"Lots," agreed Wharton.

"May as well walk," said Bunter. "My bike isn't in going order."

"It never is," said Bob.

"Well, I've asked you to mend it often enough, Bob Cherry."

"You can go on asking, my fat pippin," grinned Bob. "Come on, you chaps, and get the bikes out."

"I say, you fellows, which of you is going to give me a lift, then?"

"I wonder which!" chuckled Bob. "Anybody keen on pulling a ton weight up the hill?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The whichfulness is terrific," chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton & Co. turned out of the study, and the Owl of the Remove followed them down the staircase. Five

bikes were wheeled out of the shed, without the question of a lift for Bunter having been settled.

"I suppose you fellows are not going without me, as it's my caravan you're going to see!" snorted Bunter.

"Your supposer's out of gear, then," said Bob Cherry. "We are."

"I'd better borrow Smithy's bike, then—"

"Had you?" said Vernon-Smith, coming along to the bike shed just then. "Do, old barrel! There'll be a dead porpoise to be buried soon afterwards."

"I say, Smithy, old chap—"

The Famous Five wheeled away, leaving Billy Bunter engaged in a warm argument with the Bounder. And—iniquitous as it seemed to William George—the chums of the Remove did actually go down to Courtfield without W. G. Bunter, to see "his" caravan!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Caravan and a Mystery!

MR. LAZARUS gave the chums of the Remove a cordial and shiny smile, as their cheery faces looked into his dusky little shop in Courtfield High Street.

Mr. Lazarus did a varied business in his dusky establishment; he sold second-hand clothes, and third-hand bikes, and fourth-hand watches. There was an entrance round the corner to the pawn-broking department, and another entrance round another corner to a big yard, in which damaged ladders, and down-at-heel prams, and lame wheelbarrows, were at the disposal of his clients. He was prepared to sell or hire anything or anybody—or to buy anything from anybody—the prices being very different in the two cases. The old gentleman leaned over his dusky counter and rubbed his hands and smiled in greeting to the Greyfriars juniors.

"Vat can I do for you to-day, young shentlemans?" he asked.

"You can show us the giddy old 'bus!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ah! Master Bunter hath told you—"

"Exactly. Can we see the caravan?" asked Wharton.

"Thertainly," said Mr. Lazarus. "It is a splendid caravan, Master Wharton—the very thing you want—"

"Fits you like the paper on the wall, what?" asked Bob.

Mr. Lazarus laughed. He was too good a business man not to laugh at his customers' little jokes.

"Thith way," he said, opening a door. "You will be pleased with that caravan. I paid a very high prithe for it—very high indeed, but I am letting it cheap—"

"That's awfully good of you," said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Generous, I call it," remarked Nugent.

Mr. Lazarus chuckled again, and led the way into the yard. As a matter of fact, Harry Wharton & Co. did not expect great things of that caravan. Mr. Lazarus' second-hand goods, as a rule, required a great deal of renovating to make them equal to new. The juniors more than half expected to see some tumbledown old gipsy van, in which case they intended to decline the loan of it, with thanks—or without.

They were agreeably surprised when Mr. Lazarus led them into a shed off the yard.

There stood the caravan—and they stared at it.

Certainly it was not an old gipsy van. It was a handsome vehicle, looking almost new, nicely painted, and in first-class order. They looked into the interior, which was bright and clean and very conveniently arranged. The van did not look large; but it was quite roomy inside.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Jolly nice!" said Wharton heartily.

"The niceness is terrific."

"Nothing wrong with that van," said Johnny Bull, with rather a perplexed air; at which Mr. Lazarus grinned once more. Apparently Johnny was surprised to find an article in Mr. Lazarus' establishment that had nothing wrong with it.

"You like that van, vat?" asked Mr. Lazarus.

"Yes, rather," said Harry. "If we go caravanning, we'll certainly have it, at two ten the week."

"Better make up your minds," suggested Mr. Lazarus. "Thumbbody else may come along, and it is very cheap."

"Not so jolly cheap, without a horse," said Johnny Bull. "You can get a van with a horse for three quid a week, I believe."

Mr. Lazarus coughed.

"Let's settle on it, anyhow," said Harry. "We've as good as decided we're going caravanning, and this is a jolly good van. It's not dear, anyhow. You fellows agree?"

There was a general nodding of heads. As a matter of fact, that very handsome and commodious van had taken the fancy of the Greyfriars juniors, and helped them to make up their minds.

"Settled?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, rather!"

"Done, then," said Harry. "We'll pay you a deposit on the bus, Mr. Lazarus, to clinch the bargain."

"Thertainly."

"It will be ten bob a week each for the five of us," said Harry. "That's not steep for holiday quarters, what?"

"Right as rain," said Bob heartily. "It's a go."

"The go-fulness is terrific," concurred Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "And if the excellent and fatheaded Coker hears of it, and comes along, it will be too lateful."

"Yes, rather," said Harry. "We're taking it for the vac, Mr. Lazarus. You fellows have got some tin, I hope? We ought to pay five quids deposit."

There was a sorting out of cash. Some of the Co. had already received holiday tips from beneficent uncles and aunts, and the sum required as a deposit was easily raised. Mr. Lazarus, beaming, led the way into his little dusky office, where the cash was handed over, and the receipt duly made out and stamped and signed. The juniors had noticed that Mr. Lazarus very carefully padlocked the shed after leaving it, and they had noticed, too, that he had a big dog loose in the yard.

"Now that is all right," said Mr. Lazarus, as he handed over the receipt, and rubbed his hands, "and the van is ready for you as thoon as you bring a horse to take it away. And the thooner you do so, young shentlemens, the better I shall like it."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anything wrong with it?" asked Bob, asking that question rather late in the day, as the deposit was paid.

Mr. Lazarus grinned.

"No, no, no! Not at all! It ith a splendid van—first-class. But it is rather

a trouble to me here. You thee, thumbbody tried to break into my premises and thteal that van."

"Steal it!" ejaculated Wharton.

The old gentleman nodded.

"Thum rascal," he said. "The dog woke me up, and I looked out of my window and thaw the van half out of the shed. I called a politheman, and he nearly nabbed the rascal, but not quite. Now I have put on a padlock, and keep the dog loose in the yard."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the old gentleman, wondering whether Mr. Lazarus was gently pulling their leg with this surprising story.

"Blessed if I ever heard of stealing a caravan," said Bob. "Why, it couldn't be taken far without being spotted, and the thieves caught."

"That is tho!" assented Mr. Lazarus.

"But they tried to thteal it all the thame. They had a horse waiting in the lane at the back to pull it away. And last night there was a dithturbance, the dog barking, and the politheman nearly caught a rascal trying to get over the yard wall. I think it was the thame rascal." The old gentleman nodded very seriously. "I shall not be thorry to hire out that caravan. I would rather sell it, if you young shentlemens would like to buy it—"

"How much?" grinned Bob.

"I would thell it for a hundred and fifty pounds to get rid of it."

"Make it a hundred and fifty bob, and it's a go!"

Mr. Lazarus shook his head and grinned. He was not prepared to make the sweeping reduction in price, even to get rid of the caravan.

"It is not really in my line at all," he said. "But it was offered me at a reasonable prithe. I did not know it was going to give me so much trouble. Nobody hath ever tried to thteal anything out of my yard before."

The juniors grinned.

They thought that even Bill Sikes, in his most burglarious mood, would hardly have cherished designs upon the general contents of Mr. Lazarus' yard.

The caravan was the only valuable article there; and certainly it was worth stealing if the thief could hope to get

away safely with it. But undoubtedly it was a cumbrous article to steal, and could be traced by the police with the greatest of ease.

"Well, we'll take it off your hands as soon as school breaks up," said Harry. "The giddy burglar won't burgle it from us, anyhow. Good-evening, Mr. Lazarus!"

The juniors returned to their bikes, quite satisfied with their bargain, and rode towards the school.

"It's a bit queer about that caravan," Johnny Bull remarked, after a long and thoughtful silence. "Jolly odd somebody trying to steal it. There's lots of stuff in Lazarus' shop worth stealing if a burglar came around; but bagging a caravan is jolly odd."

"The oddfulness is terrific," observed Hurree Singh. "I have been thinking it out, my esteemed chums. I do not quite fully catch on."

"I don't quite see how Lazarus came by such a jolly good van, either," said Nugent. "I was expecting to see some old crock—"

"Same here," said Wharton. "But the van's all right. Lazarus didn't mention where he got it. No business of ours, if you come to that. He came by it honestly, I suppose?"

"More or less," grinned Bob Cherry. "I say, do you fellows know it's past tea-time?"

"Yes, rather! Get a move on!"

And the five cyclists, putting on speed, came up to the gates of Greyfriars in a cloud of dust.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Fall of the Mighty!

"STOP!"

The loud and commanding voice of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form greeted the chums of the Remove as they came towards the School House after putting up their bicycles.

Coker's voice was loud enough to be heard half-way across the quadrangle, for that matter. But the Famous Five did not seem to hear it. They walked on.



Twenty minutes later Greene joined his chums—Potter and Coker—in the High Street. He was leading a horse, and behind the horse rumbled and rolled a handsome caravan. Coker of the Fifth had triumphed. He had captured the Famous Five's caravan. (See Chapter 6.)

Coker, who prided himself on having a short way with fags, spoke a little too commandingly for the taste of the Famous Five. So they turned a deaf ear—to be more correct, ten deaf ears—to the great Horace, and walked on.

"Do you hear me?" bawled Coker, in surprise and wrath.

Still afflicted with deafness, the five juniors walked in the School House, leaving the great man staring. Potter and Greene of the Fifth, who were with Horace Coker, exchanged a wink, unseen by Coker. It would not have been discreet to allow Coker to witness them wink.

"What's the matter with those dashed fags?" demanded Coker, addressing space. "They heard me, right enough!"

"I fancy so," murmured Potter. "They'd almost have heard you if they'd been in Courtfield. Your dulcet tones, Coker—"

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"Hem!"

"Cheeky young rascals!" fumed Coker. "The fact is, they heard me all right, and paid no attention."

"Go hon!" murmured Greene.

"Did you speak, Greene?"

"Hem! Tea-time, isn't it, Coker?"

"Never mind tea now," said Coker. "I want to speak to that cheeky young cub Wharton. I suppose I shall have to go to his study. Fancy that!"

"If the mountain won't come to Mahomet—" said Greene.

"Mahomet has to jazz around to the mountain," finished Potter.

"Don't fire off stale quotations to me!" said Coker crossly. "I've got to go fagging up the Remove staircase now."

"Awful!" said Greene, with exaggerated sympathy. "Why not come and have tea instead?"

"Oh, rot!"

Coker strode into the School House,

leaving his chums smiling. They were Coker's faithful pals; but they seemed to find something amusing in the fact that Horace had to go fagging up the Remove staircase.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in Study No. 1, getting tea, when Coker loomed up. Billy Bunter was there, too, either to help in getting tea or to help in disposing of it—probably the latter. Coker's burly form bulked in the doorway, and Coker's polite greeting was:

"You cheeky little brutes!"

Bob Cherry looked round from the spirit-stove upon which he was preparing to poach eggs.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that blown in?" ejaculated Bob. "My hat! It's some silly ass going about with a Guy Fawkes mask on!"

Coker stared at him.

"What do you mean, you young idiot? I've not got a Guy Fawkes mask on!"

"Haven't you?" exclaimed Bob. "My mistake. I thought you had. Only judging by appearances, old bean!"

Coker breathed hard with wrath as the Removites chuckled. Coker was not exactly handsome, but his features were not so bad as all that.

"You cheeky little sweep—" he began.

"Same to you, and many of them!" said Bob affably. "Where's those eggs? Have you busted the eggs, anybody?"

"I called to you in the quad," shouted Coker.

"Was that you?" asked Bob.

"Of course it was, you young idiot!"

"I thought it was a bull or something got into the quad," said Bob Cherry innocently. "A chap with a voice like your, Coker, ought to get a back-pedal brake put on it."

"I want to speak to you, Wharton," said Coker, breathing harder than ever,

but controlling his lofty wrath. He realised that in the Remove passage he was in the enemy's country, so to speak. One yell from Study No. 1 would bring a swarm of fags around him, thick as leaves in Vallombrosa; so it behoved Horace James Coker to contain his wrath if possible.

"Go ahead!" said Harry. "No charge!"

"It's about a van," said Coker. "I've heard from Bunter that old Lazarus, at Courtfield, has a van—"

"Oh, really, Coker—" murmured Bunter.

"The fat little idiot jabbered some rot about going caravanning with me," said Coker. "As if I'd be found dead with a Remove fag in a caravan! Not likely!"

"I—I say, you fellows—" stammered Bunter.

"You're likely to be found damaged in a Remove study

if you're not a bit more polite, Coker!" suggested Wharton.

"Don't talk rot, kid! Now, look here, I'm going caravanning this vac," said Coker. "I'm looking round for a van. I understand that you kids have been down to Courtfield to look at Lazarus' van."

"That's so."

"Some dashed old crock, I suppose—not worth my while?" said Coker.

"It's a jolly good van!"

"You see, it stands like this," said Coker. "If the van's good enough for me I'll take it. There seems to be rather a shortage of caravans, from what I gather. It will be handy being on the spot. But I don't want to waste my time rooting round second-hand shops. So I thought I'd rather see whether you thought the van good enough."

"Best van I've ever seen," said Wharton.

"Fairly roomy?" asked Coker.

"Quite roomy for a caravan."

"Decently done up?"

"Quite!"

"Clean, and all that?"

"Clean, and all that!" assented Wharton.

"Not some dashed old gipsy crock that Lazarus is trying to palm off?" asked Coker, suspiciously.

"Not a bit of it!"

"In fact, a really good van that a fellow could go vanning in quite comfortably?" asked Coker, looking more satisfied.

"That's it!"

"Good!" said Coker. "Much obliged, in fact. I dare say what seems good enough to you wouldn't seem good enough to me. Still, after what you say it's worth my while taking the trouble to go and look at it. Thanks!"

Horace Coker turned to the door, the Famous Five staring at him blankly.

"Hold on a minute!" gasped Wharton.

"Well?" Coker glanced back impatiently. "Sharp!"

"We've engaged that van."

"Rot!"

"You see, we're going caravanning this vac," explained Wharton, "and we've engaged that van because it's a jolly good one and fairly cheap. We've paid a deposit—"

"Bosh!"

"And the van's ours!" roared Bob Cherry.

"How much deposit have you paid?" asked Coker, unheeding.

"Five quids."

"Shouldn't have thought you could raise it," said Coker. "Well, all right. I'll buzz off and see the van, and if it suits me I'll hand you your five quids, and you can give me the receipt."

He turned to the door again.

"But—" stuttered Wharton.

"I've no more time to waste here," said Coker, over his shoulder.

"But—"

"Nonsense!"

Horace Coker strode away, the interview over. The Famous Five stared at one another, and then burst into a laugh.

"Dear old Coker!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "He thinks he's going to have our van if it suits him!"

"Only if it suits him!" chuckled Nugent.

"And we don't count at all!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Of all the thundering cheek—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! What have you



Coker found himself whirled towards the study door. He spun round in the doorway and sat down with a bump and a grunt. The Famous Five grinned down at him. Coker scrambled to his feet. "I'll smash you!" he roared. (See Chapter 3.)

been gassing to Coker for, anyhow?" demanded Wharton.

"Well, you fellows left me behind," said Bunter. "I made Coker the offer to take him caravanning. I felt justified in doing it. But you chaps needn't feel alarmed. It's all right. I've decided not to take Coker. I say, you've only got six eggs here for tea. Is that all?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Then what are you fellows going to have?" inquired Bunter.

"We're going to have the scalp of the fattest pig in the county of Kent if he doesn't shut up!" said Johnny Bull ferociously.

Whereupon William George Bunter grunted and shut up. The Famous Five settled down to tea, chuckling again as they thought of Coker footing it down to Courtfield to look at the caravan. It did not seem to have dawned upon the powerful brain of Horace James that Harry Wharton & Co. might decline to relinquish the van. That fact was to dawn later.

The chums had finished tea, and were talking caravanning, when the bulky figure of Horace James appeared in the doorway once more. Coker strode into the study with a stride that made the table shake.

"It's all right!" he announced.

"Seen the van?" asked Harry.

"Yes—and it's a corker!" said Coker. "How old Lazarus came by such a real ripper I can't understand! It's all serene! Five pounds, I think you said?"

"Just so."

"Hand over the receipt, then."

"The receipt?" said Harry.

"Yes, you young ass! That receipt's mine, as I'm going to hand you back your deposit."

Coker threw a five-pound note on the study table, and waited. Harry Wharton made no movement to produce the receipt. He smiled.

"Didn't Lazarus tell you we'd hired the van for the vacation?" he asked.

"Yes, that's all right. I've explained to Lazarus that I'm taking it over, and he's agreeable," said Coker. "Where's that receipt?"

"In my pocket-book."

"Well, shell it out, you young duffer! I want my tea!" said Coker impatiently.

"Don't keep me waiting here all night!"

"Sorry to keep you waiting for a single moment!" said the captain of the Remove. "You don't improve the landscape, Coker!"

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

"I don't want any cheek," said Coker darkly. "I want that receipt. There's your five quids."

"Is that a present?" asked Bob Cherry. "Awfully kind of you to tip us five pounds for our little caravanning holiday, Coker!"

"It's for the deposit!" roared Coker. "Now I want the receipt! Don't I keep on telling you that I'm taking the van over?"

"We're not handing our van over to you, Coker," explained Wharton in a voice as gentle as the coo of a dove.

"Don't be a young ass!" said Coker. "I've decided to have that van. Still, I'll do the fair thing. I'll give you an extra ten bob."

He dived his hand into his pocket, and there was a clink of much cash. Horace Coker was always extremely well provided with that useful article.

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

"You're not having our van! Try to

get that into your thick head! You're not having it! Catch on?"

"Look here——"

"There's the door," added Wharton politely.

"I'm having that van," said Coker calmly. "I've told you that I've decided on it. I'm not likely to let a gang of fags do me out of a van I've decided on. You can hardly expect it!"

"It's our van!" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Don't shout at me, Bull. Give me that receipt, Wharton. Lazarus won't let me have the van without it."

"Naturally — as he's let it to us," said Harry. "Take away your five, Coker. Nothing doing!"

"Take away that bauble!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I'm a patient chap," said Coker, breathing hard, "but I don't take much cheek from fags. I shall be sorry to have to give you a hiding, Wharton."

"You will—if you begin!" assented Wharton.

"Will you hand over that receipt?"

"Not quite."

"For the last time!" roared Coker.

"Bow-wow!"

Coker forgot that he was in the enemy's country as he received that disrespectful reply. He made a jump at the captain of the Remove.

Billy Bunter, unfortunately, happened to be in the way. Bunter was swept aside, and went sprawling on the study floor with a terrific yell. Then Coker's powerful hands fell on Wharton's shoulders.

And at the same time hands that seemed innumerable fell upon Horace Coker.

The Fifth-Former found himself suddenly whirling towards the door with a mighty whirl.

He spun round in the doorway, and sat down there with a bump and a grunt, not quite knowing how he had arrived there.

"Ooooooh!"

"Ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter, sitting up. "Smash him! Jump on him! I'm killed—I mean, injured! My backbone's broken in two—yow-ow—places—ow!"

"Grooogh!" gasped Coker.

The Famous Five grinned at the great man sprawling in the doorway. Coker scrambled up.

"Why, I—I—I'll smash you!" he gasped.

"Come on, Coker!"

"Collar him!" yelled Bob Cherry, as the Fifth-Former rushed to the attack.

The next moment a terrific struggle was raging in Study No. 1. Chairs went flying right and left.

Coker was a powerful fellow, but he



"Bunter doesn't know for certain we are going tomorrow," said Harry Wharton, thoughtfully. "We can get off while he is snoring. We'll have the bags all ready, and when he rolls down in the morning he'll simply find us gone. It's the only way of giving him the slip!" (See Chapter 5.)

was not quite equal to dealing with five active juniors at once.

He spun round the study, battling for his life. Billy Bunter prudently crawled under the table.

Crash! Trample! Crash! Bump!

Vernon-Smith looked into the study in astonishment, and then there was a yell along the Remove passage.

"Tumble up! Rescue, Remove!"

Study doors opened all along the passage.

The Bounder was the first in to the rescue; but Squiff and Redwing, Penfold and Mark Linley were close behind.

After them came Bolsover major and Tom Brown and Kipps and Peter Todd and Newland, and five or six other fellows. It was surprising that so many fellows could get into one study, but they did. And they all wanted to get near Coker.

Horace had woke up a hornet's nest—not a new experience for the great man of the Fifth.

What happened to him next Coker never quite knew.

A series of earthquakes, air-raids, and dynamite explosions seemed to be rolled into one for his benefit—that was the impression the proceedings made upon him.

He came to himself, as it were, at the bottom of the Remove staircase, sitting on the landing there a wreck.

He sat and gasped.

"Come back, Coker, and have some more!"

"Lots more on tap, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove staircase was crowded with yelling juniors. Coker sat and blinked up at them dazedly. He felt his nose and his chin and his eyes and his

cars. All those parts of him felt as if they weren't there.

"Ow!" gasped Coker. "Wow! Grooogh! My hat! Yoooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, give him some more!"

"Roll Bunter down on him!" howled Squiff.

"Ha, ha! Good egg!"

Here, I say, you fellows, leggo—yaroooooh—

Coker of the Fifth staggered up. He did not charge up the Remove staircase. The spirit moved him to do so; but though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. He staggered away down the lower stairs instead, followed by a chorus of howls and hoots.

It was a dilapidated Coker that tottered into the study in the Fifth Form passage and collapsed into a chair there. Potter and Greene looked at him across the tea-table and smiled.

"Been telling the fags what you've decided about the van?" asked Potter blandly.

"To hear was to obey, of course?" remarked Greene.

Those remarks would certainly have been followed by war in Coker's study if Horace Coker had felt equal to any more war just then. But he didn't! Even Horace Coker had had enough—for the present, at least.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Last Word!

"IT'S dashed queer!"

Bob Cherry made that remark as he came in at the gates of Greyfriars and joined his chums in the quadrangle.

"What's queer now?" asked Nugent.

"About that merry old van."

"Nothing happened to the caravan?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Coker's been after it again," grinned Johnny Bull. "He seems rather sore about it. He had the cheek to offer Lazarus ten bob a week more than we're going to pay!"

"That's all right," said Bob. "Lazarus will stick to his bargain. But as I was in Courtfield I thought I'd drop in and have another look at the van. And there's been another attempt to burgle it."

"Phew!"

"Old Lazarus told me," said Bob. "It's simply extraordinary! He's got the bobby on the beat to keep an extra-special eye on his yard, and the bobblet nearly caught a man last night. There was another man holding a horse at a distance—the bobby saw him. They got away. But there's no doubt they were after the van. Isn't it a giddy mystery? What the thump do they want that van for?"

"Nobody caught?" asked Nugent.

"No; they got clear. I could understand it if they were after Lazarus' giddy jewellery and things, but that caravan—" Bob Cherry shook his head. "It beats me!"

The Co. looked puzzled, as they felt.

"If a chap wants the van so badly, he could have hired it," said Wharton.

"Well, you can't hire a van without paying for it, and giving references," said Bob. "The thief couldn't get hold of it that way, I suppose. But Lazarus says there was a man came after it a week or two ago—before we saw it—who wanted to hire it. He agreed to pay what was asked, but broke down on the question of references. Lazarus wasn't trusting a hundred-and-fifty-quid van into his hands, of course, as he was

shifty. He's got an idea that it's the same man trying to steal it. They've tried three times now. What the thump do they want it for?"

"Goodness knows!"

"There's some giddy mystery about that van," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "It looks like a really good van, specially built for somebody with money to burn. Lazarus don't seem to want to mention where he got it, or who sold it to him."

"He's jolly anxious to get it off his hands," grinned Bob. "It's beginning to worry him. He said that if he hadn't let it to us, he'd have sold it at an auction for what it would fetch to get it off his hands. He's fed-up with the enterprising burglars."

"Rather a joke if they try to burgle it when we're caravanning in it!" remarked Nugent.

"The jokefulness would be rather too terrific!" said Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Well, there'll be five of us, and we can take care of ourselves," said Wharton.

"Six, you mean!" chimed in Billy Bunter.

"Five!" said Harry.

"Six, old chap—"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"You fellows needn't be nervous about it," said Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five. "I shall be there, you know. Rely on me!"

The Famous Five chuckled. They were not feeling nervous; but it was not the prospect of Billy Bunter's protection that reassured them.

"We shall be taking our cricket things," said Bob, "and if a merry burglar comes a-burbling, and I get a lick at him with my bat he will wish he had taken to work instead. But it's dashed queer—we're starting with a giddy mystery to begin with! We'll have the van, though!"

"Yes, rather!"

"That's settled!"

Coker of the Fifth met the juniors as they were going into the schoolhouse. Coker had something to say; and, apparently, he preferred not to visit the Remove passage again.

"About that van—" he began.

"Come up to the study and talk it over!" said Bob Cherry affably.

And there was a chortle.

Coker did not accept the invitation.

"I'm having that van," said Coker.

"I'd decided on it; and I wouldn't take any other van now if Lazarus had fifty to offer. Your cheek only makes me more determined. That's the kind of fellow I am!"

"Gather round, my infants!" said Bob Cherry gravely. "Coker's going to tell us the kind of fellow he is! Go on, Coker!"

Coker clenched his big fists. But Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was chatting with Monsieur Charpentier at a little distance, and as he saw him Coker unclenched his fists again. It was not a suitable moment for argument in Coker's drastic style.

"Go on, Coker!" chorused the juniors, with mock respect. "You're an awfully interesting chap, Coker!"

"Sing it over again to us!" said Bob Cherry.

Coker breathed hard through his nose.

"Will you hand over that van, Wharton?" he asked.

Wharton turned to Bob Cherry.

"Will we hand over the van?" he said gravely.

Bob turned to Johnny Bull.

"Will we hand over the van?"

Bull turned to Nugent.

"Will we hand—" he was beginning; but Coker interrupted.

"We're breaking-up to-morrow," he said. "I won't thrash you on the last day of term—"

"You won't!" assented Wharton, with a smile.

"The won'tfulness is terrific!"

"I simply tell you that I'm having that van. I understand from old Lazarus that you've arranged to take it away in the second week of the vac; you're meeting in Courtfield to start caravanning. I understand that—"

"Not really!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "You surprise me, Coker!"

"Isn't it so?" demanded Coker.

"Yes, it's so. But what surprises me is that you understand it. I never thought you could understand anything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

If there had been apoplexy in the Coker family, Horace would certainly have had a fit on the spot. Fortunately, there wasn't.

"I shall be here!" he gasped. "I'm going to have that van! I've made you a fair offer—your money back and ten bob for yourselves. You ought to be grateful—"

"It's an ungrateful world!" said Bob, with a serious shake of the head.

"Anyhow, I'm having the van. If you refuse to hand it over, I shall simply take it."

"Take it?" ejaculated Wharton.

"That's the programme. I'm not likely to be defied by a gang of fags, I suppose!" said Coker disdainfully. "It's up to me now to have that van. I am giving you warning what to expect if you don't do as you're ordered!"

"Thanks!" said Wharton, laughing. "We'll be on the look-out for you, Coker!"

"We'll be jolly glad to see you!" said Bob genially. "If you come bothering round our van, we'll alter your features for you, Coker—and any alteration would be for the better, wouldn't it, old bean?"

Coker controlled his feelings, and walked away. The Famous Five regarded one another with grinning faces.

"Dear old Coker!" murmured Bob. "Always biting off more than he can chew, and always getting it in the neck!"

"The cheeky ass—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"This is rather rich, even for Coker," said Harry Wharton, with a chuckle. "If he means it—"

"Oh, he means it!" grinned Bob. "There's going to be trouble as soon as we start with the giddy van. The more the merrier."

Coker glanced at the chums of the Remove when the Greyfriars fellows were clearing off the next day. Perhaps he expected them to come along and explain that they were sorry, and that he could have the van, or perhaps he expected to see signs of trepidation. In either case, there was a disappointment for the great man of the Fifth. The Famous Five waved their hands to him from their brake and called out a cheery good-bye, and Billy Bunter—feeling safe out of Coker's reach—put a fat thumb to his fat little nose and extended four fat fingers in derision. And Horace Coker, simmering with wrath, was left only the poor solace of slanging Potter and Greene.

(Continued on page 13.)

The Greyfriars HERALD

SUPPLEMENT No. 52.

Week Ending August 6th, 1921.



THE SCHOOL HOUSE



Harry Wharton Editor



THE ENTRANCE GATES

Assisted by BOB CHERRY (Fighting Editor),
VERNON-SMITH (Sports Editor), MARK
LINLEY, TOM BROWN, and FRANK NUGENT.

Address all letters to HARRY WHARTON,
c/o The Magnet Library, The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

EDITORIAL.

By Harry Wharton.

I had hoped that this Special Scouting Number would come as a pleasant surprise to my reader chums.

Doubtless it would have done had not Billy Bunter—the fat eavesdropper!—overheard my plans, and forestalled me by publishing a Special Scouting Number of his "Weekly."

These two Scouting Numbers, however, will be as different as chalk from cheese. Billy Bunter's is merely an apology for a number. This is the real goods!

We are told by a famous novelist—Charles Dickens, to wit—that Sam Weller's knowledge of London was extensive and peculiar. Billy Bunter's knowledge of scouting is neither. What he doesn't know about camping, trail-hunting, and so on, would fill whole volumes! He wasn't qualified to get out a Scouting Number at all; and in cribbing our idea, and making a hash of it, he has merely covered himself with ridicule.

I think I may say, without being thought conceited, that this is one of the best numbers we have had, just as Billy Bunter's Scouting Number was the worst perpetration in the history of schoolboy journalism.

Did Bunter go unpunished for his audacity in cribbing our wheeze? Not a bit of it! If you want to see how he fared, turn to the "Police Court News." You will find it very amusing—but Bunter didn't!

There are still several correspondents who seem to imagine that I have got my knife into W. G. B. Nothing of the sort. If Bunter would only drop his queer little habits, and behave himself like a little gentleman, he would be treated like a decent member of society. If he played cricket really well I would gladly give him a place in the Remove eleven. If he refrained from listening at key-holes, and telling fibs, and cribbing the wheezes of a rival editor, we would even invite him to share Study No. 1 with us, like he did in the old days, when we were practically new boys.

Far be it from me to bear malice towards anybody. But until Billy Bunter mends his ways he will have to take a back seat.

And now, my chums—as Billy would say—"I will leave you to enjoy this wonderful feast of tickshun to yore harts' contempt!"

HARRY WHARTON.

Supplement 4.]

THE LONG, LONG TRAIL!

A Revised Version of a Popular Song

Written by DICK PENFOLD.

Sung by W. G. BUNTER during a "forced march" of the Greyfriars Boy Scouts.

Legs are growing very weary,
Arms are stiff and sore;
Scouting isn't very cheery,
Life's a beastly bore.
See! The road before us stretches
Many a weary mile.
Cherry, take compassion! Let me have
your supper ration,
I'll dispose of it in style!

There's a long, long trail a-winding
Into the far distant camp,
Where the tents are toppling over,
And the beds are damp.
There's a long, long night of waiting
Until my dreams all come true,
Till the time that I'll be feeding
On a dish of Irish stew!

Say, you chaps, I'm nearly dropping!
Shall we get there soon?
Ow! I really can't help stopping,
Think I'm going to swoon!
Hunger's gnawing at my vitals,
I cannot force a smile.
Stop a jiffy, Skinner! I'll relieve you
of your dinner,
Then I'll jog along in style!

There's a long, long trail a-winding
Into the far-distant camp,
Where we'll eat and sleep and revel
At the end of our tramp.
There's a long, long night of waiting
Until my dreams all come true,
Till the time that I'll be drinking
Countless ginger-pops with you!

What I Think About It!

By Billy Bunter.

(PATROL LEADER, "Owl" Patrol.)

As the fond parent remarkt when he looked at his baby, "I think it's a crying shame!"

Who first had the idear of a Speshul Scouting Number? Me! Who first put the idear into print? Me! Who cribbed the idear, and tried to reep all the onner and glory? Me—I mean Wharton!

Their are two Scout Patrols in the Remove. One is the Lions—and there anticks farelly make you rore! The other is the Owls, of which I am the commander-in-cheef.

What I don't know about scouting isn't worth knowing. I have won every Scout badge it is possibel to win, and if I were to try to wear them all they wood cover the breast of my tunick, and the back of it as well. And I should have to kontinew them down my shorts!

As a master of scoutcraft, I am IT! I can follo a trail for miles and miles—espeshully if their's a big feed at the end of it!

And yet Wharton, who is a tenderfoot—a meer novvis—dares to get out a Speshul Scouting Number of the "Greyfriars Herald," as if he were an orthority on the subjeckt of scouting!

Kompare this number with my own Scouting Number of the "Weekly," which appeered last weak, and you will say, "One is the reel goods—the other is a farce!" [Hear, hear! Our readers will not need telling which is the farce!—ED.]

It's just like Wharton to cribb my idears like this. But it's always the way. I'm such a clever fello, and Wharton's such a duffer that he karn't help sucking my branes. If he didn't, the "Greyfriars Herald" wood never be published at all, for Wharton hasn't a single original idear in his head!

I am only aloud a few inches of space in this issaw, deer readers, so I karn't tell you eggssactly what I think of Wharton's wicked, wanton, wily ways. But the neckst time he dares to cribb one of my idears I shall rekwest him to meet me in the Jim, with or without glivs.

Torking about the Jim, have you felloes seen my Speshul Jim-nastick Number in the "Popular," now on sail?

If you haven't got it, fly to yore noose-agent at wunce! My airoplane is at yore disposal.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 704.



Impertinent Interviews

By our Special Representative.

No. 6.—Patrol-Leader ROBERT CHERRY.

WHEN I called on the Editor to receive my instructions, I found him in scouting attire. Besides being the Editor of the "Greyfriars Herald," captain of the Form, captain of cricket, and president of this, that, and the other, he is the leader of the 1st Greyfriars Troop of Boy Scouts.

"You look awfully smart in that rig out," I said admiringly—"in fact, one might say that you were fetching!"

"Enough of flattery!" said the Editor sternly. "There's work to be done! I want you to interview Patrol-leader Cherry, who holds a responsible position under my command."

"Where shall I find him?" I asked.

"Goodness knows! He might be in his study. On the other hand, he might be a dozen miles away. It's your place to ferret him out, and interview him!"

"You're sending me on a wild-goose chase!" I growled.

"Can't help your troubles! If your contribution isn't handed in by five o'clock, you'll be sacked on the spot!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Not wishing to lose my remunerative job—I get half-a-crown a year, and nothing found—I set off at once in quest of Patrol-leader Bob Cherry.

My first place of call was Study No. 13.

"Bob Cherry at home?" I inquired, popping my handsome face through the doorway.

"He is absentfully away," said Hurree Singh, pausing in the act of playing the Indian love lyrics on his mouth-organ.

"Any idea where he is?"

"You may find him on the riverful stream, either puntfully punting, or rowfully rowing, or swimfully swimming."

"Thanks!" I said.

And I at once made tracks for the river.

The first thing that greeted my gaze when I reached the boathouse was a bundle of scout's clothes. They were awfully smart and stylish—just like the togs which the Editor had been wearing.

"Just about my size, too!" I murmured, picking up the tunic.

I didn't know who the togs belonged to, and I didn't much care. I was filled by an impulse to put them on, in order that I might look as smart as the Editor. Call it vanity, if you like, but I wasn't going to miss this opportunity of arraying myself like Solomon in all his glory.

Being rather a scrappy individual, I was able to don the scout's uniform over my Etons.

Having done so, I stepped into the boathouse, where a mirror hung upon the wall, in order to take stock of myself.

"My hat!" I ejaculated. "I look the complete scout! I must go back to Greyfriars and cut a dash! I sha'n't worry about finding Bob Cherry!"

As I emerged from the boathouse, a stentorian voice hailed me.

Turning, I beheld the very fellow I had been seeking—Bob Cherry.

He was about a hundred yards down the river, swimming at a frantic rate in the direction of the boathouse.

"My togs!" he shouted. "What are you doing with my uniform, you boulder?"

"I had no idea it was yours," I answered.

"Well, take it off, or I'll pulverise you!"

I had no intention of removing the scout's rig-out which became me so well, so I turned on my heel and hurried away in the direction of Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry bellowed to me to stop, but I heeded not. I left him in the river, threatening me with all sorts of pains and penalties unless I came back and discarded his uniform.

When I arrived at Greyfriars I caused a great sensation.

There was a party of Removites in the Close, and they gazed at me in wonder.

"Didn't know you were a giddy patrol-leader!" said Peter Todd.

I chuckled.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 704.

"I look jolly smart in this get-up, don't I?" I said. "I'm supposed to be interviewing Bob Cherry for the 'Greyfriars Herald,' but I prefer to walk round and exhibit myself in this new toggery!"

"That uniform looks suspiciously like Cherry's!" said Vernon-Smith.

I made no answer, but strolled away.

Half an hour later Micky Desmond came dashing into the school building.

"Whither bound?" I inquired, meeting him in the passage.

"Faith, an' some spalpeen has walked off with Bob Cherry's togs while he was bathin'!" said Micky breathlessly.

"And Cherry has sent you here to fetch him something to wear, I suppose?"

Micky Desmond nodded, and passed on. A few minutes later I saw him going out of the gates with a large bundle under his arm.

"Good thing for Cherry that he found somebody to go to the rescue," I murmured, "or he might have had to stay in the river indefinitely!"

I then took up my position in the doorway of the porter's lodge, and waited for Bob Cherry to turn up. As soon as he came I intended to bolt into the lodge.

But when Bob Cherry did arrive I did not dodge inside. I stood in the doorway like one transfixed.

"M-m-my only aunt!" I ejaculated.

For Bob Cherry was attired in a suit of Sunday best—and the suit was my own!

Bob is sturdy, and I am slim. Consequently, when he tried to get into my togs he had done considerable damage.



"My togs!" shouted Bob Cherry, as I come down the steps of the boat-house. "What are you doing with my uniform on?"

Moreover, Bob Cherry appeared to have fallen into a puddle on his way to the school, for my trousers—my priceless Sunday bags—were caked with mud!

"Here we are again!" said Bob Cherry gaily. "Hope you didn't mind my sending Desmond up to the school to borrow your togs! Exchange is no robbery!"

"You—you—"

Words failed me. I rushed at Bob Cherry, and the next moment we were fighting like tigers.

Although a fairly good fighting-man when I am roused—and I was roused then—I was no match for Bob Cherry. He got my head in chancery, and pounded it unmercifully. Then he rolled me in a muddy puddle in the Close, but in so doing he only soiled his own uniform, which I was wearing.

The upshot of it was that Bob Cherry's scouting attire had to be sent to the cleaner's.

My own togs were so badly damaged that they were beyond repair, and I made a present of them to the old clo' man when he called.

So the joke was against me, after all. And I shall think twice before I help myself to any more scouting apparel whilst the owner of it is bathing!

THE GREYFRIARS POLICE COURT!

A Record of all recent Charges and Convictions.
BY OUR SPECIAL REPORTER.

CHARGE OF CRIBBING!

THE police-court proceedings took place this week in a large marquee, the property of the 1st (Greyfriars) Troop of Boy Scouts.

The presiding magistrate—Mr. Justice Wharton—was in full scout kit. He looked an even bigger freak than usual. (All right, Mr. Reporter, you'll get it in the neck for this!)

The first prisoner to appear was William George Bunter, who was rolled into the dock on a trolley.

Mr. Robert Cherry, K.C., appeared for the prosecution, and Mr. Harold Skinner, K.C., C.A.D., for the defence.

Magistrate: "What is this Owl doing in the dock?"

Mr. Cherry: "Glaring at you through his blinkers, your worship." (Laughter.)

Magistrate: "Yes, yes. But why is he here? In what way hath he offended Our Person?"

Mr. Cherry: "The other day, your worship, some time between rising-bell and bed-time, the prisoner was found loitering outside the editorial office of the 'Greyfriars Herald.' His ear was glued to the keyhole, and he was drinking—"

Magistrate: "Bless my soul! At his age, too! What was he imbibing?"

Mr. Cherry: "He was drinking in your conversation, your worship." (Laughter.)

Magistrate: "I trust he found it refreshing. What was I talking about at the time?"

Mr. Cherry: "Your worship was arranging to produce a special Scouting Number of the 'Greyfriars Herald.' Prisoner overheard the stunt, and used it himself in that priceless weekly of his."

Magistrate: "Ho, ho! Cribbing—eh? We shall have to deal very severely with this eavesdropping porpoise!"

Mr. Skinner, for the defence, said that his client had merely stooped down outside the door of the editorial office in order to tie his bootlace, which had come undone. He had not overheard any conversation, being afflicted with deafness in both ears.

Magistrate: "I thought his name was Bunter—not Dutton! (Laughter.)"

Mr. Skinner: "The special Scouting Number was my client's own idea. He thought of it years ago, before you were out of your worshipful cradle."

Magistrate: "I will stand no cheek from you, my learned chump! What do the gentlemen of the jury think about it?"

Foreman of the Jury: "We found prisoner guilty before the proceedings began, your worship." (Loud laughter.)

Prisoner pleaded that his frail and delicate constitution would not stand heavy punishment. Nevertheless he was sentenced to six sounding strokes with the tent-pole.

REPORTS IN BRIEF.

Samuel Tuckless Bunter was charged with stealing a billycan, the property of his major.

Magistrate: "Is that why it is called a (Continued on page 12.)"

[Supplement ii.]



By Sir James Vivian.

"**W**E'RE going to have a perfectly priceless time!" exclaimed Coker of the Fifth.

Coker's countenance was beaming—likewise the countenances of the Fifth-Formers who accompanied him.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the members of the Kangaroo Patrol, composed solely of Fifth-Formers, were tramping along the dusty road in scouting attire. Their destination was the Scouts' camp at Woody Bay, a charming resort a few miles along the coast.

Coker was at the head of the procession, pushing his motor-bicycle. Coker never went anywhere, if he could help it, without his beloved machine. Like Mary's little lamb, wherever Horace Coker went, his bike was sure to go.

"We'll prepare tea as soon as we get to the camp," said Potter.

"Faith, an' I could do with it, for one!" said Fitzgerald. "I'm ravenous!"

"Same here!"

"Put the pace on, Coker!"

Coker spun round irritably.

"Not so much gas!" he growled. "As the patrol-leader, I'm privileged to go at whatever pace I like."

In the heat of the July afternoon the Scouts pressed on. Their formation was ragged and disjointed; there was no method about their marching.

Coker's patrol was the laughing-stock of Greyfriars—chiefly because the lanky fellows of the Fifth looked so ridiculous in scouting garb.

Presently Coker uttered a cry of satisfaction.

"The camp's in sight, you fellows!"

"Oh, good!"

Some distance ahead a group of white tents could be seen. Close beside them a number of dark, moving objects were visible.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Greene, in alarm. "There's somebody in the camp."

Coker frowned.

"Some country yokels, I expect," he said.

"We'll jolly soon send them about their business!"

On nearing the camp, however, the Fifth-Formers saw that the meadow was occupied by their old rivals, Temple & Co., of the Upper Fourth.

Cecil Reginald Temple was the leader of the Wolf Patrol. He and his fellow-Scouts had left Greyfriars in advance of the Fifth-Formers, and had commandeered the camp. They were quite justified in doing so, really, for the tents were the property of the school authorities, and were for general use.

The camp was not large enough, however, to accommodate two patrols for the week-end.

Either Coker & Co. would have to retreat, and leave the camp in the hands of their rivals, or Temple & Co. would have to be ejected with violence from the meadow.

Coker's fighting instinct was fully aroused.

"The cheeky bounders!" he shouted wrathfully. "They've collared our camp! Rush them!"

So saying, Coker leaned his motor-cycle against a gate, and led his men to the attack.

Temple & Co. saw what was coming, and they were quite ready for it. They had not expected to be left in peace during the week-end. They lined up, shoulder to shoulder, and prepared to receive the onrush.

Coker & Co. came charging through the entrance to the meadow like a herd of buffaloes. But by the time they came to close quarters with their rivals their energy was almost exhausted. A tramp of six miles on a scorching hot day is scarcely a fitting preparation for a hand-to-hand battle.

"Turn 'em out!" cried Temple.

The attacking party seemed to come up against a brick wall.

The members of the Wolf Patrol stood firm

as a rock, and the Kangaroos hurled themselves against that solid line in vain. They were beaten back, and before Coker could collect his scattered forces, Temple & Co. were engaged in chasing the Fifth-Formers from the meadow.

"Sock it into them!" yelled Temple gleefully. "Chase 'em until they drop!"

Coker & Co. were in full flight now. Their attacks had been repulsed, and they had no stomach for further fighting. Their one desire was to put as much distance between the camp and themselves as possible.

It was galling to leave the camp in the hands of the enemy, but it could not be helped.

The Wolves, living up to their name, were dashing along like a hungry pack in search of prey. They chased the Kangaroos across several fields, and then caught up with them.

Another hand-to-hand encounter followed.

It is only fair to the Fifth to say that they were less strong, numerically, than their rivals. Consequently, Temple & Co. had no difficulty in overwhelming them.

After a brief struggle the Kangaroos lay on their backs in the grass, with a Wolf on each of their chests.

"Good work!" said Dabney delightedly. "What are we going to do with 'em now, Temple?"

"Oh, let them go," said the patrol leader of the Wolves. "We might as well relieve them of their clasp-knives first."



After a brief struggle, the Kangaroos lay on their backs in the grass, with a Wolf on each of their chests.

"The spoils of war!" chuckled Fry, helping himself to Coker's knife.

"All right, you bounders!" spluttered Coker. "Just you wait! You haven't seen the last of us yet!"

"Bow-wow!"

As soon as the victorious patrol had collected the clasp-knives of their victims, Coker & Co. were allowed to crawl away.

As the triumphant Wolves returned to the camp, sounds of singing came to their ears.

Over a score of voices were chanting, in unison, a scouting song.

"Look out! Look out! the song of the Scout,

The cry of the marching host.

Under command to lend a hand

Wherever it's wanted most.

Body and brain resolved to train

By all that we hear and see;

Each in his place, his job to face,

Whatever that job may be!"

An expression of alarm came over the face of Cecil Reginald Temple.

"Sounds like Wharton & Co.!" he exclaimed.

"Buck up," said Dabney, "or they'll be raiding our camp!"

The Wolves quickened their pace.

On coming in sight of the camp, they saw Harry Wharton & Co.—the Lion Patrol of the Greyfriars Remove—in the act of

marching into the meadow.

"The—the cheeky young cubs!" gasped Temple. "They've taken advantage of our backs being turned to slip into the camp!"

"We'll soon have them out of it," said Fry confidently.

But his confidence was misplaced.

The Lions were not only skilled in Scoutcraft, but they were excellent fighting-men.

They lined up shoulder to shoulder, just as Temple & Co. had done to meet the attack of the Fifth-Formers.

The Wolves, under Temple's command, launched a fierce attack. But they got no further than the entrance to the camp. They were driven back in disorder, with the war-cries of Harry Wharton & Co. ringing in their ears.

"Hurrah!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!"

Temple, who had been floored by a powerful straight left from Bob Cherry, picked himself up, and shook his fist at the Lions.

"Clear off!" he said heatedly. "This is our camp!"

"There seems to be some slight difference of opinion on that subject," said Harry Wharton, with a grin. "We happen to be in possession at the moment, and, what's more, we mean to remain in possession!"

"Hear, hear!"

Temple rallied his men, and another desperate attack was made.

This time the Wolves looked like succeeding, for half a dozen of them broke through into the meadow.

The Lions, however, fought with such grim determination that they gradually overpowered the attackers.

Temple & Co. were scattered like chaff before the reaper. After ten minutes' fighting they fled in wild disorder.

The shouts of the victors followed them as they ran.

"Hurrah!"

"The Remove are top dogs!"

"We're here for the week-end!"

"Just you wait, my beauties!" growled Temple, as he limped along with his followers.

"We'll spring a surprise attack on you to-night, and you'll be caught napping!"

But the Lions dug themselves in, and they were prepared for any emergency.

Harry Wharton had a splendid sentry system, and when the alarm was given at dusk, everybody in the camp was prepared.

The Lions found themselves up against a much stiffer proposition on this occasion. For Temple & Co. and Coker & Co. had joined forces, and they outnumbered the Remove to the tune of two to one.

It so happened, however, that Bob Cherry had procured a hosepipe, and the fierce jet of water which was discharged therefrom effectually kept the invaders at bay.

Half a dozen juniors brought soda-water syphons into play, and this completed the rout.

Drenched, demoralised, and defeated, the Wolves and the Kangaroos beat a retreat, and crawled back to Greyfriars, leaving the camp in the hands of the Lions.

And the Removes spent a glorious week-end under canvas, having successfully outwitted the rival patrols!

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THE CASE OF THE MISSING PROVENDER!

TERRORS SHOCKE reclined at ease on his magnificent horsehair sofa, with his face buried in the "Daily Reflection."

There was nothing in the police-court news to interest him. He was reading of England's glorious display in the latest Test match.

"They put up a fine fight, Shaker," he murmured—"a very fine fight! They were only beaten by an innings and a few hundred runs. Either the Australians are going all to pieces, or our own batting strength is improving."

"You are interested in cricket, Shocke?" I ventured.

"Ever since I could toddle on two stumps," was the reply, "the game has had an absorbing fascination for me. Even now my relatives declare that I have bats in my belfry."

"But surely they do not mean cricket-bats, Shocke?"

Before my friend could reply, the door of his apartment flew open, and a plump and breathless figure burst in.

We recognised the newcomer at once. It was Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars.



A plump and breathless figure burst into our rooms. It was Billy Bunter, and he was dressed in scouting kit.

Bunter was in scouting kit, and he looked about the weirdest freak that had ever gained access to Terrors Shocke's rooms—and there have been a good many.

"Pray be seated, my young friend," said Shocke, in his courteous manner. "Not on the Windsor chair, or it will collapse. You had better try the coal-scuttle."

Billy Bunter seated himself on the scuttle, which groaned beneath his weight.

"Why are you dressed in this quaint attire?" inquired Terrors Shocke.

"I'm camping out for the week-end, in a meadow near Greyfriars," said Bunter. "I'm the leader of the Owl Patrol, you see."

"You are camping out alone?"

"All alone. We've only one tent, and it won't accommodate more than one person."

"It would accommodate six of ordinary size," said Shocke, with a smile. "But I can quite understand a boy of your huge bulk monopolising every square inch of the tent-board. But we are digressing. Why have you come to see me?"

"Doubtless he is collecting funds for his patrol, Shocke," I murmured.

"Nothing of the sort!" said Billy Bunter indignantly. "I'm not on the cadge. The fact is, Mr. Shocke, my supplies of grub have been disappearing in a most mysterious way. I have now been camping out for two nights. The first night I took with me a huge tuck-hamper, and stowed it in the tent. When I awoke in the morning the hamper was still there, but it was empty!"

"You had doubtless consumed the contents overnight!" said Shocke, with a dry smile.

"Not at all! The hamper was untouched

when I went to sleep, and when I woke up there was nothing in it. That was the first night. And the same thing happened last night. I want to prevent it happening again to-night—my last night under canvas. That's why I've come to you."

Shocke nodded. "My preliminary fee is a guinea," he hinted.

"Ahem! I'll let you have it as soon as my postal-order comes," said Bunter. "Will you take up the case, Mr. Shocke? I really can't afford to lose a tuck-hamper every night!"

"Shaker and I will travel down to Friardale this evening, and visit your sleeping quarters," said Shocke. "I have no doubt I shall be able to elucidate the mystery."

"Oh, good!" said Billy Bunter. "What time may I expect you, sir?"

"H'm! Let me see. The houses of refreshment close at ten. You may expect us at about quarter-past."

Billy Bunter took his departure, and Terrors Shocke and I spent a listless day, sleeping and smoking alternately.

That evening we hired a couple of bicycles—there were no trains leaving London after mid-day—and sped down to the charming village of Friardale. Ever and anon my friend halted, in order to split a small lemon-squash with me. For the night was very sultry, and the roads were dusty.

On reaching Friardale we dined at Ye Olde Fryed Fyshe Shoppe, and then made our way to the meadow in which Billy Bunter was encamped.

The fat junior was waiting for us. He was sitting up in bed, reading by the light of a bicycle-lamp. His elbow was resting on a huge tuck-hamper.

"Here we are!" said Shocke cheerfully. "I think we shall just manage to squeeze ourselves into the tent, Shaker. That is one of the blessings of being slim. Is that hamper full, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!"

Billy Bunter lifted the lid, and we saw that the interior of the hamper was stacked with all sorts and conditions of good things.

"Now, you go to sleep, my boy," said Terrors Shocke, "and we will keep guard. No harm shall come to you or to your hamper."

Billy Bunter promptly settled himself down to slumber, whilst Shocke and I, cramped and uncomfortable, sat blinking at each other in the rays of the bicycle lamp.

The hours dragged slowly by, and nothing happened to break the monotony of our vigil.

Terrors Shocke had forgotten to bring his cigars, with the result that we had nothing to cheer us up.

Midnight sounded at length from a neighbouring church clock.

"How are you feeling, Shaker?" whispered my companion.

"Cold, hungry, and miserable," I replied.

"Well, we can soon banish the hunger and misery, if not the cold. Pile in, Shaker!"

So saying, Terrors Shocke raised the lid of Billy Bunter's tuck-hamper.

"Shocke," I gasped, "this—this is nothing less than theft!"

"Nonsense! It is the duty of our clients to provide us with refreshments. Away with your scruples, and pile in!"

We were both ravenous, and we did full justice to the contents of the tuck-hamper.

For upwards of an hour the champing of our jaws mingled with the unmusical score of Billy Bunter.

Shocke and I polished off the provender between us; and then, feeling deliciously tired, we, too, dropped off to sleep.

When we awoke we were greeted by the twittering of the birds, and the shrill lamentations of Billy Bunter.

Supplement iv.]

"The grub's gone again! Have you any idea how it vanished, Mr. Shocke?"

My friend gave me a knowing wink.

"I have solved the mystery, Bunter," he said. "It appears that you are in the habit of eating in your sleep."

"What!"

"We kept a close watch last night, and saw you sit up in bed, open the hamper, and consume the contents. You must have done the same thing on the two previous nights."

"My hat!"

"Now that we have solved this pretty little problem, Shaker," said Shocke, "we will mount our trusty push-bikes and get back to town."

"Really, Shocke, your methods are most ingenious!" I exclaimed, as we pedalled along side by side. "Your theory that Bunter was in the habit of eating in his sleep was excellent. But how do you suppose the food really disappeared, in the first place?"

"Oh, anything might have happened," said Shocke carelessly. "The tent might have been raided by one of Bunter's schoolfellows, or some hungry carnivorous creatures might have entered the tent by stealth, and consumed the food. But enough of theorising. As a matter of actual fact, that was the finest midnight feast I have had since my schooldays!"

And I heartily agreed with my amazing friend.

THE GREYFRIARS POLICE COURT!

(Continued from page 10.)

Billy-can—because it's the property of Billy?" (Laughter.)

Detective-Inspector Penfold gave evidence of arrest, and as prisoner had already been in custody since the previous night, he was let off with a caution.

Percival Spencer Paget was charged with being in possession of arms.

Magistrate: "What nonsense is this? We are all in possession of arms."

Mr. Cherry, K.C.: "Yes, but those were firearms, your worship. Prisoner was found with two loaded pea-shooters on his person. It is believed that a plot was on foot to assassinate your worship on the occasion when you reviewed the 1st (Greyfriars) Troop of Boy Scouts."

Magistrate: "This young anarchist must be severely dealt with. He is sentenced to be bombarded for ten minutes with his own pea-shooters."

The bombardment duly took place, and when the ordeal was over, the prisoner's face was perforated with holes.

Richard Nugent was charged with stealing a cake.

Magistrate: "What sort of a cake?"

Mr. Cherry: "A cake of soap, your worship." (Laughter.)

Magistrate: "I am delighted to observe this sudden desire for cleanliness on prisoner's part."

Prisoner: "I didn't pinch the soap for myself. I was going to give Sammy Bunter a bath."

Magistrate: "Oh, that alters the complexion of things!"

Mr. Cherry, (smiling): "It would certainly have altered the complexion of Sammy Bunter!" (Laughter.)

Magistrate (to prisoner): "It was very wrong of you, my little man, to appropriate a cake of soap. But I will be lenient with you on this occasion. You will be bound over to keep the piece for a fortnight!"

Prisoner (cheekily): "Many thanks, Tarzan of the Apes!"

The Greyfriars Caravanners!

(Continued from page 8.)

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

The Fight that Failed!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

"Quite!"

"Oh, quite!"

"Not to be thought of!" said Bob Cherry.

"Not for a minute!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was a council of war in Harry Wharton's own special "den" at Wharton Lodge.

"By the way, where's Bunter now?" asked Bob Cherry suddenly.

"Blessed if I know!" said Harry. "Thank goodness he's not in sight! That's one comfort."

Wharton was looking very thoughtful. A problem had to be solved—and that problem concerned William George Bunter, the ornament of the Greyfriars Remove.

Ten days of the vacation had passed. The Famous Five had been scattered to their various homes—only Hurree Singh, who had no "people" in England, coming home with Wharton. On the second day Billy Bunter had dropped in. Colonel Wharton and Miss Wharton had eyed the fat junior a little, and Harry Wharton had eyed him a good deal.

Bunter did not mind being eyed—he was only afraid of being booted, which was quite a different matter. He stayed on cheerily—and talked cheerily of the coming caravanning tour. He suggested taking the van across the Channel for a "run" in France—his great knowledge of French would come in useful, and as for the expenses, he would ask his pater for a special cheque.

It was useless to tell Bunter that the caravanning party was complete, and that the number five was a fixed and unalterable number. Bunter declined to see the point—indeed, whenever he referred to the caravan he spoke of it as "my van."

Bunter was there when Bob Cherry arrived, he was still there when Johnny Bull came, and he was there yet when Frank Nugent drifted in. From the Lodge the Famous Five were to go down to Courtfield together to take possession of the van and begin the tour. And Bunter was going, too—according to Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not want to be inhospitable. But they felt that they had enough Bunter during the term at Greyfriars.

Bunter during the holidays was a little too much. They really felt that, whatever their sins or shortcomings, they had done nothing to deserve this affliction.

Hence the council of war in Wharton's den.

On the morrow they were to start to take possession of the van, and it was agreed unanimously that the caravanning tour would be a hopeless failure if the Owl of the Remove were not shaken off.

Wharton had tolerated the fat Owl with all the politeness he could muster during ten days at the Lodge. He felt that he was entitled to a rest now.

"It's quite impossible," said Johnny Bull. "The fat bounder always grouching and complaining—"

"Bagging all the grub when we're not looking!" growled Bob. "Nothing will be safe in the van if Bunter's there."

"And the horse can't be expected to

pull his weight," said Nugent. "And he's too dashed lazy to walk."

"Besides, why should a chap come caravanning if he doesn't stand his whack in the exes?" demanded Johnny Bull. "I don't want to be mean, but it's not reasonable."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Agreed, nem con," he said. "But he's such a gluey stickler. I don't want any jaw before my uncle and aunt, of course. The question is—how can we dodge Bunter?"

"That's the idea—dodge him!" said Bob thoughtfully. "It ought to be fairly easy. He's too jolly lazy to get up in the morning now there isn't a rising-bell and a prefect's ashplant to make him. He never rolls down till everybody's finished breakfast. If we catch an early train—"

"Good!"

"He's never down before half-past ten," said Harry, with a nod. "And there's a good train goes at nine—that catches the express."

"That's our train, then!" said Bob decidedly.

The Famous Five looked quite relieved. It was quite a simple plan, and it held out promise of shaking off Bunter.

"Not a word, though," said Johnny Bull. "If the fat bounder suspected, he would be up early for once."

"Yes, rather!"

"The upfulness would be terrific," said Hurree Singh, with a nod. "The deadly secret must be kept as deep as the honourable tomb."

"Bunter doesn't even know for certain that we're going to-morrow," said Wharton thoughtfully. "He knows it's soon, that's all. We can get off while he's still snoring—"

"Good egg!"

"We'll have the bags all ready. And when he rolls down he'll simply find us gone," said Harry. "We're often all out in the morning when he comes down, so there's no reason why the fat bounder should suspect anything. Not before lunch, anyway."

"And we shall be getting lunch in Courtfield," grinned Bob, "while dear old tubby is getting his here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And immediately after lunch we'll get the van from Lazarus and clear out of Courtfield," said Harry. "And then Bunter is welcome to track us down if he can."

"Good egg!"

"That's a go!"

And the council of war broke up, with much satisfaction at the easy solution of the problem that had been arrived at.

Harry Wharton & Co. went downstairs in a cheerful mood. When they were gone and the door was closed there was a movement in the room.

From behind an Indian screen in a corner a fat figure emerged cautiously.

"Beasts!"

Bunter whispered that word to himself. Then he grinned.

"Yah! Beasts!" murmured the grinning Owl. "After all I've done for them! Talk about ingratitude!" The fat junior frowned scornfully. "Just like Thingummy says in the play, 'How sharper than a thankless tooth it is—'

I mean, 'How toothier than a thankless sharp—' I—I mean, 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless—' Something or other; I forget what. Just expresses it!"

He blinked round the room, and winked at the ceiling.

Billy Bunter had apparently had his suspicions regarding that council of war in Wharton's den. If so, his suspicions

had been more than justified—as he had learned while curled up behind the screen in the corner—having preceded the Famous Five there by a few minutes before they gathered in council. In his indignation at the ingratitude of these thankless fellows Bunter might have been expected to confront them with crushing scorn—but he didn't! He crept quietly from the room, grinning to himself.

And the next morning, when the Famous Five came down early as usual, Billy Bunter was still in bed. He had been consulting a time-table over-night, and apparently he felt secure in reposing his fat person as long as usual. He stirred at the sound of a motor-car on the drive without, but only grinned sleepily and turned his head on the pillow again.

Harry Wharton & Co. whirled away cheerily to the station—minus Bunter. They knew their Bunter so well that there was an anxious moment when they stepped into the train for Courtfield.

But no fat and ponderous form loomed up. The train buzzed out of the station, and they sat down contentedly.

"Hurray for us!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"It seems too jolly good to be true!" chorled Nugent. "I say, Harry, what will your uncle and aunt do with that fat slug we've left in the house?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Any old thing they like," he answered. "They won't turn him out, and Bunter can hang on if he likes—I don't mind! Thank goodness the fat bounder is still snoring."

It was quite a cheery journey down to Courtfield. At that familiar old town the Greyfriars juniors alighted, and went into the bunshop—often patronised by them in term time—for a substantial lunch. There was plenty of time for lunch, as they had arrived in Courtfield fairly early, and they had arranged to take over the caravan in the afternoon. They lunched, and chatted, and then had coffee; and finally Harry Wharton called for the bill, and they made a move.

And as they came out of the bunshop in a merry crowd, a voice greeted them in fat and friendly tones.

"I say you fellows—"

"Great pip!"

"Bunter!"

The Famous Five stared at Bunter as if he had been a ghost. Bunter nodded and smiled amiably.

"Awfully good of you chaps!" he said.

"G-g-good!" stammered Wharton.

"Yes, to let me have my sleep out," said Bunter airily. "I suppose you knew it would be all right for me to catch the eleven-thirty here?"

"Eh?"

"So I have a good snooze, and a jolly brekker, and came on," said Bunter. "I didn't stay to lunch—there wasn't a train in time to catch you after the eleven-thirty. Suppose I'd stayed to lunch, I should have missed you altogether. That would have been rather rotten—what?"

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"He heard us talking yesterday!" roared Johnny Bull suddenly.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I don't know what you're driving at, Bull. I say, you fellows, I suppose you've just lunched. I had a rather late brekker, but I could do with some lunch if you like."

Bob brightened up.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed. "Go in and have some lunch, Bunter, while we—I—I mean, better not miss your lunch."



A pair of powerful hands gripped Coker and he was thrown down on top of Potter. "Ow, you beastly tramp!" he roared. He tried to struggle but he was in the hands of a man much stronger than himself. (See Chapter 8.)

"I happen to have come away without any tin," said Bunter. "I've been expecting a postal order at the lodge, but there's been some delay in the post, and—"

"I'll lend you ten bob."

"Good! Come in with me."

"We'll take a stroll—"

"So will I," said Bunter.

And he did.

It was the first time on record that William George Bunter had refused a 'ced. But he felt that it was worth it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Strategy!

STRATEGY!" said Horace Coker. He spoke impressively, but George Potter and William Greene did not seem to be particularly impressed.

"What?" yawned Potter.

"Which?" asked Greene.

Coker frowned. Like many great leaders and captains, he had to contend with obtuseness and slackness on the part of his followers. It was one of the penalties of greatness.

"Strategy," said Coker, still more impressively, "is the thing! Tactics, you know."

"Are tactics and strategy the same thing?" asked Greene. "I used to read a lot about 'em in the papers in war time, and the journalists always made out there was some distinction between them, though they never seemed to know 'other from which."

"If you'll shut up for a moment, William Greene, I'll explain."

"No good, Greeney shutting up for a minute, if that's the game," said Potter, shaking his head. "Better shut up for a couple of days, Greeney, if Coker's going to start his chin."

Greene chuckled, and Coker frowned more portentously.

"Here we are in Courtfield," said Coker.

"That's so," said Potter, with a nod. "I recognise the place." He looked round him seriously. "Yes, it's Courtfield right enough."

"If you're going to be a funny idiot, George Potter—"

"Not at all, old fellow—that's your stunt. Worry on," said Potter encouragingly.

The three Fifth-Formers of Greyfriars had come out of Courtfield railway-station. Potter and Greene had been spending the vac, so far, at Coker's place—under the benevolent eye of Coker's aunt, Judy. It was a jolly place enough—everything there, they agreed, was tip-top, excepting Coker—and, of course, as

reasonable fellows, they couldn't expect to spend a vac at Coker's place without Coker. That would have been asking too much.

Potter and Greene would have been quite content to rub on, without bothering about any caravanning tours. But Coker had decided upon a vaning tour, and that settled it. Coker's word was law.

Of course, as his chums were to come as his guests, Coker footing all the bills, they hadn't much to complain of. Anyhow, it wouldn't have been any use to complain.

If they gave Coker any hints that they were prepared to leave caravanning alone, Coker either did not hear or did not heed. He went on his way regardless.

So now they had arrived at Courtfield in the sunny summer morning—at the very time that Harry Wharton & Co. were speeding thitherward in an express train, but hadn't yet arrived.

Coker had laid his plans, with what he flattered himself was deep strategy—or tactics. Coker didn't mind which.

He was going to have that van, of course; having determined on that, Coker was adamant. He condescended to explain to Potter and Greene, more than once, that it was up to him. The fags had been cheeky—a serious matter when it was Coker of the Fifth whom they had cheeked. They had refused a quite generous offer he had made them, which was distinctly ungrateful. They had bowled him out of their study at Greyfriars, and rolled him down the Remove staircase—injury added to insult, as it were. Taking one considera-

tion with another, so to speak, it was up to Horace Coker to have that van. Besides, he had said he would, and that settled it.

Coker was quite satisfied with this reasoning; and Potter and Greene, feeling that Coker wasn't to be reasoned with at all, resigned themselves to their fate. They even nourished a hope that the caravanning tour, if it came off, might be quite enjoyable, though Coker's presence in the caravan would be a considerable drawback. But Potter and Greene had even a wild hope that Coker might be dropped behind somewhere.

Potter had told Coker to "worry on" with his explanation; but Coker did not. He fixed a stern glance upon George Potter instead.

"I'm running this show," said Coker. "I've pointed out to you chaps several times that I'm leader, and that leaders have to be obeyed. As you're my guests, I can't very well punch you. But I want it clearly understood, from the start, that I want none of your funny business, George Potter, and I don't want any feeble, idiotic criticism, Greene. If you had anything to say with any sense in it, of course it would be different. But I've given up expecting anything of that kind from you chaps."

Coker paused, but not, like Brutus, for a reply. He was prepared to do all the talking.

"Now just listen. What we're going in for is strategy. I know the arrangements those young sweeps made with Lazarus. It's to-day they're to call for the caravan with a horse, and start. I don't know what they've done about the horse, but that doesn't matter. I know I've fixed up with the livery stables here to provide a first-class horse, and it's all ready for us to lead away."

Coker paused again impressively.

"Now here comes the strategy," he said. "If we wait till those cheeky young scoundrels have got the van out, and then rush them, they've got cheek enough to put up a fight."

"They have!" assented Potter, with conviction.

"Not much doubt about that!" concurred Greene.

"As they're five, and we're only three, it's barely possible that they might give us some trouble," said Coker. "Not much, of course, but it would be undignified to scrap with a gang of fags."

"Worse than that, if they handled their cricket-bats!" remarked Greene. "They might."

"They jolly well would if we tried bagging their van," said Potter. And he rubbed his head as if in anticipation.

"Well, we want to avoid vulgar scrapping if we can," said Coker, who also, perhaps, had thought of the cricket-bats. "That's where my splendid strategy comes in. We're going to bag the van before they arrive."

Potter and Greene blinked.

"But old Lazarus won't let you bag it, Coker. He's hired it out to Wharton's crowd, you know—"

"What you want to do, Potter, is to listen, and not talk so much," explained Coker.

"Oh!"

"I'm not going to show up," continued Coker. "Lazarus knows that I wanted the van, and he might be a trifle suspicious of me. Greene's going to drop in with the horse—"

"Oh, am I?" said Greene.

"Yes. You'll simply say you've got the horse for the caravan, and Wharton

and the rest are coming along!" said Coker triumphantly. "See? That's telling the exact truth. Wharton & Co. certainly are coming along—I've no doubt they're in the train now."

"Oh!"
"Thousand to one old Lazarus won't dream of smelling a rat," continued Coker. "Why should he? He knows you're a Greyfriars fellow, Greene, but that's all he knows about you. And with your rather obtuse face—"

"Eh?"
"With your rather obtuse face, you don't look as if you could get up to anything deep."

Greene looked at Coker with a fixed look. The cheerful Horace rattled on unregarding:

"You couldn't, of course—it's me that's thought it out. Looking a fool really helps you through."

"L-l-l-looking a fool!" babbled Greene.

"Yes; it's really lucky, in the circumstances."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter suddenly. Greene seemed to be short of breath, for he was gasping in quite a peculiar way.

"Nothing to cackle at, Potter, that I can see," said Coker curtly. "Now, you understood, Greene. We'll walk round to the livery stables and get the horse—I've paid a steep deposit on it already—and you lead it to old Lazarus' show, and mention that you've come for the van, and Wharton's coming along. Understand?"

"I—I—" "The harness and things are all there—everything but the horse. I've seen all that—I went over the thing very carefully when I decided to have it."

"I—I—" stuttered Greene. "Suppose Wharton's been for the van already?" asked Potter.

"He hasn't! I know all their arrangements—old Lazarus let it all out when I saw him last. I pumped him, in fact," said Coker loftily.

"They might have altered—" "Rubbish! They're coming from Wharton's place by a morning train, and they lunch here—I know that for a fact. Then they're calling for the van. It's all out and dried. It never occurred to any of them that it was necessary to keep it a secret—"

"They didn't know there was a strategical genius about!" suggested Potter.

"Exactly—they didn't! But there is," said Coker impressively. "Little me. What!"

"Ha, ha! I—I mean, yes, exactly. But—but I say, is it quite legal to bag the van like that?" asked Potter. "Couldn't they send the peelers after us if we lift their van?"

Coker snorted.

"They wouldn't do that, being Greyfriars chaps. Even those Remove fags have a proper sense of what is due to the school," he said. "Besides, I shouldn't care if they did. With my strategy, I should throw any pursuit off the track. If a bobby ventured to interfere with me, I shouldn't hesitate to punch him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Now, if you've done arguing, let's get a move on," said Coker. "We've got some shopping to do before we take the van out of Courtfield. I've got ten guids to lay out in tuck for the start."

Potter and Greene seemed to brighten up at that, somehow. Potter looked quite enthusiastic, and Greene a little less downhearted.

"Come on!" said Coker. And they came on.

A quarter of an hour later, a horse was being led out of the livery stables. Greene eyed him rather gingerly as he took the halter.

"He's all right," said Coker. "Splendid animal. Now get a move on, Greene—we'll wait for you to bring the van round to the stores, to load up with tuck. Mind Lazarus doesn't smell a rat. Don't try to be clever—just be natural."

And with that encouragement, William Greene started off for Mr. Lazarus' establishment, leading the horse. And Coker and Potter waited for him outside the stores.

And—rather to Potter's surprise, though not at all to Horace Coker's—twenty minutes later William Greene rejoined his chums, still leading the horse—and behind the horse there now rolled and rumbled a handsome caravan. Coker of the Fifth had triumphed—strategically, or tactically, whichever it was—anyhow, he had triumphed. And Coker of the Fifth, like the classical gentleman of old, felt like striking the stars with his sublime head.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

On the Track!

"**H**ALLO, hallo, hallo! Here we are again!" The Famous Five came cheerily into Mr. Lazarus' dusky shop. Billy Bunter rolled in after them. Bunter did not intend to let the caravanners get out of range of his spectacles.

Mr. Lazarus greeted the juniors with a genial nod. He had just finished negotiating the sale of a watch to a customer, and he bowed that gentleman out, and turned to the juniors, rubbing his hands.

"Goot-afternoon!" he said. "Very pleased to see you again, young shentlemens! You have thought of thum-thing you want to take in the caravan, yes, and you come back to buy him of old Lazarus: I can sell you a lovely clock that—"

"Eh? We're not after clocks," said Wharton. "We've come for the caravan."

Mr. Lazarus stared.

"The caravan?" he repeated.

"Yes, of course—according to arrangement," said Harry, surprised by Mr. Lazarus' surprise. "Isn't it ready?"

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in alarm. "You don't mean to say that you've let it be burgled after all, while we've been away?"

"My cootness!" said Mr. Lazarus,

rubbing his fat chin. "I do not understand. It is tree hours since your friend took away the caravan!"

"What?"

"Which?"

"How?"

"Took it away?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Yeth, thertainly!" said Mr. Lazarus, greatly astonished. "He brought the horse for it, and said that you were coming along—"

"Who did?" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Great Scott! Is this a dodge of the merry burglar who's been trying to burgle the van?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Lazarus, you—you ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "Whom one earth have you handed our van over to?"

"Young Master Greene—"

"Greene!" howled Bob.

"Greene of the Fifth!" shrieked Wharton.

"My cootness!" said Mr. Lazarus. "Isn't Master Greene going caravanning with you, young shentlemens?"

"No!" roared Bob.

"Not likely!"

"Do you think we're taking Fifth-Formers?" snorted Johnny Bull. "It's a holiday!"

"Oh, my cootness! I shink when Master Greene bring the horse, and say you are coming along, that it is all right!" stuttered Mr. Lazarus. "Your schoolfellow play a shoke on you, vat!"

"It's Coker!" said Wharton. "Coker's at the bottom of it. He's sent Greene



Stokes fell forward on his knees, and as the Rabbit was then in full flight, the whole of the Greyfriars party piled upon Mr. Stokes with one accord. "Find something and tie him up," said Bob Cherry, kneeling on the wriggling ruffian. "I'll clump him on the head if he resists." Bob tapped his stick on Mr. Stokes' skull. "Quiet, you brute!" (See Chapter 9.)

to bag the van, in case Lazarus suspected him if he came himself!"

"Yes, rather!"

"My ootness! If it had been Coker, shentlemens, I should not have handed over that van," said Mr. Lazarus. "But as Master Greene belonged to Greyfriars I zought it was all right—"

"It's all wrong!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The wrongfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Lazarus!"

"Three hours ago!" said Wharton. "I—I'd almost forgotten about Coker and his rot. They must have come back here to bag our van—I suppose they knew our arrangements—that it was to-day—"

"If Master Greene had come any other day, I should not have given him the van," said Lazarus. "But I think he is a little early, and that is all, and he say you are coming along—"

"Well, we've come along, that's certain," said Bob. "But we seem to have come along a little too late."

"And Coker's got the van!" said Nugent. "Why, he's as bad as the giddy burglar. It's our van!"

"It is only a shoke, of course," said Lazarus. "Master Greene will give you the van, young shentlemens."

"Was Coker with him?" asked Bob. Mr. Lazarus shook his head.

"He was alone," he said. "I shink he come from you, and he was going caravanning wiz you. He paid me ten pounds for four weeks' hire; I shink it come from you."

"Coker, of course," said Bob. "Greene hasn't any 'tenners' to chuck about. Coker means to pay for the van if he has it."

"He's jolly well not going to have it."

"No fear!"

"Three hours ago—my hat! They may be miles away by this time!" groaned Bob. "We'd better get after them at once!"

"You shink they will keep the van?" exclaimed Mr. Lazarus, in astonishment. "Of course!"

"But that is not legal," said Mr. Lazarus. "If you like, you shall use my telephone, and ask for a politheman."

The chums of the Remove grinned, in spite of their wrath. They were not likely to call up a policeman to deal with Coker of the Fifth.

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton. "We can manage Coker. Which way did Greene go?"

"He led the van down the High Street," said Mr. Lazarus. "I was very glad to see it go—that van has given me great troubles since I have bought him! After he is brought back to me again I shall sell him at vunce! I do not like burglars coming round my place! The van went towards the common, and zen I come into my shop and see him no more."

Harry Wharton looked at his chums.

"Well, Mr. Lazarus isn't to blame, really," he said. "He thought he could trust a Greyfriars fellow with the van. What we've got to do is to get after it, and get it back."

"You bet."

"As they've paid a month on the van, we needn't pay anything now," added Wharton. "We can settle that with Coker. Come on!"

"I say, you fellows!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say!" howled the fat junior, as the party hurried out of the shop.

"I say! It's important!"

"Well, what is it, then?" exclaimed Wharton impatiently.

"I haven't had my lunch yet!"

Biff! Bob Cherry's vigorous hand smote Bunter's straw hat down on his head, and Bunter yelled. That was the only answer the Owl of the Remove received to his plaint.

Then, without wasting further attention upon Bunter, the Famous Five started in pursuit of the van.

Coker & Co.—for they had no doubt whatever that Coker and Potter had joined Greene as soon as he was clear of Mr. Lazarus' establishment—had had three hours' start. But Harry Wharton & Co. were first-class Boy Scouts, and they had no doubt about their ability to track down the caravan. It was a fairly conspicuous object to track.

"Hold on a minute!" said Harry, as the juniors came by the Courtfield Stores. "There was nothing in the van in the way of grub—they'd hardly start on a trip without getting in some supplies. We were going to shop at the stores here before starting. Most likely Coker did the same."

"Good egg!" said Bob. "Let's inquire."

"I say, you fellows, there's a tea-room here!" said Bunter. "Shall I get a snack while you're inquiring?"

"You can go and eat coke!"

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"Kill him, somebody!"

Harry Wharton hurried into the stores. Inquiry there elicited quite a great deal of information. Coker—who was well known there—had done quite extensive shopping, and several assistants had been called upon to carry out the supplies and stack them in the caravan. And then the van had been driven out of Courtfield towards the common. And half an hour or so had been occupied in the shopping and stacking.

"That reduces their lead to two hours and a half," said Harry Wharton. "We shall run them down all right. Come on!"

The juniors hurried on, walking at a great rate, with Billy Bunter fagging behind, his fat little legs going like clockwork.

Bunter was looking discontented and wrathful. He had set out to go caravanning, not to go walking—and at such a rate. Bunter felt that he was being wronged and injured. But his wrongs and his injuries were utterly disregarded by his heartless companions. They were thinking only of the raided caravan, and did not give a single thought to William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows," howled Bunter, dropping behind at last, "I can't keep up with you, you know!"

"Good!"

"You awful beast, Bob Cherry!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter put on a spurt and came up again.

"I'll tell you what," he gasped. "You fellows can join hands—two of you—and carry me. What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I can't keep up this rate!"

"Roll away, porpoise!"

"Let's cut back to the town and hire a taxi then!" gasped Bunter. "We can track them down ever so much better in a taxi. It's only a shilling a mile, you know! I—I—I'll pay it!"

"You cut back, then," suggested Bob Cherry.

"You'll wait for me?"

"No fear!"

"Beast!"

Bunter decided to carry on. He dropped behind again, but he came up once more as the trackers halted for consultation at the cross-roads. There

was a good deal of traffic on the dusty roads, and picking up the trail of the caravan was rather a hefty task.

But there were sheep on the common, with a lad in charge, and Wharton cut across to ask him for information.

Fortunately, the youthful shepherd had seen the caravan pass, and he informed Wharton that it had turned into the lane for Redclyffe.

The juniors headed for Redclyffe at once, and Bunter, refreshed by a rest in the grass, rolled after them manfully.

In Redclyffe Lane there was less traffic, and the scouts were able to pick up the track of a large and heavy vehicle. They had no doubt that it was the track of the caravan, and they held on at a good speed. There were many turnings in the lane, but the track held on, and was picked up again and again, till Redclyffe village came in sight.

By that time Harry Wharton & Co. were getting a little tired, and more than a little exasperated. Their intentions towards Coker & Co., when they should have come up with the raiders, grew more and more ferocious. They took a brief rest and a hasty meal of bread and cheese at the village inn, and inquired after the caravan; but it had not been seen in Redclyffe. They guessed that it had turned into the high road near the village, and on the high road tracking was difficult, if not impossible. The juniors started again before Bunter had finished refreshing himself, and the fat junior followed, complaining loudly, with a wedge of cheese in one hand and a chunk of bread in the other.

"Lucky it keeps light jolly late now," Bob Cherry remarked. "We'll come up with the brutes sooner or later. And then won't we jolly well wallop 'em!"

"Yes, rather," gasped Nugent.

"We'll bag all the grub they've laid in, too," said Johnny Bull. "That will be tit for tat!"

"A giddy Roland for a merry Oliver!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We shall have earned it by the time we get it!"

And even Billy Bunter brightened up at that thought. Coker's supply of tuck was a prize worth exerting his fat limbs for.

Luck befriended the trackers on the main road; a carter had seen a caravan passing on the road towards Ashford. It was painted green, in pale green picked out with dark. And that description was enough; it was the Greyfriars van. Fatigued, but hopeful, the juniors trudged along the Ashford road, asking questions of nearly every pedestrian they met, and getting information here and there. And as the sun sank behind the wooded downs, the dusty pursuers still pressed on, and they flattered themselves that at last they were gaining on the raiders.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Philistines!

A LIGHT flashed in the darkness of the caravan. Potter of the Fifth grunted and awoke as he was trodden on. There was a mutter of voices. The light, which came from a lantern, flashed to and fro, dazzling in its glare. Coker sat up in the bunk, banged his head, and gave a howl. Greene yawned and stared and blinked. There were two more figures in the caravan now—dusky figures—and the door was wide open, the night wind blowing in. Coker rubbed his head and roared.

"Those young sweeps! They've got here! Collar them! Kick them out! You cheeky little villains—"

"Shut up!" came a deep voice.

Coker fairly jumped.

That deep, threatening voice certainly was not the voice of any member of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Wha-a-at—" stuttered Coker.

"Tramps!" muttered Potter, from the blankets on the floor. "I told you so, Coker! Your doing!"

Potter wisely remained quiescent in the blankets. He was not out for a fight with muscular tramps.

In his view, Coker had asked for this, and Coker could take the consequences. If the van was robbed, there was consolation in the thought that everything there belonged to Coker, or would have to be made good by Coker. Potter was only anxious not to get a tramp's cudgel on his head, or a tramp's knuckles on his features. So he lay quiet. Greene, as if he read Potter's thoughts, and agreed with them heartily, remained in his bunk, blinking. Only Coker of the Fifth thought of fighting.

"Tramps!" repeated Coker. "My hat! You dashed rascals, how dare you shove into our van! Line up, you fellows!"

Coker's long legs sprawled out of the upper bunk, as he hurled himself recklessly at the enemy, without seeing them clearly, or having anything like a clear idea who or what he had to contend with.

He discovered very quickly, however.

A powerful pair of hands gripped him, jerked him away from the bunk, and threw him down, and he fairly walloped on top of Potter, who yelled and raved. Coker struggled spasmodically, surprised by the strength with which he was grasped. He was no infant; but he was in the hands of a man who treated him as one.

"Ow, ow! Ooooh!" spluttered Coker.

He was able to get in only one hefty blow, and that, unfortunately, landed on Potter, in the confusion. There was another dismal howl from Potter. It was evidently not Potter's lucky night.

The flashing lantern was stationary now; the man who held it had stuck it on the shelf in the caravan. Its light gleamed on a strange scene. A burly, powerful man in a speckled muffler was grasping Coker so powerfully that even the hefty Horace had to take it quietly. Another man, a smaller fellow, with a pock-marked face and only one eye, stood by the door, with a thick cudgel in his hand.

"If they lift a finger, Rabbit, brain 'em!" panted the big man, compressing his grasp on Coker.

"Leave it to me, Stokey!" said the little man. "I'll brain 'em fast enough! Get a cinch on that thundering fool!"

"Yo-wo-woop!" spluttered Coker.

He sprawled on his back now—and on Potter's chest—blinking up dazedly at Stokes' savage, threatening face. A brawny fist was drawn back over him, and Coker felt sick as he saw it. If that huge fist had been dashed into his face, it would have stunned him. But the blow did not fall.

"Are you giving in, you young fool?" hissed Stokes.

"Yes," gasped Coker.

"Sensible of you!" said Mr. Stokes grimly.

Rabbit gave a soft chuckle.

"Fairly easy job, arter all, Stokey."

"You bet—easier than getting into that cussed old sheeney's place at Court-

field!" growled Stokes. "We're O. K. now."

Coker started.

He had heard, of course, the story of the several successive attempts to "burgle" the green caravan at Mr. Lazarus' establishment. He grasped the fact now that this attack was not by common tramps of the high road. The caravanners were in the hands of the thieves who had attempted to steal the van at Courtfield.

"Now, if you're taking it quiet, you won't get 'urt!" said Stokes. "We ain't arter hurting you, but we're ready to smash you into a jelly if you give any trouble! Catch on to that?"

"Yes," gasped Coker.

"We want this here van," continued Stokes. "That's what we're arter. Now we've got it—see?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"If you want your jaw knocked through the back of your 'ead, you've only got to raise a 'and!"

"Oh dear!"

"Now get up!" snapped Mr. Stokes.

He released Coker, and the breathless Fifth-Former of Greyfriars scrambled up—much to Potter's relief. Potter was still more breathless, and he sat up and pumped in air.

Coker leaned on the side of the van and panted. Coker seldom knew when he was beaten—but he knew it now. Rabbit was evidently ready to use his cudgel; and the big ruffian was alone—a match for the three Greyfriars fellows—certainly much more than a match for Horace Coker.

"Now take it quiet, the lot of you!" said Stokes. "We sha'n't hurt you—but keep quiet! If any of them calls out, Rabbit, hit him on the head!"

"'Ard!" said Rabbit, with a nod.

"Get outer that bunk, you!"

Green crawled out.

Coker was still gasping; Potter and Greene looked at one another with pallid faces. In what lawless, ruffianly hands had they fallen?

"Get your clothes on!"

"Look here—" began Coker.

"You 'ear me?"

Coker said no more. The three Fifth-Formers hurried on their clothes. Then Stokes, who had been looking round the van, picked up a cord, and proceeded coolly to bind their hands behind their backs. Potter and Greene submitted to their fate with exemplary meekness. Coker gave a sort of wriggle, but he did not venture to resist.

Their hands having been bound, Stokes looked round for some more cord, and found some, and tied their ankles.

Then the three were bundled roughly out of the van and dropped into the grass.

Horace Coker contrived to wriggle into a sitting position. His brain was in a whirl.

From the open doorway of the van came an incessant flashing of the lantern as it moved about. The two ruffians seemed to be searching the van, though what they were searching for passed Coker's comprehension. Fragments of their muttered talk came to his ears.

"The cap'n had them—we know that he—"

"We've got the van, Rabbit—that's the chief thing. It's only a question of time."

"All right before the morning."

"I reckon so. Anyhow, we're keeping the van till we've done. Nobody's likely to run across us here."

Rabbit chuckled.

"Couldn't have camped in a better place for us, Stokey!"

"Couldn't!" agreed Stokes.

Their muttering voices died away as they searched through the van. Bed-clothes, crockery, and tin-ware were tossed carelessly out upon the grass. The ruffians seemed to be rooting through the van from end to end, completely gutting it in their mysterious search.

"My only hat!" murmured Coker breathlessly. "They must be a pair of lunatics, I think. They haven't even been through our pockets, and they're rooting through the van, and there's nothing there but grub!"

"They'll come to our pockets later, you bet," mumbled Greene morosely. "Lucky I brought only my gun-metal watch."

"Oh, you ass, Coker!" groaned Potter.

"Is it my fault?" snapped Coker.

"How was I to know that two hooligans were going to drop on us. Besides, I put up a fight, and you fellows didn't!"

"If you'd backed me up—"

"I don't want my head caved in!" snarled Potter. "Besides, what sort of a fight did you put up, anyhow? You punched my head, you silly owl!"

"I'd punch it again if my hands were loose," retorted Coker. "You ought to have backed me up. Now they can do as they dashed well like with our things!"

"What the thump do they want?" muttered Greene, sitting up and blinking at the doorway of the van. "They must be the rotters who tried to steal the van from old Lazarus—"

"That's plain enough."

"And they watched us get it away, and they've been following us all day, of course," said Potter. "Coker never thought of that."

"I couldn't think of it, could I?" howled Coker.

"Not with your brain," said Potter, perhaps encouraged to unusual frankness by the fact that Coker's hands were tied. "You couldn't think of anything, if you tried—and you never do try. You burbling ass, you've just put us into their clutches by camping in this out-of-the-way corner. Just what they wanted. If we were close to the village, they wouldn't dare rush us like this."

"I dare say they'd have tried it on, anyhow," said Coker. "They seemed jolly determined to get hold of the van. They seem to think there's something hidden in it."

"Bother them!" groaned Potter. "I say, my wrists are aching. I wonder how long this is going to last?"

"Oh, don't grouse!" said Coker.

"Br-r-r-r! Fathead!"

"Ass!" said Greene.

Coker gasped.

"If my hands were loose—" breathed Coker.

"Your tongue's still loose, worse luck!" said Potter. "Give it a rest, Coker, and give us a rest!"

"Yes, do!" urged Greene.

Horace Coker relapsed into furious silence. High above the wood near at hand, the moon sailed into view between fleecy clouds. The light streamed down on the lonely camp of the caravanners, on the three bound school-boys sprawling in the grass, on the van, and the heap of furniture and utensils scattered under the doorway. From the van came the incessant flashing of the lantern, moving to and fro, and the muttering voices and curses, of the two

ruffians seeking—what? Coker & Co. could not even surmise what they were seeking.

But they were evidently very keen on their search, whatever its object might be. As the minutes dragged by, curses both loud and deep came from the two rascals, disappointed so far.

"They ain't 'ere, Stokey!" Coker heard, in the Rabbit's discouraged tones.

A savage curse from Stokes answered.

"They must be here you fool!"

"Then where's the cap'n hidden them?"

"That's what we've got to find out, you jay!"

"It don't look to me—"

"Did you expect to see 'em lying on the blooming floor?" jeered Stokes savagely. "Shut your head, and 'elp me look for them!"

The muttering died away again.

"Them!" repeated Potter wonderingly. "What the merry thunder are they looking for?"

"Goodness knows!"

"They may think we've hidden our money in the oven," said Coker. "I've got my banknotes in my pocket, I know that."

"Rot!" said Potter. "They haven't gone to all this trouble only for that."

"Trust Coker not to see what's as plain as daylight," agreed Greene.

Coker breathed hard through his nose.

"When we get out of this," he said, "I'm going to thrash you two rotters, first thing. Then—"

"Oh, shut up, Coker!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Shut up!" said Potter.

Coker shut up, in sheer astonishment and wrath. The worms were turning with a vengeance!

Stokes came out of the van at last, tramping down the steps, and came over to the three bound Fifth-Formers. In the moonlight his face showed up savage and threatening, and even Coker felt a tremor at his glance. The bulky ruffian loomed over them.

"Just answer me a question," he said thickly. "You've been over that

there van pretty thorough, I s'pose?"

"Ye-es," stammered Potter.

"Have you found anything out about it?"

"I—I don't know what you mean. We—we found it all right. It—it's a good van—"

"Talk sense, you young jackanapes! Have you found anything like a secret cupboard, or a drawer, or anything?"

"N-n-no!"

"Sure?" snarled the ruffian.

"Quite sure!" gasped Potter. "We—we never thought of looking for anything of the kind, you know. It—it's just as Lazarus handed it over."

Stokes muttered a curse, and went back into the van. The movement of the lantern was resumed, as the two ruffians flashed the light into every corner—seeking, scanning, searching into every recess, in quest of only themselves knew what.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton & Co.'s Triumph!

LOOK! Bob Cherry breathed the word.

"What—"

"A light!"

"Oh, good!"

The hour was late, and Harry Wharton & Co. were fatigued. They were more than fatigued—they were very nearly tired out.

How many miles they had followed the elusive caravan they did not know; but they knew that they were tired out. Billy Bunter had ceased to grouse—he hadn't breath enough to grouse with. He just rolled on like a fellow in a dream—only his fear of being left alone in the dark lanes preventing him from rolling in the grass to sleep.

Again and again the chums of the Remove had picked up the trail of the caravan. Carters and carmen, workers in the fields and cyclists, nearly everybody they passed, in fact, had been called upon for information. And, fortunately, the handsome, green-painted caravan was so conspicuous an object

that few had passed it without noticing it—and plenty of people had passed it, or it had passed them.

So, from one clue to another, the chums of the Remove worked their way onward, till darkness found them well off the main roads, and involved in a tangle of lanes and footpaths—with few passers to ask for further information. A labourer, plodding on his homeward way late, however, enlightened them further. He had seen the green caravan, and he thought it was heading for Ockley's Rough—a region of which the Greyfriars chums, naturally, had never heard. The agricultural gentleman was surprised to hear that there was anybody who had never heard of Ockley's Rough—he had known it, he told the juniors, ever since he was a boy, so high.

"And it be queer," he continued; "you're the second lot that's asked me arter that caravan, and the others 'adn't 'eard of Ockley's Rough neither. That be queer, beant it?"

"Somebody else inquiring after the caravan!" repeated Wharton, in surprise.

"Two covies," said the man. "Nigh on two hours ago. Proper rough-looking covies they was, too, one of 'em with only one eye. Says they'd missed their friends in the van, so they says. Well, sir, you foller this lane as far as the pond, and turn to the left and keep on till you see the haystack. Don't go as fur as the haystack, but soon's you see it bear off to the right and look for the bridge—leastwise, it ain't a bridge now, but you'll see where it used to be—and strike off across the fields by the footpath till you see the wood, and then bear round south, if you foller me, and you'll see Ockley's Rough afore you—open for miles. But if you'd rather go by the lane—"

With these explicit directions, Harry Wharton & Co. pushed on, Bunter coming out of a short nap, and plodding on behind.

Tired as they were, they had high hopes—for it was certain that Coker & Co. must have camped long before this, and it was only a question of finding the camp. They could guess, too, that Coker had sought a lonely spot, in case of pursuit; and however determined he was to push on, he was bound to camp sooner or later, and Ockley's Rough seemed a likely spot. But whether they were approaching Ockley's Rough or not, in the dimness and the tangle of fields and lanes, the juniors were blissfully ignorant—they hoped for the best but they had lurking doubts. And then the light caught Bob Cherry's keen eyes.

The juniors came to a halt. The moon had long risen, but the light was indistinct. From the dimness of the distance came a flashing light, as of a lamp or a lantern moving rapidly in a doorway.

"Some shepherd—" said Nugent.

"Whoever he is, we can ask him for the direction to Ockley's Rough, blow it," said Bob. "I'd be jolly glad to see a human being again, anyhow. I feel like a merry explorer in a giddy desert."

"I say, you fellows—" came feebly from Bunter.

"Come on!"

The juniors pushed on with renewed determination. Billy Bunter fagging dismally in the rear.

They found themselves skirting a wood—and hoped that it was the wood the countryman had mentioned. The

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light disappeared at intervals, but it continually reappeared, and it seemed almost incessantly in motion. Evidently it was gleaming from a doorway; and as they drew nearer, they saw that that doorway was well above the level of the ground.

"It's in a van!" breathed Nugent at last.

"A caravan——"

"Our van!" gasped Wharton. "Hur-
ray!"

There was no doubt of it, as they drew nearer. The moonlight glimmered on the shape of a caravan, and it was from the open doorway at the back that the moving light flashed and glimmered.

"But what the merry thunder are they up to?" gasped Bob. "It's past midnight now, I should say, and they ought to be fast asleep. What the dickens are they jerking that light about inside the van for?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Bother them!" growled Bob. "If we'd found them asleep, we could have handled them without any trouble. Anyhow, we're going to handle them."

"What-ho!"

"Quiet," said Wharton. "There's only five of us, and they're Fifth-Form, you know—pretty hefty for us to tackle. It will be a bit of a scrap, even if we take them by surprise. Get as near as you can without alarming the rotters."

"I say, you fellows——"

"You'd better stay here, Bunter—you're not good in a scrap."

Sniff, from Bunter.

"After that remark, Wharton, I shall decline to take a hand in the affair at all," said the Owl of the Remove. "I shall stay here now!"

And he did.

The Famous Five pressed on, very cautiously. What Coker & Co. were "up to" they simply could not imagine. But they were confident now of taking the caravan-raiders by surprise.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry suddenly. "Hold on, you chaps! There—there's something wrong there."

The juniors, at a distance now of only fifty yards or so, halted, and surveyed the scene before them.

The moonlight was deceptive; but they could make out that there was, beyond the shadow of a doubt, something "wrong" at the caravan camp.

Three figures were sitting in the grass at a short distance behind the van; and there was a pile of goods from the van near the steps. The awkward-looking position of the three figures, and the fact that they were sitting there at all puzzled the juniors at first. But they discerned the reason at last—the three were Coker & Co., and they were tied hand and foot. And the shadowy forms they could discern moving in the van—two of them—carrying the light about—were the forms of strangers—the juniors caught only glimpses of them, but they saw that they were roughly-dressed men.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Coker's run up against trouble!" he said. "The van's been raided by a

couple of tramps, and they've tied those three idiots up. I suppose they're robbing the van now!"

The juniors crept closer, taking advantage of the cover of the thick bunches of rough grass and straggling bushes. They were soon able to look right into the van from behind, through the open door. A big man was on his knees, examining the floor, while a smaller man, with only one eye, held the lantern. Coker & Co.'s muttering voices came to the ears of the juniors now.

"A pair of tramps," said Wharton in a whisper, "and a rough-looking pair at that!! They've got the van."

"This is where we come in!" murmured Bob Cherry. "From the look of things, it's pretty lucky for Coker that we ran him down."

"The luckfulness is terrific," whispered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed ruffians look very hefty, my worthy chums, and we are unarmed. I think the proper caper would be to arm ourselves stickfully."

Bob Cherry chuckled softly.

"Inky's right," he said. "We can cut some sticks in these bushes. Quiet, though!"

It was evidently a good idea, and the chums of the Remove lost no time. They opened their pocket-knives, and cut sticks from a thicket near at hand. Then, after a whispered conversation, having arranged their plan of campaign, they advanced again.

Each with a thick stick gripped in his hand, the Famous Five crept towards the caravan, keeping out of the line of the door in case the ruffians should glance out and take the alarm.

"Great Scott! Those cheeky fags!" exclaimed Coker. "You cheeky young rotters, what the thump——"

"Shut up!" hissed Potter.

But it was too late. Stokes looked out of the van, startled by Coker's exclamation. He started violently as he saw the five figures coming on—only a few yards distant now.

"Look out, Rabbit!" he shouted.

He leaped down the steps of the van, cudgel in hand.

"At 'em!" roared Bob Cherry, as further caution was useless. And the five juniors rushed fiercely on.

Rabbit came leaping out of the van after his comrade. He also had a cudgel gripped in his hand.

"Go for 'em, kids!" gasped Potter.

Harry Wharton & Co. came down on Stokes with a determined rush. The ruffian's swinging cudgel met three or four sticks, and crashed on them; and before he could lift it again a fifth stick lashed across his head, and he staggered with a howl of pain.

As he staggered, Harry Wharton struck, and Stokes rolled in the grass, yelling.

It was at that moment that Rabbit jumped out of the van, cudgel in hand; and the juniors turned on him and met him fiercely. Rabbit retreated round the van before the lashing sticks. His cudgel was knocked out of his hand, and

he yelled as he received a crack on the head—and then Bob Cherry's stick crashed on his shoulder, fairly numbing it. Rabbit howled loudly, and took to his heels.

Stokes was on his feet again, cursing luridly, and groping for his weapon in the grass, where it had fallen when he fell. But he had no time to recover it. As he stooped, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rushed at him, and landed a hefty lash on the back of his head. Stokes fell forward on his knees, and as the Rabbit was then in full flight, the whole of the Greyfriars party piled upon Mr. Stokes, with one accord.

"Find something and tie him up," said Bob, kneeling on the wriggling ruffian. "I'll cave in the back of his head if he resists!" Bob jammed his stick on Mr. Stokes' skull. "Quiet, you brute!"

And Stokes, cursing eloquently, gave in, and Nugent whipped a length of rope out of the van, and thoroughly and scientifically tied Mr. Stokes' rough wrists together, and then his ankles. Then, for additional safety, he was tied to the wheel of the caravan.

"Looks to me like our win!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "The other rotter's got clear, though. Bunter!" Bob Cherry put his hands to his mouth and roared: "Bunty! You can roll in! Safe now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Billy Bunter rolled in.

"Come and let us loose, you fags!" shouted Coker of the Fifth. "Mind, you're not going to have this van. It's our van, you know. But come and let me loose. Do you hear?"

There was a joyous chortle from the Famous Five.

"Dear old Coker!" said Bob. "Always the same old Coker! I think you'll do very nicely as you are for the present, Coker!"

"You cheeky young rotter!" roared Coker, in great wrath. "Come and untie me at once! I'll smash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, come and let us loose, you kids!" stammered Potter.

"Is it pax?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Is it our van, and is it pax?"

"No!" bawled Coker.

"Then you can stay as you are for the present," said Wharton coolly. "Now, you fellows, what about camping?"

"What about supper?" said Bunter. And he dived into the van.

"Bunter's right," remarked Bob Cherry. "I could almost eat Coker! Let's see what they've got in the way of grub."

There was plenty in the way of grub, and Harry Wharton & Co. sat down to a substantial and very cheery supper in the moonlight—eating to an accompaniment of lurid remarks from Coker—which had no effect whatever upon the Greyfriars Caravanners!

THE END.

(There's another grand caravan story next week! Full particulars in the "Chat.")

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