

"FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!"

Grand Sporting and Adventure Serial Starts To-day.

No. 867. Vol. XXVI.

Week Ending September 20th, 1924.

The Magnet 2^d

Library

Complete of School Stories.

EVERY
MONDAY.

**FREE BICYCLES
FOR READERS!**

SEE PAGE 6.



WHERE BILLY BUNTER IS NOT AS BRAVE AS A LION!

A THRILLING MOMENT FOR THE FAMOUS FIVE!

(Read this week's amazing complete story of Harry Wharton & Co.—"Foes of the Sahara!"—describing their adventures in Northern Africa—inside.)



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!"

By Hedley Scott.

IN this issue of your favourite paper you will find the opening chapters of our grand new sporting and adventure serial. The Melton brothers are courageous, big-hearted fellows, determined to win through. On their side is youth and its proverbial optimism; but even the cheery spirits of these Meltons suffer a set-back in the second instalment. It would seem that an unkind fate is for ever dogging their footsteps—just when success is imminent a reverse of the wheel sets in.

UP AGAINST IT!

fully describes their position in the busy metropolis wherein they hope to accomplish great things. Will they win through or not? That is a big question which I will leave Mr. Hedley Scott to answer in his own inimitable way. Make no mistake about it, chums, this powerful story is going to create a big sensation. Be sure and follow it through from week to week. Perhaps your non-reader chum would be pleased to make the acquaintance of the Meltons. You can effect the introduction by lending him your copy of the MAGNET for this week—next Monday he'll want to buy his own copy sure as "eggs is eggs!"

"IN THE POWER OF THE SHEIK!"

By Frank Richards.

This is the next ripping story in our grand holiday series dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. in Northern Africa. The plucky Removites still forge on into the desert, Billy Bunter still continues to "grouse" from morn till night, but the goal looms nearer with each setting of the sun. Somewhere in the deep recesses of the desert lies Major Cherry—a prisoner in the hands of Mustapha ben Mohammed, the usurper sheik. At his side, unruffled by the turn of events, is young Ali ben Yusuf, the rightful sheik of the wild Tahar tribe. These two—the man and the boy—are fighting a battle with themselves. And the stake is

THE EYE OF AHMED,

a sacred talisman that, according to custom, must always be in the possession of the reigning chief of the tribe. Mustapha ben Mohammed would give his soul to possess the Eye of Ahmed, for without it his position as Sheik of the Tahar tribe is anything but a sinecure. Only Major Cherry, to whom it had been entrusted by Ali's father, knows the whereabouts of the talisman, and despite Mustapha's threats to put him to the torture should he remain obstinate, the gallant old soldier refuses to accept life itself as the price of his honour.

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THE CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS!

'Tis then that the cunning desperado of the desert plays his trump card. His men have kidnapped Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn—in fact, they are now close prisoners in the Arab camp. Mustapha, knowing the Englishman's code of honour where women are concerned, threatens to put the plucky Cliff House girls to the torture, unless Major Cherry delivers up the talisman. Shaken to the core, the old soldier realizes that the position is hopeless. He cannot let these young girls suffer on his account. But hark! Through his despair and misery come the tramp of feet, the sound of a familiar voice—a voice he had been led to believe would never greet him again in this world! What does it all mean? It means that—But there, it would be spoiling a good thing to say anything further. Let Frank Richards lead you to this desert encampment in his own way. His is the master touch of a born craftsman. Not a dissentient voice will be raised when my chums have read

"IN THE POWER OF THE SHEIK!"

for it beats anything that has ever flowed from Mr. Richards' pen in the past. Order your MAGNET early, boys. This wonderful story must not on any account be missed.

FOOTBALL!

Hurrah! Everyone's walking about with a smiling face now that King Footer has come into his own again, and what better, my chums, than a special supplement to celebrate the grand occasion. The "Herald" staff has turned up trumps once more. Both the serious and frivolous side of football have been treated in this coming supplement, and you'll vote it a huge success. Line up, boys, for the kick-off!

A BIKE FOR THREE WORDS!

Reference must be made to our simple competition—which, by the way, is going great guns—and its wonderful weekly prize. An £8 bicycle is not a prize to be sneered at. Every week your Editor is offering one of these handsome "jiggers" free. Think of it, chums, for three words one of these bikes may be yours. There should be very little hesitation on your part in filling up the coupon on page 6—it costs you nothing except the three-ha'penny stamp to cover postage. For simplicity, too, the MAGNET "Characters" Competition requires a lot of beating—a glance at the winning line at the foot of these columns will indicate how easy it is. 'Nuff said!

THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

Now is the time to trot along to your newsagents and secure a copy of this world famous book. There's bound to be a rush for it—360 pages of real value such as your editor offers for the modest price of six shillings is a bargain indeed, and where there are bargains there are crowds. Most of you are familiar with the "Holiday Annual" and its wonderful attractions. Besides containing long complete stories of your favourite characters—Harry Wharton & Co., Tom Merry & Co., and Jimmy Silver & Co.—the Annual abounds in stirring stories of adventure on land and sea, plays, poems, tricks, gorgeous coloured plates, and splendid photogravures, etc.

GLASGOW READER WINS A BICYCLE THIS WEEK!

Result of "Hurree Singh" Characters Competition!

In this competition a prize of a Gent's "Royal Enfield"
Bicycle has been awarded to:

HARRY STANLEY HILL,
3, Beechmount Cotts,
Yoker Road,

Scotstoun, W.,
GLASGOW,

for the following line:

"Sometimes Needs Interpreter!"

Three words for an £8 bicycle, chums! The offer is repeated this week—you'll find full particulars on page 6.
Go in and win!

Beneath a scorching sun our Greyfriars chums trudge their weary way through the vast Sahara—an endless vista of sand and rocks, bushes shrivelled by the intense heat, and an occasional clump of stately palms. During the day the wild beasts of this illimitable desert dog their footsteps; at night their dismal howls break in upon the slumbers of Harry Wharton & Co. But these plucky Removites still trudge on towards their goal, scorning to retreat from the stealthy—



A Magnificent New
Long Complete
Story of Harry
Wharton & Co.,
describing their
breathless adven-
tures in the heart
of the Sahara.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Oasis in the Sahara!

A DOZEN palm trees, rearing tall, graceful heads against the blue. A straggle of scrubby bush, scorched by the heat. A tiny spring, welling up, glistening among the sand particles. And round and about, on all sides, the Sahara—the endless, illimitable desert!

By the palm trees, a little tent, and eight camels stretched on the earth, at rest.

It was the camp of Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove, far enough now from Greyfriars.

Many a long hundred miles lay between the Famous Five and the old school they had left behind.

Harry Wharton stepped out of the tent, rubbing his eyes. The sun had leaped up in the east—it was a new day in the desert. The last howling hyena had retreated, darkness rolled away like a curtain that is drawn. Harry stood before the tent and looked round him. North, south, east and west the view was the same—sandy flats that stretched on to the horizon, seemingly endless. No sign of life, no wandering Arab horseman, not even a bird on the wing. In all that vast expanse all was silent and still as in death, save in the camp of the Greyfriars juniors at the tiny oasis.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was Bob Cherry's voice. "Wake up, you slackers!"

Johnny Bull and Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came out of the tent. Billy Bunter did not come out. His resonant snore was still heard. Bunter hated the desert and everything connected with it. But it had one advantage—there was no rising-bell in the Sahara! Billy Bunter snored on contentedly.

"Nothing in sight," said Johnny Bull, staring round at the sandy plain. "I heard a lion a good many times during the night. Lucky he gave us a miss."

"The luckfulness was terrific," remarked Hurree Singh, "and still more lucky that the esteemed and execrable Mustapha ben Mohammed has not found us."

"I fancy we're safe enough here from the jolly old sheik," said Frank Nugent. "Looking for anybody in this desert must be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"Only we're going to look for him soon," said Bob. "That's when the circus will begin."

"No good meeting troubles half-way," said Frank cheerily. "What about brekker?"

"Bunter!" Bob shouted into the tent.

"Bunter!"

"Groogh!"

"Turn out!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Brekker!" roared Bob.

"Mmmmm!" mumbled Bunter. Even the magic word brekker failed to rouse him. He turned over and slumbered again.

"The fat duffer!" growled Bob. "If he hadn't been a born idiot he wouldn't have landed himself on us for this trip. And now we're here, the born dummy wants to take it easy. I'll give him easy, Bunter!"

"Mmmmm!"

"Wake up!"

"Groogh! Beast!"

"Are you coming out of that?"

"Mmmmm!"

Bob Cherry reached into the tent. He grasped hold of a plump ankle and pulled. There was a roar from within.

"Yaroo! Leggo!"

"Come out!"

"Sha'n't!" yelled Bunter.

"Well, your jolly old ankle's coming," said Bob. "You can please yourself about coming along with it."

"Ow! Beast!"

Bob Cherry tugged at the ankle. It came out of the tent. Needless to say, the rest of William George Bunter followed it. The Owl of Greyfriars landed in a sprawling heap before the tent, yelling.

"Ow! Beast! I'll jolly well lick you, Bob Cherry!"

"Go it!" chuckled Bob.

"I say, you fellows, if you think I'm going to stand this you're jolly well mistaken!" roared Billy Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "We're starting early. Don't you want to feed before you start?"

"I don't want to start."

"Do you want to be left behind, fat-head?"

"I want to get back to Biskra, and I don't want to start for a couple of hours yet," hooted Bunter.

"Well, we're not going back to Biskra, and we're going to start under half an hour," said the captain of the Remove. "Please yourself about grubbing first."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter picked himself up and yawned, and rubbed his eyes, and jammed his spectacles on his fat, little nose. He gave the Famous Five a glare of scornful reproach. According to Bunter, he was a deeply-injured person.

He had insisted upon joining the expedition into the desert, refusing to believe that there was any danger—till it was too late. Now it was clear even to Bunter's obtuse brain that the journey was a terribly perilous one. Bunter's idea was that they should head for Biskra at once, and get out of the desert at the earliest possible moment.

As the Famous Five had set out to make an attempt to rescue Major Cherry, now a prisoner in the hands of the desert sheik, Mustapha ben Mohammed, they were not likely to act on Bunter's suggestions. Bunter's comfort, and Bunter's safety, were secondary considerations to them. To Billy Bunter they loomed up as the most important considerations within the wide circle of the universe.

Billy Bunter and the Famous Five were not likely to agree on that subject. Fortunately, it did not matter whether Bunter agreed with the Famous Five or not.

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Bunter blinked round at the spacious desert and grunted. He would have given all the treasures of Africa to have exchanged it for the view from the pier at Blackpool.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't bother!" said Bob. His father's danger was ever present to Bob Cherry's mind, and it was telling a little on his good temper. He found it less easy than of old to bear with Billy Bunter's perpetual grousing.

"I say," howled Bunter, "let a fellow speak, can't you? I'm the only chap in this party with any sense in his head. Look here, I'll start as early as you like if you fellows will agree to head for Biskra."

"Cheese it!"

"We've had enough of it," said Bunter. "I know I have, at any rate. I don't want to see any more of dashed deserts than a fellow can see on the films at home. See?"

"Yes. Now dry up."

"As for rescuing your pater, Bob, that's all silly rot."

"Is it?" growled Bob.

"Yes, and you know it. As for Ali ben Yusuf, blow him. I never did like the chap at Greyfriars. The brute refused to cash a postal-order for me, I remember. He's only a beastly Arab, anyhow, and if the other beastly Arabs want to do him in, let 'em! That's what I say!"

"And that's about enough," remarked Frank Nugent.

"The enoughfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"If you fellows go looking for trouble with that thumping old sheik Mustapha you'll find it, bad," went on Bunter.

"That's very likely," assented Harry Wharton.

"The brute would think nothing of sticking the lot of you."

"We know that!"

"And me, too!" howled Bunter.

"Yes, yes; give us a rest!"

"You—you blithering idiot!" roared Bunter, in great indignation. "Do you think I want to be stuck?"

"If you weren't a born duffer, you'd be safe in Biskra now, with Hazel," said Nugent. "Now it's too late, so dry up."

"Let's go back at once—"

"Cheese it!"

"You—you rotters—"

Bob Cherry picked up a tent peg.

"Where will you have it, Bunter?" he asked.

"Beast!"

Bunter dodged the tent-peg, and relapsed into sulky silence. He was sulky, he was angry, he was alarmed for his precious skin. Nevertheless, his appetite was not affected, and he joined the Famous Five at breakfast, and for some time to come his plump jaws were too busy even for grousing.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Black Treachery!

"NOBLE gentlemen—"

It was the voice of Ibrahim, the guide, from the tent.

Ibrahim, the guide, had spent the night with his hands bound, and fastened to a cord that was tied to a peg.

The chums of Greyfriars had not stood on ceremony with the treacherous guide who had almost succeeded in betraying them into the hands of their enemies. They were taking no chances with Honest Ibrahim.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! We may as well let that rotter loose," said Bob, getting

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up from the sand. "I suppose he's to have some brekker."

Bob stepped into the tent, and released Honest Ibrahim.

The Arab guide salaamed effusively to the juniors as he emerged, smiling, with a flash of white teeth.

It did not seem to lie on Ibrahim's conscience that he had been detected in an act of the blackest treachery. Neither did he seem to resent, outwardly, at least, his unceremonious handling by the Greyfriars juniors. Rascal and traitor as they knew him to be, he seemed to be still seeking to ingratiate himself, and recover their good graces.

"Fine good morning, my noble gentlemen!" said Ibrahim, as he salaamed again.

Bunter blinked at him uneasily.

"I say, you fellows, you ought to kick that Arab brute out," he said. "You jolly well know he's only waiting for a chance to turn on us."

"My noble sir!" protested Ibrahim.

"Oh, shut up, you dashed nigger!" snapped Bunter.

"We know it well enough, Bunter," said Harry Wharton quietly. "But we shall take good care that he doesn't turn on us, and we haven't done with him yet."

"We could make him guide us back to Biskra, and chuck up this rotten expedition altogether!" suggested Bunter.

"Cheese it!"

"My noble gentlemen get breakfast," said Honest Ibrahim sorrowfully. "That is for Ibrahim. You trust Ibrahim; he do your business. Is not Ibrahim the slave of the noble English gentlemen? Ibrahim, him make coffee, yes."

"May as well," assented Bob. "I know you can make jolly good coffee."

"Ibrahim make best coffee in Algeria," said the Arab. "Ibrahim, him very clever fellow. Only honest guide in Algeria—all American and English gentlemen say so."

"Oh, cut the cackle, and get on with the coffee," grunted Johnny Bull. "You may as well make yourself useful, as we've got to let you worry us with your face."

"Yes, rather!"

"To hear is to obey, my fine gentlemen!"

Honest Ibrahim proceeded to light a little brazier and make the coffee. Harry Wharton kept his eyes on the Arab, while the other fellows devoted most of their attention to their breakfast.

In a very short time Ibrahim, smiling and salaaming, brought them the coffee, steaming hot in tiny cups, on a lacquer tray.

"Very fine good coffee, noble gentlemen," said Ibrahim. "You trust Ibrahim—he do your business."

"That smells good," said Bunter, reaching out for a cup.

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton.

Bunter snorted.

"I'm jolly well going to have some coffee, I suppose!" he roared. "Do you want all the coffee?"

"Hold on, you fat fool!"

"Rats!"

Wharton reached across, and knocked the little cup from Bunter's fat hand, as he was raising it to his lips. There was a yell from Bunter, as the hot coffee spouted over his knees.

"Whooooop!"

"What the thump!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Hold on, I tell you," said Harry Wharton. "Ibrahim, you may take one of these cups of coffee."

"Ow, ow, ow!" howled Bunter.

"My noble gentlemen, Ibrahim do not drink with his lordly masters," protested the guide. "Who is Ibrahim, that he should have so much honour?"

"Never mind about that," said Harry, his lips setting. "Take that cup of coffee at once, and drink it."

"Good heavens!" murmured Nugent, his face paling.

The juniors understood now what was in Wharton's mind. Only Billy Bunter, mopping his knees, did not heed.

"I'm wet!" howled Bunter. "I'm scalded! Ow! Wow! Wharton, you beast, I'll jolly well lick you for this! Ow!"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

"Ow, ow, wow!"

Wharton was on his feet now, his eyes fixed on the guide. Ibrahim was still smiling and making deprecatory gestures, but there was a gleam of alarm in his black eyes. His hand went, as if by instinct, to his girdle, where his knife had been. But no knife was there now. The juniors had taken good care to disarm the treacherous Arab.

Wharton picked up his rifle.

The other fellows watched him in silence, as he put the rifle to his shoulder, and levelled it full at the Arab.

Ibrahim shivered.

He was looking in the face of death, and he knew it. Wharton's eye gleamed along the levelled rifle at him.

"Drink that coffee!" said Harry.

"My noble master—" faltered Ibrahim.

"Take it at once, you villain!"

Ibrahim picked up the tiny coffee-cup, with dusky fingers that trembled.

"The villain!" breathed Bob Cherry. "Poison!"

"I think so," said Harry.

"Pull the trigger," said Bob, between his teeth. "The reptile isn't fit to live."

"Let him drink the coffee of his own making," said the captain of the Remove grimly.

Ibrahim's knees knocked together in his baggy and brilliant blue trousers. His dusky face was growing grey in colour.

"Noble master—"

"Drink it!"

The cup fell from Ibrahim's hand, and was shattered in pieces on the sandy earth. The guide fell on his knees.

"Mercy!" he gasped.

"I say, you fellows, what's the row? Gimme some of that coffee!" howled Bunter.

"You can have all you like!" snapped Bob. "It's poisoned."

"What?" yelled Bunter.

He jerked back his fat hand, as if the coffee-cup had become suddenly red-hot.

Ibrahim, on his knees in the sand, raised his dusky hands in beseeching appeal. Nugent quietly poured away the remainder of the coffee into the sand. The rifle in Wharton's hands bore full upon the treacherous guide, and Harry was strongly tempted to pull the trigger. Had he done so, not a hand among his comrades would have been raised to deter him—even Nugent's kind, good-natured face was hard and merciless. The wretched Arab saw death before him, and he bowed his turbaned head.

"Allah is Allah!" he murmured. "There is no God but One God, and Mahomet is his Prophet! Son of a thousand dogs, you may send Ibrahim to the houris in Paradise—Gehenna waits for you and all unbelievers!"

And he bowed his head to death.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

HARRY WHARTON paused. It was a pause full of terror for the wretched miscreant, kneeling in the sand before the rifle.

Wharton lowered the weapon at last. He was in the desert now, and he had learned some of the ways of the desert. In the eyes of the desert Arab, mercy to a defeated enemy would seem nothing but foolish weakness. In Wharton's place, Ibrahim would have pulled the trigger without the hesitation of a moment. But the Greyfriars junior was made of different stuff.

"After all, we need the scoundrel," said Harry. "Without him, we cannot find our way to Mustapha ben Mohammed's encampment."

Ibrahim looked up. "I will guide noble English gentlemen—I will fight for my generous master—I am Ibrahim, the honest guide of—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Wharton, in disgust. "We must keep an eye on the brute, you fellows, till we can get rid of him."

"Get out, you rotter!" growled Johnny Bull.

Honest Ibrahim rose to his feet. He understood that his life was spared; and his feeling, probably, was one of contemptuous wonder.

He backed away, salaaming as he went.

"Pack up the tent!" called out Bob Cherry. "The brute may as well make himself useful."

"Ibrahim serve his noble masters till him die!" said the guide.

"Hold your tongue!"

Ibrahim held his tongue, and proceeded to take down the tent, and pack up the camping materials on the baggage-camels. In a very short time he was his smiling, polite, effusive self again. Even after his latest act of black treachery, he did not seem to have given up the hope

of ingratiating himself with his "fine gentlemen."

While Ibrahim was packing the camels, Harry Wharton & Co. held a brief council of war.

Billy Bunter sat and listened, with a frowning brow.

To Bunter's mind it was all utter "rot."

The party had escaped the trap set for them by their treacherous guide—they had escaped being delivered into the hands of the sheik. They had a chance of getting away to safety; and it seemed to Bunter crass folly not to take advantage of it. To seek for Major Cherry and Ali ben Yusef in the midst of the savage Arabs of the desert, seemed to Billy Bunter sheer madness. It was going to hunt for the danger they had already narrowly escaped.

Harry Wharton & Co. saw that quite as clearly as Bunter—more clearly, perhaps. But there was no faltering among them. They knew that they were taking their lives in their hands, in the attempt to rescue Bob's father from the sheik. They knew how heavily the chances were against them. But Bob was determined to save his father or die in the attempt; and his comrades would never have dreamed of deserting him.

The time for hesitation was past. It only remained for the chums of Greyfriars to lay their plans as cautiously as they could, and trust to fortune for the rest.

Harry Wharton called to Ibrahim at last.

The Arab came up, smiling and salaaming. Looking at him, it was difficult to believe what implacable treachery lay behind the handsome, dusky, smiling face. But the Greyfriars juniors quite understood "Honest" Ibrahim by this time. In Biskra and the holiday towns of Algeria, he was a lying, persistent, cheating guide—in the desert he was a primitive Arab, prepared to cut the throat of friend or foe for a few francs.

"Fine gentlemen want Ibrahim?" he asked. "You trust Ibrahim—he do your business."

The Arab really seemed to have forgotten the incident of the poisoned coffee.

The Famous Five, indeed, did not feel towards him, as they would have felt towards an European for such an offence. Ibrahim, the child of the sun and the desert, in his turban fastened by a false ruby, his dingy gold-braided jacket, his brilliant blue trousers and yellow boots, was hard to take seriously at all.

"Listen to me, Ibrahim," said Wharton quietly. "You know that we left Biskra to find Major Cherry, who is Mustapha ben Mohammed's prisoner somewhere in the desert."

"Ibrahim, him know."

"You know where to find the encampment?"

"Know fine."

"You are going to guide us there."

The Arab's black eyes glimmered.

"Ibrahim, him guide! Ibrahim only honest guide in Algeria."

"I know what you are thinking," went on the Greyfriars junior, in the same quiet tone. "You think you will have a chance of handing us over to Mustapha, after all, and getting hold of the bribe he has offered you to deliver us into his hands. You can cut that out. You may have a chance, I know. We're risking it. But at the first sign of treachery, you will be a dead man!"

"Ibrahim no could betray noble gentlemen," said the Arab. "Ibrahim, him faithful and honest. What you think? Bon garcon, mais oui."

"How far is Mustapha's camp from here?"

"One day."

"Then we can reach it by nightfall?"

"Oh, yes! Yes!"

"We've got to get in sight of the place, without being seen by Mustapha's men," said Harry.

"No possible."

"You must make it possible, somehow," said the captain of the Remove grimly.

"If we are seen and attacked you will get the first bullet through your head."

Ibrahim made a grimace.



"Let him drink the coffee of his own making," said Harry Wharton, levelling his rifle at the shrinking guide. Ibrahim's knees knocked together; his dusky face grew grey in colour. "Noble master—" he began. "Drink it!" commanded Wharton sternly. The cup fell from Ibrahim's hand, and he dropped on to his knees. "Mercy!" he gasped. (See Chapter 2.)

6 LOOK OUT FOR THE "FISHER T. FISH" COMPETITION RESULT NEXT WEEK!

"Now think, Ibrahim show encampment to noble gentlemen from a hill, and desert Arab no see fine gentlemen."
 "I thought you could manage it," assented Wharton. "We know quite well, Ibrahim, that we are very likely going to our deaths—and from that you can understand that we shan't deal gently with you if you play any tricks. When we've sighted Mustapha's encampment, we shall have done with you."
 "Then Ibrahim, him go?" asked the Arab.

Johnny Bull gave an angry snort. "To warn Mustapha that we're at hand. No jolly feat!"

"Ibrahim swear—"
 "Cheese it!" growled Johnny. "We shall have to leave you safe somewhere," said Harry. "We shall leave you with Bunter. If we do not rejoin you, you will know that we have been killed, and you will take Bunter back to Biskra. I shall give you a letter to Mr. Hazeldene at Biskra, asking him to hand you a thousand francs if you bring Bunter back safely. I have left money in his charge, and you will be paid."

"Ibrahim understand."
 The Arab gazed curiously at the juniors. His belief was obvious that they were going to their death. That little circumstance did not trouble Ibrahim.

What troubled him was that he was going to lose Mustapha's promised bribe for handing them over to death.

"That's all," said Harry. "I depend on you to keep us out of sight of the Arabs till we're ready to act. You had better do so, because your life depends on it."

"Ibrahim know."
 "Now we're getting on, then."
 "I say, you fellows—"
 "Get on your camel, Bunter."
 The Owl of the Remove blinked angrily at Wharton.

"Look here, for the last time—"
 "For the last time, shut up!"
 "You fellows can chuck away your lives if you like!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "My life's of some value, see?"

"Blessed if I see it," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"
 "We're doing the best we can for you, Bunter," said Harry patiently. "You have a chance, at least, of getting back safe, if we—if anything happens to us."

"That's all very well. Pretty selfish and inconsiderate of you, I think, to rely on that Arab thief to take me back to Biskra. Suppose something happens to me? I'm not thinking of myself," added Bunter loftily. "I've got pluck, I hope. But what about Marjorie?"

"Marjorie?" repeated Wharton. "Yes; what would she feel like if anything happened to me?" said Bunter. "You know she's rather spooney in my direction—Here, Bob Cherry, you beast, keep off! Yoop! Wharrer you kicking a chap for? Ow!"

Bob Cherry did not explain what he was kicking a chap for. But he kicked hard.

Billy Bunter made a rush for his camel.

He clambered on the kneeling animal, and the camel lurched to his feet, lifting Bunter out of reach.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter.

"Let's get off!" growled Bob.

And the Greyfriars party turned their backs on the oasis.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Mirage in the Desert!

THE sun was high in the heavens now—the heat of the tropical day was burning down upon the Sahara.

Behind the camel-riders, the palms of the oasis sunk below the horizon of scorching sand.

Unbroken desert lay around them, glistening sand-particles kicked up under the hoofs of the camels. A light wind rose, but it did not bring coolness—it was hot as the breath of a furnace.

The camels plodded on patiently—the riders, under their pith helmets, perspired in the heat.

Ibrahim ran with the party, urging on the baggage-camels, active and untiring, seemingly impervious to heat.

Half a mile after mile glided under the hoofs of the camels, and the running feet of Honest Ibrahim.

How the Arab knew the route, in the seemingly trackless desert, was a puzzle to the juniors. Doubtless there were landmarks visible only to the practised eye of the son of the desert.

Solitary, fearfully solitary, as the desert looked, there were not wanting evidences that other travellers had passed before them.

White bones of dead camels bleached in the sun, on the burning sand, relics of old caravans that had passed. Once the juniors caught sight of a grinning skull half buried in the sand.

But for these ghastly relics, the juniors might almost have believed that they were the last surviving inhabitants in a lost world, so deep was the silence and the solitude.

And yet they felt the fascination of the great spaces—of the rough open-air life of primitive man. There was something within them that answered to the call of the desert.

Higher rose the sun, hotter grew the clear air, and the light wind seemed edged with flame as it fanned their cheeks.

"I say, you fellows!" hooted Bunter suddenly.

Wharton glanced at him. "I knew you were only pulling my leg, you beasts," said Bunter, with an angry blink. "I knew it was only an excursion, and we were getting to a town. Yah!"

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Wharton, wondering whether the sun had affected Bunter's senses.

"You jolly well know what I mean!" snorted Bunter. "Look here, turn to the left a bit, and let's get to the town and get some grub there. I'm fed-up with your measly rations, I can tell you."

"He's wandering in his mind," said Nugent.

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"Sunstroke, I suppose," said Bob. "We—what—Hullo, hallo, hallo! He's right! Look!"

"My hat!"

Bunter had raised a fat hand to point towards the left of the route the Greyfriars party were following.

The juniors halted their camels. It was a strange scene that their eyes rested upon—a startling scene, in the heart of the desert they had believed solitary and untrodden.

Less than a mile away, as it seemed, rose the high white walls of a city.

They could see the gates, wide open, and moving figures that passed in and out of an ancient embattled gateway. Flat garden roofs, soaring towers and glistening minarets, clustered before their eyes.

"Great Scott!" breathed Wharton.

He gazed in astonishment, incredulously, at the scene. He knew that he was looking upon one of the strange old cities of the Sahara—one of the walled Arab cities accessible only by caravan across great spaces of desert.

He turned towards Ibrahim.

The Arab guide had halted, with the rest, and was standing looking calmly towards the shining city in the sunlight.

"Ibrahim!" rapped out Harry. He dropped his hand to his rifle. His first thought was that the Arab had tricked him, and was guiding him to the nearest town instead of towards the desert encampment of Mustapha ben Mohammed and Bou Saoud.

"Noble gentlemen!"

"What town is that?"

"El Geb," said the Arab.

"You know the place?"

"Ibrahim know."

"And what are you taking us there for?" demanded Wharton, his brows setting grimly. "What trickery is this?"

Ibrahim grinned and salaamed.

"No take noble gentlemen to El Geb," he said, "No could take. Hundred and hundred miles to El Geb."

"What the thump do you mean?" demanded Bob Cherry savagely. "The place isn't a mile away. Why, I can make out the watchman on the walls."

Ibrahim's grin grew wider.

"Mirage!" he said.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Mirage! No real."

"Oh!" ejaculated the juniors together.

They had heard, of course, of the mirage in the desert—of the strange pictures of distant places seen reflected on the burning air. They stared again towards the dream city. It was hard, almost impossible to believe, that it was a vision of a city far distant—that it had no reality.

"Rot!" roared Bunter. "Don't talk rubbish to me about mirages! Look here, you fellows, that's a civilised town, and we're going into it. There's a French resident in all these Sahara towns, so I shall be safe there all right. I can tell you I'm going there. You fellows can keep on if you like."

"Don't be an ass, Bunter. It's a mirage!"

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter turned his camel towards the visionary city.

"Stop, you silly ass!" roared Bob. "Do you want to get lost in the desert by yourself?"

"Rats!"

"Hm keep on," said Ibrahim. "Few minutes, and him see no more."

"Oh!" said Bob. He understood that the mirage would be visible only from a particular point, and that at a short distance it would vanish into nothingness.

"Follow the silly duffer," said Harry



In an instant Ibrahim rolled away the full length of the rope from the tent peg. The lion would have clutched him as he rolled, but at the same time Bob Cherry struck with the axe. So forceful was the blow, that the axe flew from his grasp, and the keen edge of the blade remained in the lion's skull. (See Chapter 6.)

impatiently. "We sha'n't lose much time."

The party followed Bunter.

Quite convinced that it was a real city he was staring at, Billy Bunter urged on his camel, determined not to be stopped. He was yearning to find himself safe under a roof again.

His camel trotted on swiftly over the sand, and it seemed to Bunter that the city was drawing nearer and clearer.

Then, all of a sudden, it vanished.

Bunter jumped.

He had passed out of the zone from which the mirage was visible, and the Sahara city had vanished from his sight—walls, and towers, garden roofs and minarets, were gone as if by magic, and in their place lay the dreary waste of scorching sand.

"Wha-a-at!" stammered Bunter.

He pulled in his camel and took off his big spectacles, and rubbed them, and jammed them on his fat little nose again. He could not believe his eyes or his spectacles.

But the city was gone! Only the waste of sand, scorching under the sun, met Bunter's eager eyes.

"Oh dear!"

Bob Cherry came trotting up on his camel.

"Well, you fat duffer, are you satisfied now?" he asked.

"It—it—it was only a rotten mirage!" groaned Bunter. "Oh dear, what a rotten swindle! Oh crumbs!"

"Come on, fathead!"

Billy Bunter dispiritedly turned his camel back.

The Greyfriars party resumed their route. A few minutes later Ibrahim raised a dusky finger to point.

"Him come back," he said.

The juniors looked. There was the city again—walls and towers and minarets shining in the sun. Billy Bunter blinked at it, and grunted, and shook his fist at it.

A few minutes later, as the camels trotted swiftly on, the mirage was lost again, and the sandy desert stretched unbroken on all sides.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Lion!

IT was past noon when Harry Wharton & Co. rode into a rocky valley in a range of low hills that broke the sandy flat of the desert. It was time to halt and rest, and the juniors were glad to get into the shade of high rocks. The rocks were scorching to the touch, but they afforded a little shade from the blazing sun. Gladly enough the Greyfriars party dismounted from their camels.

Billy Bunter, having devoured his rations and asked for more, rolled on a rug in a shady nook, and was soon fast asleep. Harry Wharton & Co. decided to follow his example. There was nothing to be done till the burning heat of midday had passed, and that night, too, they were not likely to sleep. Nightfall had to see them within touch of the

encampment of Mustapha ben Moham-med.

Ibrahim blinked sorrowfully at the juniors as they secured him.

"Fine gentlemen no trust Ibrahim," he said.

The juniors did not trouble to reply to that remark.

Honest Ibrahim's hands were secured behind him, and the end of the rope was fastened to a tent-peg jammed in a crevice of the rocky soil. The Arab submitted with Oriental resignation and rolled his burnous around him, and stretched himself in the shadiest spot he could find. His calm, untroubled face and regular breathing soon showed that he was asleep.

It was not so easy for the Famous Five to sleep.

The climax of the expedition was at hand now. A few hours more and they would be in danger, from which, they knew, escape was unlikely. The thought did not shake their nerve. They had long ago made up their minds to it. But it made them very serious and subdued. When the struggle came with the sheik all the odds were against them, and well they knew that they had no mercy to expect from the robber Arab of the Sahara if they fell into his power. They thought of it quietly as they sat in the shadow of the hot rocks; but it was necessary to sleep, to refresh themselves for what was to come, and they closed their eyes at last and slumbered.

Johnny Bull remained awake to watch. It was necessary to keep watch and ward. So near to the enemy, it was possible that at any moment some savage horseman might come riding into sight.

But the heat and the silence made Johnny drowsy at last, and he nodded as he sat with his rifle across his knees.

There was a faint sound of movement among the rocks near at hand, but Johnny Bull did not observe it. A great head and a tawny mane rose above the rocks, and two gleaming eyes looked at the camp. A full-grown African lion crouched within the distance of a spring. Doubtless the arrival of the party had disturbed the lion in his hidden lair among the rocks.

Crouching there, the lion watched the camp for long minutes, his hungry, savage eyes lingering on the sleeping juniors, the sleeping Arab, the recumbent camels. Johnny Bull, nodding over his rifle, did not see the fierce beast. But there was an uneasy stirring among the tethered camels. They stirred and grunted and lurched up, straining at their tether, and the commotion startled Johnny into watchfulness. He looked up and jumped to his feet.

"What—"

He was interrupted by a low, deep, blood-curdling growl. The junior stared about him.

Then he saw the lion.

Crouching on the rocks at a short distance, the savage animal glared at him.

"Oh, my hat! Wake up, you chaps!" yelled Johnny Bull.

The juniors were on their feet in a moment.

"What—"

"A lion! Look!"

A loud roar reverberated among the rocks. It echoed back like thunder from the hollows of the hills. The lion was on his feet now, lashing his sides with his tail.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Look out!"

"I say, you fellows—"

The juniors did not heed Bunter. The fat Owl of the Remove sat up and yawned, and rubbed his eyes.

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"I say, was that thunder?" he asked drowsily.

"It's a lion!"

"Yaroooo!"

Billy Bunter bounded to his feet. He gave the lion one terrified blink, and started scrambling away frantically over the rough rocks. A deeper roar echoed in the hills.

A sinuous body launched itself through the air. It dropped within six feet of the Greyfriars juniors.

"Shoot!" shouted Harry.

Five rifles rang out, the reports almost blended into one. A fearful roar from the lion answered.

There was blood on his hide as he stood growling and clawing, and he seemed to be daunted. Roar after roar pealed from his powerful throat as he clawed at the ground.

The camels were almost frantic with terror, straining to tear away from the tether-ropes. Tethered as they were, they were at the lion's mercy if he came nearer. Harry Wharton, his rifle still at his shoulder, his eyes steadily on the savage beast before him, called out to Bob Cherry without turning his head.

"Get the camels away, Bob. Quick! If we lose them we're done for."

"Noble gentlemen—" came a howl from Ibrahim.

But the juniors were deaf to Ibrahim at that terrible moment. They did not remember that the Arab was tied up; indeed, they did not remember him at all.

The lion, daunted by his hot reception, stood growling and roaring and clawing the ground, lashing his sides with his tail, and working himself to fury. Four of the party, though with pale faces, fronted him steadily, while Bob Cherry hurried to get the camels out of the reach of another spring.

With a clatter and a din of terrified snorting, the group of camels trampled away, Bob Cherry holding them together. The lion's savage eyes turned after them.

Crack, crack, crack!

The rifles spurted again. Twice the savage brute was struck, and his attention was turned on Harry Wharton & Co. once more. He growled savagely and sprang.

In an instant the four juniors were scattering from the leap.

But for the fact that the beast was wounded, it was doubtful whether one at least of them would not have fallen a victim to the spring. As it was, they scrambled on the rocks in safety, and the lion dropped short, roaring with pain and rage.

Wharton gave a hurried glance after the camels. Bob Cherry was holding them together with the ropes, but they were out of hand and trampling away wildly. But they were out of reach of the lion, at all events.

"Look out, Harry!"

The wounded brute was clambering after Wharton over the rough, jutting rocks.

Wharton leaped across a crevice—a wide gap between two big rocks—of a width he would scarcely have attempted at any other moment. But he landed safely, and the lion stopped on the near side, roaring furiously. Blood drenched his tough hide, and he was feeling the loss of it, otherwise it would have been an easy spring for the brute, and the captain of the Remove would have been in his tearing claws.

Johnny Bull fired from another quarter, and the bullet struck the lion in the flank, calling his attention from Wharton again.

He spun round and made a furious rush

at Johnny, but that active youth was already scrambling out of reach, and a bullet from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's rifle was buried in the brute's neck, again causing him to whirl round, roaring with rage.

Like thunder the roaring echoed, rattling back from the hills in peal after peal.

Shot after shot rang out, and the lion rushed to and fro, but the loss of blood was telling upon him severely, and the little juniors were able to scramble out of his reach in turn. Had the brute concentrated his whole attention upon one, doubtless that one would have fallen a victim, but the attack repeated from different directions confused him, and he wasted his waning strength in frantic rushing after one and then another of the four.

And then suddenly his bloodshot eyes fell on Ibrahim.

The guide, his hands bound, secured by the rope to the tent-peg, had lain perfectly still and silent, only his wide-open, frightened eyes giving a sign of life. He was helpless, at the lion's mercy if the beast turned on him, and his only chance was to escape attention; and though his dusky face was grey with fear, he had nerve enough to remain motionless.

But as the lion's wild eyes turned on him, Ibrahim realised that he was lost, and he gave a faint moan of horror.

With a shambling run, dropping blood on the rocks at every step, the lion reached him, and his fearful claw was laid on the breast of the shrinking Arab.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Fight for Life!

BOB CHERRY, rifle in hand, came running back to the camp. He had succeeded in hitching the rope on a point of rock and knotting it there, and the bunch of camels, still snorting and trampling with affright, were safe from bolting. Bob ran desperately back to the help of his comrades, fearful of what might have happened during the few minutes of his absence.

"Look out, Bob!" shouted Nugent, from a high rock.

"You fellows safe?" panted Bob.

"Yes—yes; keep clear of the brute!"

Bob stopped.

"He's got Ibrahim!" called out Johnny Bull. "We're all right, and Bunter's bolted. Keep clear."

"Ibrahim!" muttered Bob.

He looked at the wretched Arab, and raised his rifle, and lowered it again. The lion, crouching over the scared man, half hid Ibrahim from view; it was impossible to fire without an equal chance of hitting the man instead of the brute. Wharton came down the rocks and joined Bob Cherry, and his chums followed him, breathless and panting.

The lion, crouching over the Arab, glared at them across the motionless man, growling horribly, with foam-flecked jaws.

Only that one moan of terror had come from Ibrahim. Now he lay still and silent, and the juniors wondered whether he had fainted, or indeed perhaps died of fright.

"He's done for," muttered Nugent, with white lips.

"Shoot, and chance it," said Johnny Bull. "Better he killed by a bullet than by those claws."

"Yes; but—"

The juniors hesitated. Ibrahim had been a traitor to them; only that morning they had escaped his last and

blackest act of treachery. But it was terrible to see him thus. Traitor and cheat and thief as he was, he was a human being, and the Greyfriars juniors would have risked much to save him.

They drew closer to the spot, their rifles ready in case the lion should turn on them again. But the weakened brute remained where he was, growling ferociously, his claw extended over the Arab. Possibly he was deceived by the man's passive stillness, and believed him dead—the lion will not tear a dead body like a hyena or a jackal. But as they drew closer, the juniors observed Ibrahim's face, which was turned towards them, and his eyes wide open and dilated, gazing at them with a dumb, beseeching appeal. He was not dead—he had not even fainted—all his senses were on the alert, though it was easy to read in his pallid face that he despaired.

His treachery, his endless rascality, the juniors forgot in those terrible moments. They remembered only that he was a man to be saved at any risk or danger.

But it was not easy to see what was to be done. Even if a volley finished the lion, it was probable that in his death-throes the claws would tear the wretched Arab to pieces.

Bob Cherry set his teeth. "We've got to save him!" he muttered. His sunburnt face was white. "We've got to save him somehow." "Shoot!" muttered Johnny Bull. "Shoot, and chance it! It's better for the man."

"Hold on a minute," said Bob. He hurried to the starved camel-loads. He caught up an axe and came running back.

"You fellows stand ready to fire," he muttered. "I'm going to chance it."

"Bob—"

"You sha'n't—for that brute—" "Stand ready!" answered Bob. And he strode towards the crouching lion, axe in hand. His comrades watched him breathlessly.

The lion glared and growled as the junior came at him, axe in hand. There was a pool of blood on the rocks where the lion crouched, thickening every

moment; he was already hard hit. The huge brute was weakening; but his aspect was terrible as he glared at the junior, his eyes blazing like fire. Bob Cherry's heart beat fast; but he did not pause. Only by drawing the savage monster away from the Arab could he save the man's life, and he was risking his own for it.

"Come on!" muttered Wharton. The four juniors followed Bob.

There was a deep, ferocious growl from the lion, as Bob came closer, and he rose from the stretched, motionless form of the Arab—the terrible claw that had rested on Ibrahim's breast was removed.

In an instant the Arab rolled away, the full length of the rope from the tent-peg.

The lion would have clutched him as he rolled, but at the same instant Bob Cherry struck with the axe.

So forceful was the blow, that the axe flew from Bob's hand, and the keen edge of the blade remained embedded in the lion's huge skull.

Crack-ack-ack-ack!

Four rifles spattered at the same moment, and every one of the bullets struck the lion, as Bob Cherry leaped back. A lashing claw missed Bob almost by a hair's breadth.

For a second it seemed to the juniors that the lion was upon them, tearing and clawing; but his strength was spent now, and he fell on the rocks, roaring and tearing at the earth in the throes of death.

They scudded back, to give the brute ample room, and from a distance fired again and again, pumping bullets into the writhing body. But Bob Cherry paused a moment to slash his knife across the rope that secured Ibrahim to the tent-peg, and to give the Arab a helping hand to run.

The roaring of the lion died away in feeble rumbling, and the huge body was stretched at last on the rocks—still and silent! Even in death his aspect was terrible, and the slayers regarded him with uneasy glances.

"He's done!" muttered Johnny Bull.

He wiped the sweat from his brow. "He's done! We—we've been lucky!"

Ibrahim sank on a rock, trembling in every dusky limb. His nerve had lasted him through his terrible ordeal; but now he was shaking like a leaf in the wind.

Bob Cherry dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Back up! All safe now."

He cut the Arab's hands loose. Ibrahim did not speak—he lifted his trembling hands, and sat with his head bowed into them, without a word. Harry Wharton looked round, remembering Bunter.

"Where's Bunter?"

"Goodness knows."

The Owl of the Remove had vanished.

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

"Bunter!" shouted Wharton.

Faintly from afar came a feeble howl:

"Help!"

"He was bound to tumble into trouble, of course," growled Johnny Bull. "What the thump's happened to him now? He took jolly good care to keep clear of the lion."

"Well, he wouldn't have been of much use, if he'd stayed," said Bob, with a faint grin. "Let's look for the duffer."

"Help!"

The juniors hurried in the direction of the howl.

A hundred yards away, they came in sight of an expansive pair of trousers, but for the moment they could see nothing more than that of William George Bunter. The Famous Five burst into a laugh.

Bunter was jammed between two rocks. In his hurried flight, he had striven to shove through a crevice—and the crevice had been a little too narrow for Bunter's extensive circumference.

Head first the Owl of the Remove had sought to jam himself through—and his head and shoulders and arms had gone through the opening; but his waist was caught fast—so fast, that Bunter could neither advance nor retreat. He was jammed in the fissure, and there he had remained during the juniors' struggle with the lion.



"All together!" grinned Bob Cherry. "A long pull and a strong pull, and a pull all together!" "Go it!" gasped Nugent. The Famous Five grasped Bunter's legs and pulled. There was a dismal howl from Bunter. "Ow! Careful, you dummies! Don't jerk my blessed legs off, you chumps! Ow! Ow! Yow!" "He's coming!" said Johnny Bull. "Heave-ho!" (See Chapter 6.)

His fat legs were wriggling spasmodically as the Famous Five came hurrying up over the rough rocks.

"Ow! Help! Keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, is that you?" squeaked Bunter. "I say, help a fellow out! I'm jammed."

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" howled Bunter. "Can't you help a fellow get loose, before that beastly lion comes up? Get a move on, you dummies—quick—quick!"

"The lion's done for, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It's all serene now."

"Sure?" gasped Bunter.

"Quite sure."

"Oh, good! I—I was just coming back to—to help, when I got stuck in this beastly place. Look here, are you going to help me out, or are you not going to help me out?" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All together!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"A long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together."

"The pullfulness is terrific."

"Go it!" gasped Nugent.

The Famous Five grasped Bunter's legs, and pulled. There was a dismal howl from Bunter.

"Ow! Careful, you dummies! Don't jerk my blessed legs off, you chumps! Jork! Ow! Wow!"

"He's coming!" gasped Johnny Bull.

Bunter came—slowly. The fissure was much too narrow for him—and Bunter must have used terrific efforts to jam himself so far in. He came out a good deal like a very tight cork from a bottle. Slowly, by degrees, Bunter was extracted—till he came unstuck, as it were, and then he shot out suddenly, and the Famous Five sprawled over the rocks with him. Bunter sat up and roared.

"Ow! Beasts!"

"Oh, my hat! Is that your way of thanking us, Bunter?" gasped Bob Cherry, as he picked himself up.

"Yah! Rotters!" howled Bunter.

Bunter seemed to feel a little damaged. And, as usual, he seemed to feel that his damages were the direct fault of the other fellows. He sat and rubbed his fat limbs, with an angry and indignant brow.

"Come on, Bunter!" said Harry.

"Yah! I'll come when I like!"

"When you like, then," assented Harry, and he turned back to the camp with his comrades.

"Beasts! Don't leave me here alone."

"Come on, then, fathead!"

"Yah!"

Bunter limped after the Famous Five, still grouching.

"What about Ibrahim?" said Bob suddenly. In looking for Bunter, the chums of Greyfriars had forgotten the guide for a few minutes.

"Oh, my hat! Bolted, of course," said Wharton. "We've seen the last of him, I suppose."

Johnny Bull gripped his rifle.

"Not if he's within rifle-shot!" he said grimly. And he ran back to the camp.

But Honest Ibrahim was not gone. He had had his chance, so eagerly watched for hitherto, of escaping, and getting clear of the Greyfriars party. But he had not taken it. He was still sitting on the rock, with his head bowed in his hands, when the juniors reached the camp.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Honest Ibrahim?

IBRAHIM looked up.

His dusky face was still pallid, and there was a strange gleam in his black eyes.

He rose to his feet, and salaamed to the juniors.

"You're not gone!" said Bob.

"Ibrahim no want go."

"You were keen enough on bolting, before," said Bob, puzzled. "I expected to find you gone—or trying it on, at any rate. Never mind."

"Ibrahim only live to serve him fine gentlemen."

"Bow-wow!"

"You no believe?"

"Of course not," said Harry Wharton impatiently. "Cut it out, Ibrahim! I don't know why you haven't bolted—"

"He couldn't have got out of range in the time," said Johnny Bull coolly, "and I'd have potted him like a rabbit if I'd seen him on the run."

"Same here," said Bob.

"The sameness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Ibrahim regarded the juniors with a strange look. Perhaps the terrible ordeal he had been through still had its effect on him; the juniors could see, at least, that there had been some change in the Arab. He was unharmed; only his burnous had been torn by the lion's claws. He knew that he owed his life to the juniors: he knew that Bob Cherry especially had run a fearful risk to save him; but the Greyfriars fellows did not expect that to have any effect on the treacherous Arab. It had not even crossed their minds that Honest Ibrahim could feel anything like gratitude.

Ibrahim pointed to the lion, stiff and stark under the blazing sun.

"Him kill Ibrahim," he said. "Five gentlemen save Ibrahim him life."

"That's all right," said Bob, staring at the Arab. "Don't pile it on, old man. We know what your chin-wag is worth, you know."

"Ibrahim, him die for noble gentlemen."

"I don't think!" grinned Nugent.

"You no believe!" said the Arab sorrowfully. And it seemed to the juniors that his manner was unusually earnest.

But they had had too much of Ibrahim's trickery and lying. They had not the slightest doubt that this was new trickery; that by an affectation of gratitude he hoped to throw them off their guard, and find an opportunity for further treachery.

"Believe!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I'd as soon believe a Prussian Hun or a rattlesnake. Chuck it, for goodness' sake."

Ibrahim's dusky hands rummaged in the recesses of his voluminous garments. The juniors watched him curiously, wondering what was coming. He drew a small metal tube from some hidden recess and held it out to Bob Cherry.

"What's that?" asked Bob.

"Him put in coffee."

"Oh!"

The juniors understood that this was the poison which the Arab had attempted to use that morning. Bob caught at the little tube, and threw it to the ground and crunched it under his heel.

"That's done with!" he grunted.

"Now you believe?" asked Ibrahim. Apparently the Arab had given up the poison as a proof of good faith.

"Oh, rot!"

Ibrahim bent down, and fumbled inside one of his yellow boots. The juniors had searched him for weapons when first they discovered his treachery and made him a prisoner. They were considerably

startled now to see him produce a keen dagger from a hidden recess in his foot. The sharp blade flashed in the sun as he lifted it.

"My hat!" ejaculated Johnny Bull, raising his rifle. "Put that down, you villain!"

"Lucky we kept him tied up," said Harry Wharton dryly. "If we'd left his hands loose, we can guess what he would have done."

Ibrahim held out the dagger by the blade.

"You take!" he said.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors stared at the Arab in wonder. They had not suspected that theascal had a concealed weapon, and his production of it staggered their doubts. They wondered whether it was possible, after all, that the treacherous African had some rag of decency somewhere in his nature, and really intended good faith.

"Oh, let him keep his sticker," said Bob Cherry. "He could have kept it if he'd liked, and we shall be done with him soon."

"Ibrahim never leave him noble gentlemen, till safe again in Biskra."

"We'll see," said Harry Wharton. "You can keep your knife; put it away."

"Better take it off him!" grunted Johnny Bull. "The fellow's a dashed reptile!"

"I fancy he means what he says," said Bob.

"You're rather an ass, old chap."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"All serene! But let him keep his carving-knife. He can't do us any damage with it, anyhow, now we know. Look here, it's time we got going."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come along, Bunter."

"I haven't finished my nap—"

"What?"

"That beastly lion woke me up!" complained Bunter. "I jolly well want a snooze before we go on—two hours, at least!"

"Take a dozen if you like," said Bob.

"We're going on. Lend a hand with the camels, Ibrahim."

"To hear is to obey!" murmured Ibrahim.

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

The baggage-camels were packed, and the juniors mounted to resume their journey, to an accompaniment of indignant grunts from William George Bunter. The stark body of the lion lay on the rocks, already buzzing with innumerable flies that seemed to have appeared from nowhere. As the juniors rode away, a hideous head appeared from a crevice of the rocks, and a hyena's gleaming eyes watched them go. Long howls echoed behind them, as another and another of the scavengers of the desert crept to the hideous feast.

By rocky waste and ravine, the Greyfriars party rode on through the low hills, ever southward. The sandy desert burst on their view again at last, stretching on and on before them into the regions of the sun. Far away to the southward, beyond the waste of burning sand, a dun line was seen on the horizon—it marked the range of hills where, as Ibrahim had told them, Mustapha ben Mohammed's encampment lay—far beyond the power of the French soldiers. That dun line on the horizon was the destination of the Greyfriars party. It was there that the desperate enterprise was to end, and they knew only too well how it was likely to end.

Ibrahim was driving the baggage-camels as usual. He left them for a few minutes, and trotted by the side of

Harry Wharton's camel, looking up at the junior's sunburnt face with eager, earnest eyes.

"You no trust Ibrahim?" he said.

Wharton shook his head.

"Ibrahim, him tell you, you go to death," said the Arab earnestly. "No Rouni could escape the sheik in the desert—pas possible. Here it is Mustapha ben Mohammed who reigns; his spearmen will find you, and the desert will be your grave. But even now, my fine gentlemen, Ibrahim will guide you back to Biskra, you give order. You listen to Honest Ibrahim, and turn back. N'est-ce pas?"

Wharton looked curiously at the Arab, but he shook his head again.

"I daresay you mean well, Ibrahim," he said. "If we don't trust you, you've only got yourself to blame. But we cannot turn back. We are here to rescue Major Cherry, if we can."

"Pas possible!"

"Very likely! But we're going to try."

"It is death."

Wharton did not answer that. He knew the peril as well as the Arab knew it.

"You no turn back?" asked Ibrahim.

"No."

"It is the will of Allah!" said the Arab. "You die under the spears of the Tahar, and Ibrahim serve you till you die."

And he ran after the baggage-camels loud, and plied his stick and voiced loud Arabic objurgations to urge them on.

There was a sudden shout from Bob Cherry.

"The Arabs!"

From a fold of the sand, at a little distance, a horseman had suddenly emerged, not a hundred yards from the camel-riders. They drew in their camels, and the horseman, at the same moment, dragged in his steed, so suddenly that it almost fell on its haunches. In the glare of the sunlight the juniors recognised the man—Suleiman, sand diver of Biskra—the spy of the sheik, with whom Ibrahim had plotted to deliver the juniors into the hands of Mustapha ben Mohammed.

"That scoundrel!" muttered Bob Cherry. "He's seen us—he knows us—but he shan't carry the news to Mustapha."

He lifted his rifle.

Suleiman whirled round his horse. Suddenly, unexpectedly, he had come on the Greyfriars party, and he had news now for the desert sheik, if he lived to carry it to Mustapha's encampment. Ibrahim called out hurriedly to the juniors.

"No shoot! You no shoot! You trust Ibrahim!"

He ran towards the mounted Arab, waving his hands. Suleiman reined in his horse, and waited for the guide to reach him.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Desert!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. sat on their camels and watched. What Ibrahim's intention was they did not know, but they more than suspected that it was some new treachery. But they realised that it was wiser to avoid shooting, if possible. The reports of the rifles, echoing far over the desert, might have reached many ears, now that they were drawing near to the headquarters of the sheik. To give the alarm to the fierce spearmen of the desert was to endanger what little chance they had of carrying out their enterprise successfully.



Ibrahim's sinewy hands were suddenly twined in the horseman's burnous, and Suleiman, utterly taken aback by that attack from the man he regarded as his accomplice, was dragged from the saddle. "Good man!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 8.)

"Wait!" called out Harry, as Johnny Bull put his rifle to his shoulder.

"All serene!" grunted Johnny Bull. "But that ratter's not going to get away. If we can make him a prisoner all the better; but he's not going to tell the sheik that we're here."

"A rifle-shot might tell him as much," said Bob Cherry. "Wait! I fancy Ibrahim means well."

Another grunt from Johnny Bull. He was not disposed to place the slightest faith in Honest Ibrahim.

But the juniors waited and watched. Ibrahim reached the mounted Arab, and entered into talk with him. Suleiman talked from his horse's back, keeping one suspicious eye on the Greyfriars party, ready to ride like the wind if they advanced towards him. Whether they knew or not that he was a spy of the sheik Mustapha, he did not know; but he was too cunning and wary to trust himself in their power.

But of Ibrahim, of course, he had no doubts. Ibrahim was his confederate in the plot to hand over the juniors to the sheik. He knew that Ibrahim had not yet kept the arrangement, and he listened while the guide volubly explained.

Ibrahim drew nearer to the horseman, and rested his hand familiarly on the saddle while he talked in rapid Arabic, and Suleiman answered him, still watching the juniors suspiciously.

What happened next came with dramatic suddenness.

Ibrahim's sinewy hands were suddenly twined in the horseman's burnous, and Suleiman, utterly taken off his guard

by that attack from the man he regarded as his accomplice, was dragged from the saddle.

He came down on the sand with a crash.

"Good man!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

There was a savage yell from Suleiman, and he struggled with the guide, who had planted a heavy knee on his chest, pinning him down on his back on the earth.

Something bright flashed in the sun in Ibrahim's dusky hand.

Before the watching juniors knew what was happening it had happened. A wild cry from Suleiman pealed over the sands, as Ibrahim's dagger was driven home.

"Good heavens!" gasped Wharton.

He stared on, blankly, scarcely able to believe in the tragedy that had so suddenly happened under his eyes. The juniors drove their camels forward.

Ibrahim sprang to his feet.

Crimson dripped from the dagger in his dusky hand. At his feet lay the sheik's spy, motionless, his wild and savage face turned up unseeing to the sun. With the swiftness of death in the desert, his fate had come upon Suleiman, the sand diver.

Ibrahim held up the dagger with a triumphant look.

"Fine gentlemen believe Ibrahim now," he said coolly. "Now you trust Honest Ibrahim, n'est ce pas?"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him. For the moment they could not find words to speak.

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They turned their eyes with horror from the savage, set face of Suleiman.

"You—you awful villain!" gasped Johnny Bull. "You've killed him!"

Ibrahim nodded.

"Him dead—c'est la mort!" he said composedly. "He was enemy of my noble gentlemen. Ibrahim kill him. Now he tell nothing to the sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed. He carry no news to Bou Saoud the Spahi. Have I done well?"

Evidently Ibrahim supposed that his deed had reinstated him in favour. It was a terrible proof of his good faith. Even Johnny Bull did not doubt further that the Arab guide was loyal to the fellows who had saved his life. He could not have proved his good faith more thoroughly; and he did not even understand the horror in the faces of the Greyfriars juniors.

Coolly the Arab stooped to wipe his dagger on the dead man's burnouse, and returned the weapon to its sheath.

"Good heavens!" muttered Nugent, sick with horror. "I—I suppose that's the way of the desert? Let's get out of this, for mercy's sake!"

"He means well—he knows no better," muttered Bob Cherry. "Half-devil and half-child—that's what somebody says."

Ibrahim stared at the juniors.

"You no believe now?" he asked. "Ecoutez! For the death of Suleiman, Ibrahim's life is not worth a centime in the desert. If the sheik should learn, Ibrahim him die by torture in the camp of the Tahar. But you no believe?"

"Yes, yes!" gasped Wharton. "But you should not have killed him. You should not—!" He broke off. He realised that it was impossible to make the Arab of the desert understand the European point of view.

"Now him no carry news," said Ibrahim.

"Yes, yes. But—a man's life—"

Ibrahim grinned.

"It is nothing—rien!" he said. "Suleiman, all the same. Him kill dancing-girl for the gold coins. Ibrahim kill him for the safety of him fine gentlemen. Nothing!"

"Let's get away!" muttered Nugent.

The Greyfriars juniors turned their camels, and Ibrahim trotted after the baggage animals in cheery spirits. He had proved his good faith now, and his "fine gentlemen" trusted him, and that was all Honest Ibrahim wanted. As to Suleiman, he did not give him another thought. The camels plodded on over the sands, Harry Wharton & Co. silent, with troubled faces; Ibrahim singing softly an Arab song. Behind them a hyena crept out of a lair, and growled hideously over the stark form of the sand diviner. The juniors did not turn their heads as they rode away.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Sheik!

"ROUMI dog!" Major Cherry looked up quietly.

The sheik stood before him.

Dimly the light of the sun penetrated into the recesses of a deep, gloomy cavern in the desert hills.

The rough rocky walls dropped with moisture, the stony ground showed little glimmering pools.

At the mouth of the cavern the hot blaze of the African sun fell in blinding light. But in those gloomy recesses all was shadowy, dim, and damp.

A leathern girdle secured the prisoner. From the girdle a strong hide rope ran, The Magnet Library.—No. 867.

fastened to an iron bracket in the rocky wall.

Such was the prison of the man who had fallen into the hands of Mustapha ben Mohammed.

At a little distance from the major another prisoner lay asleep on the rocky ground.

It was Ali ben Yusef, once a school-boy in the Remove at Greyfriars, and the comrade of Harry Wharton & Co.

The hapless boy, so long a prisoner in the hands of the usurper sheik, was very changed from his Greyfriars days. His handsome face was thin, and worn, and haggard. He slept fitfully, as he lay on the hard earth.

From the blinding light without the sheik stepped into the dim cave, and advanced towards the prisoners.

Mustapha ben Mohammed was a tall, powerful man. In his voluminous white garments he was not without a certain dignity. His hard, dark face, with its gleaming black eyes and prominent, aquiline nose, was arrogant in its expression. He looked what he was—the savage lord of life and death in the desert.

Major Cherry regarded him quietly. Long he had lain a prisoner in that desolate cave, close by the encampment of the Tahar Arabs, and he had no hope of rescue, only the faintest hope of escape. But the bronzed face of the old soldier was set and steady. His life was in the hands of the Sahara sheik; but it was not in Mustapha's power to make him tremble.

At the deep voice of the sheik Ali awakened. He rose to his feet and stooped gazing at the chief of the Tahar with eyes that gleamed with deadly animosity.

The sheik paid him no heed. His black, glittering eyes were fixed on the major.

"Roumi dog, son of a thousand pigs!" said the sheik in his deep voice, speaking in English, "have you come to your senses yet?"

Major Cherry shrugged his shoulders, and did not answer.

"Where is the Eye of Ahmed?"

"Where you will never find it," answered Major Cherry quietly. "You have asked me the question a score of times, Mustapha ben Mohammed. You will never receive another answer. Find the amulet of the Tahar if you can."

The sheik crossed his arms on his broad chest, and stood staring gloomily at the prisoner.

"I have offered you your life for it," he said.

"It is not mine to give."

"It is in your keeping."

"And it is in safety," said the major.

"Kill me, if you choose—that is in your power. But you will never wear the amulet of the Tahar, and without it you cannot reign in safety in your tribe. Kill Ali, the son of Yusef, and still you are not safe. There are others of the blood of Yusef, and the amulet will pass into their hands, and you will be driven from the place you hold. You know it! Your own tribesmen will turn upon you when a chief of the race of Yusef appears among them wearing the amulet of the Tahar. The Eye of Ahmed will yet bring you to your punishment."

The brown hand of Mustapha ben Mohammed groped for the scimitar that hung at his side.

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"You, at least, will never live to see it, son of a thousand dogs!" he exclaimed.

The bright, keen blade of Damascus flashed over the major's head.

Major Cherry did not stir.

His cold, calm eyes were fixed on the sheik, and not a tremor passed through him. Night and day he had lived in the shadow of death since his capture by Bou Saoud, the son of the sheik. If death had come at last, he was prepared to face it. There was a slightly scornful smile on the bronzed face looking at the enraged sheik.

Twice the glittering steel flashed over the major's unmoving head, and it seemed that the enraged tyrant of the desert would strike.

But Mustapha ben Mohammed lowered the scimitar.

"There are other ways," he said.

"When the diamond is in my hands you shall die by a slower death. But I know that the amulet is in Africa—you have hidden it in Biskra. It was your intention to find Ali, and to present him to the tribe of the Tahar wearing the amulet, as the son and successor of old Yusef who died in the desert—"

"Whom Bou Saoud murdered, at your orders," said the major.

The sheik did not heed.

"The amulet is therefore not far away," he said. "Did you not plan to keep Ali ben Yusef in England till he was of man's age, and then bring him to the tents of the Oued Tahar, with the amulet of Ahmed, and call on the tribe to obey him as their sheik?"

"It is true."

"And when my son brought him here a prisoner, you followed to save him, and you brought the amulet to Africa with you."

The major did not speak.

"You left it in Biskra when you came into the desert."

No answer.

"In the keeping of your son, perhaps," said the sheik, his glittering eyes seeking to read the thoughts of the major in the impassive, bronzed face. "Well, your son and his friends will soon be in my hands."

"Your power does not extend to the French jines," said the major scornfully. "The boldest of your spearmen would not dare to ride into Biskra."

"Your son and his friends have entered the desert. Ibrahim, the guide, carried them news of your capture, and they set out to seek you."

The major started.

"Ibrahim is in my pay, and he will hand over the schoolboys to me," went on the sheik. "Every hour now I look for Suleiman, the spy, to arrive, to tell me where my spearmen shall fall upon them."

The bronzed face of the prisoner paled a little.

"If the amulet is in your son's keeping, it will soon be in my hands, Roumi dog."

"It is not in his keeping," said the major.

"Is it hidden, then, in your house at Biskra? Fool! Every Arab servant in your house has taken my bribes, and is searching for the amulet."

"It will not be found in my house at Biskra."

"Be it so! But you will tell me where it is to be found, when your son stands a prisoner here, and a scimitar is raised to strike off his head."

The major's stern lip quivered.

"Even then I shall not speak," he said. "The sheik Yusef was my friend, and his son was in my care; and even to save my boy's life I cannot betray my trust."

(Continued on page 16.)



THE FAGS' MUSICAL FESTIVAL!

(To be held in the Second Form Dormitory at Midnight.)



Conductor: Mr. BARRY TONE
(Alias DICKY NUGENT.)

OPENING CHORUS:

"FROLIC SOME FAGS ARE WE!"

In which all the fag fraternity is requested to join.

After this—provided no master or prefect has arrived in the meantime to see what all the rumpus is about!—MASTER SAMMY BUNTER will sing

"THE GOBBLER'S SONG"
(from "Chu Chin Chow").

MASTER DICKY NUGENT will then render the well-known song,

"THAT OLD-FASHIONED BROTHER OF MINE!"

The audience is earnestly requested to refrain from throwing slippers or from giving the singer "socks"!

Next comes a concerted item by

THE MERRY MOUTH-ORGANISTS
and
THE TRIBE OF TIN WHISTLERS!

GEORGE GATTY (President of the Fags' Deep-Sea Fishing and Angling Society) will then recite:

"HOW I LANDED A TEN-POUND TAD-POLE!"

After which there will be a "Poker" Dance, invented about the time of Alfred the "Grate."

MASTER MYERS will then sing

"EVERYBODY AD-MYERS ME!"

Then comes the GRAND FINAL CHORUS by the entire strength of the Company. Mouth-organs, tin whistles, combs and tissue-paper, and other melodious instruments will combine in a deafening din!

Supplement 1.

ADMISSION FREE TO FAGS. Members of higher Forms must pay a bob for "bed sitting room" and a tanner for standing room. A limited number of fellows will be allowed to stand in the doorway for twopence.

Tea and Shrimps will be served—if the "Shrimps" like it—immediately after the Concert. There will be a collection on behalf of the Universal Lemon Aid Society. Hon. Sec., MR. LEMON.

The proceedings will terminate with

A GRAND UPROAR!

Including a Firework Display. Fireworks may be procured at the doors by those who have neglected to bring them in their pockets. There will be a grand, free distribution of toffee (home made). Lights Out, 2 a.m.

ROLL UP IN YOUR THOUSANDS!

DO WE SLEEP TOO MUCH?

An Interesting Discussion in which there is a sharp clashing of opinions.

BILLY BUNTER:

Sleep too much? Not likely! Why, I reckon we ought to be aloud to sleep at least twenty hours out of the twenty-four. The trouble is that we don't get half enuff sleep. A fellow should sleep in proportion to the amount he eats. His konstitution needs it, for it is during sleep that the digestive funkshuns are restored. Of course, a fellow with a feeble appytite duzzent require much slumber. The sistern of treating all fellows alike is a most pernicious one, and I shall tell the Head so when I suggest the above scheme to him. One man's meat is another man's poison; and what is a long, refreshing sleep to one fellow is a brief doze to another. The sooner there is a reform in this respect, the better!

BOB CHERRY:

Yes, I'm inclined to think that most of us sleep too much. The reason why we sometimes feel so drowsy in the morning is not because we haven't had sufficient sleep, but because we have slept ourselves stupid! To my mind, too much sleep is just as harmful as too little. It is difficult to lay down a hard-and-fast law on the subject, but I think eight hours' sleep per night is all-sufficient for the average healthy fellow.

LORD MAULEVERER:

No need to ask my views on this vital subject. My love of sleep is well known, and I believe I could sleep for twenty-four hours at a stretch and then not feel satisfied! The fact is, we don't get half enough sleep; and it's high time the authorities "woke up" to that fact!

DICKY NUGENT:

No, I'm afraid we don't get enuff sleep, but I admit it's our own fault, in my dorm we stay up the night, what with pillow-fights and midnight feasts and all sorts of larx and pranax and capers. We never dream of going to sleep as soon as our heads touch the pillow, and life would be a jolly tame affair if we did.

WILLIAM GOSLING:

"Does we get enough sleep? Well, I dunno about schoolboys; but speakin' for gate-porters—members of me own tribe, so to speak—I says most emphatic that we never gets enough sleep. No sooner do we rest our weary 'eads on the pillow than some late-comer starts a-ringin' an' a-clingin' of the gate-bell, an' we 'as to get up an' grope our way downstairs in the dark an' go an' unlock the gates. No sooner does we get back to bed than somebody else starts a-ringin' an' a-clingin'—an' so it goes on pretty near all the night through. I dare swear I 'aven't 'ad a night's unbroken sleep this last twenty year as ever was. An' wot I says is this ere. It's a cruel shame that a man of my age 'as got to keep wide-awake all day an' all night into the bargain!"

THE HEAD:

The hours of slumber as laid down in the present school routine strike me as being very fair and reasonable; and I cannot see any way to make any extension or curtailment. Bunter of the Remove has been to me with a petition, advocating longer hours of sleep; and another junior wants me to shorten them. But I am well satisfied with the present system.

THE MIDNIGHT FEAST!

BY

DICK PENFOLD.

NIT a sound was made, not a movement heard.
As the grub to the bedside we carried;

Not a fellow there uttered a single word
Around by the bed where we tarried.

We laid it out swiftly at dead of night,
Our sheets into tablecloths turning.
By the flaring gas-jet's smoky light
And the candles dimly burning.

No useless trifles encumbered our feast,
Neither bread nor water we tasted;
But the "nuts of dough" and the buns
nicely greased
Were eaten, and nothing was wasted.

Few and abrupt were the words we all said,
And we showed not a sign of sorrow;
But we wistfully gazed on that vanishing
spread,
And bitterly thought of the morrow.

We thought, as the ginger-pop flowed o'er
the bed,
And the jam fell in lumps on the pillow,
That the morrow would see us hauled up
to the Head,
And probably smacked with a willow.

But half of our midnight meal was done,
When the "scout" gave the sign for
retiring;
And two minutes later all traces were gone,
Save the smell of the candles expiring.

Softly old Quechy crept in at the door,
And his gaze was severe and searching;
But we gave not a sign, save a sonorous
snore.

And thus we escaped from a birching!
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A Drowsy Fellow's Diary!

A Peep into the Private
Chronicles of LORD MAULEVERER
the Slacker of the Remove

MONDAY.

A terribly trying day, begad! Woke up unrefreshed after sleeping the clock round. Felt too weary for words. Managed to scramble into my togs and get down to brekker in the nick of time. Too fagged to eat. Nodded off to sleep over the eggs and bacon. That clumsy idiot Bunter woke me up by knocking the coffee-pot over. I was saturated with the scalding liquid, and my yells of anguish rang through the dining-hall. Sleep was out of the question after that. However, I contrived to take "forty winks" during morning lessons, and Quelch roused me in his usual vigorous manner—with a pointer! From time to time during the day I was able to get snatches of sleep, only to be rudely awakened on each occasion. Bob Cherry was usually the awakener. He can't stand the sight of me sleeping. He has prodded me in the ribs with cricket-stumps until I'm a mass of bruises, begad! But it's bed-time at last, and I shall now be able to take a long spell of delicious, dreamy repose. Three cheers for the merchant who invented sleep!

TUESDAY.

Precious little chance of getting any sleep to-day. Bob Cherry had me constantly under his eye. When lessons were over, he marched me out to the cricket-field, and made me take part in a practice-match. Whilst fielding in the "deep," a feeling of intense drowsiness came over me, and I sank down in the long grass and went right off to sleep. As the song says, "Many brave hearts are asleep in the 'deep,'" and I was one of them! But I didn't sleep long. Wharton was batting, and he made a mighty drive. The ball landed "plomp" on my chest as I lay slumbering, and it was as if a thunder-bolt had dropped from the skies! Instead of apologising, Wharton said it served me jolly well right for being such a slacker!

WEDNESDAY.

I overslept this morning. For once in a

way, Bob Cherry forgot to rouse me. My elegant form was concealed beneath the bed-clothes, so I suppose nobody noticed me. Anyway, I didn't wake up till the bell rang for morning lessons! I sprang up and dressed, and dashed down the stairs three at a time; but I was ten minutes' late when I presented myself in the Remove Form-room, and in my hot haste I had forgotten to don a collar and tie, and my shirt had been put on inside-out. Moreover, I'd clean forgotten to brush my hair. Old Quelch had several sorts of a fit when I sprinted into the Form-room. "Mauleverer!" he barked. "How dare you come rushing into the room in such a wild and dishevelled state?" "Awfully sorry, sir," I replied, "but I overslept. You see, I went to bed five minutes later than usual last night; that's why I couldn't wake up this mornin'." Quelch ordered me to go back to the dorm and complete my toilet, and when I reappeared in the Form-room he presented me with five hundred lines. Five hundred, by Jove! I shall have to stay awake for a week to get them written! Oh, dear! It's a sad, bad world for a fellow who has the misfortune to be born tired!

THURSDAY.

Didn't get a wink of sleep all day. Bob Cherry stuck to me like my own shadow, and wouldn't let me out of his sight. He kept me on the go all day long, and I feel absolutely dog-tired to-night. I've placed an alarm-clock on the locker near my bed, to prevent myself oversleeping in the morning. One can't do that sort of thing twice running!

FRIDAY.

Confound it! Bother it! Likewise, dash it! Something went wrong with the heastly alarm-clock, and it started its merry music at four a.m. instead of seven! It kicked up such a hullabaloo that it woke the whole

dorm. The fellows were furious about it. They dragged me out of bed and gave me a bumping; and I felt so jolly sore that I found it impossible to get to sleep again. It wasn't until lessons were over for the day that I had a chance to steal away to a quiet spot and enjoy a nap. I stretched my weary limbs on the grassy bank of the River Sark, and dropped into a delightful doze. I awoke suddenly, to find myself struggling in four feet of water. In my sleep I must have rolled to the edge of the bank and tumbled into the river. I managed to struggle on to terra firma, and then I squelched my way back to Greyfriars, looking more like a drowned rat than an elegant member of the aristocracy. Yes, begad! Life is hard and cruel for an ardent disciple of the celebrated Jip van Winkle!

SATURDAY.

"One glorious hour of blissful sleep is worth an age without a name!" And I was able to enjoy several glorious hours to-day. There were no lessons, and so, after the exhausting and nerve-racking experiences of the past week, I crawled away to my study, and locked myself in, and sank to slumber on the sofa. I must have been absolutely worn out, for I didn't wake even for meals. All day long I slept the sleep of the just, and the energetic Bob Cherry hammered at the door in vain. I awoke this evening, feeling like a giant refreshed; and to-morrow—Sunday—will be another day of placid tranquillity. I dare say Bob Cherry will take it out of me on Monday by making me play cricket, and sprint round the Close, and perform all sorts of exhausting capers. Still, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. I have slept soundly all day, and now I shall sleep soundly all night. Am about to vend my way to the Remove dorm, and in that delightful haven of rest I shall sink into merciful oblivion for a dozen hours or so. Yaw-aw-aw! I'm beginning to feel dreadfully drowsy again!

EDITORIAL!

By HARRY WHARTON.

This week we are taking for our subject the "night life" of Greyfriars.

A dormitory would be a very dull place if we went there just to sleep. And school life would be a dreary affair if there were no midnight revels and banquets and pillow-fights.

The day's enjoyment does not end with "lights out." On the contrary, it is just about to begin! As soon as Wingate of the Sixth—or Loder, or Gwynne, as the case may be—has given us "Good-night," we put our heads together and discuss a plan of campaign. Sometimes we decide to raid a rival dormitory. Sometimes we hold a court-martial on some unhappy offender, and proceed to toss him in a blanket. Occasionally, if there is no master within earshot, we hold a grand concert. And there are times when we break bounds in order to pay a visit to Sir Hilton Popper's orchard, or perchance play that good old game called "Jack-o-Lantern"—a glorious game for a moonless night, I can tell you!

On nights when there is nothing special THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 367.

"doing," we lie awake and "jaw" until past midnight. The formation of the Remove footer team is discussed; ghost stories are told; the doings of the day are freely debated. And it is not until we are weary of the sound of our own voices that we sink blissfully into the arms of Morpheus.

There are some fellows who take no part in these nightly discussions. Lord Mauleverer uses the dormitory for its proper purpose. He goes there to sleep! Long before the prefect comes in to extinguish the lights, his lordship drops into a dreamy repose.

The same remarks apply to Billy Bunter—unless there happens to be a midnight feast on the tapis! Bunter would not miss a midnight feast for untold gold. Even if

he happens to fall asleep beforehand, he always manages to wake at just the right moment. He possesses a "sixth sense," which enables him, even in sleep, to tell when there is any grub knocking around. If you were to hold a frying-pan, full of sizzling sausages, under Bunter's nose while he slept I guarantee he would wake instantly!

The Remove dormitory has the reputation of being the most unruly dormitory at Greyfriars, and we have to tread warily in our midnight escapades; for there is generally a master or a prefect on the prowl. But our "scouting" system is perfect, and the fellow on duty invariably gives the alarm at the approach of the common enemy.

I fancy you will all enjoy this number, and wish you could come to Greyfriars and share in our merry adventures "at the full o' the moon." The night life of Greyfriars brings plenty of excitement in its train!

Talking of excitement, you'll find plenty of that in our next Supplement. King Footer is here, and the merry journalists of the "Herald" have "crowned" him in their own inimitable fashion. Mind you are present at the "coronation," chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

[Supplement ii.]

The Children's Best Coloured Paper
JUNGLE JINKS
Out on Thursday—Price 2d



Bunter's Sleeping Sickness!

By S. Q. I. FIELD

"BUNTER!"

The voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was like the rumble of thunder.

Snore!

Mr. Quelch gave a jump. He bestowed the glare of a basilisk upon Billy Bunter; but the fat junior was happily unconscious of that glare. His arms were stretched out on the desk in front of him, his head rested on his arms, and he was—or appeared to be—fast asleep. His snore, which was like the grunt of a pig, quite startled the class. And it startled Mr. Quelch also.

"Bunter!"

It was a stentorian shout this time—a shout which would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers. But it failed to awaken Billy Bunter. The fat junior remained in an attitude of placid repose.

Mr. Quelch gave a snort. He picked up a pointer, and took a quick stride towards the slumbering Bunter.

Bolsover major, who was sitting next to the Owl of the Remove, gave him a dig in the ribs with his elbow, and muttered, "Wake up, fathead!" But even this failed to have the desired effect.

Even when Mr. Quelch grasped the fat junior by the collar, and shook him, Bunter's eyes remained closed.

But when the pointer was brought into play, and fell across Billy Bunter's shoulders, the sleeper awoke—with a yell that rang through the Remove Form-room.

"Yaroooooh!"

Mr. Quelch looked grim.

"Bunter!" he thundered. "You have had the temerity to fall asleep during lessons! Not only have you slept, but you have snored in a most revolting manner! There is no excuse for your conduct. You have had nine hours' sleep in the dormitory, and that is ample."

Billy Bunter, having recovered from the effects of his rude awakening, gave a portentous yawn.

"Yaw-aw-aw! I—I'm sorry I fell asleep, sir, but I couldn't help it. I shall drop off again in a minute."

"W-w-what!" gasped Mr. Quelch, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"You see, sir," explained Bunter, blinking drowsily at the Remove master, "I'm suffering from the new disease—sleeping sickness. Lots of people die of it every year, and I'm afraid I shall be the next victim, sir. It's awful! I don't know how I caught the germ, but I've got it all right. I can hardly keep my eyes open."

Even as he spoke, Billy Bunter's head sagged down on to his arms once more.

Mr. Quelch looked grimmer than ever. It was quite evident that he did not believe Billy Bunter. He lacked that simple faith which is supposed to be so much better than Norman blood.

"So you have contracted sleeping sickness, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, in ominous tones.

"Yessir!"

"Then I will endeavour to apply a cure!" So saying, Mr. Quelch brought the pointer into play once more. And on this occasion he wielded it with tremendous vigour. Billy Bunter shot up from the form like a plump jack-in-the-box, and he shrieked and squirmed under an avalanche of blows.

"Ow-ow-ow! Give over, sir! Stoppit! Can't you see how you're hurting me, sir?"

Supplement iii.]

"Curing you," corrected Mr. Quelch. And there was a titter from the class.

The cure certainly seemed effective. Billy Bunter was wide-awake now, and he appeared to have "that Kruschen feeling," for he jumped clean over the form, and out of range of those merciless blows.

"Now, Bunter," panted Mr. Quelch, "perhaps you will oblige me by remaining awake for the rest of the lesson!"

Billy Bunter obliged. And it was generally believed that his "sleeping sickness" was completely cured.

Such was not the case, however. When the class was dismissed, Billy Bunter rolled wearily out into the Close. He staggered towards one of the old elms, and stretched his tired limbs beneath its grateful shade. Within a moment he appeared to be fast asleep.

Harry Wharton & Co. saw the fat junior lying there, and they were amazed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Looks as if Bunter wasn't spru- ing, after all. He's gone to bye-byes again!"

"He's merely putting it on," growled Wharton.

"He is trying to kidfully spoof us that he has the sleepful sickness," said Hurree Singh. "But I will wager a bag of doughnuts that he wakes up when the esteemed dinner-bell goes!"

"No takers!" chuckled Nugent.

Hurree Singh's prophecy was fulfilled. For no sooner did the dinner-bell ring out than Billy Bunter "sat up and took notice," so to speak. Then he jumped to his feet, and hurried away towards the dining-hall.

After dinner Bunter became drowsy again. It was a half-holiday, and he spent it on his study sofa. He locked the door, as a precaution against being disturbed, and, judging by the sounds of snoring which came from Study No. 7 all the afternoon, he did not once wake.

Yet it was rather strange that, when his study-mates came in for tea—they had to clamber in through the window—they found all the eatables already consumed! As Peter Todd remarked, Bunter must have walked in his sleep!

Efforts were made to rouse the fat junior, but they proved unavailing. Billy Bunter's huge bulk was spread out on the sofa, and he seemed to be sleeping very deeply indeed. Even when Tom Dutton started playing his concertina, Bunter did not stir.

Peter Todd began to look worried. He began to wonder if there was really any truth in the statement that Bunter was suffering from sleeping sickness. For hour after hour the fat junior had laid on the sofa, oblivious to all that went on around him.

Peter communicated his fears to Harry Wharton & Co.

"I'm beginning to think there must be something wrong with our prize porpoise," he said. "He's sleeping like a log. Nothing seems to wake him."

"He's swanking," said Wharton.

"I—I suppose so," replied Peter. "And yet I should like to make absolutely certain."

"We'll make certain to-night, in the dorm," said Bob Cherry, with a twinkle in his eye.

"How?"

"Leave it to me," said Bob. "I'll undertake to find out in two minutes whether Bunter's really got sleeping sickness, or whether he's spoofing."

Billy Bunter slept all that evening. When bed-time came he still slumbered. Wingate of the Sixth, who was shepherding the juniors to bed, stepped into Study No. 7, and bawled to Bunter that it was bed-time. The fat junior did not hear; at all events, he did not heed.

Wingate strode towards the sofa, and gave Billy Bunter a shaking. But the sleeper's eyes remained tightly shut.

"Wake up!" roared Wingate. "It's bed-time, you young duffer!"

There was no response. The captain of Greyfriars looked long and searchingly at the slumbering form. It struck him that Bunter's complexion was rather paler than usual. And, like Peter Todd, Wingate began to wonder whether, after all, it was a genuine case of sleeping sickness.

"Nothing seems to rouse him," he murmured. "We shall have to carry him up to his dormitory, I suppose."

Wingate summoned Gwynne of the Sixth to help him, and between them they carried the slumbering Bunter upstairs.

"Faith, an' he seems dead to the world entirely!" said Gwynne. "We shall have to undress him and put him to bed."

"He's shamming!" growled Bolsover major.

But the two seniors didn't seem to think so. They removed Bunter's clothes, and put on his pyjamas, and heaved him into his bed. During these operations Bunter never once murmured or opened his eyes.

"Seems to be something radically wrong with him," said Wingate. "It looks as if we shall have to get the doctor to him in the morning."

About half an hour after lights out Cherry lighted a candle and got out of bed. The other members of the Famous Five were still awake, and they grinned at Bob.

"Now, what about this feast, you fellows?" said Bob. "The grub's under my bed, in a hamper. Shall we make a start?"

"Yes, rather!"

Instantly Billy Bunter's eyes opened, as if by magic. And when Bob Cherry started to move his locker, as if he were dragging a tuck-hamper from under his bed, Bunter sat bolt upright.

"I say, you fellows! Why didn't you tell me you were going to have a feed? You'll count me in, of course?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in surprise. "The sleeper awakes!"

"And, what's more, he's been awake all the time!" growled Johnny Bull. "The fat spoof! I knew he was only putting it on."

"Oh, really, Bull—" began Billy Bunter. "I say! Where's the feed?"

"There isn't one!" said Bob Cherry sweetly.

"What?"

"It was just a ruse, my pippin, to see if you were shamming or not."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Goodness knows why you've been shamming sleeping sickness, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "Perhaps it was with the idea of dodging lessons, or else having a nice time in the sanny. But whatever your reason, we've bowled you out, and now you're going to get the bumping of your life. Tumble out, you chaps!"

Billy Bunter pleaded and protested, but in vain. He was heaved out of bed, and bumped with great vigour and heartiness.

Billy Bunter's brief bout of "sleeping sickness" was now completely cured!

THE END.

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(Continued from page 12.)

"Even to save the girl who is your son's friend in Biskra?" said the sheik grimly.

"She is not in your power, and will never be," said the major. "You will never make me believe it."

The sheik laughed harshly.

"It is true that my spearmen dare not ride into the French lines," he said. "If all the Arab tribes were of my mind, they would rise and sweep the Roumis into the sea. But it is not so; and where the French soldiers ride, the Arab must bow his head. In Biskra the Arab is a cringing slave; but the slave has his cunning. For many days now you have not seen Bou Saoud."

He paused, and laughed again sardonically.

"Bou Saoud is in Biskra, watching his chance. The two girls at the white villa are already in his hands, or soon will be. A swift camel will bring them into the desert, and in the desert I am master. What will you say when they are here—when they are handed over to the torturers if you do not speak?"

"You scoundrel!"

The moisture stood on his forehead in great drops. The sheik had succeeded at last in penetrating his iron composure.

There was an echoing sound of trampling hoofs in the valley, echoing faintly in the hollow cave.

The sheik turned his head and listened. Then he fixed his eyes on the prisoner with a grin of savage malice.

"Bou Saoud has returned," he said.

"Listen to that signal—it tells of success! The two English girls are here, in my hands. What will you do to save them?"

"You scoundrel!" muttered the major. "Think of it!" said Mustapha ben Mohammed.

He turned and strode away. For a moment the tall, white-clad figure barred the bright sunlight at the mouth of the cave. Then the sheik was gone, and the prisoner was left in the silent, shadowy cave to his torturing thoughts.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Swoop of the Spahi!

"MARJORIE!"

"Yes, Clara!"

"Ready, old bean?"

"I'm coming."

"Back up!" called out Miss Clara cheerily from the garden of the villa at Biskra. "The guide's waiting, and all's ready."

Marjorie Hazeldene was in her room above.

She was dressed for the ride—one of the many excursions that filled in the holiday days at Biskra. Hazel and Marjorie and Clara were to ride out to a Roman ruin a dozen miles from the town, and lunch at a French auberge there. Marjorie held in her hand a little leather case—a tiny case of Russian leather, less than an inch in extent.

What the tiny case contained Marjorie did not know.

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All she knew of it was that Major Cherry, before he had left Biskra on his ill-fated expedition, had placed it in her keeping.

That it contained something of great value was certain; she knew that much, at least. The major did not care to carry it with him on his dangerous journey in quest of Ali ben Yusef. Neither had he cared to leave it concealed in his house. Certainly no one was likely to guess that he had placed the amulet of the Tahar tribe in the hands of a schoolgirl.

But the major was a shrewd judge of character. He knew that Marjorie could be trusted to keep a secret, and she had kept it. Even Clara Trevlyn knew nothing of the trust.

The major had told her to keep the little case till his return; and if he did not return before she left for England, to take it home with her and hand it to Colonel Wharton, Harry Wharton's uncle. That was all she knew.

But she realised that it was a matter of importance, and the tiny case with its hidden contents never left her keeping.

She had fastened a thin gold chain to the little case, and now she passed the chain round her neck, and slipped the case out of sight in her dress.

"Ready, Clara!"

She joined Miss Clara in the garden. Hazeldene of the Remove came out of the house and waved good-bye to his parents on the veranda. Clara waved, too; and Marjorie ran up the steps to say good-bye to them before she went, little dreaming of how long the parting was destined to be.

Then the three went into the courtyard, where Hamid, the Biskra guide, was waiting with the horses.

Hamid salaamed to the ground as they came up.

"We shall expect you back to tea!"

Mr. Hazeldene called from the veranda.

"Right-ho, dad!" called back Hazel.

"You will not be late, Marjorie,"

added Mrs. Hazeldene.

Marjorie smiled and waved her hand.

The three riders turned out of the courtyard, into the road that ran past the villa from Biskra into the desert.

Hazel was in cheery spirits, and Miss Clara was merry as usual. Marjorie was a little silent and thoughtful.

She was thinking of her Greyfriars friends, of whom she had heard no word since they had ridden into the Sahara with Ibrahim. Hazel glanced at her, and read her thoughts easily enough.

"The fellows are all right, Marjorie," he said lightly. "They'll be back in Biskra in a day or two. Their jolly old guide will lead them up and down and round about, and then bring them back. They won't find Mustapha ben Mohammed, any more than they'll find the jolly old original Mahomet himself."

Marjorie shook her head, but did not answer. The thought of what might have happened to Harry Wharton & Co., in the trackless desert, was always in her mind.

The riders turned from the road, and followed a barely-marked track that seemed to lead into the open desert. Hazel rose in his stirrups and stared round him.

"Hamid!" he called out.

The guide turned his head.

"My master!"

"Is this the right route?"

"Hamid know!" said the guide, reassuringly. "Soon you see the date-trees."

"Oh, all right!"

The miles glided under the trotting hoofs. Many pleasure parties from the holiday towns were passed, and Hazel

exchanged greetings with some of them that he knew.

But after a time the route grew more solitary, and Hamid, scanning the ground, was unable to discern any sign of a track. Again it came into his mind that Hamid had missed the way.

"Blessed if I don't think that fellow is making a mistake," said Hazel. "You know these dashed guides—they claim to know everything—to get a job."

"Well, we've had this guide a dozen times before, and he seems to know his way about," said Clara.

"I know!" assented Hazel. "But, look here, Hamid, isn't it about time we got to the auberge?"

The Biskra guide raised his hand and pointed across the plain. In the distance the graceful tops of a clump of palm-trees waved.

"It is there!" he said.

"Oh, all right!"

The party rode on. It was almost noon, and the sun blazed down with fierce heat, when they reached the clump of trees. They glanced with slight interest at a number of camels sprawled by the trees, and four or five Arabs who lounged by them. There was no sign of an auberge, or of any other habitation.

"That ass has found out by this time that he's gone wrong. I think," grumbled Hazeldene. "Lot of time wasted!"

One of the waiting Arabs came towards the party as they halted. He was a handsome fellow, in a swaggering bold way. Arab as he was, in Arab garb, he carried himself like a man who had known military life. Hazel stared at him. He had seen the young man in Biskra before, and knew that he was Bou Saoud, the son of the desert sheik, and the enemy of Harry Wharton & Co. A vague misgiving rose in Hazel's breast. It seemed impossible to him that the Spahi could or would dare to act lawlessly, so close to the French holiday town, in the district patrolled by the French troops. But the mocking grin on the Spahi's face was not reassuring.

Bou Saoud salaamed to the two girls, his bold gaze resting on them impudently.

"Welcome to the desert!" he said.

Hazel pushed forward his horse.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "How dare you speak to my sister, you blackguard?"

Bou Saoud laughed.

He called to Hamid, the guide. Under the eyes of Hazel, he threw a five-hundred franc note to the man. Hamid, grinning, turned his horse back towards Biskra.

"Hamid!" shouted Hazel, astonished and alarmed now. "Hamid! Where are you going? Come back!"

The guide rode on without heeding.

"Good heavens!" breathed Marjorie.

"What—"

"There is no danger," said the Spahi, smiling. "You are the guests of Mustapha ben Mohammed—that is all. You will ride with me to the tents in the desert."

"Oh!" gasped Clara.

"You villain!" shouted Hazel, grasping his riding-whip. "Do you think—" "Taisez-vous!" snapped the Arab. "It is not for you to speak. You will not come—you are not wanted."

"Do you think I will leave my sister with you, you scoundrel?" shouted Hazel. "Why, I—I—"

"Seize him!"

At the word, two of the lounging Arabs flung themselves upon Hazeldene, and he was dragged from his horse. Marjorie gave a cry.

Another of the Arabs led forward a camel—a tall, powerful animal with a

palanquin on its back. Marjorie, with a sickening dread at her heart, realised that this treachery had been planned—the palanquin was there to take them into the desert; the Biskra guide had been bribed to lead them into the trap. Her terrified glance swept the horizon; there was no help.

Hazel, struggling furiously, was helpless in the grasp of the two ruffians who had seized him.

The Spahi spoke in Arabic, and the junior was flung to the ground at his feet. Bou Saoud swept his scimitar into the air, over the breathless schoolboy as he lay. Marjorie, with a cry, sprang from her horse, and threw herself before her brother.

"You will not kill him!" she panted. "He is not wanted," said the Spahi. "For mercy's sake—" screamed Marjorie.

The savage Spahi lowered his weapon, with a grin.

"For your sake, if you choose," he said, laughing and shrugging his shoulders. "It matters little—let him live!"

"Oh, you villain!" panted Hazel. "You shall suffer for this, you dastard!" "Silence, while you are safe!" snapped the Spahi.

He snapped out orders in Arabic to his men. The two girls were lifted into the palanquin. Hazel, grasped again by the Arabs, was helpless to intervene.

The desert raiders mounted their camels. A savage blow from a spear-butt sent Hazel reeling, and he rolled on the sand. He picked himself up, his

brain in a whirl. Marjorie's white face looked at him from the curtains of the palanquin; her hand waved to him, and then she was gone. The swift camels bore away the prisoners and their savage escort.

Hazel groaned. He staggered blindly after the raiders, but soon the swift camels were mere moving dots on the vast expanse of the desert, and then they vanished from sight.

Marjorie was gone.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Discovery in the Mirage!

"A RABS!" "The giddy enemy!" The sun blazed on Harry Wharton & Co., as their camels trotted on over the sand. The air shimmered with heat. Even Hurree Jamsel Ram Singh admitted that it was hot. Far to the south-west the dim line of hill-tops grew clearer, as the juniors rode onward. But they were still distant, vague in the shimmering heat of the horizon.

Suddenly, almost with the suddenness of a film scene, a caravan burst on the sight of the riders.

Wharton shaded his eyes with his hand under his sun-helmet.

Quite close at hand, almost within voice-range as it seemed, a dozen camel riders had started out of the desert. In the midst of the party was a tall and

powerful camel, with a curtained palanquin on its back. And at the head of the party rode a horseman whom the juniors knew. They knew that handsome, dark, wicked, and reckless face—the face of Bou Saoud, once an officer of the Spahis in the French service—the man who had kidnapped Ali ben Yusuf at Greyfriars, and placed him in the hands of the sheik.

Wharton grasped his rifle. But the next moment he lowered the weapon, with a smile. It was Bou Saoud he was looking upon, but not Bou Saoud in the flesh. He remembered the dream city of the Sahara, and he knew that this was the mirage again.

"My hat! That villain!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"It's the mirage!"

"Oh!"

The Greyfriars party halted, and stared at the strange scene from their camels.

So close were the pictured figures that it seemed as if they could have called to them. Yet probably the Spahi and his men were fifty miles away, in what direction the juniors could not even guess.

"It is mirage, my fine gentlemen," said Ibrahim. "You see Bou Saoud; he hide with prisoner."

"Prisoner?" repeated Wharton. "My lord see palanquin on big camel. That is for women," said the guide.

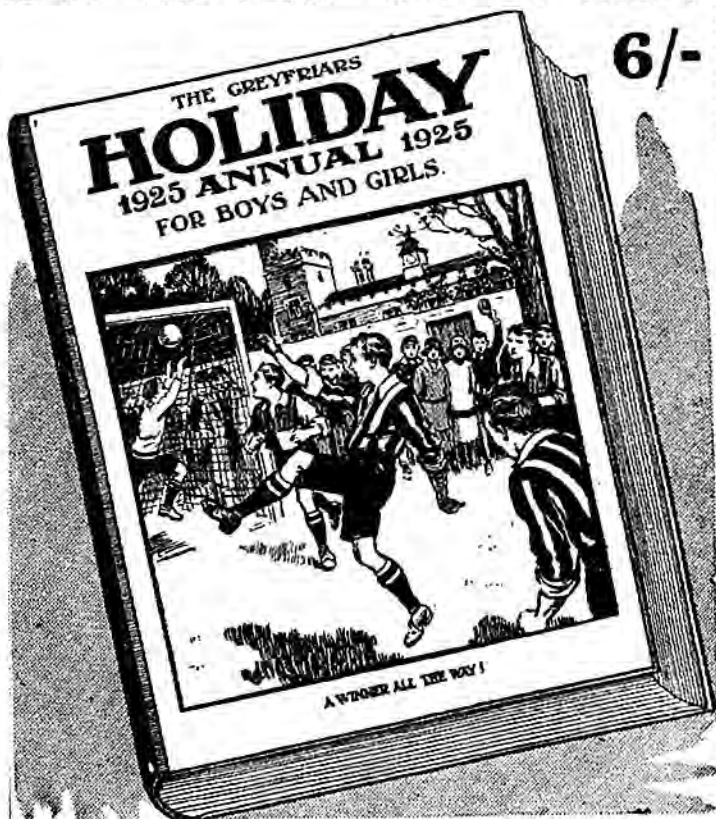
Wharton knitted his brows.

He understood that the Spahi and his men had been upon some raid, and were returning to the sheik's encampment in the desert hills, probably with plunder, and with prisoners.

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Ibrahim smiled.

"Perhaps some of the Ouled Nail," he said.

"The what?"

"The dancing-girls."

In Biskra, the Greyfriars juniors had seen the Arab dancing-girls, who were mostly of the tribe of the Ouled Nail. They knew it was the custom of the dancers to string their gold coins and wear them in clattering clusters, every new gift from their admirers adding to their jingling treasure. And they had heard of the dancing-girls being sometimes carried off, and even murdered, by the Arabs, for their strings of gold coins.

"The awful rotter!" muttered Bob Cherry, hugging his rifle. "I wish he were within range!"

"The villainousness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his dark eyes glittering at the pictured riders.

Ibrahim raised a brown finger to point. "Now, you see!" he said. "The curtain him open."

The juniors' eyes were fixed on the palanquin that swayed on the high back of the powerful camel. Dusty white curtains closed in its sides, and as they gazed the curtain on the side turned to them moved, drawn aside by a hand within. The prisoner of the palanquin was about to look out at the desert.

They expected to see the brown face of girl of the Ouled Nail, as the curtain was drawn aside.

But it was a white face that looked out.

Bob Cherry gave a husky cry.

"Marjorie!"

"Marjorie!" repeated Harry Wharton, in utter amazement and dismay.

"Good heavens!"

Ibrahim stared and nodded.

"Hou Saoud has taken her from Biskra," he said. "See, there is another in the palanquin!"

A second face looked out into the desert. It was the face of Clara Trevlyn.

In utter horror, Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the dream-picture of the desert.

Their faces were set.

"Marjorie, in the hands of that villain!" muttered Bob Cherry hoarsely.

"What can it mean? Why—"

"It is the order of the sheik!" said Ibrahim.

"Good heavens!" muttered Nugent.

With tense faces the juniors watched the mirage. It came as a stunning blow to them to discover that Marjorie Hazeldene was in the hands of the robber Arabs. It had never even entered their thoughts that she was not safe in Biskra.

Bob Cherry shouted to Ibrahim.

"Ibrahim, where are they? Cannot you tell where they are?"

Ibrahim shook his head.

"It is a mirage!" he said. "Perhaps ten miles—perhaps fifty—who knows? Personne! Ibrahim no can tell."

Bob gripped his rifle convulsively.

"The villain! The villain!" he muttered.

"It's going!" whispered Nugent.

Bon Saoud and his men were riding on into nothingness. The mirage vanished as suddenly as it had arisen.

Once more empty space was before the eyes of Harry Wharton & Co.

Only for a couple of minutes had that strange scene been pictured to them in the shimmering heat of the desert.

Like spectres, the Arab raiders vanished from their sight.

The juniors' faces were white and set. Marjorie and Clara were in the hands of the Spahi—prisoners in the power of the desert sheik! And they were utterly helpless to aid. It was impossible even

to guess in what direction the Spahi had vanished.

There was a long silence.

"They must be going to Mustapha's encampment," said Harry Wharton at last.

Ibrahim nodded.

"It is so," he said. "Bon Saoud is returning from his raid. He is taking his prisoners to the sheik."

"We shall find them there," said Bob Cherry, between his teeth. "Get on, you fellows. It is not only my father that we have to save from those scoundrels now!"

The juniors urged on their camels again.

Even Billy Bunter's face was serious now, and he forbore to grouse.

Under the burning heat of the sun the camels trotted on, and the distant line of hills came ever and ever nearer. Rocky ridges cropped up in the waste of sand, loose stones clanked round the trotting feet of the camels.

The sun was deep on the horizon now, a blazing ball of crimson. Its oblique rays swept the desert like flame.

Lower it sank, till it dropped behind the horizon, and the night had fallen. But a silvery light was streaming from the east, and a bright moon sailed over the waste.

"When are we camping, you fellows?" called out Billy Bunter.

"We're not camping!" answered Wharton curtly.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't talk now, Bunter."

Ibrahim, bearing the baggage-camels with his stick, was no longer shouting to them in the usual way of camel-drivers. Voices carried far in the stillness of the desert, and the Greyfriars party were now drawing near to the headquarters of the sheik. Under the shining moon the tired animals trotted on. But Harry Wharton & Co. were no longer conscious of fatigue. The sight of Marjorie and Clara in the hands of the robber Arabs had filled them with a bitter determination. And even Billy Bunter said no more, and did not even tell his companions that he was hungry.

Under the moonlight the Greyfriars party rode into a broad, low valley in the desert hills. Before them, in the bright light of the moon, rose a strange-looking building. Harry Wharton called to the guide.

"Ibrahim, what is that?"

"It is the Bordj," said the guide. "There we stop, my fine gentlemen. The tents of Mustapha are one mile."

And the camels halted in a deserted courtyard, in the midst of which rose the square brick tower of the Bordj.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Bordj in the Desert!

THE Bordj stood lonely, solitary, and silent, in the hollow of the hills, like a forgotten sentinel keeping watch and ward over the waste of sand and rock.

It was a square tower built of bricks of baked mud, pierced with loopholes instead of windows. There was but one door, and that was closed and locked with a huge iron lock. Round it lay the low-walled courtyard, with a well.

The juniors had heard of the "Bordj," though this was the first one they had seen. Here and there, in the lone sandy wastes of the Algerian deserts, the brick towers are scattered—sometimes never visited from one year's end to another. In the Bordj is shelter, and if necessary a refuge from attack, for the French

patrols that ride into the recesses of the Sahara. Sometimes an Arab village of tents or mud huts will grow up around the Bordj.

But the Bordj at which Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived was utterly deserted and solitary. The mud walls of the courtyard were crumbling, and clanging cries from within the tower showed that desert birds had made their homes there, and were startled by the unusual sounds of tramping of camels without.

Probably years had elapsed since some French cavalry detachment, riding through those arid wastes, had camped at the Bordj. There was no sign that a human foot had trodden there.

Harry Wharton tried the door of the little tower. The rusty iron lock was fast.

"Me open!" said Ibrahim.

If the juniors had needed any further proof of Ibrahim's good faith this would have been enough. They had known nothing of the existence of this lonely post in the desert, but they realised at once of what service it might be to them. Within those thick walls of sun-baked bricks, they could have held their own against an attack by much greater numbers—and the little fortified post might prove their salvation when the struggle came with the sheik.

Only a mile away, over the dim rugged ridges of the hills, lay the encampment of Mustapha ben Mohammed, swarming with savage spearmen. At any hour now the yells of the desert robbers might be heard, and the Greyfriars juniors might be engaged in a desperate struggle for life.

Ibrahim took an axe from the baggage. The lock on the door was strong, and of great size; but rust had eaten into it, and in a few minutes Ibrahim had forced it open.

The creaking door swung back.

There was a clatter from the desert birds, escaping in alarm from the loopholes in the walls.

Within there was a room with bare earth floor, bare walls of mud bricks, furnished with a rough trestle table and two or three stools. A stair of brick led to an upper room.

The place was evidently deserted, but the juniors searched it. A snake hissed on the floor, and Ibrahim promptly cut it into two with the axe. The birds were gone, and no other living thing was found in the interior.

"We could put up a big fight here if it came to that," said Johnny Bull, glancing round him. "We can get all the baggage in here, and the provisions—and at a pinch the camels could be driven into the lower room. This is luck for us!"

"Yes, rather!"

"What about water?" asked Nugent.

"There is a cistern," said Ibrahim.

"We shall fill it from the well—your slave Ibrahim will fill it, while his lords rest."

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry. "All hands to the mill."

"I say, you fellows, I'm tired—"

"You can unpack the grub, Bunter."

"Oh, all right!"

A zinc bucket was found on the rope at the well. The rope was rotted through; but a camel-rope soon replaced it, and the juniors were busy drawing water very quickly.

Without discussion, they had settled that the Bordj was to be their headquarters, and it was necessary to place it in a state of defence. Desperate as was the enterprise of the Greyfriars juniors, almost certain as it seemed that they were seeking destruction, they intended to neglect no precaution.

The long day's ride in the blazing

African heat had tired them; but there was no time to think of fatigue. Bucket after bucket was drawn from the well, and the cistern in the tower was filled to overflowing, as well as the water-bottles and the camels' water-skins. The water was a little brackish; but it was good; and in the Sahara it is water that is the prime necessity of life. Indeed, it is the endless disputes about the springs and wells that cause many of the incessant petty wars among the Arab tribes of the Sahara. The turning of some petty stream near its source may cause a war to the death between two tribes, and a feud that may never end.

The cistern filled, the baggage was stacked in the lower room of the Bordj, only the camels being left tethered in the courtyard.

Harry Wharton looked at the broken lock on the door, but it was past repair. But within there were iron sockets for the reception of bars, and the stout bars of palm-wood stood ready.

The hour was late when the juniors sat down wearily to snatch their supper. Bunter had already supped amply, and was snoring on a rug in a corner.

Then it was necessary to hold a council of war. Ibrahim, the guide, had done his duty, and he was free to go. It had been Wharton's intention to leave him bound when the rescuers sought the sheik's camp, in the keeping of Bunter; but that was not necessary now. They knew that they could trust Ibrahim not to betray them now.

"Now, about Bunter and Ibrahim," said Bob Cherry. "We've done with Ibrahim, and there's a chance of getting Bunter back safe. He's no use here, of course."

Bunter opened one eye and blinked at the juniors.

"Cheek!" he murmured.

Bob smiled faintly.

"Do you want to stick on, Bunter?" he asked. "We're going from here to the Arabs' encampment. The chances are about a thousand to one that we shall never come back."

"We shall not come back without Marjorie and Clara," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We know now that they are prisoners of the sheik; and we shall save them, or die trying!"

"That's settled," said Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter was wide awake now.

"Of course, I'm not going to desert you fellows," he said. "But if you like, I'll get back to Biskra and—and—fetch help."

"All right," said Bob. "Let it go at that; anyhow, you're going back to Biskra, and goodness knows I hope you'll get there safely. Ibrahim will go with you, and we can trust him now."

He looked at the Arab guide, who stood in silence.

"Ibrahim!"

"My fine gentlemen!" murmured Ibrahim.

"You've done all you have to do now. You can point out to us the way to the sheik's camp."

"It is near—in the day, from the tower, you will see the tent of the sheik."

"Good! Then we're finished with you, old bean. You can get back to Biskra—you shall take a camel for yourself, and as much of the food as you need. Take Bunter back safely, and you shall have a thousand francs."

"I will give you a letter to Mr. Hazeldene at Biskra, and he will pay you the money, as soon as Bunter is there," said Harry Wharton.

Ibrahim was silent. His black eyes were fixed on the Famous Five, with a curious expression in them that the juniors could not understand.



Marjorie's white face looked at Hazel from the curtains of the palanquin, her hand waved to him—and then she was gone. The swift camels bore away the prisoners and their savage escort. Hazel, groaning in spirit, staggered blindly after the raiders until they vanished from his sight. (See Chapter 10.)

"Does that satisfy you?" asked Harry.

"My lord, no."

"No need to haggle," said Bob tersely.

"We're not likely to want again the money we left with Mr. Hazeldene. Let him have two thousand francs. Is that all right, Ibrahim?"

"My lord! No!"

"What the thump do you want, then?" growled Johnny Bull.

Honest Ibrahim salaamed.

"No want go to Biskra," he said.

"Ibrahim, him live only to serve his fine gentlemen! Ibrahim stay."

"Oh, my hat!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Enemy!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. stared at the guide.

That there was some good somewhere in the treacherous, tortuous nature of the desert Arab they had learned. Undoubtedly he had had a change of heart since the juniors had risked their lives to save him from the jaws of the lion. The death of Suleiman had been a terrible proof of it, and his guiding them to the refuge of the lonely Bordj was another proof. But that his gratitude went further than that they had not supposed. But apparently Honest Ibrahim was no dealer in half-measures. He had changed his allegiance, and he had changed it thoroughly—lock, stock, and barrel, as it were. There was no doubting the earnestness in his dusky face.

Once back in Biskra, Honest Ibrahim would be once more the lying, cheating

guide; once more loose in the desert, he would be again the ruthless rascal ready to cut the throat of friend or foe for a handful of francs. But to Harry Wharton & Co. he was devoted; he was incapable of betraying them, of deserting them, probably even of thieving from their baggage. With all the ruthless wickedness and dishonesty of the savage Arab, there was an almost infantile simplicity in his strange character.

The juniors looked at him, perplexed. Ibrahim salaamed again.

"Ibrahim stay," he said. "Him die for his fine gentlemen! Ibrahim live only to serve noble English lords."

It was the same flowery language the juniors had always heard from Honest Ibrahim when he was cheating and stealing, and planning to deliver them over to their enemies. But there was a difference now, in that he was sincere.

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"You know the danger we're in here, Ibrahim," he said.

"Ibrahim, him know," said the Arab quietly. "Not one of us live to see Biskra again. Me know. C'est la mort! Ibrahim, him die with his fine gentlemen."

The juniors could not help being touched. They cherished a hope, faint as it was, of success and escape. But it was clear that Ibrahim looked on the expedition as hopelessly doomed; that he fully expected death at the hands of the sheik and his savage spearmen. All he asked was to die with them.

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"Dash it all, there's a chance!" growled Johnny Bull. "We're not dead yet; and while there's life there's hope."

Ibrahim shook his head.

"Die to-day—die to-morrow!" he said.

"What matters? It comes to all to die. To-morrow Ibrahim will be with the hours in Paradise." He shrugged his shoulders. "There is no God but one God, and Mahomet is his Prophet."

"You really want to stay and share our luck?" asked Harry Wharton, after a pause.

"I have said it."

"We'll be glad, of course," said Harry. "But—" His glance rested on Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, I can't get back to Biskra by myself, you know," said the Owl of the Remove in alarm.

"You shouldn't have come!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The esteemed and fatted Bunter asked for it," murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, shaking his head.

"Beast!"

"Ibrahim, him no go back," said the Arab stolidly. "To hear is to obey, but Ibrahim him deaf. No leave his fine gentlemen. Ecoutez! Mustapha does not know that Ibrahim is the faithful servant of the Roumi gentlemen. Him think Ibrahim give up his gentlemen for a reward. Dead or alive, Ibrahim was to receive five thousand francs for his fine gentlemen. Now it is changed; but the sheik does not know. Ibrahim can go into the encampment of the Tahir—he will tell lies to the sheik—"

"What?"

"He will say, the fine gentlemen are dead, and their bones picked by the jackals in the desert," said Ibrahim. "He will say it was the poison. Mustapha believe that Ibrahim still serve him. In the camp of the Tahir Ibrahim will spy for his masters; he will find out where are the prisoners, and if they yet live. He will return with news to the Bordj. Have I said well?"

"Good!" said Bob with a nod.

The juniors realised at once the value of Ibrahim as a scout. It was true that he could enter the camp of the tribesmen without fear; the sheik knew nothing of the change of sides, or of the death of Suleiman.

Harry Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"It might make all the difference between success and failure," he said. "It's no good blinking the fact that in going to Mustapha's camp we are going into the lion's den, with precious little chance of getting out of it alive. If Ibrahim will scout for us—"

"You trust Ibrahim—he do your business," said the guide.

"We do trust you," said Bob.

"Then it's settled," said Harry Wharton. "Ibrahim, you say that the sheik offered you five thousand francs for us if you betrayed us. You shall have twice five thousand francs if we rescue the prisoners and get them back to Biskra."

"On my head be it!" said Ibrahim. "The fine gentlemen are generous. Ibrahim will not live to see Biskra again—him walk no more in the bazaar, and never more see the dance of the Ouled Nail. Ibrahim him ready. My lords sleep in the Bordj, while Ibrahim him go to the tents of the Tahir."

"And Bunter—" muttered Bob.

"Bunter must take his chance with the rest of us," said Harry quietly. "We shall leave him here with the camels when we go, and he will have

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a chance at least of getting clear—more than we shall have."

"That's the best we can do for you, Bunter," said Bob.

Snooze!

Billy Bunter was asleep again.

The juniors left him sleeping. Ibrahim, under the waning moonlight, quitted the Bordj, and from the narrow doorway the juniors watched him disappear into the shadows of the rocks.

Perhaps, for a moment, a misgiving entered their hearts. It was in the guide's power to betray them, to bring down a horde of savage enemies upon them before the night was an hour older. In trusting him, they were trusting him with their lives and with all their hopes of saving the prisoners of the sheik. And faithful as he had been that day, they did not and could not forget his long treachery.

But the die was cast now.

Harry Wharton closed the door, and dropped the palm-wood bars into the iron sockets. The juniors were safe from a surprise, at least, and behind the walls of the Bordj they were prepared to give a good account of themselves if the enemy came.

Then they laid down to rest, to make the most of the enforced inactivity during Ibrahim's absence.

Billy Bunter's deep snore echoed through the little brick tower; the Owl of the Remove slept as soundly in the Bordj in the desert as in the old Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. But it was not so easy for the other fellows to sleep, fatigued as they were. The thought of the two girls in the hands of the savage Arabs was torment to them, and it haunted their minds.

But they slept at last.

There was no alarm in the night; the knock of Ibrahim was not heard at the door. The guide had promised to return by the dawn if it were possible; but the rosy dawn glimmered in at the narrow loopholes of the Bordj, and the juniors still slept undisturbed.

Harry Wharton was the first to awaken.

The room was hot and stuffy, heated by the blaze of a tropical African sun without. It was high day, the sun blazed over the rocky hills, and burned down on the lonely walls of the Bordj. Wharton started to his feet, angry with himself for having slept so long. His comrades still slept; Bunter snored on.



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There were sounds outside the walls. Wharton supposed, for the moment, that it was a stirring of the tethered camels in the courtyard. But he heard a hand groping over the barred door, and the thought flashed into his mind that Ibrahim had returned at last. He ran to the door, and, at his movement, his comrades awakened.

Wharton's hands were on the palm-wood bars, but he paused. Instead of removing the bars he called out:

"Who is there?"

A startled exclamation in French answered him.

"Diable!"

It was the voice of Bou Saoud, the Spahi.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last of Bou Saoud!

HARRY WHARTON caught his breath.

"Bou Saoud!" he muttered.

"The enemy!" Bob Cherry gritted his teeth savagely. "That scoundrel? Open the door, Harry!"

"Has Ibrahim betrayed us, after all?" growled Johnny Bull.

"I'm sure not," said Bob. "I trust him!"

"The trustfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and execrable Bou Saoud has found us."

"Let us get at him," said Bob, his eyes gleaming. "I only want to stand face to face with that scoundrel!"

"Don't be an ass, old man," muttered Harry. "There may be a swarm of them. We can see from the roof. Come up the stairs."

Knock!

"Mes enfants!" It was the well-known, mocking voice of the Spahi. "So you are here?"

"We are here, you villain!" answered Bob.

"Here—alive!" said the Spahi. "Then Ibrahim has lied—he has spoken falsely to the sheik. And I have found you by chance! A la bonne heure!"

The juniors remembered what Ibrahim had said—that he intended to make a false report to the Sheik Mustapha. They looked at one another. Ibrahim had been faithful, though in his own false and tortuous way. And evidently he had not returned—he was still in the sheik's camp, where his life was now worth a moment's purchase if Bou Saoud returned with the news that he had played Mustapha false.

Harry Wharton ran quickly up the brick stair. From the upper room of the Bordj another stair gave access to the flat roof, which was surrounded by a loop-holed parapet.

The juniors were quickly on the roof. They looked down.

At the gateway of the courtyard a handsome Barbary horse stood, waiting for his master. It was the steed of Bou Saoud. By the doorway below the Spahi was standing.

He was alone. There was no other Arab to be seen. From the roof of the tower, far in the distance, a gleam of flowing water could be seen, and by it the shining tents. The encampment of Mustapha ben Mohammed lay there.

"He's alone!" muttered Bob.

"Alone! And he knows that Ibrahim has turned against his gang, and if he goes back—"

"If he goes back Ibrahim is a dead man, and we're not better!" said Johnny Bull quietly. "He's not going back!" He lifted his rifle over the parapet.

Wharton caught his arm.

"Are you mad? A shot would be heard at the sheik's camp. Stop!"

"Better than Bou Saoud going back," answered Johnny Bull.

"There are other ways."

"Ha!" The Spahi looked up, and caught Johnny Bull's glance, as the junior looked down over the parapet. "Vous etes la! But I wait for the door to be opened, mes enfants."

He laughed mockingly.

Scoundrel and blackguard as the Spahi was, there seemed nothing like fear in him. He looked up coolly and mockingly. Possibly his belief was that the schoolboys would be terrorised by the mere sight of him, and that they would not dare to raise their hands against him. If that was his belief, he was soon to be undeceived.

"I have found you," he went on, in the same mocking tone. "Peste! I came to hunt for gazelle in the hills, and I have found sheep. Ha, ha!"

The juniors understood then.

The Arab, riding past the lonely Bordj to hunt in the hills, had seen the tethered camels in the courtyard, and guessed at once that some travelling party had camped there. He had dismounted and tethered his horse at the gate to investigate. So near the encampment of the Sheik Mustapha, the travellers, whoever they might be, were at the mercy of the desert robbers. But Bou Saoud had desired to know who they were before he called his savage spearmen to the attack. Had it been a French military party camped in the Bordj the cunning Spahi would have given them fair words, and left them, to take counsel with the sheik whether there should be an attack. The discovery that the party consisted of the Greyfriars juniors was an amazing one to him, that was clear, for Ibrahim's false report had been believed in the camp of Mustapha ben Mohammed.

The Spahi's wicked black eyes were dancing with glee as he looked up. Obviously he believed that the juniors were at his mercy, and that their fate was in his hands.

Wharton whispered to his comrades, while the Spahi's mocking laugh rang below.

"We've got to get him—without a shot, if possible!"

"But how?"

"Keep him in talk, if you can."

Wharton held up a long camel-rope he had brought up to the roof. "You come with me, Bob. You others stay here. Keep him in talk if you can, but if he tries to mount his horse, shoot him dead!"

"Right!"

Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh joined Johnny Bull at the parapet over the doorway. The Spahi waved his hand to them in ironical greeting. They did not show their rifles, and probably he did not know that they were armed at all.

Wharton and Bob Cherry crossed the flat roof to the back. The end of the rope was fastened quickly to the flag-staff that stood on the roof. Quietly the long rope was let down at the back of the little square building.

Silently, but in haste, Harry Wharton swung himself over, and slid down the rope, his rifle on his back. As swiftly, Bob Cherry followed him. In a very few minutes they stood on the earth, the building between them and the Spahi.

Meanwhile Bou Saoud was calling up to the three juniors whom he could see on the roof.

"You will not descend and let me in? Mais, allons, done! It is inhospitable, n'est-ce pas? I welcome you to the desert, mes amis!"



There was a crash as Johnny Bull flung his rifle at Bou Saoud's head. The Spahi reeled, uttering a sharp cry. In an instant, Harry Wharton was rushing upon him. "Quick, Bob!" he panted. The two juniors flung themselves upon Bou Saoud, tearing his rifle from his hands, while reassuring shouts from above showed that the rest of the Co. were hastening to the scene. (See Chapter 14.)

"Where is Ibrahim?" asked Nugent, rather to gain time than in expectation of an answer.

The Spahi laughed again.

"In the camp of Mustapha, my father," he answered. "Have you bribed him with a great sum? He came to us and lied. He told us that the five Roumis were dead in the desert, and that the hyenas had picked their bones! Ibrahim will pay for deceiving the sheik. He shall die by the torture. But you, will you descend and give yourselves up to me, or will you wait till I signal to my spearmen?"

He grinned with enjoyment.

"Shall I give you some news?" he said. "Shall I tell you that the white girls are in the camp of Mustapha. That I, Bou Saoud, seized them at Biskra and carried them into the desert?"

"You scoundrel!" said Johnny Bull. "We know it. We saw you yesterday—in the mirage in the desert."

"Is it so? Then you know that they are prisoners, to die by torture if the Eye of Ahmed is not given up to the Sheik Mustapha!" Bou Saoud stepped back from the door and picked up his rifle. "Regardez, done! Three shots are the signal—to bring my riders here."

He laughed again.

At the same moment Harry Wharton appeared at the corner of the building, and the Spahi started as he saw him. He threw up his rifle to a level, aiming at the captain of the Remoue.

There was a crash, as Johnny Bull flung his rifle from the roof. It crashed on the Spahi's turbaned head, and Bou Saoud reeled with a sharp cry.

In an instant Wharton was rushing upon him.

"Quick, Bob!" panted Wharton.

Bob Cherry, only a few seconds behind his comrade, rushed on the Spahi.

A savage curse in Arabic broke from Bou Saoud, as he struggled in the grasp of the two juniors.

His rifle lay on the ground, but there was a long knife in his girdle, and he clutched at it.

The three juniors on the roof rushed frantically down the steps into the building. They tore open the barred door and rushed out to join in the fray.

Wharton and Bob Cherry were both sturdy and strong, but the powerful Arab was like a tiger in their hands. Wharton seized his wrist and dragged his grasp away from the knife, but Bou Saoud tore it loose again. Bob Cherry, grasping the ruffian's loose burnous, hooked his leg, and brought him with a crash to the ground.

Both the juniors fell with him.

Bou Saoud, active as a panther, tore himself loose, and gained his knees. Panting, snarling like a wild animal, the savage Arab dragged at his knife.

It was then that the door of the Bordj flew open, and Nugent, Bull, and the nabob rushed out. They hurled themselves on the Spahi.

The knife was gleaming in the air as they reached him, aiming at Bob Cherry. Johnny Bull's heavy fist reached the Spahi in time, crashing on his jaw, and Bou Saoud rolled over on the earth.

A loud and terrible cry rang out and awoke the echoes of the hills. The

(Continued on page 28.)

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With but a few pounds in their pockets the Melton brothers set forth on a great adventure, their lack of finance being more than balanced by sheer grit and the will to win. Take them by the hand now, chums, share their troubles and triumphs. You'll enjoy every line of—



A Stirring, Sporting and Adventure Story, telling of four brothers' plucky fight against adversity.

Rank Defiance!

"THE school won't stand for it, Pat!" George Melton, the popular, athletic captain of St. Bartholomew's, ceased his agitated perambulation of the study carpet, and faced his bosom chum.

"You hear, Pat? They won't stand for it!"

Pat O'Shea nodded gloomily. "Sure, an' it don't need an over-powerful intellect to grasp that, George," he said slowly. "St. Bart's is going down the hill, and—"

His words trailed off, and he glared at Melton, seeing in the other's face a reflection, as it were, of his own thoughts.

For over a month now the scholars of St. Bart's had been compelled to keep their noses to the grindstone. Dr. Saunders, the headmaster, once—now in the dim past—known to all and sundry as "Old Dozey," had suddenly awakened up to the fact that St. Bart's was a scholastic institution. The pupils under his charge were at school to learn things other than how football, cricket, fives, tennis, and kindred sports should be played. Which was a surprising state of affairs when one considered that Dr. Saunders had held the reins of office for fifteen years without bringing his mighty intellect to bear upon such an obvious viewpoint.

But once having seen the obvious, Dr. Saunders had stirred from his lethargic comfort, determined that, having stirred himself, his pupils should do likewise. Thus it was the rather self-willed scholars at St. Bart's suddenly found their liberty of movement curtailed. No more slacking, no more were bounds made to be broken, no more were fluid masters merely machines that chalked mysterious and uninteresting things on the blackboard.

St. Bart's had been changed in one short, but well-remembered day. With the backing of Dr. Saunders himself

behind them, the masters had followed out his instructions to the letter. Members of every Form had discovered that a Form-master's will was law. No more cheeky answers, no more inattention; in fact, the scholars at St. Bart's were so completely overawed by this sudden and unlooked for change that they allowed themselves to be ordered hither and whither by those in authority, unable to do aught but obey.

A week of such treatment had seen St. Bart's well under control, although the germ of rebellion had taken root. Gradually, bit by bit, Dr. Saunders had deprived St. Bart's of the hours generally allotted to sports. Half-holidays were things of the past, late passes were things talked about, but never seen; and woe betide any daring young fellow who set law and order at defiance, and broke bounds.

Reginald Glynn—one of the darlings of the Fifth—had thought fit to show Dr. Saunders what he thought of his sudden awakening by walking out of the school gate, late at night, under the very nose of that learned gentleman himself.

Poor Glynn. They only talked in whispers of his daring exploit now, for Glynn, like half-holidays, was a thing of the past, so far as St. Bart's was concerned, at any rate.

Cricket had faded out un mourned by any who wielded the willow. Cricket in the new circumstances had become a labour, not a sport. But football! Ah, football would be different! So thought the optimistic members of St. Bart's.

But Dr. Saunders was still very much awake. Indeed, he possessed such uncommon activity that certain disrespectful fags of the Second had been led to the conclusion that Old Dozey had undergone the thyroid gland treatment. Notices appeared on the board every day in his scrawling handwriting. Perhaps Dr. Saunders was making up for lost time. Certain it was that in one month he had issued more orders than he had ever done in the fifteen years preceding the "change."

And it had been George Melton's duty to pin one of these notices to the board only a few moments before. Having done which, the handsome skipper of the school had rejoined his pal, full of pessimistic forebodings.

There was ample cause for pessimism on Melton's account, for following his retreat from the notice-board had arisen a rapidly growing tumult of angry dissension. Juniors and seniors were all hastening to the board in Big Hall, there to read for themselves "Saunders' latest bulletin."

In less than ten minutes Big Hall was the scene of a wild disorder. Fellows were talking heatedly amongst themselves. Some were mounted on chairs, addressing their angry Form-fellows, others were punching at imaginary Dr. Saunders.

"Listen, Pat!" said Melton grimly. "Have you ever heard a row like this since you came to St. Bart's?"

"Only once," returned Pat, "and that was when you scored a hundred not out against Rookwood, and saved St. Bart's defeat. But serious, old man, I'm a little thinkin' that the end is near. The kids have been bottling up their feelings for a month now, and—"

"Now the cork's drawn," put in Melton, with a mirthless laugh. "I think you're right, Pat. Perhaps we had better run down to Big Hall, and try and put things straight. After all, old son, we're prefects—upholders of law and order."

"Bless you, I've a mind to go over to the enemy!" said Pat O'Shea. "I'm all for the kids. It's time Saunders got the order of the boot—"

O'Shea!"

The name was rapped out in a voice shaking with anger. Both the seniors turned sharply, and faced the open door of the study. Dr. Saunders himself stood framed in the aperture, a grim expression on his lean, angular face, a steely light in his watery eyes.

Pat O'Shea flushed an uncomfortable red, whilst George Melton suddenly

found great entertainment in studying the pattern of the wall-paper.

"O'Shea!" barked Dr. Saunders. "How dare you speak of your headmaster in such disrespectful terms. The 'order of the boot,' indeed! And you a prefect! O'Shea, consider yourself no longer a prefect. I've had doubts for some time past as to the advisability of your remaining in a post of honour and trust; but—but—'order of the boot'! Impertinent! Disgraceful! And you, Melton—I'm surprised and shocked to find you a ready listener to such insulting chatter—"

Dr. Saunders broke off, breathing hard. An impaired wind stopped him from giving Melton a "dressing down," for which affliction George Melton was truly thankful. St. Bart's headmaster was fond of hearing his own voice.

It was while Dr. Saunders was drinking in great gulps of air that Pat O'Shea cleared his throat.

"Now that I am relieved of the great honour you once saw fit to repose in me, sir," he said gravely, "I would like to make a few observations that, from a point of loyalty to you, I could not utter before."

"What?"

"In the first place," continued Pat, no whit perturbed by the angry menace in Dr. Saunders' watery eyes, "if I may say so, you are dragging St. Bart's down hill fast. The boys have no faith in you, have no respect for you, or for your tyrannies. In a few hours, to save your position, you will be called upon to expel many of those who once upheld the good name of the school. I can see it coming. I, for one, do not intend to remain at this school for another week. Dr. Saunders," added Pat gravely, "I shall be leaving St. Bart's the day after to-morrow."

Dr. Saunders started, and his face twitched. He was unprepared for such a statement, as he was unprepared for the storm his latest order was to bring about. He gulped in more air.

And while the two seniors looked into his irresolute face, there came the trampling of many feet in the corridor without. Dr. Saunders' scraggy neck shot forward as he heard the commotion, and his equally scraggy features became visible to a crowd of juniors and seniors who were tramping along the corridor.

At once a shout went up.

"There's the rotter!"

Cat-calls and boos, hisses, and groans followed the shout. Angry faces glared hostility at Dr. Saunders, angry fists were flourished almost under his nose.

"Boys," stormed the Head, backing a pace, "how dare you! Disperse at once to your studies!"

"Rats!"

"Down with him!"

No authority on earth could have cowed that unruly and out-of-hand mob at that moment. The crisis had come. Dr. Saunders turned to George Melton, the captain of the school.

"Melton," he rapped, his harsh voice cracking, "kindly exert your influence. These boys are out of hand."

The captain of the school squared his shoulders.

"Dr. Saunders," he replied quietly, "I cannot undertake a duty when my heart is not in the work. As O'Shea as good as said just now, you've brought this trouble on yourself. My sympathies are with the boys. Kindly accept my resignation as captain of the school!"

A cheer rang out at the "skipper's" words, a cheer that drowned the imprecation Dr. Saunders was weak enough to give voice to. Spluttering with wrath,

his skinny hands clenching and unclenching spasmodically, the Head of St. Bart's turned savagely on Melton.

"You—you refuse to help me, Melton?" he hissed.

"Call it what you will, sir," returned Melton. "I've finished trying to patch up the troubles you've continually thrust on the school for the last month. Things have gone too far."

"Too far!" shrieked the Head. "I should say they have, when my head prefect shows rank disobedience to my face. Melton, you will be expelled from the school to-morrow. Now," added Dr. Saunders, turning threateningly to the crowd of juniors and seniors in the corridor, "the same punishment will be meted out to any of you who refuse to obey orders."

"Go and eat coke!" A high-pitched voice rose above the din. "Our footer is not going to be stopped by you or anyone!"

The Penalty!

THERE was a chorus of acclamation from the crowd. Thirty juniors moved forward threateningly, at the head of them John Matthew Melton, the captain of the Fourth. Ranged on either side of him were Dicky and Marcus Melton, the Terrible Twins of the Remove. Their blood was up now that their big brother had been expelled.

A trifle unruly at the best of times, but decent enough fellows otherwise, the Twins of the Remove were now egging Matthew on, not seeing, or not wishing to see, the warning glances George Melton gave them.

"Ah!" rapped Dr. Saunders savagely. "I see it is a family conspiracy! You Meltons had better take heed from the example I have made of your eldest brother. Return at once to your studies, do you hear me?"

"We want the order washed out!"

Something like a chant rose from the crowd of juniors behind the Meltons. And Matthew Melton, in the van of the rebel juniors, echoed it.

"You've no right to forbid us to play football," he added defiantly. "We're not standing it. And this is what we think of your notice!"

As he spoke Matthew Melton drew from his pocket a crumpled paper, which he deliberately tore into four pieces and tossed over his shoulder. It was rank defiance. Not wholly creditable perhaps to those who upheld it, but, in the circumstances, understandable.

Dr. Saunders took a step forward, his eyes glinting savagely. His right arm shot out, and Matthew Melton received a cuff on the ears that sent him spinning into the ranks of his followers. It was about the worst thing Dr. Saunders could have done. For one month now had St. Bart's endured his tyrannies without any open show of resentment. But that box on the ears was like unto the loading of the last straw on the camel's back.

In a moment thirty juniors swept forward, yelling loudly, in effect, for Dr. Saunders' blood. The headmaster of St. Bart's was seized in the grasp of many hands and brought to the floor.

Above the din could be heard his yells of anger and his appeals for succour, playing inconsistently with his wild threats of vengeance. Above the din, too, could be heard George Melton's voice calling upon the juniors to desist.

But the juniors were deaf to the cries of authority. Dr. Saunders was pumelled, bumped, and generally "handled," until big George Melton and Pat O'Shea had succeeded in dragging him away from his captors.

"Run, sir!" urged George Melton, steadying the fuming headmaster on his feet. "They are out of hand. I'll hold

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By Frank Richards

THE TOP-NOTCH SCHOOL
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BOYS' FRIEND

OUT TO-DAY

PRICE 2d.

them here if you will go to your study."

Dr. Saunders saw the wisdom of the advice and acted upon it. For the first time in the history of St. Bart's a headmaster was seen to run, almost in fear of his life, from his own pupils. Not until Dr. Saunders was out of sight did the clamour die down.

And then George Melton spoke to the juniors.

"You kids had better clear off," he said quietly. "You've done yourselves enough harm without asking for any more."

The crowd dispersed, and George Melton beckoned to his younger brothers to come into the study.

"You know what this means, kids," he said, when the trio were seated.

"The bullet!" returned Matthew briefly. "Still, we don't want to hang on here if you're going, George."

"That's a fact!" stoutly averred one of the twins. "Besides, for some unaccountable reason old Saunders has had his knife into us for this last month. Once you're gone, George, it would be perfect misery here."

George Melton glanced across at Pat O'Shea.

"What do you think of it, Pat?" he said, shaking his head. "You're going, old fellow, I'm going, and these young idiots have more than earned the sack. Ring-leaders, that's what you young asses are. Expect Saunders will flog you!" George winced as he uttered the words, as if undergoing the flogging himself. He always reckoned himself responsible for his younger brothers, and he blamed himself now for not having acted differently at the commencement of the rebellion. Still, it was no good crying over spilt milk.

"Cheer up, George!" said Pat comfortingly. "You had nearly run your course here, at any rate. You were due to leave next month, weren't you?"

"That's so," replied George, thinking of the irate guardian he would have to face.

"And Justin Mahone will look after us," said Matthew, knowing less of his worthy guardian's uncertain temper than did his elder brother.

"Well, you kids," said George, with an air that suggested that he wished them to depart for their own quarters, "you had better mind your P's and Q's at prayers to-night. Saunders will have recovered by then, and will be in dangerous mood. No back answers, mind. You've played your tune, now stand the racket."

And, with an affectionate nod to each of his brothers in turn, George Melton watched them depart from his study.

When they had gone he turned to his chum.

"It's a nasty thought, Pat," he said suddenly. "But it seems as if old Saunders has deliberately played for a culmination to his tyrannies, such as we have just witnessed."

"Don't quite get you, old scout," returned Pat, perplexed.

"Listen, Pat! I warned Saunders on two occasions, while he was contemplating cutting the footer out of the curriculum, that it would end in rebellion, or something akin to it. Does one feature of the trouble stand out more than any other when you come to weigh it up carefully, Pat?"

"Can't say it does," was the reply, after a moment's thought.

"Then, doesn't it strike you as significant that the chief persons who will suffer over the whole affair are, with

the exception of yourself, my three brothers and myself?"

"Phew!" whistled Pat. "That is significant, old boy, pointed out like that. What's the game?"

"Heaven only knows!" said George gloomily. "But I have an uncanny instinct that there is more in this affair than hits the eye. As you know, Matthew is captain of the Fourth, and, therefore, a person of responsibility in his small way. The twins—well, all the school knows that they rule the roost in the Remove. And they are the unfortunate upon whom the wrath of Saunders will fall, and fall heavily."

"You don't really think that Saunders will expel the lot of you?"

"I do!" came George Melton's reply. "And, like a fool, I played into his hands in refusing to order the silly young cubs back to their quarters. I rather think he knew that I would take that attitude, for I had given him more than a hint that I did not agree with his methods, and, if he persisted in cutting down the school's sport, I should have to resign my office."

"Queer—deuced queer!" said Pat O'Shea. "Anyway, we shall hear the worst at prayers to-night. One thing, though, I'm glad I'm going. The paper has been fidgeting for me to enter the business. Well, now's his chance. You and I, George, will see a lot of each other."

"I wonder?" murmured George slowly, again bringing up before his mental vision a picture of his guardian.

"Why, surely you don't think that I would forget my best chum?" began Pat, in a tone of reproach.

"Of course not, old scout!" smiled George. "But—oh, well—"

He broke off, at a loss for words, but he covered his confusion by gripping Pat's hand tightly, a pressure that was at once reciprocated.

A pin could have been dropped and heard in Big Hall at prayers that same evening when Dr. Saunders rustled in. He took his stand on the raised dais in the centre of the Hall, and scrutinised each line of his pupils, as though fully capable of discerning an absentee.

But the roll was called, and every St. Bart's scholar was in his accustomed place.

Prayers were said in an atmosphere of unrest. Something like that interval between a deadly calm and the outbreak of a storm. At last Dr. Saunders cleared his throat and approached the matter which was occupying the minds of everyone before him.

"This afternoon," began the Head, his watery eyes roving over the assembly, "I was, as you know, or have, doubtless, heard, the victim of a hostile demonstration on the part of a gathering of juniors from Lower Forms. Such an outrage has never occurred before in the whole term of my office as headmaster, and, what is more to the point, I shall see that it never happens again."

Dead silence followed his words, although meaning glances were thrown at the chief culprit.

"I called upon George Melton, your late captain, to exercise his authority, but he flatly refused to quell the riot. George Melton, stand forward!"

Amid a buzz of whispered remarks Melton stationed himself in front of the dais.

"Another wretched boy, filling the position of captain of his Form, was I regret to say, the chief ringleader of this—this disturbance. Matthew Melton, stand forward!"

Amid just such another buzz of whispers as had broken out when Melton senior stepped to the front, Matthew joined his brother.

"Matthew Melton was aided and abetted by his two brothers—Richard and Marcus," continued Dr. Saunders, in a cutting voice. "And from what I know of their record they appear to be the dominant characters in the Remove. Richard and Marcus Melton, kindly stand forward!"

Heads erect, their faces bearing the same expression of stoicism as Melton senior, the twins stepped forward. And the strange likeness they bore each other was more pronounced than ever it had been before. Indeed, there were many present who could not for the life of them have told which was Marcus or who was Richard.

"I am about to deal with these wretched boys," continued the Head, "in so drastic a fashion that I trust the memory of it will be a lasting lesson and a deterrent to those foolish enough amongst you who might be tempted to follow in their footsteps. Mr. Mitchell, you will kindly send for the porter—and a birchrod."

Mr. Mitchell, the easy-going master of the Remove, hastened out of Big Hall on his uncongenial errand.

"To continue," said Dr. Saunders cuttingly. "The names of these boys have already been struck off the school register. In short, they are expelled!"

A murmur of surprise ran round the assembly, all the more acute when the school porter appeared at the heels of Mr. Mitchell.

"Mr. West," rapped out the Head to the school porter, "take Richard Melton upon your shoulders—"

"He will do nothing of the kind!"

George Melton's voice rang out clear and sharp—and final. Gasps of astonishment escaped the assembly.

"Boys," continued Melton senior, addressing his brothers, "you will go at once to your dormitories, pack your boxes, and meet me in a quarter of an hour's time."

The only person who was not dumb-founded at this outburst appeared to be the Head himself. Without a word of protest he saw the twins and Matthew Melton turn on their heels and hurry out of Big Hall. Then he fixed George Melton with his watery eyes.

"St. Bart's would seem well rid of such turbulent characters as the Meltons," he said sneeringly. "Your impertinence has saved Mr. West an uncongenial task. George Melton, but for your age, I would cause you to take the place of your younger brothers. However, as you choose to free St. Bart's from your undesirable company at such short notice, I shall allow your insubordination and impertinence to go unpunished. Nevertheless, your guardian shall hear of this. Perhaps he can find a way to quell that arrogant spirit of yours."

It was on the tip of George Melton's tongue to "chastise" Dr. Saunders in the same way; but he controlled himself. With a look that Dr. Saunders was destined to remember at some distant date the one-time captain of the school walked out of Big Hall, the admiration of all the junior boys present, and the object of sympathy from the seniors.

Fifteen minutes later the dormitory windows were filled with eager and solicitous faces as the Meltons, bearing their trunks and boxes between them, passed out of the big gates of St. Bart's never to return.



"The names of these boys," said Dr. Saunders cuttingly, "have already been struck off the register. Mr. West," he added, turning to the school porter, "take Richard Melton upon your shoulders——" "He will do nothing of the kind!" George Melton's voice rang out clear and sharp—and final. Gasps of astonishment escaped the assembled school. "Boys," continued George, addressing his brothers, "you will go at once to your dormitories and pack your boxes!" (See page 24.)

And from the safe harbourage of a curtained window Dr. Samuel Saunders eyed their departure with a cunning grin, the while he rubbed his hands with satisfaction, after the manner of a man who has performed some advantageous move the value of which he alone knew and could gloat over.

A Surprise Meeting!

AS luck would have it the expelled Meltons came across a carrier's cart bound for the station, and without loss of time to the carrier their boxes and trunks, already labelled for London, were taken aboard.

"That's a load off our minds," said George, wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"And off our backs," chuckled the irrepressible twins. "Don't look so worried, George," added Marcus, noting the furrows in his brother's brow.

George smiled. Being the elder brother he felt that all the responsibility of their present position was due to him; and George Melton had a way of taking things to heart more than is good for the average person. But the twins and Matthew Melton found great novelty in the present situation—youth was in their favour.

Forcing a smile and a cheery conversation he felt far from feeling, George Melton slackened his steps. What awaited him and his brothers he had not the slightest idea, for their guardian, Justin Mahone, was a hard and bitter man—a bachelor, who dabbled in stock and shares, and who, if what rumour said was true, was something of a mysterious character. The fate of the Meltons was in his hands, for Justin Mahone was the executor of Murgatroyd Melton's will—a will that by reason of its peculiarities had aroused much comment in the courts when it had been admitted for probate.

The lights of the town were beginning to show up clearly now as the Meltons

left St. Bart's far behind. Along the road could be seen a group of young fellows all shouting at the top of their voices the strains of a popular music-hall ditty.

George Melton paid little heed at first to the party moving towards them until the face of the leader of the group became visible in the strong glare of light from a neighbouring street lamp. Then George Melton halted unconsciously, his hands clenching automatically, his rugged jaw thrust forward aggressively. For he had seen what his younger brothers had missed—the face of Bully Townsend, an assistant to one of the local butchers. Townsend claimed a sort of unchallenged leadership over a gang of rowdy, lazy youths—a regular pest to the neighbourhood and a continual source of menace to any who wore the colours of Bart's. They were soon known, by reason of their leader's name, as the "Townies."

In the past George Melton had thrashed the butcher's assistant for bullying a Second-Former. The thrashing had ended in a riot almost, for Bully Townsend had called upon his followers when he found himself beaten, urging them to take up the cudgels on his behalf. On that occasion George Melton had fought the fight of his life. Not for nothing had he been chosen to represent St. Bart's in the Public Schools' Boxing Championship at Aldershot. Not for nothing had he reached the final and lost the spoils of victory when the spoils were his for the asking.

But when he had engaged Bully Townsend's crowd—a lone hand fighting a score of vicious youths, help had come at an unexpected moment in the shape of a dozen St. Bart's fellows, brought to the spot by the Second-Form lad who, finding his captain quite competent to thrash Bully Townsend, had rushed back to the school in order to bring some of his chums on the spot to witness the "hiding."

The free fight, for thus it became in less than no time, ended in the complete rout of the Townies, Bully Townsend himself setting the example by showing a cleaner pair of heels than any of his pals. But before he had thus wisely retreated, Bully Townsend had sworn to be avenged upon George Melton.

And it was of that lurid threat George Melton thought now. Quickly he counted the number of "toughs" accompanying Bully Townsend—ten in all. Strong fellows all, their average age about nineteen.

With a grim expression George Melton turned to his young brothers. They, too, had spotted the crowd moving in their direction now, but wisely remained silent. "There's going to be trouble, kids," said George. "Will you face it out, or shall we beat a strategic retreat?"

"Retreat!" exclaimed Matthew Melton scornfully. "What, before this gang of rotters? Not likely!"

And the twins no less valiant or scornful chimed in:

"Let's give 'em socks, George!"

George nodded, and a steely gleam came into his blue eyes. But he did not underestimate his likely foes. If it came to a fight—and for his brothers' sake he fervently hoped that it wouldn't—the combat was going to be an unequal one.

Suddenly Bully Townsend caught sight of the ex-St. Bart's fellows, and immediately he let out a whoop of triumph.

"School kids, boys!" he roared, his beetle brows coming together so that they met. "And that hulking brute Melton's with 'em! This is our chance to wipe off the debt. No fear of any dashed kids from the school coming along to chip in this time."

He whispered a few words to his cronies, who at once spread themselves out across the entire width of the road, and strolled on still yelling at the top of their lungs.

Only a few yards separated them from the Meltons now.

"Ease up, kids," said George Melton softly. "Back against this wall—we'll wait for them."

The Meltons obeyed. They ranged themselves in a fighting group in front of the brick wall of a furniture repository—and waited.

"Ho—ho!" leered Bully Townsend, as he came on a level with them. "What are you school kids doing out of your bye-byes at this time of night?"

A coarse guffaw of laughter came from the "Townies" at their leader's words, a promise of what was to follow. But the laughter faded out as George Melton strode forward.

"I've got a fair idea of your intentions, Townsend," he said grimly. "I haven't known you now for five years without being able to sum you up pretty accurately. You're looking for trouble. I've got a sporting proposition to make to you—"

"Ho—ho!" leered Townsend, winking at his comrades. "Let's hear it!"

"I'm willing to take on together the two best among you," continued George Melton, "and give you all the fighting you want."

He looked fully capable of proving his words as he stood there; a scornful smile playing about the corners of his mouth. It was a sporting chance that he might shoulder the whole trouble himself and spare his brothers. But Bully Townsend was not prepared to take on such a generous—and hard-hitting—foe when he had a crowd of pals at his back. He winked at his comrades again.

"What do you take us for?" he demanded insolently. "You're going through the mill this time, an' no error, me lads. I see you've got yer bloomin' brothers with yer. Well, they can all take a 'iding, I suppose?"

He seemed to think there was a great joke in the words, for he laughed uproariously, and his cronies provided a splendid "echo."

Matthew Melton sidled up to his brother.

"You're a plucky lot of louts, I must say," he said boldly. "Let's get on with this hiding you're talking about."

The laughter went out of Bully Townsend's face in the instant, and a savage expression took root. He reached out with the intention of boxing Matthew's ears; but the ex-St. Bart's junior did not intend to suffer the insult. He side-stepped with consummate ease, and before Bully Townsend had quite grasped the fact that he had been made to look foolish a forceful straight left took him between the eyes.

Down he went in an undignified heap at the feet of his cronies, uttering a string of lurid imprecations. The next moment the fight had started.

Bully Townsend struggled to his feet and called upon his cronies. But they needed little urging. This was a fight to their liking—ten against four, and the four all younger than themselves.

"Keep your heads!" roared big George Melton, singling out the three largest of the Townies. "And keep together, kids!"

That was all George had time to say. The next moment he was hitting out with right good will. Two of the Townies staggered back with damaged noses, whilst the third, who had found himself opposite the sturdy ex-skipper of St. Bart's began to wish that he had chosen one of the twins as his opponent.

He thought so still more when he joined his pals on the ground—the variation of treatment this time being a rapidly swelling eye.

But not for long did the battle wage in the favour of the Meltons. The twins were barely holding their own. Their age, height, and reach, were severe handicaps. Only in one direction were they the superiors of the Townies, and that was in the matter of pluck. Marcus already had a nasty gash in his cheek, whilst both of Dick Melton's eyes had closed. Still they fought on, giving back all they received in quality if not in quantity.

Suddenly Matthew Melton was felled by a savage right-hander from Bully Townsend. A cheer went up from the Townies as they witnessed it. But the cheer goaded George Melton into a savage fury. He stood over the prostrate form of his brother, while the twins edged closer to him, and fought with all the ferocity of a tigress guarding its young.

Smack! Biff! Thud!

Three blows that took as many seconds to materialise put three of the Townies on their backs, streams of crimson flowing from their mouths. But they came on again with redoubled fury.

Now one of the twins was down—victim to a stealthy blow from one of the hangers-on of the crowd who preferred to wait on the outskirts of his fighting comrades until he saw an opportunity of dealing damage without being called upon to pay the price.

But George Melton saw the sneaking "brave," and immediately singled him out. Hitting out right and left, he forced a passage through the roughs and reached the cringing figure of the fellow who had put young Marcus down so dastardly. George's right fist sang through the air, and Marcus had been avenged. One of the toughs at least would play no further hand in that unequal fight for ten minutes to come.

Again George fought his way back to Matthew and the twins. All were on their feet now, although Marcus and Matthew were looking decidedly groggy. One look at their battered faces and George Melton waded into the Townies again. None could stand up before that human battering-ram. Bully Townsend

received the full benefit of a half-arm swing that shifted his jawbone a matter of an inch, and left him feeling anything but a fighter or a bully.

George himself had suffered considerable damage. Great streaks of crimson were gushing down his face, both eyes were puffed, both lips were gashed, but the spirit of the fighter burned on undiminished; burned on although the hard knuckles had bitten through the tightly-drawn flesh, leaving the bones exposed to view. His breath was coming in great gasps, the perspiration oozed out of him, but still those whirling fists would not be denied.

"Down 'im!" gasped Bully Townsend, scrambling to his feet and beckoning to three of his pals. "Get him down, and the rest will be nowhere!"

But that was easier said than done. The pluck had been knocked out of the majority of the Townies by this time, leaving only a rancorous hatred and a desire for revenge.

Big George Melton did not give them a chance to rally. He waded into them with a careless disregard of plunging fists that were not too particular where they landed. Down went the Townies in his passage under that terrific onslaught, leaving only Bully Townsend himself and another on their feet.

But the damage had been done for all that, although the victims were the twins and not their elder brothers. Three of the Townies had made a determined onslaught on the plucky youngsters, and force of numbers had told.

Smack!

Marcus sank down to the ground like a felled ox and lay still, uncannily still. Dicky was not a second behind him. Two cruel fists reached him—one in the pit of the stomach, the other fair on the point.

But the Townies had not time to gloat over their triumph, for big George Melton was fighting his way back to the wall with Matthew not far from him also hitting out lustily.

"It's now or never!" grunted George to his brother. "Let them have it, old boy!"

Four more blows were struck—the last four of that memorable fight. And then the Townies were in full flight, once more Bully Townsend showing the fastest pair of heels amongst them.

Big George silently gripped Matthew's hand as he watched the retreat, and then the two elder brothers bent over the twins.

George winced and shuddered as he looked at the bruised and battered faces of Dicky and Marcus, although his own features were swollen almost out of recognition.

"The curs!" he breathed, tenderly wiping a stream of crimson from a gash in Dicky's cheek. "The cowardly rotters!"

And Matthew, attending to Marcus, re-echoed his brother's sentiments.

With all the care and tenderness of a mother for her children, Matthew and George Melton did what they could for the comfort of the twins. Quite five minutes had gone by before either opened his eye, or, to be more correct, before either attempted to open his eye. Great puffs of bruised flesh had formed on each cheekbone, almost reducing the eyes to narrow slits.

"Hello, boys!" said Marcus, with an attempt at cheerfulness, an attempt that caused him great pain, for to wrinkle

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Suddenly Matthew Melton was felled by a savage right-hander from Bully Townsend. A cheer went up from the Townies as they witnessed it. But the cheer goaded George into a fury. He stood over the prostrate form of his brother, the twins edging closer to him, and hit out right and left with all the ferocity of a tiger. (See page 26.)

his battered features in a smile was like unto the slow drawing of a tooth.

"Have they gone?"

"Yes, poor old son," said George, with a lump in his throat. "Are you hard hit?"

"No more than any of us," returned Marcus bravely. "Poor old Dicky here is in a bad way, George."

"Not so much of it," came the hoarse voice of Dicky, who had recovered somewhat. "I—I'm as fit as a —"

"Easy, old fellow," said George, pillowing his younger brother's head in his strong arm. "You had better rest for a bit. You're done up!"

And despite the avowals of the twins that they were fit as fiddles and prepared to move off without delay, George and Matthew persisted gently and yet firmly that they must rest for awhile.

The Occupant of the Carriage!

TEN minutes had now passed since the last of the Townies had disappeared from sight, but suddenly Matthew caught the tramp of many feet along the road, and he looked up sharply at George.

The big brother of the family had heard the sounds, too, and an anxious look crept into his face. Were the Townies coming back with reinforcements, he asked himself?

The bare thought was enough to send a shudder down his spine. Not that big George Melton ever shirked a fight; more often than not he revelled in one, for he was by nature a born fighter. But his strength had left him after that stern tussle, and he was thinking of his brothers—those brothers who had fought as only Meltons can—those brothers who were now reduced temporarily to battered wrecks.

Big George rose to his feet and crossed the road. The tramp of footsteps—running footsteps—were nearer now. What did they mean? An agile spring and George Melton had clambered on to the brick wall of the

furniture repository. And what he saw from that point of vantage caused a low cry of anxiety to escape him.

Along the road, at present obscured from the view of those below by the bend in the road, were racing a crowd of Townies. At a rough calculation George put their number at twenty. In the van was Bully Townsend, no mistaking his ugly—yes, and battered—features, despite the dim light that obtained.

With a nimble spring George Melton was on the ground again beside his brother.

"Matthew," he said anxiously, "can you carry Dicky?"

"Eh, what's that?" gasped Dick indignantly.

"Never mind what he says," continued George hurriedly. "The Townies are coming back again—this time there is a whole crowd of them. We can't possibly stay and fight it out. We must beat an honourable retreat to the station."

"I get you!" returned Matthew. And without more ado he stooped and picked up Dicky, tucking him under his arm in a fashion which under entirely different circumstances might have been regarded as comical—as far as Dicky was concerned, at any rate.

For George to do likewise was but the matter of a second. With Marcus under his left arm and Matthew similarly laden by his side, the two elder brothers broke into a run.

They were out of sight of their pursuers by the time the latter had rounded the bend, every second widening the gap between them.

"Put a spurt on, Matthew," panted George. "We shall give them the slip. I rather fancy they won't come too near the station for fear of running foul of the police."

He quickened his pace as he spoke, and Matthew, some two years his junior, found it was all he could do to keep up with his brother's long, loping stride. He stuck gamely to his task, however,

until he trod on a loose stone. A spasm of pain shot through his ankle, and he all but fell.

"I can't go on, George," he said faintly, limping to a halt. "I've ricked my confounded ankle!"

Something like a groan escaped George Melton as he slackened down. He glanced at his brother's face, twisted in pain, and then looked back along the road for sign of his pursuers.

But Bully Townsend and his cronies were not yet in sight. Evidently they had paused by the old brick wall, unable to account for the absence of the Meltons.

George was taking no chances. Without remark he snatched the inert figure of Dicky from beneath Matthew's arm, and the next moment he was racing off again—this time with a double burden.

"You can't carry them both!" panted Matthew. "I—"

"Come on!" snapped George abruptly. "Stick it out, Matthew—not far to go now."

Relieved of the weight of Dicky, Matthew could now manage to limp along at the heels of his elder brother. And a strange procession they made. One old yokel, who was trudging towards them, stopped and stared in amazement as they went by.

"Well, Oi'll be 'anged!" he exclaimed, scratching his head. "Be this some new game?"

A few moments later the Meltons entered the station precincts. Then, and not till then, did George put the twins on their feet. Matthew sped away to the booking-office for the tickets to London, and returned in a breathless state a few moments later with the information that a train was about to start for town. The next train, he had discovered, did not leave until midnight.

"Come on, kids," said George, breaking into a run. "We'll catch this one."

(Continued on next page.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 867.

FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!*(Continued from previous page.)*

Whispering a few words to a porter whom he knew by sight, concerning the labelling and shipping of their baggage to Waterloo Station, George caught up with his brothers just as they reached the ticket-barrier.

The collector was closing the gate. "Too late, young gent!" he laughed, barring the Meltons' progress. "Stop—just about to start."

George had set his heart on catching that particular train, and this was a time for action, not words. He shoved the collector aside, and the next moment the Meltons were racing along the platform, spread out in single file. In their wake they left a group of yelling porters and an enraged ticket-collector. People turned and stared at the Meltons as though they were dangerous customers that had broken loose from gaol. A porter near the carriage into which the Meltons clambered as the train got under weigh tried to stop them, but he was gently and firmly "sat down."

The train drew out of the station

slowly and majestically, leaving four ex-members of St. Bart's gazing out of the window at the distant pile of grey stone buildings that had once sheltered them. And each of them was wondering whether he would ever see those fine old walls again.

George breathed a deep sigh of relief when the school faded into the dusk, and turned his attention to his brothers. Then and then only did he become aware of another passenger in the carriage.

And his identity came as the biggest shock of the day. For the sharp, scowling face—the more clearly defined now that the overhead light had been switched on—peering out from the corner of the compartment was the face of Justin Mahone—the Meltons' guardian!

(Such an ill-timed meeting with the man who holds their future careers in his hand, so to speak, leaves the Meltons gasping in astonishment. A surprise is in store for them—and for you! Next week's long instalment of this new serial will tell you all about it. Don't miss it, chums!)

FOES OF THE SAHARA!*(Continued from page 21.)*

Famous Five, closing in on the sprawling Arab, paused. His burgous was drenched with blood, the fierce dusky face had gone grey, the savage black eyes rolled with fear and agony. Bou Saoud, the Spahi, had fallen on his own knife as he rolled over under Johnny Bull's blow, and the blade was buried almost to the hilt in his body.

Bou Saoud was dead!

The blazing sun rose higher over the Sahara. A score of yards from the gate of the lonely Bordj a heap of sand hid for ever the savage Spahi. On the roof, Harry Wharton & Co. watched, with anxious hearts, for Ibrahim.

THE END.

(Our plucky Removites might well 'frisk' anxiously on Ibrahim's account, for the Arab guide's safe return to the Bordj means the first sign of success in their hazardous venture. Be sure and read "In the Power of the Sheikh!"—next week's glorious story of Harry Wharton & Co.)



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