

A Superb FREE Gift INSIDE!

No. 966. Vol. XXX.

Week Ending August 21st, 1926.

The Magnet 2^d

Library

EVERY
MONDAY.



**THIS
Magnificent
STAND-UP
CUT-OUT**

of
**M.W. TATE
(SUSSEX)**

FREE
*In This
Issue!*

“ BOUND FOR BHANIPUR ! ”

This week's amazing story of
Harry Wharton & Co. in India

AUSTRALIA'S CAPTAIN

Forms the subject of next week's stunning Free Gift.

Every reader of the MAGNET should make absolutely certain of this

**FINE CUT-OUT
STAND-UP PHOTO**

By ordering a copy of next Monday's

MAGNET

NOW!



H. L. COLLINS. (In action).

There will be a rush to secure this wonderful Free Gift, boys. Mind you are not in the "disappointed" queue

NEXT WEEK!



GOOD OLD TATE!

I SN'T this week's dandy cut-out photo of the famous Sussex and England bowler the goods, boys? What-ho! A collection of cricketers' photos without our "world beater" amongst them would be incomplete. Readers have even gone to the trouble of writing me to satisfy themselves beforehand that "Maurice" was to be included in the set, but yours truly was not going to leave out our best bowler, not likely! And now to next week's gorgeous Free Gift—the eighth of the series. H. L. Collins, the clever Australian skipper is the man to look for. You'll find him all right between the pages of next Monday's MAGNET—in photo form, of course. All the same for that he looks very much alive, for the likeness is extremely good, and depicts Collins in careful, calculating mood. See to it that you add "Herby" Collins to your set; in short, order next week's MAGNET in good time.

HOW TO STAND THEM UP!

I should like to say a few words about making these gorgeous Free Gifts stand up. It's quite a simple matter, believe me. Hold this week's wonderful photo of M. W. Tate in your hand. At the extreme left, on the green base, you will see a short vertical black line marked "Cut." Cut along this line from the top DOWNWARDS, taking care not to cut farther than about an eighth of an inch from the bottom of the base. Got that? Good! Now, on the extreme right of the base you will see another short black line marked "Cut." Cut UPWARDS this time, taking care to stop a little short of the top of the base. Now bend the stand back at the dotted lines, and interlock the cuts you have made into one another. You will thus have made a strong stand which will support the figure nicely and firmly.

**"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL"
AND SEPTEMBER 1st!**

Only a few more days to wait! "Hurrah!" Some of you are saying that, I know, for the fame of "The Holiday Annual" is world-wide, and its loyal readers have only one complaint against it, namely, that it comes out but once a year. Still, this year's wonder volume you will agree has been worth waiting for. The stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, etc., are better than ever, the layout is even more attractive and the colour plates and black-and-white illustrations are top-hole and pleasing to the eye. Little need for me to rub it in about ordering the "H. A." in advance, for most of you will trot round to your newsagent with that object in view some time this week.

"EVERY BOY'S HOBBY ANNUAL"

This is the title of an entirely new Annual which will take its place with the "H. A." on the bookstalls, September 1st. Lots of people fight shy of new things, but I'll wager my best Sunday hat that this new "Hobby Annual" will go down like hot cakes. No matter what your hobby is this monster volume deals with it from every possible angle. It is informative without being too technical—a great thing in its favour—and each hobby article, written by an expert, is strengthened with carefully executed drawings, photos and diagrams. In addition, there are three fine charts given free with this Annual, dealing respectively with Wireless, Woodworking Joints, and Fretwork. These will be found in a special pocket attached to the cover. This is a unique opportunity for you handymen to add a really useful book to the workshop library, and "Every Boy's Hobby Annual" should be ordered right away. Don't forget—Out September 1st.

DELICIOUS BOX OF SHERBET FREE!

When you're at the seaside keep a sharp look-out for the MAGNET Special Representative. He's got heaps of boxes of delicious sherbet to give you chaps. You'll find him on the beach, and if he sees you holding a copy of the MAGNET, he'll be pleased to hand you a box of sherbet FREE. But you must be holding your copy of the MAGNET, otherwise he won't know if you are a MAGNET reader. He'll be looking out for you on the beach, never fear, so it's up to you, chaps, to make yourselves known and show your favourite paper as prominently as possible.

Next Monday's Programme:

**"IN THE HEART OF THE HIMALAYAS!"
By Frank Richards.**

This is another long complete story in the grand holiday series, dealing with Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in India, and it's bang up to the mark! Mind you read it, chums!

**"CURLEW ISLAND!"
By David Goodwin.**

There will, of course, be another stirring instalment of this popular serial. Look out for it!

A SPLIT SUPPLEMENT!

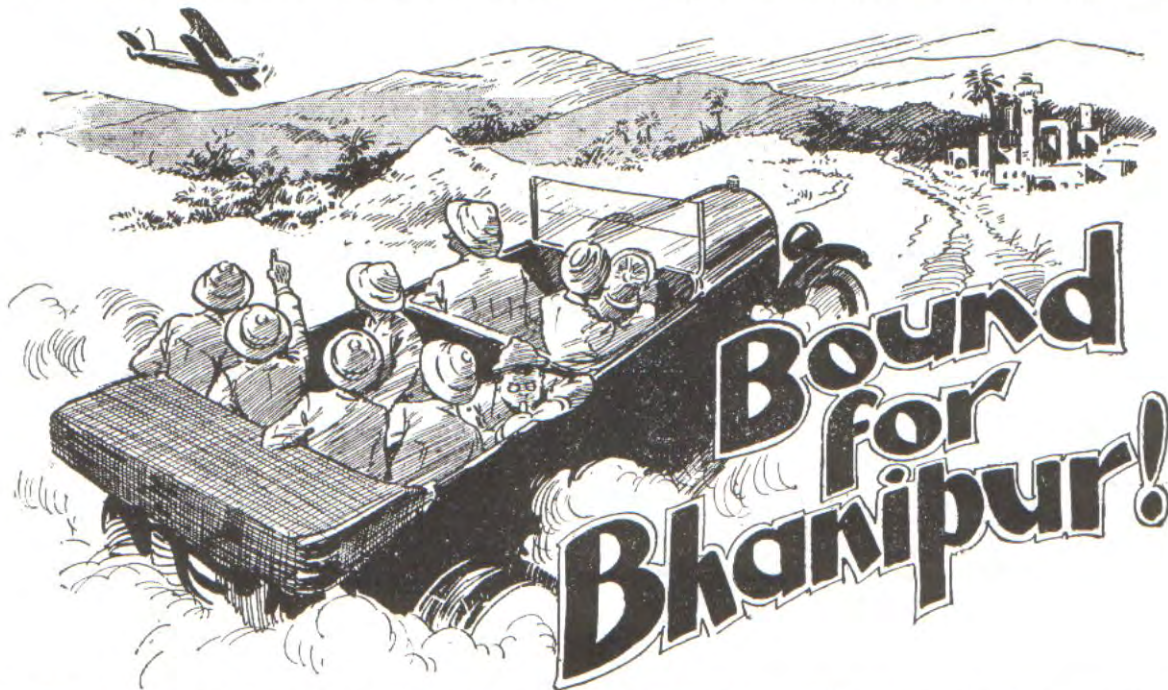
Next Monday's special supplement is divided over cricket and football and will be found all the more interesting on that account, as King Cricket has had his reign.

RESULT OF "BOUNDARIES" CONTEST No. 2.

will be found in next week's bumper issue. As your name might be amongst the prizewinners, it's advisable to make certain of your copy of the MAGNET without delay. Chin chin, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

HURREE SINGH'S KINGDOM! Curious to see the state over which their dusky chum is ruler, Harry Wharton & Co. set out for Bhanipur with light hearts. But they find that peril lurks at every twist and turn in the trail!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with their Amazing Adventures in India. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Looking After Bunter!

"DELHI next stop!"

"Better wake up, Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter was snoring.

His deep and far from musical snore mingled with the rattle and roar of the train.

If there was one thing that Billy Bunter could do, and do well, it was sleeping. The voices of Harry Wharton & Co. did not disturb him; neither did the rattling and jolting of the train.

The soft Indian evening had closed in; a myriad of stars glimmered in the sky.

The Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, were tired with their long journey. But they did not think of closing their eyes; the sights and sounds of Central India were new and strange to them, and of endless interest. But William George Bunter, regardless of the sights and sounds of mysterious Hindustan, was sleeping as if he was in the old Remove dormitory at Greyfriars school.

"Bunter!"

Bob Cherry leaned over the fat junior and shook him vigorously by the shoulder.

"Groogh!"

"Bunter!" bawled Bob.

Billy Bunter's eyes opened wide behind his big spectacles.

"Ow! Beast!" "Tain't rising bell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Next stop, Delhi!" said Bob Cherry.

"We get out at Delhi, Bunter."

"Oh!"

Bunter scrambled to his feet.

His deep snore no longer echoed through the car. The silence was both grateful and comforting.

"I say, you fellows, wait for me!" exclaimed Bunter.

"We'll wait!" said Johnny Bull, with a chuckle.

"The waitfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Bunter!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Where's my hat? Where's my bag? I say, you fellows, where's my things? You might lend a fellow a hand!" howled Bunter. "Just like you to leave me behind in the train, just like you left me behind at Bombay, you beasts! I believe you want to leave me in the train."

"My esteemed Bunter——"

"Oh, shut up! Where's my hat?" roared Bunter.

"Here you are!" grinned Frank Nugent. "You've been sitting on it, old fat bean!"

"Beast!"

Bunter took the pith sun hat, and punched it out into the shape of a hat again and jammed it on his head.

"Where's my bag?"

"Here you are!" said Harry Wharton.

"Where's my rug?"

"Catch!" said Bob Cherry, and he tossed Bunter his rug.

"Whoop!"

Billy Bunter caught the rug with his head, and it folded up round his fat features.

He dragged it off and gave the playful Bob a withering glare through his big spectacles.

"That the lot?" asked Bob cheerily, quite unwithered by the glare.

"Yes, you rotter!"

"What I like about Bunter," said Bob, "is his graceful, polished way of thanking a fellow for lending him a hand."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm ready now," growled Bunter.

The fat junior blinked round him. From the windows of the car there was no sign yet of a station. At the other end of the car, Colonel Wharton sat smoking a cigar and reading the "Pioneer." Harry Wharton & Co. had

not yet started to gather up their paraphernalia.

Bunter looked perplexed.

He stood, with all his possessions, ready to disembark; but the train rattled on without a sign of stopping.

"Cherry, you beast!"

"Yes, old bean?"

"Didn't you say Delhi was the next stop?"

"Certainly!"

Bunter blinked at the windows again. Still there was no sign of a station. He blinked round at the grinning faces of the Famous Five.

It began to dawn upon his fat brain that his leg had been pulled.

"When do we get into Delhi?" he demanded.

"Can't say exactly," answered Bob Cherry cheerily. "Somewhere about half an hour or an hour, I fancy."

"You—you—you——" gasped Bunter.

"You told me it was the next stop."

"So it is."

"You—you silly chump!" roared Bunter. "Was there any need to wake me up if we don't get in for an hour?"

"Not at all!"

"You burbling fathead! What did you wake me for, then?" bawled Bunter.

"Fed-up with your snoring, old bean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you——" gasped Bunter.

The expression on Billy Bunter's fat face seemed to have an exhilarating effect on the chums of the Greyfriars Remove. They roared.

"Beasts!"

William George Bunter disposed of his hat, his bag, and his rug, and sat down again and settled himself once more to balmy slumber.

Fortunately—for Bunter, if not for his travelling companions—he was able to drop into slumber at a moment's notice.

Snore!

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"Going it again already!" said Bob Cherry. "Jevver hear such a thumping row?"

"The snorefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Let him rip!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "He's less trouble asleep."

And Billy Bunter continued to snore contentedly until the train glided into Delhi, under the lamp-lights.

The train stopped at last.

Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived at the ancient Mogul capital on their long journey to Bhanipur, the native home of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Colonel Wharton rose to his feet.

"Delhi!" he said. "Come, my boys!"

Snore!

"Better wake Bunter again!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Even Bunter will want to be woke up now we're at Delhi. Bunter! Bunter! Bunter!"

Snore!

"Bunter!" roared Bob.

"The wakefulness is essential, my esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking the Owl of the Remove by the shoulder.

"Groogh!"

"My esteemed snoreful Bunter——"

"Leggo!"

"Delhi, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter!" said the nabob, shaking the Owl of the Remove again. "Wake up!"

Bunter opened his eyes.

He blinked quite furiously at the dusky face of the Nabob.

"You beast! Leggo! Let a fellow snooze!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter——"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter closed his eyes again.

Evidently the Owl of the Remove took it for granted that his fat leg was being pulled again. But the other fellows had followed Colonel Wharton out of the car now, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave the sleeping beauty another shake.

"Bunter——"

The fat junior opened his eyes again and gave Hurree Singh a glare of concentrated ferocity.

"Can't you let a fellow sleep?"

"My esteemed Bunter, we have arrived fully reached Delhi, and——"

"Take that, then!"

"Ow!" roared the nabob as Billy Bunter landed out with a fat fist.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh "took" it. He had no choice about that. He took it on his dusky nose, and sat down in the carriage.

"Now leave a fellow alone!" growled Bunter.

"Ow!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh staggered to his feet.

The dusky nabob was one of the best-tempered fellows in the Greyfriars Remove. But the best of tempers was bound to fail under the strain of William George Bunter.

Bunter settled back to sleep again, apparently considering the incident closed.

Two dusky hands grasped him.

"Ow! Wow!" roared Bunter. "You black rotter, leggo! You—— Oh! Ow! Wow! Yoooop!"

Bunter whirled along the carriage in the sinewy grasp of the nabob of Bhanipur. He hardly realised whether he was on his head or his heels as he was whirled along.

He went out upon the platform with a swoop.

Bump!

Bunter sat down.

He sat and roared. Harry Wharton & Co. burst into a roar, though of a different kind.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Ow! Wow! Yooop!" roared Bunter. "My hat! I—I'll—I'll slaughter him! I—I—I'll——"

"Bunter!"

Colonel Wharton rapped out the word.

"Ow! Yes! Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"I'm hurt!"

"Be quiet!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter blinked at the colonel, almost overcome with indignation.

"You fat duffer!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Did you want to stop in the train and be shunted into a siding?"

Bunter blinked round him.

"Oh! Is this Delhi?" he stuttered.

"Did you think it was Clapham Junction?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter picked himself up and rolled after the Greyfriars party.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton & Co. in Delhi!

"SHA'N'T want rocking to sleep to-night!" yawned Bob Cherry.

The Greyfriars fellows were tired after their long railway journey from Bombay. After supper in the Delhi hotel they were shown up to their room—a large, airy apartment, with windows looking on a court where graceful palm trees waved and swayed in the starlight. Pandy Din, the colonel's kitmutghar, was making up their beds, with the help of the peon servant. Billy Bunter sat down and watched them with a dissatisfied face.

Travelling in India was not precisely like travelling in Western countries, and Bunter did not consider that he was receiving all the comforts and attentions to which so important a personage was entitled.

"I say, you fellows!" he grunted.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the grouse now?" inquired Bob.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"I'm not grouching, you beast!"

"Not grouching?" asked Bob in astonishment. "What's the matter, then? Are you ill?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Bunter didn't have enough supper," said Johnny Bull, shaking his head. "He ate only enough for a couple of elephants."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "I've been thinking——"

"What's the good of beginning that, at your time of life?" demanded Bob.

"And what are you doing it with, anyhow? Gammon!"

"I've been thinking," roared Bunter. "Travelling in India seems to be quite different from travelling in England."

"It's a different country, you see," explained Bob. "Look on the giddy map and you'll see——"

"Oh, don't be an ass! It seems to be the custom here for travellers to take their own servants to wait on them in hotels," said Bunter. "Now, I don't see why this journey should be done on the cheap."

"Not when we've got a millionaire in the party," assented Bob. "You can send wireless telegrams from here, I believe. What about sending to Bunter Court for a few thousand pounds?"

Bunter did not heed that suggestion.

"Inky's got lots of money," he said.

"It was understood that my exes would be stooed, of course. But I'm not the fellow to be under any obligation to anybody, I hope. Any small sums that are advanced to me will be settled later."

"Are you expecting a postal-order in Delhi?" asked Bob.

And the juniors chuckled. Since leaving Greyfriars School much less than usual had been heard of Billy Bunter's celebrated postal-order.

"As a matter of fact, I rather think that a good many remittances will have accumulated at Greyfriars by this time," said Bunter. "But, of course, that's neither here nor there. We're in Delhi now."

"The remittances are neither here nor there, that's a cert!" said Bob, and the juniors chuckled again.

"To come to the point," continued the Owl of the Remove, "we're travelling with only two servants. When I'm home for the holidays at Bunter Court I'm accustomed to a host of menials."

"Go it!"

"You fellows are not accustomed to the decencies of life," explained Bunter.

"It's different with me. You can take a whack in that blinking kitmutghar and that blinking peon, but I think I'm entitled to a servant to myself. I think it's my due."

"Go ahead, then," said Bob. "I don't suppose the colonel would object; and there are plenty of native servants to be engaged if you want them. You've only to go to an agent—there's an agent's office at the Kashmir Gate, not very far from this hotel. Walk round in the morning and engage a whole army of 'em."

"That's what I was thinking of," said Bunter. "I don't want a lot of attention. I can rough it, I hope. But I shall want a servant to myself, and unless I have one I don't see how I can consent to come any farther with this party. It was my intention to see Inky safe to Bhanipur; but something is due to oneself, you know."

"You're not thinking of deserting us?" ejaculated Bob.

"I am!" said Bunter firmly. "Unless I'm treated decently I shall chuck the whole thing."

Bob looked round.

"Where's my handkerchief?" he asked. "Somebody lend me a hanky. I'm going to cry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is a serious matter," hooted Bunter.

"My mistake. I wasn't aware of that," yawned Bob. "Now, if Bunter's done talking, you fellows, let's turn in. I'm sleepy, and Bunter's entertaining conversation makes me sleepier."

"The drowsiness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I haven't finished yet," howled Bunter.

"We'll turn in, all the same," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You never have finished wagging your chin, you know."

"I mean what I say," said Bunter. "I'm going to engage a native servant in the morning, to look after me specially. If there's any mean and sordid argument about the fellow's wages I leave it to you. If you choose to swindle him I can't stop you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's final," said Bunter. "After brekker to-morrow I'm going round to the agent's to engage an ayah."

"A—a—a what?" ejaculated Wharton.

"An ayah," said Bunter.

"You're going to engage an ayah?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, staring at Bunter blankly.

"Yes. Native servants here are called ayahs," Bunter condescended to explain.

"I've picked up some Hindustani, you know. Not like you dense duffers; you

"Beast!"

"Dry up!"

"Old Wharton won't let me carry a revolver," said Bunter peevishly. "I don't feel safe without a revolver."

"We jolly well shouldn't be safe if you had one, fathead!"

"Yah!"

Bob Cherry slumbered again, and for a time there was silence. A soft breeze came in from the palm-gardens through the light curtains at the windows. Bunter closed his eyes, but opened them again.

"I say, you fellows——"

Deep breathing answered him. The Famous Five were all asleep.

"Wharton!" shouted Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" Wharton awoke again. "Is that Bunter? What is it now, you fat duffer?"

"I was thinking of snakes——"

"What?"

"Are there any snakes in Delhi?"

"I wish there was a boa-constrictor, and that he had you in his inside!" said the captain of the Remove in concentrated tones. "If you wake me up again I'll scalp you!"

"Beast!"

Once more there was silence and slumber. But a few minutes later the voice of William George Bunter shattered the silence.

"Wharton! I say, Wharton! Don't be a selfish beast, you know! Look here, Wharton——"

"Eh?" Harry Wharton's eyes opened.

"What about tigers?"

"Tigers?"

"Yes, tigers. Can't tigers get in here?"

Harry Wharton did not give his opinion on the possibility of tigers getting into a Delhi hotel. He groped for a boot.

Whiz!

"Oh, my hat! Yaroooh! Whooooop!"

"If you want another boot, Bunter I'll——"

"Ow! Wow! Beast!"

And the voice of Bunter was heard no more, and at long last there was peace.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Morning in Delhi!

COLONEL WHARTON and the Famous Five breakfasted cheerily in the sunny morning at a table set among the palm-trees in the hotel gardens. Billy Bunter was not down yet; he was putting in a little extra sleep, doubtless feeling safe from snakes and tigers in the day-time. The absence of Bunter did not detract from the cheeriness of the breakfast-party—rather the reverse. There were a good many guests at the Delhi hotel, and many were breakfasting in the garden in the cool of the morning, and unnumbered native servants came and went, soft-footed and silent. Pandi Din waited on the juniors, with a cheery, brown face.

The juniors looked about them a good deal, interested in their new surroundings. At Bombay they had stayed in a bungalow, and since then they had been on the Indian railways, and this was their first experience of hotel life in India. It was a matter of keen interest to them, that they were in the ancient capital of the Mogul Empire, the city that had seen such desperate fighting in the days of the Mutiny. The Indian Mutiny, hitherto, had been little more than a section of history to the

Greyfriars juniors, but now they were among some of its scenes—within a walk was the famous "Ridge" whence the British operations were carried on—close at hand were the places where the British troops had closed in desperate strife with the mutineer sepoys.

Naturally, the juniors wanted to see something of those historic scenes, as Colonel Wharton easily understood. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had been in Delhi before, but it was new and strange to his comrades.

"You would like a trot through the city, of course?" the colonel remarked, with a smile, when breakfast was over.

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry.

"I have to take Hurree Singh to call upon the Governor-General," said Colonel Wharton. "There will be no harm in your taking a stroll through the city, with Pandi Din to look after you. Keep together, and do not get out of Pandi Din's sight."

"We'll be jolly careful, uncle," said Harry.

And when the colonel and the nabob were gone, the four Removeites of Greyfriars prepared for their "trot" through the historic city, to see as much as could be seen in a day; for on the morrow

the morning his deep snore was to be heard. When Bunter turned out at last, and came down to breakfast, he found the peon, who informed him that the colonel sahib and the juniors and Pandi Din were gone. Bunter grunted.

"Just like the rotters, to clear off and leave a fellow on his own," he growled. "Well, give me some brekker, anyhow."

And a breakfast of considerable dimensions having been disposed of, Bunter ordered the peon to guide him to the agency at the Kashmir Gate, where he was quite resolved to engage the "ayah" for his own personal service—a much more important business, in Bunter's opinion, than seeing any of the sights of the great city.

In fact, nothing could transcend the importance of William George Bunter's personal comfort being properly looked after. Had the Viceroy of India taken that matter under his especial care, Bunter would doubtless have considered that an eminently proper state of affairs. At least, he was going to have a special native servant of his own, and Bunter had little doubt that the native would become devotedly attached to him—recognising what a great sahib Bunter was, and admiring him accordingly. He would be, in fact, the "faithful nigger" Bunter had read about in books—and Bunter was assured that he had personal qualities calculated to inspire faithfulness in a "nigger."

A faithful nigger who should rejoice in Bunter's smile, and tremble at his frown, was exactly what the Owl of the Remove wanted. As for the paltry question of the nigger's wages, Bunter was prepared to leave that little detail to be managed by his comrades. Sordid details of that kind were beneath him.

Bunter rolled importantly into the agency by the Kashmir Gate, where almost anything could be obtained, from railway tickets and rickshaws and round tours, to bearers and guides and time-tables and telegrams. There were plenty of tourists going in and out, mostly with red faces under white topees, and some with guide-books under their arms. A drowsy young man sat up and took notice when Bunter inquired of him whether he could engage a native servant there, and he answered that Bunter could, but on learning that the native servant required was an ayah, the young man, with a jerk of his pen, directed Bunter to another department.

Bunter rolled into that department, and found it in charge of a fat, perspiring Eurasian gentleman, who fanned himself considerably, and inquired in a languid voice what Bunter wanted. The Eurasian gentleman being half-Hindu, did not really feel the heat so much as he pretended, but he felt that it was due to his European half to affect to be quite overcome by it.

"Yes," he told Bunter. "We can recommend a good ayah—a reliable ayah who has served in good families."

"That's what I want," said Bunter. "Nothing second-class for me, you know. And at once, you know."

The Eurasian gentleman fanned himself again, and opened a book. In that book he wrote Bunter's name, and the address of the hotel.

"Will convenience be consulted adequately if I shall send ayah to hotel this evening?"

"That's all right."

"The question of salary——"

"Never mind that," said Bunter. "If I get what I want, I don't mind paying well for it."

"Sahib can rely upon ayah recommended by this agency. We have on

*Don't Miss Our
EIGHTH
FREE
GIFT—
Next Monday!*

early the party were resuming the journey by railroad to Lahore.

Bunter was not yet down, and Wharton went to call him. He found the Owl of the Remove snoring.

"Bunter!"

"Groogh! Gerrout!"

"We're going out——"

"Go, then, and be blown!"

Wharton grinned.

"Don't you want to come, fathead? It's the only chance of seeing something of Delhi."

Bunter gave him a sleepy blink.

"Blow Delhi!" was his answer.

"It's an interesting place to see, you know."

"I don't think much of it! Buzz off!" And the captain of the Remove buzzed off, leaving Bunter to have his sleep out.

"Isn't Bunter coming along?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No. He's putting in an extra snooze."

"Good old Bunter! There's times when a fellow feels quite obliged to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And under the care of Pandi Din, the juniors walked out of the hotel and started their inspection of the Mogul city. Billy Bunter went on sleeping contentedly; and till quite a late hour in

our list only those with worthy recommendations of good families."

"Good!" said Bunter.

And he rolled out satisfied.

Outside, he looked for the peon. He had not told the man to wait, but had expected him to do so. The peon, however, was gone.

"Cheeky nigger!" grunted Bunter.

But Bunter did not mind very much. He decided upon a stroll through the city on his own, and he rolled away cheerily, his fat face crimson with warmth, his spectacles gleaming under the shade of his topee. But it was very hot in the city by the Jumna, and Bunter was soon tired of exertion. He rolled down the famous Chandni Chauk, and looked round for somewhere to rest. Having found a seat under a big, shady tree, Bunter sat down, and for some minutes watched the people passing and re-passing. Finally his head nodded forward, and his eyes closed behind his big spectacles, and he dozed; and the snore of William George Bunter was added to the other interesting sounds of the ancient Mogul capital.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Sleeping Beauty!

"LOTS to be seen here," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, lots!" agreed Nugent.

"The lotfulness is terrific, as Inky would say if he were with us," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "But it's jolly hot!"

"It is—it are!" agreed Johnny Bull.

Pandy Din had acted as guide to the juniors, and they had seen a great deal of the ancient capital on the banks of the Jumna. They had had a look at the celebrated Jami Masjid, and at several of the scenes of the fighting in the old days of the Mutiny; and now they were strolling along the Chandni Chauk, feeling pleasantly tired. They stopped under the shade of a leafy tree out of the blaze of the sun. A low, rumbling sound came to their ears as they stopped, but they did not for the moment observe it. Bob Cherry mopped his brow, fanned himself with his sun-hat, and put it on again. Undoubtedly it was warm in Delhi.

"About time we got back to the hotel," said Wharton. "My uncle will be back before this with Inky."

Bob glanced up at the cloudless sky. "Storm coming on, I fancy," he said. "Don't you fellows notice the thunder in the distance?"

The juniors listened.

A whirring rumble came to their ears, distinctly like the muttering of distant thunder.

"I suppose they have sudden thunderstorms in this heat," remarked Harry Wharton.

Johnny Bull grinned.

"If we were in the old dorm at Greyfriars, I should say that that was Bunter snoring," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton called to Pandy Din, who was standing like a bronze statue at a little distance, waiting the pleasure of the sahibs.

"Is there going to be a storm, Pandy Din?"

"I think not, sahib."

"Isn't that thunder?"

The kitnuthgar grinned.

"No thunder, sahib—it is one that sleeps!" he said. He made a gesture towards a seat on the other side of the big, shady tree.

"Oh!" said Bob, with a chuckle.

"Some giddy tourist taking a nap in the heat of the day."

"It is the little fat sahib!" said Pandy Din.

"What? Bunter?"

"Han, sahib."

The juniors moved round the big tree towards the seat and stared at the sleeper thereon.

It was William George Bunter.

He was fast asleep, with his fat little legs stretched out and his head leaping forward under his sun-hat. His snore was deep and incessant.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"It's Bunter, turned up like a bad penny! I wonder if he's engaged his giddy ayah yet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton frowned.

"He ought not to be out alone," he said. "He knows jolly well that he ought not. The fat-head should have come with us, or stayed in the hotel. He caused trouble enough at Bombay by wandering off on his own against orders."

"Let's gather him up now," said Johnny Bull.

"Bunter!" shouted Bob.

Bunter did not wake.

He was tired and he was sleepy. He was plunged deep into slumber, dreaming of the tuckshop at Greyfriars and unlimited jam-tarts. Even Bob's stentorian shout did not awaken him.

"My hat! He's going it!" said Nugent.

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

Bunter certainly was going it. For quite a considerable distance along the Chandni Chauk his sonorous snoring could be heard. Tourists who passed him glanced round and stared; natives grinned at him; and Bunter slept and snored on unheeding.

The juniors contemplated the groaning Owl of the Remove with grinning faces.

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

"Better wake him," said Harry. "We can take him back with us. My uncle would be waxy if he knew that the fat idiot had wandered out by himself."

"Bunter!"

"Bunty!"

"Fathead!"

The Owl of the Remove snored on.

"Hold on a minute!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin, as Johnny Bull was about to grasp the fat junior by the shoulder and shake him.

"What's the game?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Only a little jest on the giddy 'sleeping beauty,'" said Bob. Evidently the torrid Indian climate had not undermined Bob's exuberant spirits.

His chums watched him as he proceeded, a dusky grin dawning even on the bronze face of Pandy Din.

Bob had a copy of the "Allahabad Pioneer" under his arm. He detached the leaves of the newspaper and proceeded to pin them round Bunter's topee in a pyramidal form, changing the topee into an enormous conical top-hat of paper.

The remains of the newspaper he twisted into sections, attached to a string like the tail of a kite.

The string was tied to the back of Bunter's hat.

Bob Cherry stood back to survey his handiwork with a satisfied grin. There was a chuckle from the other juniors.

"Bunter ought to make a sensation, got up like that!" said Bob. "Well,



In his tall paper hat, with the kite-tail stringing behind it, Billy Bunter strolled down the Chandni Chauk. A plump Eurasian, coming towards him, stared and then backed away, with alarm in his olive face. The expression on the fat gentleman's countenance plainly indicated that he had fallen in with a lunatic! (See Chapter 4.)

he likes making a sensation—he loves the limelight! He will get lots when he walks round Delhi like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Still Bunter was sleeping peacefully. But it was time for him to awaken now, and Bob prodded him vigorously.

"Groogh!"

Bunter's eyes opened behind his spectacles.

He sat up and blinked at the Greyfriars juniors.

"You fellows!" he ejaculated.

"We've found you, old fat bean!" said Bob cheerily. "Your snore guided us, you know. It can be heard for miles."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You ought not to have come out alone, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"Rats!"

"You fat duffer—"

"I want you to get it into your head, Wharton, that I'm jolly well going to do as I jolly well like!" said Bunter independently. "You may be captain of the Remove at Greyfriars, and no end of a big gun, in your own estimation—though I never thought much of you. But here you're nobody—less than nobody, in fact."

"You silly owl!" said Harry. "You may butt into danger, wandering around by yourself."

"Oh, rats! Those niggers bagged me at Bombay because they wanted to find out where Inky was," said Bunter. "They know where Inky is now, and they've got their eye on him, so it's all right. I'm safe enough. Besides, I don't care for danger—not funky like you fellows!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"We're going back to the hotel now," said Harry. "You'd better come along with us, Bunter."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

Bunter had not awakened in a good temper.

"We could dribble him back," suggested Bob Cherry. "Let's kick him in turns, you know, and we'll get him as far as the hotel—if he doesn't burst!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry Wharton impatiently, "it's true that circumstances here are different from Bombay, but you know that my uncle does not want us to go out alone."

"Blow your uncle!"

"What?" roared Wharton.

"Too uppish for me," said Bunter. "I saved his life on the train when that nigger, Nally Das, was after him. Is he grateful? Not he! I've jolly well saved all your lives, one way or another! Especially Inky's. You're an ungrateful lot! You even keep me short of money! There's going to be a sordid argument about the wages of my ayah—I know that!"

Wharton jumped.

"You haven't really engaged an ayah, you fathead?"

"I jolly well have!" said Bunter scornfully. "My ayah's coming to the hotel this evening to be taken on."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle—even that nigger's cackling!" said Bunter, with a disdainful blink at the grinning face of Pandy Din. "Well, cackle as much as you like—and be blown to you! I'm not under your orders, Wharton! You can go and eat coke! And I'll jolly well come back to the hotel when I jolly well like! See?"

And, to assert his independence, Billy Bunter rose and rolled away, giving the Greyfriars juniors a final disdainful blink as he went.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed after him.

Bunter was blissfully unconscious of the change Bob Cherry's playful hands had made in his appearance, with the help of the Indian newspaper.

In his tall paper hat, with the kite-tail stringing behind him, his aspect was remarkable and striking, not to say extraordinary and amazing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A contemptuous snort came back from Bunter, and he rolled off down the Chandni Chalk, satisfied that he had put the cheeky juniors in their place, and satisfied with things generally.

A plump Eurasian gentleman, coming towards him, caught sudden sight

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of Bunter and jumped. The plump gentleman stopped, stared, and backed away, with alarm in his olive face. The expression on the Eurasian's countenance plainly indicated that he supposed that he had fallen in with a lunatic. Bunter blinked at him arrogantly and rolled on. A party of American tourists stopped to stare at him.

"Some guy, I guess!" Bunter heard one of them remark in nasal tones.

Bunter blinked at him disdainfully and rolled on, leaving the tourists staring and laughing.

"On the whole, I think we're well out of a walk home with Bunter!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "It looks to me as if Bunter is going to make a sensation."

Bunter was making one already.

There were plenty of people in the Chandni Chalk, and they all seemed interested in the Owl of the Remove. They stared, or grinned, or laughed, and some of them backed out of his way, obviously thinking that it was a case of sunstroke, or lunacy.

"It's too bad!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"My dear chap, Bunter asks for these things," said Bob Cherry. "He ought to have come back with us. If he prefers to go alone he can go like that. Let's hook it; Bunter's getting a mob already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove walked away with Pandy Din, leaving William George Bunter to continue his sensational progress along the Chandni Chalk on his independent own.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Astonishes the Natives!

BILLY BUNTER was astonished. It was true that he loved the limelight. Bunter never let a chance of the limelight like the sunbeams pass him by.

Still, in some ways it was possible to have too much of a good thing.

Bunter was getting too much now.

A distinguished-looking fellow like Bunter, handsome and, in fact, stately, might be expected to attract a second glance. Bunter realised that, and did not, of course, mind. It was natural—in Bunter's opinion—for the male sex to glance at him with envy, and the gentle sex with admiration in their glad eyes.

But even Bunter, with all his fatuous self-satisfaction, could not think that it was admiration he was exciting now. He was getting much more attention than he was accustomed to, but it really did not seem to be of the admiring sort.

People looked, and looked again, and turned round their heads to look a third time. Native boys gathered to follow him. Possibly they supposed that Bunter was some kind of a showman, and was going to give a performance. Little black and brown and bronze urchins of all ages and sizes gathered in the wake of Billy Bunter, and he found himself leading quite an army as he turned out of the Chandni Chalk and headed for the hotel.

Bunter couldn't understand it.

There were plenty of things that Bunter never could understand, but this was the greatest problem of all. It beat him.

Certainly if there had been a looking-glass at hand and he could have seen himself he would have understood.

There were all sorts of costumes in the streets of Delhi—many of them strange and remarkable. But it is safe to say that there was no pedestrian

abroad that day as remarkable as William George Bunter. A fellow who walked abroad with a conical paper hat nearly two feet high, and a kite's tail dangling down his back, would have attracted attention anywhere, in any city from China to Peru.

Delhi, like all Oriental cities, swarms with idlers and loafers with nothing particular to do, and quite a large number of them acquired an interest in this remarkable sahib, who was apparently either mad or playing an extraordinary trick. They walked round and after Bunter, watching him, and the mob of sightseers grew and grew. Many voices called out to him; but as they spoke in the native tongues Bunter did not comprehend. He would have been startled to learn that he was looked on by some of his followers as a new kind of fakir; by others as a conjurer, or a showman; and by still others as a wandering lunatic.

Bunter marched on haughtily, his fat little nose turned up in contempt, and his fat red face growing more and more crimson. Limelight to this extent was neither grateful nor comforting.

"The silly owls!" he murmured, in perplexity. "Anybody would think I'd landed on a cannibal island, where a white man had never been seen before! There are lots of other white men here—and they seem to stare at me as much as the niggers! What the blump does it mean?"

A big Punjabi policeman stopped and stared at Bunter, and stepped into his path. Bunter halted.

"Sahib!" murmured the policeman deprecatingly.

"What do you want?" snapped Bunter.

"If the sahib suffering from sunstroke—"

"What?"

"If it being sunstroke—"

"Don't you be a cheeky ass!" said Bunter, and he rolled round the policeman, and progressed, leaving the big Punjabi staring blankly. The man would have been willing to take him to the hospital, where sunstroke cases are promptly treated. But the sahib was entitled to have his own way. Even a fat little sahib in a tall paper hat and a kite's tail was a sahib.

Bunter rolled on, quickening his pace. He desired very much to leave his army behind.

But they were not to be left. They followed on, grinning and chattering in many tongues, and their numbers grew and grew. It seemed to Bunter that all the idlers in Delhi were gathering in his wake. An American tourist stared at him and tapped him on the arm.

"Say, what's the game?" he inquired. Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh?"

"Is it a bet?" asked the Transatlantic gentleman, staring at Bunter through his horn-rimmed glasses.

"Is what a bet?" snapped Bunter. "What do you mean?"

"I guess I mean—are you doing it for a wager?"

"Doing what?" shrieked Bunter.

"This stunt!"

"Go and eat coke!" said Bunter, and he pushed past the tourist and went on his way.

"Waal, carry me home to die!" said the Transatlantic gentleman. "This is the queerest stunt I've seen in India so far. This beats it!"

Bunter rolled on, to an accompaniment of laughter and chatter. He was more than fed-up, and he looked round for a vehicle to finish his journey.

A carriage was crawling by, with a

native driver looking for a hire, and Bunter waved a fat hand at him as a signal. The native driver stared back and seemed to hesitate. He was looking for a passenger, but probably not for so remarkable a passenger as W. G. Bunter in his present guise.

"Stop!" shouted Bunter. "Here!"

The man drew up the vehicle, with some reluctance in his manner. Bunter blinked angrily at his staring, uneasy face.

"Speak English!" he snapped.

"I am speaking English," said the driver. "Desires the sahib to be driven to hospital?"

"Hospital?" gasped Bunter. "No, you idiot! I want to be driven to the Palm Hotel."

Bunter's numerous followers gathered round. Two or three dozen of them entered into conversation with the carriage driver at once, amid gurgles of laughter. The remarks that were made upon Bunter would have made his hair curl, could he have understood any of them. The mob seemed to be satisfied by this time that he was not a fakir, or a conjurer, or a street dancer, and had settled that he was insane. Sunstroke seemed to be a reasonable explanation of Bunter's conduct. That he did not know how he was got up was, of course, not likely to be guessed.

"What's the fare?" demanded Bunter suspiciously.

"Twenty rupee."

"You mean two!" snarled Bunter.

"Meaning twenty," said the driver calmly. The native did not mean to carry a lunatic about at the ordinary fare.

Bunter hesitated a moment; and then it occurred to him that he could leave the question of the fare to be settled by somebody else, once he was safe at the hotel.

"All right!" he growled.

He stepped into the open carriage.

The driver whipped up his horse and Bunter sat in state, with a burning face under his topee, crowned by the high paper hat.

"Quicker!" he called to the driver. "Leave that gang of cheeky niggers behind. See?"

The whip cracked again.

But the cheeky niggers were not to be left behind. Two or three of the younger sort clambered behind the carriage and hung on; others trotted, to keep pace. The Delhi loafers were not to be deprived of this unusual entertainment by so simple an expedient as taking a carriage; and a breeze from the Jumna fluttered out the kite's tail behind Bunter with striking effect.

The fat junior was glad when the hotel was reached. He caused quite a sensation there.

Men smoking their cigars on the veranda jumped up to stare at him. Native waiters, and bearers, and kit-nuthgars stared and cackled. Bunter almost wondered whether he was on his head or his heels by this time. Never had he created so immense a sensation in his fat career.

From a window above, five juniors looked out, and roared with laughter as they spotted Bunter in the carriage. The colonel and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had returned from the Governor-General's palace some time before Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived at the hotel, and the nabob was with his chums again. Hurree Singh's dark eyes almost started from his head at the sight of Bunter.

"The esteemed and idiotic Bunter is quite potty," he said. "Look at him, my worthy chums."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter! And he's still got it on!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat! He's got half Delhi after him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the colonel!" said Bob. "He doesn't seem to think it's funny. He's the only one that doesn't."

"Except Bunter," grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Colonel Wharton had been smoking a cigar on the veranda with some old acquaintance he had encountered in Delhi. The sight of Bunter made the colonel jump; but it did not make him laugh. He strode out to the carriage at once.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean?"

Bunter blinked at him.

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"POPULAR!"

"Blessed if I know!" he stammered. "All these black scoundrels have followed me from the Chandni Chank. I don't know why."

"Are you mad?" boomed the colonel.

"M-m mad?" stammered Bunter.

"Is it sunstroke, or what?"

"What do you mean?" yelled Bunter.

"The question is, what do you mean?"

snorted the colonel. "How dare you get yourself up in that ridiculous manner and parade the streets? If you are not out of your senses what do you mean? Do you wish to make an absurd show of yourself to a mob of natives?"

Bunter gasped.

"What—what— I don't understand!

What—what the thump do you mean?

What have I done?"

"Surely it is not possible that you have been drinking!" exclaimed the colonel, aghast.

"D-d-drinking?" stammered Bunter.

"Take it off at once!"

"Eh?"

"Take it off!" thundered the colonel.

"Take what off?" spluttered the Owl of the Remove helplessly. He wondered whether all Delhi had gone mad, the colonel included.

"That ridiculous paper hat."

"Pip-pip-paper hat?"

"Take it off, you absurd young ass!"

"How can I take off what I haven't got on?" shrieked Bunter. "I think you must be potty. I'm not wearing a paper hat, am I? I'm wearing my topee, same as usual. Are you blind?"

Colonel Wharton stared at him speechlessly. How Bunter could be wearing an enormous paper hat without knowing it was a mystery to him. He grabbed at the paper hat, but it did not come off. It was pinned securely round the topee. He jerked it off the topee.

Then Bunter saw what most of Delhi had already seen. He stared at the conical paper hat attached to his topee with bulging eyes.

"What—what—what's that?" he stammered.

He blinked at the paper hat and the kite's tail like a fellow in a dream. Even Bunter realised that in that guise he had been calculated to cause a sensation in Delhi, or anywhere else.

"Is it possible that you did not know that this was on your head?" demanded the amazed colonel.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"What! You dare to call me—"

"I don't mean you. I mean that other beast—one of those beasts! They must have done this when they found me asleep on the seat under the tree!" yelled Bunter. "I was taking a nap when those rotters found me, and they must have fixed me up like that while I was asleep. Beasts!"

"Good gad!" said the colonel.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the window above.

Colonel Wharton glanced up at five laughing faces. Bunter shook a fat fist at them.

The colonel's stern face broke into a grin. He realised that the ancient Mogul capital of India had been the scene of a jape more suited to the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

"Well, well, get in, Bunter!" he said. "You have attracted enough attention. I think, for one day. Get into the hotel and stay there. Pandy Din, pay the driver. Go in at once, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was only too glad to roll into the building and hide his blushes. For once the limelight had fallen on the Owl of the Remove, and he was glad to get out of it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Ayah!

STARS glimmered in the dark blue sky; through the scented dusk a soft breeze came from the wide waters of the Jumna. In the palm garden of the Delhi hotel Harry Wharton & Co. rested in long cane chairs, and took their ease after their evening meal. Through the dusk of the gardens cigar ends glimmered red, from strolling smokers. Here and there was a murmur of voices and a drowsy hum of insects. The Famous Five were feeling very content and cheery, as they sat and sipped coffee or sherbet, and chatted idly. Colonel Wharton had left them there. He had business on hand connected with the journey on the morrow northward to Lahore. In the distance

hovered Pandi Din, the kitmutghar, brown and good-tempered, with a keen eye open. So far, the Greyfriars party had seen nothing of their enemies since their arrival at Delhi, and they wondered whether Nally Das, the desperate emissary of the Rajah Bajir Rao, had given up his task of kidnapping the nabob and preventing him from reaching his home at Bhanipur. Certainly Nally Das could not have shown himself in Delhi without being taken by the police; his attempt upon Colonel Wharton's life in the train had booked him for a term of years at the Andaman Islands, if he was caught. But when Bob Cherry suggested that Bajir Rao's agents had given up the thing as a "bad job," Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his dusky head.

"My esteemed relative, Bajir Rao, will not allow me to arrive safely at Bhanipur if he can preventfully stop me," he said. "Once I am in the palace of my fathers, the worthy and disgusting rascal will be played out, like a tooth that is drawn. He will never be nabob in my place, if once I securely join my uncle, the Jam Bahadur. But in Delhi we have nothing to fear—the excellent colonel has the aid of the police, and the esteemed rascals are looked for. But when we leave—"

Harry Wharton nodded, as the nabob paused.

"They're getting desperate," he said. "At first they tried to kidnap Inky—now they've gone further, and my uncle came very near to falling under Nally Das' knife on the train from Bombay. I think we shall see something more of them after we leave Delhi. And when we are beyond Lahore, we shall be in wild country—Bhanipur is rather off the map, isn't it, Inky?"

"The excellent railroad does not run reachfully to Bhanipur," said Hurree Singh, "and in the hills on the frontier there are dacoits—"

"What are dacoits?" asked Bunter.

"Robbers, my esteemed Bunter."

"Fancy having a brush with Indian dacoits!" said Bob cheerily. "Worth coming all this way for, what?"

"We shall be all right if the colonel will let me have my revolver," said Bunter peevishly. "You can rely on me to protect you—as usual."

"If that's all we have to rely on, old fat bean, our number's up!" said Bob, with a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've seen you through safe so far," said Bunter. "Didn't I save Inky at Marseilles? Didn't I save him on the steamer in the Mediterranean? Didn't I butt in at the right moment when Nally Das was after the colonel on the Bombay train? What?"

"You've come in useful a few times, by a series of accidents," said Johnny Bull. "Not in any other way. Can it?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Give your chin a rest, old fat man!" "I'm accustomed to ingratitude," said Bunter bitterly. "After all I've done for you, all you can think of is playing tricks on a fellow when he's asleep—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter relapsed into indignant silence. He had not yet forgotten the incident of the paper hat and the kite's tail; and the comic side of that incident was quite lost on him. He groped in his pocket and drew out a packet of cigarettes, and put one in his mouth. The Famous Five looked at him—whereupon Bunter lighted the cigarette with a flourish. Colonel Wharton was absent, and it was a case of the mouse playing while the cat was away.

"You fat duffer," said Bob. "Chuck that away!"

"Rats!" said Bunter contemptuously. "I'll stand you a fag all round, you fellows, if you like. Why not? No masters or prefects here to rag a fellow. Be men, like me!"

"Fathead!"

Billy Bunter snorted, and smoked his cigarette. He hoped that the guests sauntering in the dusky gardens would notice that he was a man of the world, a fellow who knew his way about, and not an ordinary schoolboy like the rest of the party. If anyone noticed Bunter, however, it was probably not with admiration.

A Hindu waiter came along the garden, looking round, and stopped at the little table round which the juniors sat, and on which stood their coffee-cups. He salaamed to the young sahibs.

"Sahib Bunter—"

"Hullo!" said Bunter carelessly.

"One ayah come and saying to see Sahib Bunter."

Bunter sat up.

"That's right," he said. "I was expecting an ayah. I engaged one this morning at the agency."

The waiter peered at him.

"Young sahib engage ayah?" he asked.

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"Yes; it's all right."

The Hindu waiter did not seem to think, somehow, that it was all right. He appeared puzzled.

"Me showing ayah to garden to see Sahib Bunter?" he asked at length.

"Yes, and don't dawdle."

"Han, sahib."

The waiter disappeared, and Billy Bunter gave his companions a lofty, vaunting look. They were all grinning.

"You can cackle," he said, "but I've engaged a native servant, and I'm jolly well taking him with me when we leave Delhi to-morrow, see?"

"Hin!" murmured Wharton.

"The himfulness is not terrific,"

gurgled Hurree Singh.

Bunter blinked at them, not understanding.

"If there's any sordid question about the man's wages, I shall decline to discuss the matter," he said. "It was understood—clearly understood—that my exes would be paid, if I consented to come to India to protect Inky. I shall not condescend to enter into any mean argument about money."

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"It's up to you, Inky," said the Owl of the Remove. "I shall expect you to stand the ayah's salary."

"My worthy and ludicrous Bunter, if you shall take the esteemed ayah with you, I shall peacefully pay the wages."

The juniors chuckled. They did not think that Bunter would wait to take

the ayah with him—when he saw the ayah.

"Well, that's decent of you, Inky, at least," said Bunter. "Of course, it's up to you. Hallo, who's this?"

The Hindu waiter was returning, and he was showing the way to the juniors' table, to a stout lady dressed in white, rather voluminous garments, with a long white veil over her head and face. She was a native lady, and rather fat, and of uncertain years. The waiter spoke to her in his own tongue, indicating Bunter, and retired, leaving the plump lady bowing gracefully to the perplexed junior, while Harry Wharton & Co. tried hard to suppress their smiles.

"What do you want?" asked Bunter.

"I come to see you, sahib."

Bunter blinked at her. Bunter would not have been surprised to receive the "glad eye" from an Indian damsel; he, at least, was quite well aware what an attractive fellow he was. But this good dame was not less than forty, so it could scarcely be a case of the "glad eye." Bunter could not guess what it meant.

"You came to see me?" he asked.

"Han, sahib."

"Who are you, then?" demanded Bunter.

"Name being Aoudha," said the visitor. "I come from the agency by the Kashmir Gate."

"Oh! I see," said Bunter. "About the ayah. Aren't they sending my ayah this evening after all?"

Through the veil, the features of the dame could not be very clearly seen. But the juniors could see that she looked puzzled.

"Yes, sahib! Ayah being send," she answered.

"Where is he, then?" asked Bunter.

"I being ayah."

Bunter jumped.

"You?" he ejaculated.

"I, Aoudha, being ayah," said the visitor, bowing and smiling. "I am recommend by honourable Major Smith, and honourable Miss Wilkins, with writings in English. I serve for rupees one hundred a month, and am customed to care of children."

"Children!" said Bunter faintly.

The ayah eyed him. No doubt she had expected to find the Sahib Bunter a gentleman of much more advance years than the Owl of the Remove, and a married gentleman with a family. Otherwise, it was difficult to guess what he wanted with an ayah, an ayah's duties being those of a nurse, or lady's-maid, or both combined.

The ayah was not likely to guess that Bunter, in his sublime ignorance and self-satisfaction, had engaged an ayah thinking that "ayah" was a manservant.

"But the little sahib is a boy," said Aoudha. "He is not married?"

"Married!" stammered Bunter.

"The sahibs do not marry as boys, like the people of Hindustan," said the ayah.

"Oh, my hat!"

"But perhaps the sahib is sick, and needs the care of an ayah?" asked Aoudha. "It is a new duty to me, but I am willing. I have nursed the sick before. But for that I shall ask one hundred and twenty rupee."

Bunter blinked at the ayah, and blinked at the juniors, who were almost suffocating in their efforts to preserve their gravity.

"What does she mean, you fellows?" stammered the Owl of the Remove.

"What does she say she's an ayah for?"

"She is an ayah, fathead!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Rats! Isn't an ayah a manservant?" demanded Bunter.



"Smack him, ayah!" chortled Bob Cherry. "A jolly good smacking is what he wants!" Billy Bunter made a jump to escape, but the ayah—with a very powerful grasp—jerked him back. Smack! "Yaroooooh!" wailed the Owl of the Remove. "Leave off! I—I—I won't be put to bed by a black woman!" (See Chapter 7.)

"Ha, ha! No."

"An ayah is of the gentle and feminine variety," explained Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Gammon! If that's so, why couldn't you tell a fellow?" snorted Bunter.

"You wouldn't let us tell you!" chuckled Bob. "You knew best, you know. Don't you always know best?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ayah looked puzzled.

"The sahib is satisfy?" she asked. "I showing sahib my writings in English, recommend from honourable major and honourable miss. Is it to be engage?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter.

With all his desire for the services of a faithful attendant, Bunter did not want a woman-servant. Even Bunter drew the line at engaging a lady's-maid or nurse for himself.

Aoudha frowned.

"But why?" she asked. "Sahib has not yet looked at my writings, and he say no. Why he say no?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"Tell her it's a mistake, and that you're only a blithering idiot that doesn't know his way about," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You answering me," said the ayah, showing signs of anger, which was not surprising, in the circumstances. "I have best of recommend from honourable major and distinguished English miss, likewise recommend from Agency. All duties I shall perform to satisfaction. Speak English, and no objection to leaving India. You answering me why you say no?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "You—you see I—I—I— It's all a mistake! I—I don't want you! P-p-please go away!"

"Why you no want?"

"Oh dear! Tell the waiter to come back and shift her, you fellows!" Aoudha's eyes flashed through her veil.

"You no pukka sahib!" she exclaimed. "I make one journey to see sahib, I pay money for rickshaw, and sahib say there is mistake. But you engaging ayah at agency, and there is no mistake. You engaging me, and I coming. No mistake!"

"I—I tell you—" gasped Bunter.

"You no wanting ayah?"

"No!" stuttered the hapless Owl of the Remove. "That's it, I—I don't want an ayah! Good-evening!"

"You wasting my time and money on rickshaw and you no want?"

"That's it! Good-bye!"

"If I were that ayah," said Johnny Bull, "I'd jolly well smack his cheeky head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ayah looked as if she were going to act upon that tip from Johnny Bull. Naturally, she was extremely annoyed, being only able to conclude that she was the victim of a thoughtless practical joke on the part of an inconsiderable school-boy.

Bunter jumped up in alarm as the plump lady moved towards him. He did not like the gleam of her black eyes through the veil; still less did he like the swing of her plump hand towards him.

"Here, you keep off!" he roared. "Keep her off, you fellows! Oh, my hat!" Bunter dodged round the coffee-table. "I say, you fellows, back me up! Keep her off while I hook it!"

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

Billy Bunter fairly bolted, streaking for the hotel buildings as if his fat life depended on it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton jumped up, and interposed as the ayah was pursuing Bunter.

"Hold on, madam!" he exclaimed. "We'll make it all right. You shall lose nothing by coming here. That fat duffer made a mistake!"

"No mistake! He engage ayah—I being good ayah!"

"Yes, yes, but—" Wharton dragged a handful of rupees from his pocket.

"Will that make it right, madam?" Apparently it made it right, for the ayah smiled serenely at once.

"You pukka sahib," she said.

And having been indemnified for her loss of time and the expense of her rickshaw by twenty rupees, the plump dame bowed and retired. The juniors were glad enough to see her depart. Bunter had vanished into the hotel, and retired to the juniors' room—extremely uneasy lest the ayah should pursue him there and insist upon being engaged, or smack his head in lieu of an engagement.

"Good old Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The fat ass!" said Harry. "It would have served him right to let him deal with the ayah himself. She looked as if she had a temper."

Hurree Janset Ram Singh grinned.

"My esteemed chums, a wheezy good idea has occurred to me brainfully," he said. "The worthy and ridiculous Bunter insisted upon engaging an ayah and he does not know that the ayah has taken her honourable departure. Suppose the ludicrous ayah follows Bunter to his room, and insists upon attending on his honourable person?"

"But she's gone," said Nugent.

"It is easy to obtain a white dress and a white veil, my esteemed chum, and

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the esteemed short-sighted Owl would not see any difference."

The juniors stared at Hurree Singh for a moment, and then burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!" chortled Bob Cherry. "He would have an ayah, and he wouldn't be happy till he got it! Let him keep it now he's got it! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors left their coffee unfinished. Pandi Din was despatched to secure an ayah's dress, and in the kitmutghar's room Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh put it on. Billy Bunter was not finished with his ayah yet!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Ayah on Duty!

"I—I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was sitting on his bed in a very uneasy frame of mind, and he blinked nervously at the juniors as they came in. Wharton and Bob Cherry, Nugent and Johnny Bull had come up to bed, but the nabob was not with them. The nabob was still putting some final touches to his ayah's attire, with the help of Pandi Din.

"I—I say, is she gone?"

"Your ayah?" asked Bob.

"She isn't my ayah!" hooted Bunter. "I don't want an ayah, and I'm jolly well not going to have an ayah! I—I thought an ayah was a manservant, you silly idiots, like a kitmutghar."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ought to have told me that an ayah was a blinking female!" hooted Bunter.

"You wouldn't let us tell you!" chuckled Bob. "Now you've engaged an ayah, you're for it. You can't expect ayahs to come along here and be satisfied when they're told it was a mistake. Be reasonable. Besides, she says she's accustomed to children, and you need looking after like a baby. You admit that, Bunter?"

"No, I don't!" roared Bunter.

"Well, there it is, whether you admit it or not. You can't engage a native servant and sack her at a moment's notice without any cause of complaint."

"D-d-do you mean to say she isn't gone?" gasped Bunter.

"I don't know where she is; but as we came upstairs, I saw somebody who looked jolly like an ayah."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I dare say you'll find her useful, Bunter," said Harry Wharton laughing. "She looked a hefty sort of ayah, and being accustomed to children—"

"Beast! She doesn't know which is our room," gasped Bunter.

"I suppose she'll inquire, if she's looking for her employer," said Johnny Bull.

"I'm, not her employer!" shrieked Bunter.

"You are, old man—you are! You engaged her at the agency this morning," chuckled Bob. "You can't deny that you engaged an ayah."

"I—I thought—"

"What you thought isn't evidence, that's good law," said Bob. "Dash it all, we all advised you not to engage an ayah; and you would have your own way. What are you grousing about?"

"I won't pay her any wages—I won't pay her an anna—I—she won't stay without wages!" gasped Bunter.

"Inky will see to that; you told him it was up to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"You—you beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Mean to say that I've got to have a blinking ayah if I don't want a blinking ayah?"

"You will have to settle that with the ayah. If I were an ayah I wouldn't be sacked like that for nothing."

There was a tap at the door. Pandi Din put in a grinning face.

"Ayah ask to see honourable sahib Bunter."

There was a yell from Bunter.

"Keep her out! She can't come in here."

"What rot!" said Bob. "An ayah's duty is to put the children to bed. She's going to do her duty, now you've engaged her."

Bunter spluttered.

"You—you—you awful rotter! You can let her put you to bed if you like—she's not going to put me to bed!"

"I haven't engaged her," chortled Bob Cherry. "If I engaged an ayah, I should expect her to do her duty, which would be putting me to bed."

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

Bunter jumped up and made a rush for the door, with the intention of looking out the ayah. But he was too late. A figure in white, with a rather thick white veil descending over head and face, sailed into the room. Billy Bunter backed away.

"Sahib Bunter!" said a soft voice from under the veil.

"Go away!" gasped Bunter.

"Little fat sahib engage ayah—"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I don't want an ayah! Turn her out, you fellows. Shove her out of the room. Never mind if you hurt her."

"Dear man, we're not handling a lady to please you," said Wharton. "You engaged an ayah, and here's a giddy ayah. What's the trouble?"

"Beast! Turn her out! Call the manager! Call the khansama! Call the porters! Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I being good ayah, and putting the little fat sahib to bed," purred the soft voice under the veil.

"No!" yelled Bunter.

He backed away from the ayah—it it was an ayah—till he came in contact with the edge of his bed, and sat down suddenly. As Bunter sprawled on the bed, the ayah kneeled down before him, and began to take off his shoes.

"Go away!" yelled Bunter.

"No going away!" purred the ayah. "You engaging me, and I doing duty. If you no liking me, you send me away to-morrow."

"Take her away, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well kick you if you touch me!" raved Bunter. "I won't be put to bed! Keep off!"

And in sheer desperation, Bunter lunged out with his foot. But the ayah was on the look-out. A brown hand grasped Bunter's ankle and twisted it aside, with a grip that was very powerful. Bunter gave a howl. His fat ankle felt as if it had been in a grip of steel.

"You behaving yourself better with a lady!" said the ayah severely. "You being bad boy, I smacking you."

"Oh, lor!"

"Smack him, ayah!" chortled Bob Cherry. "A jolly good smacking is

what he wants. You see, he's a wilful kid, and doesn't know his own mind. First he wants an ayah, and then he doesn't want an ayah. I don't believe he really knows what he does want."

"I looking after him, and if he is bad, smacking him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's boots were off now, and the ayah began to drag off his socks. The socks came off, and then the ayah began to remove his collar and tie. Bunter made a jump to escape; but the ayah—with a very powerful grasp—jerked him back, and then:

Smack!

"Yarooooooooh!"

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

"Oh, crumbs! Oh dear! Go away! Leave off! I—I—I won't be put to bed by a black woman!" wailed Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, make her go away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's jacket came off, and then his purple cummerbund. Then the ayah unbuckled his belt. Certainly, a genuine ayah would not have been likely to proceed thus; but Bunter knew nothing about the manners and customs of ayahs, and he had not the remotest idea that the thick veil concealed the grinning features of Hurree Singh.

"Leave off!" he gasped, clutching at his trousers with desperate hands. "I—I—I— Help! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The communicating door of Colonel Wharton's room opened, and the kind, bronzed face of the colonel looked in.

"You boys seem very merry to-night," he said. "Why—what—who—?" The colonel stared blankly at the ayah.

Bunter gave a howl.

"Make her go away, sir! Turn her out! Ow!"

"What on earth—" exclaimed the astonished colonel.

"It's Bunter's ayah," said Bob Cherry, wiping away his tears. "Bunter engaged an ayah this morning, thinking that an ayah was a manservant."

"Good gad!"

"The ayah came, and Bunter sacked her on the spot," said Bob. "He didn't seem to want her after all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So, as we thought he was entitled to an ayah, we rigged up Inky for the job," said Harry Wharton.

"What?" yelled Bunter.

The ayah threw her veil aside. The grinning dusky features of Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh were disclosed.

"Inky!" he stammered.

"My esteemed self," said the nabob, cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you japing idiot!" roared Bunter.

Colonel Wharton broke into a laugh.

"I think you are the most ridiculous boy I have ever seen, Bunter," he said. "But really, you should not play these tricks on a lad so abtuse as Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You had better go to bed now," said the colonel, laughing, and he went back to his room.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh threw off the ayah's dress. Billy Bunter eyed him as if he could eat him.

"You—you cheeky rotter!" he gasped.

"Pulling my leg all the time?"

"That's actually dawned on him!"

said Bob Cherry. "What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on page 17.)

ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2:



Harry Wharton's Cricket Supplement

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No trouble or expense has been spared to make this supplement interesting and informative. In it all phases of cricket will be discussed by writers chosen from the foremost cricket authorities in the land. Readers may, therefore, rely upon the facts, figures, etc., mentioned from week to week in this supplement as being authentic.

HARRY WHARTON, Editor.

Wonder Feats AT THE Oval!

Interesting Facts about the Famous Ground where the Fifth and Final Test Match will be played.

THE home of the Surrey County Cricket Club—the Oval—is second only to Lord's as a famous centre of the game. On its green surface there have been many magnificent tussles between England and Australia, and many individual feats which are remembered by old cricketers, and may be worth recalling for the benefit of those who are not old enough to remember them.

The Oval has the reputation of being one of the very best cricket pitches in the country from the batsman's point of view. Bowlers, of course, view it very differently, and, consequently, it is not surprising that the majority of the wonder-feats at the Oval stand to the credit of the batsmen. That being so, it is rather surprising that the Oval has witnessed the second smallest score ever made by an Australian team in this country in a Test match. In 1896 the cream of Australia's batsmen were sent back to the pavilion for a total of 44 all told. Wouldn't there be rejoicing in the camp if our bowlers of to-day found their form and got rid of the Australians in this last Test for less than that number!

A RECORD!

That there is a lot of cricket history attached to the Oval

will be obvious when it is mentioned that it was here that an Australian eleven beat a picked England eleven for the very first time in this country. This was as long ago as 1882, and a memorable match it was, too. First of all, it provided a memorable finish, Australia winning by seven runs. It was also memorable for wonder-bowling by the "demon" of Australian fast bowlers—Spofforth. This man died only a month or two ago, but right through his lifetime he used to refer to this match as the greatest in which he had ever taken part. His expresses were too good for England's batsmen, and he had fourteen victims in the course

of the match—a greater number than has ever been taken by any England or Australian player in this country in one Test game.

JESSOP IN FORM!

Mention of this close fight reminds me of another wonderful feat at the Oval which stands to the credit of Gilbert Jessop, that greatest of all hitters.

This was in the year 1902. Things did not go any too well for England in that match, and in the final innings, on a wicket which was considerably the worse for wear, and which favoured the bowlers, our players were set the big task of scoring 263 runs to win in the last innings. If the task seemed big at the start of the "knock," it became bigger shortly afterwards, for England lost five of her very best batsmen for a mere 48 runs. It seemed then like all Lombard Street to a china orange that Australia would win in comfort. But there came to the wicket Gilbert Jessop. He didn't worry about the pitch being bad or the necessity for caution. He just went for the Australian bowling bald-headed. In seventy thrilling minutes England's score was advanced by 139 runs, of which Jessop made 104. He hit one five and seventeen fours. Thus by fearless hitting was the way paved to victory, and in the end Rhodes and Hirst knocked off fifteen runs for the last wicket, and England won one of the most exciting of all the Test matches.

A LUCKY PRESENTIMENT!

Most cricketers consider that their ambition in life has been realised if they manage to score a century in a Test match. For a player to score two centuries in the same Test match is really beyond the wildest dreams, yet it has been done once in this country and it was at the Oval where the feat was performed. The man who did it was Warren Bardsley, the vice-captain of the present Australian team. In 1909 against England, he scored 136 in the first in-

"HALLO, EVERYBODY! GILLIGAN CALLING!"



Mr. A. E. R. GILLIGAN, the captain of the last English team in Australia, and a member of the present Selection Committee, broadcasting his views on Test match cricket. He is seen speaking into the microphone, and standing upon the extreme right is his club mate, Maurice Tate.

ings and followed it up with 130 in the second innings. The strange thing about this amazing feat was that on the morning of the game he had a presentiment that he would score two separate hundreds. Before a ball was bowled Bardsley told a member of the Australian team that he felt sure he would do this thing. He was told not to be silly, and also to remember that in the whole history of the game no player had up to then scored two separate hundreds in a Test match. "That doesn't matter," said Bardsley: "I feel sure that I am going to do it." And sure enough he did.

Never Tired Tate!

BY "PAUL PRY."

(Our Special Correspondent)

The Record Breaker of Sussex and England, who forms the subject of this week's topping **FREE GIFT!**



TRAINING for football we often hear about, but very seldom is the necessity of training for cricket insisted upon. There is one man, however, who prepares in the most serious way for the Test matches of the present season—Maurice Tate, of Sussex.

He lives at Brighton, and right through the winter he kept ever in his mind's eye the fact that he might be wanted again to bowl the Australians out, so took daily walks of anything

up to five miles o'er the Sussex Downs. These walks were alternated with twice-a-week outings with the Sussex foot beagles, and those who know anything about beagling know that it is jolly hard training as well as jolly good sport.

SUCH IS FAME!

In connection with his training, in the course of which Tate took off a stone in weight, he tells a good story. On many mornings when he was out doing his walk he met the same man, and after some time this man spoke to him. "Good-morning!" he said. "How are you getting on?" "Oh, fine!" replied Tate; and, taking hold of his belt, added: "You will see that I am getting down to fighting weight." Whereupon came this remark from Tate's questioner: "I am glad to hear that, because I told my friends that I had met a heavy-weight boxing champion out training every morning."

A PREFERENCE FOR THE BAT!

Maurice Tate is certainly a famous bowler; perhaps in some respects the best bowler in the world at the present time. He is thirty-two years of age and the son of a man who himself

played for Sussex in the old days. But there was a time when father Tate almost despaired of seeing his son follow in his footsteps, in spite of the fact that the lad was taken out into the garden to play cricket almost as soon as he could walk. He did nothing remarkable at his school at Haywards Heath, and even the promise he showed was more in the direction of a batsman than a bowler. In this connection it may be said that even for Sussex he has played an innings of 203, and assisted in a second-wicket partnership with Bowley which realised 385.

Persuaded to keep on trying to improve his bowling, however, Tate got into the Sussex County side before the War, and when the conflict was over developed most rapidly. He had many sensational performances to his credit, including one piece of sensational bowling when he took five wickets in less than two overs for no runs while playing in a trial match for England against the Rest. He also did some fine bowling against the South Africans, but mostly he will be remembered for his record-making bowling during the last series of Tests in Australia. All Australia acclaimed him magnificent; he took thirty-eight wickets, or more than have ever been taken by any bowler in one series of Tests. He bowls at the wicket all the time, which is one of the secrets of success, and the other is that he has the knack of making the ball nip in fast off the pitch.

Stranger than Fiction!

By Student.

WHEN some of our popular authors sit down to write a cricket story which is fiction they think of wonderful deeds to be performed by their heroes or by their villains. Sometimes, as we read the results of these efforts of imagination we, say, "Oh, yes, that's all very well! But such things would not happen in real life!" Yet, in regard to cricket, as in regard to other things, it is undoubtedly a fact that truth is stranger than fiction.

During the present season we have had illustrations of this. Think what happened during the Test match at Lord's in June. A perfect wicket had been prepared. On this wicket on the first day the Australians had put up a good score. At four o'clock on the morning of the second day the head groundsman at Lord's found that for some mysterious reason he could not sleep—a most unusual thing for him. He didn't know why he couldn't sleep, and he hadn't the faintest excuse, really, for getting up and going over to the ground at Lord's. But he did get up and go over to the ground. And what did he find? A hose-pipe, left running on the pitch, threatening with every gush to ruin this wonderful wicket on which the Test match was to be continued.

TOO STEEP!

If the groundsman had not been disturbed in his sleep, and if he had not had some intuition to go to the ground, that left-running hose-pipe would have

put an end to the game. A writer of a fiction story would not have dared to get his groundsman up at four o'clock in the morning without any real excuse, because the accusation of using the long arm of coincidence would have been thrown at him.

The young lads who come into cricket fiction stories generally perform amazing deeds, but such performances have their counterpart in real life.

Here is a story stranger than fiction: Years ago J. W. Hearne, of Middlesex and England fame, sold match-cards on the ground at Lord's. One day he went round to the nets where well-known players were practising, and he bowled to them. As it happened, the captain of Middlesex, "Plum" Warner, was standing by. He was greatly impressed by the young lad, soon had him in the Middlesex team, and actually took him to Australia before he was twenty-one years of age. What is even better, the story had a most happy sequel, for Jack Hearne scored a century for England before he was twenty-one.



H LARWOOD (Notts.).

ALL THROUGH A VACANCY!

Very much on the same stranger than fiction lines, is the rise of young Harold Larwood. A little over a year ago he was just an ordinary member of an ordinary cricket side in Nottingham. A vacancy in the Notts second team occurred suddenly, and unexpectedly. Larwood was given his chance; he snatched it with both hands, as it were, and in less than twelve months from that moment he was bowling for England against Australia at Lord's.

BEATING THE FICTION WRITERS!

Yes, the heroes of real cricket, as distinct from cricket stories as told by the fiction writers, are responsible for miracle performances. Twelve years ago England sent a team to Australia, and that team lost the first match rather badly. On the morning when the second match was due to start there came a terrible bit of news to John Douglas, the acting captain of the England team. It was to the effect that his star bowler, Sidney Barnes, was too ill to get up. He had a temperature over the hundred mark, and he had to be left at the hotel while the rest of the team went to the cricket ground. Almost as soon as they arrived, however, Sidney Barnes also arrived, shivering in a big coat though it was a perfect summer's day. "I can't stay in bed," he explained to his captain.

"But you are not fit to play," said Douglas, "though I very much want you to." In the true fiction hero spirit, Barnes replied: "Well, if you want me to play I'll play if it kills me!"

And Barnes did play. Australia won the toss and batted first. This sick man went on to bowl, and in the first five overs he dismissed four of Australia's very greatest batsmen, with only one run scored off his bowling. The fiction writers can try their best, but this sort of feat takes some beating.

More IMPORTANT than Batting!

A striking article from the pen of J. W. Hearne, the famous Middlesex and England cricketer.

IT is not always easy to decide exactly in which department of cricket most work has been done towards bringing a side home victorious. For instance, every cricketer could recall matches which have been won, almost literally, by two or three brilliant catches which have dismissed batsmen who seemed to be well set. To an even greater extent would it be possible to point to games which have been won by a piece of dramatic batting. By way of example, there was that historic Test match at the Oval in 1902, which may be said to have been won by the efforts of one batsman.

I was not then taking any active part in first-class cricket, but I remember how the circumstances thrilled me as a boy. England were playing Australia at the Oval, and events did not shape themselves any too well for the home side. In fact, when there were five men of England out in the second innings for 48 on a bad wicket, over two hundred runs were still wanted for victory. Then Jessop came into change the outlook completely by hitting up a very quick century, giving England a chance which previously she did not seem to possess. And the end of that story was that England won by one wicket. That, as I say, was an instance of batting which went a very long way to win the match; and many other similar cases could be recalled.

THE IMPOSSIBLE IDEAL!

When all is said and done, however, it seems to me that if this present cricket season has proved anything, it has proved that with Test matches in this country limited to three days, it is to the bowlers of the sides, rather than to the batsmen, that we have to look to gain the verdict. I take it that the really perfect team would consist of ten good all-rounders—men who are first class in batting, bowling, and fielding, with the eleven made up with a wicket-keeper batsman. Alas, this is an ideal which it is impossible to live up to! In an ordinary first-class side you get two or three men who can both bat and bowl, and occasionally there arises a man who is right at the top in both departments—a George Hirst or a Wilfred Rhodes. But for the most part the leading batsmen of any age are not particularly good in the bowling line, and the star bowlers are, at best, merely useful when it comes to batting. Thus the selectors of a representative team are always apt to be faced with the problem of how many batsmen pure and simple, and how many bowlers pure and simple shall be included in the side.

ODDS ON THE BATSMEN!

And, as I say, the Test matches of this season have certainly proved, especi-

ally in England's case, that it is the bowlers to whom we must look to force a victory. Take the Test match at Lord's as an example. The wicket was as perfect as any wicket I have ever seen in this country; too perfect, one might say, when looked at from the bowlers' angle. Anyway, it was obvious right from the start of the match that it would require something extraordinary in the shape of bowling if the Australians were to be got out twice in three days for comparatively low scores. I heard one man who was in the match at Lord's say that any batsman worthy of the name could, if he had not been concerned with the getting of runs, have stayed at the wicket for the whole of the three days. That was an exaggeration, of course, but the statement was made to illustrate the perfect nature of



J. W. Hearne.

the pitch. It meant that the odds were on the batsmen all the time.

A TOO PERFECT WICKET!

Incidentally, this serves to remind me of a point which is often discussed in these days—whether our bowlers are so good as they used to be. Personally, I do not think there is very much wrong with the bowling side of cricket, but I do not think that when we make comparisons with bowlers of other days we should not overlook the fact that they are handicapped much more in these days than they used to be. All the groundsman's art is brought to bear to prepare, especially for a big Test match, the best possible pitch. The strip of turf along which the wickets

were pitched at Lord's had, as I happen to know, been the object of most careful attention for many weeks. The result was a credit to the ground staff. They had prepared a wicket of which they had a right to be proud. For this I am not blaming them. On the other hand there may, remembering that Test matches are limited to three days, be such a thing as a too perfect wicket—a wicket which is all in favour of the batsmen and all against the bowlers. I think this is a point which is worthy of attention, and it is certainly a point which should not be overlooked when we make comparisons between modern batting and bowling and that of by-gone days.

THE TAIL!

I am afraid I have wandered from my point, however, which was to show that, generally speaking, in these days, it is bowling which wins matches, bowling which can get a good batting side out on a good wicket. And if it is agreed that it is bowling which wins three-day Test matches, then I think it clearly follows that almost the first consideration in choosing an England side should be the bowling department. Some people grumble from time to time at what they call the length of the England tail. Now, what does the length of the tail matter so long as—and this happened at Lord's—four or five batsmen are able to get practically all the necessary runs?

What was it that accounted for Australia's success in this country in 1921? There was nothing particularly wonderful about the batting of that side. I don't think, myself, that it was as good as the batting of the present side. But the bowling was good. There were in that 1921 team two superb bowlers at the top of their form—Gregory and McDonald—and these two, backed by useful change bowlers, were largely responsible for the ability which the Australians showed to force a victory even on good wickets.

WHO WINS MATCHES?

I shall never forget what a bit of super-bowling did for England in Australia in 1912. We had lost the first Test, and things had gone so badly with us that it looked as though we should lose the second. But right at the start of that second game Sidney Barnes got among them. He dismissed four of Australia's best bats, on a perfect wicket, while only having one run scored from his bowling. That was the stuff which put us all on our toes; gave us our match-winning chance, which the batsmen took in due course, and from that moment we never looked back.

We got the Ashes in that tour because Barnes and Foster gained a definite ascendancy over the batsmen of Australia. By way of returning the compliment, Australia beat us here in 1921 because she sent two bowlers who quickly got on top. So, looking at the thing all round, I fancy it will be agreed that, big as the part which the batsmen play, it is the bowlers who really win matches.

J. W. Hearne

PLAYING to a FINISH!

Our contributor has something to say on the question of the time allotted to Test Matches.

SHOULD every Test match between England and Australia be played to a definite finish, no matter how long it takes? This is a question which has been hotly discussed during the present season, circumstances having arisen to keep the matter very much to the forefront.

As my young readers are no doubt aware, the arrangements for this season's Test matches were as follows: Three days only were allotted to each of the Test matches, with the proviso that if the last Test match—the one at the Oval—would decide the rubber, then that match was to be played to a finish. Quite a lot of people think that this play to a finish arrangement should have been applied to every match, so as to prevent the drawn games which we have been called upon to witness.

A SEVEN DAY MATCH!

Probably my readers are also aware that in Australia, when Test matches are played, time is of no consequence. The games are played to a finish, no matter how long they take, and in this connection it is worth while recalling the shortest of the Test matches in Australia during the last English tour ran to five days, and the longest ran into the seventh day.

To this question of playing matches to a finish, however, there are two sides—as to every other question. In the first place, the conditions are different in Australia from this country. There are no huge county match programmes out there; just a small number of games between the various States being arranged each summer. For Test matches to be played to a finish in this

country would interfere very seriously with the programmes of the various counties, and the Australians themselves would find it difficult to fix up a programme of games.

EVEN SLOWER CRICKET!

Perhaps the interference with the county programmes is a small matter, though. So we will look at the question from a bigger angle—the effect on the cricket. Now, what is the one thing of which modern cricketers are being continually accused in these days? It is that they are far too slow; that they don't take enough risks when they are at the wicket. Now, I put it to you that if batsmen of these times don't get on quickly enough to satisfy the spectators when matches have to be finished in three days, are they likely to hustle if no time limit is fixed? To my mind it is an absolute certainty that if every Test match in this country were played to a finish, the cricket would get slower and slower, and the public get really fed-up with it long before the end of the season. Indeed, I would go a bit further, and say that if the experiment of playing all Test matches in this country to a finish were tried once it would never be repeated.

GRAND NEW LIMERICK COMPETITION!

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This is a simple, fascinating competition in which everyone can join. All you've got to do is to round off the unfinished verse shown on this page. A point to remember is that your last line must scan with the first two. Don't try and be too clever—a simple but forceful line is what is wanted. An example line is given to help you.

To the sender of the "last line" which, in the Editor's opinion, is the best, will be awarded the useful money prize of £2 2s. To each of the six next best, prizes of 10s. 6d. will be awarded.

DIRECTIONS.

When you have thought out a really good last line, fill in the coupon below, IN INK, taking care to write your name and address clearly, and post it to:

Magnet "Boundaries" No. 7,
Gough House, Gough Square,
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so as to reach that address not later than Thursday, August 26th, 1926.

You may send in as many attempts as you like, but all efforts must be written on a separate entrance form as provided here. It is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision must be accepted as final.

Employees of the proprietors of the MAGNET may not compete.



G. BROWN (Hampshire).

A stalwart of Hampshire is Brown, A batsman of skill and renown.

When the willow he wields On England's green fields,

Example last line:—

The shouts of applause none can drown.

TIRING THE BOWLER!

The sport-loving people of England have been brought up on football, as it were, and football is concentrated excitement. When they go to see a cricket match they want to see either runs made or the batsmen getting out. I don't say the public are always justified in their demands for more hustle from our cricketers, but the fact remains that there would be no cricket tours to England if the cricket was so deadly dull that people would not pay money to see it.

Many an excellent bowler who has been to Australia has told me of the heart-breaking job which they have had out there. The pitches are well-nigh perfect, and rain seldom comes to spoil them. The batsmen, knowing that there is no necessity to hurry, sit on the splic and wait for the bowlers to get tired. In the words of one bowler: "In Australia you don't bowl so much in the hope of getting the batsman out as that the batsmen will make a mistake and get themselves out."

A WORD WITH THE UMPIRE.

F. Carter (Brighton).—The smallest man I know in first-class cricket is Cornford, the Sussex wicket-keeper. He is only 5 ft. 2 ins. in height, or half an inch smaller than "Fanny" Walden, of Northamptonshire.

H. Whittle (Liverpool).—Eight balls to the over are bowled in first-class cricket in Australia, but this number is not allowed in England, and I do not think we shall ever adopt the same idea.

MAGNET "BOUNDARIES" COMPETITION No. 7.

FREE COUPON.

I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

LAST LINE

Name

Address

Closing Date, Thursday, August 26th.



(Continued from page 12.)

"Beast!"

And Billy Bunter turned in, glowering with wrath, but considerably relieved to find that he was not, after all, to have the attentions of an ayah.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Awful!

DELHI was left behind by the Greyfriars party the next morning. Billy Bunter, at least, was not sorry to quit the famous city of the Moguls; his adventures in Delhi

Bhanipur. Although under the protection of the British Raj, Bhanipur was an independent State, and it was rather a new idea to the Co. to think of Inky as a "giddy monarch," as Bob described it, sitting in state upon a golden throne, and giving commands to innumerable guards and retainers.

Billy Bunter was quite startled to learn that it was in Inky's power, once he stood in his palace, to give orders to armed guards to "chop a fellow's head off." Certainly the good-natured and amiable nabob, known at Greyfriars as the best-tempered fellow in the Remove and a crack cricketer, did not seem much to resemble a dusky despot of the East. It was not likely that there would be any chopping off of heads at Bhanipur under the rule of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; and yet the juniors sometimes wondered a little whether they knew their Indian chum quite so well as they had supposed.

When he mentioned the Rajah Baji Rao, his ambitious kinsman who was seeking to rob him of his throne, the nabob's kindly face hardened, and a glitter came into his eyes, which savoured more of the East than of the West. And it was borne in upon the

"If you fellows don't want those cakes I'll polish them off!" said the Owl of the Remove. "We shall be in Lahore in an hour or two now, and you can get some more!"

"Go it!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You can have mine."

Wharton's cake vanished, and Bob Cherry's followed it. Nugent's cake went next, and then Bunter eyed the cake belonging to Johnny Bull. Johnny Bull seemed a little less accommodating than his comrades. He picked up the cake and munched it.

"I was going to eat that cake!" said Bunter, in an injured tone.

"Go hon!"

"If there's anything I dislike it's selfishness," said Bunter. "You knew jolly well that I wanted that cake!"

"Quite!" assented Johnny, munching cheerfully.

"If I'm going to be treated with this rotten greedy selfishness all round—" began Bunter warmly.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh pushed his cake towards the fat junior.

"Pile infully, my esteemed Bunter!" he said.

Bunter grabbed the cake. "Well, a fellow expects something to

MONEY FOR "MAGNET" READERS!

Result of "Boundaries" Competition No. 1.

The First Prize of £2 2s. 0d. for the best "last line" sent in has been awarded to:

H. S. WILSON, 32, Kingsway, Mortlake, London, S.W.14.,

for the following:—

Of Sutcliffe all Yorkshire is proud,
His battling is loved by the crowd;
When Herbert goes in,
People say with a grin,
"He could score if the wicket was 'ploughed.'"

The six prizes of 10s. 6d. each have been awarded to the following:—KENNETH DAWES, 3, Hampton Villas, South Chingford, E.4.; JOHN GALLAGHER, 15, Chadwick Street, Wallsend, Northumberland; ROBERT GIVEN, 17, Beith Road, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, N.B.; ARTHUR GOODES, 157, Nelson Road, Crouch End, N.8.; R. N. LINELL, 98, Midhurst Road, West Ealing, London, W.13.; HARRY A. WOODROW, Gresham, Norwich, Norfolk.

had not proved grateful or comforting. Northward the express bore the party, by Saharunpore and Amritsar, and then on towards Lahore. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face wore cheery smiles as he drew nearer and nearer to his homeland.

To the other fellows of Greyfriars Bhanipur was a distant unknown spot, no more than a name; but to the nabob it was home, where his earliest years had been spent, and which he had never forgotten. In cheery tones the dusky junior told them about Bhanipur, which, according to his description, was the most delectable spot in the famous Land of the Five Rivers. And Harry Wharton & Co. were very keen to see that delectable kingdom of the hilly north. Even Billy Bunter detached his thoughts a little from sleep and tuck, and pictured himself swanking in a marble palace surrounded by bowing and admiring natives.

In a few days more the juniors were to see Bhanipur, and Inky's uncle, the Jam Vahadurmand, the wise old moon-shee who had taught him his remarkable English; and the nabob promised them a tiger-hunt, and they quite thrilled at the thought of tracking the tiger in his native jungle.

But many a long mile lay as yet between them and the nabob's palace in the little hill-locked kingdom of

minds of the Co. that it was quite probable that there would be shedding of blood while they were the guests of their Indian chum in the mountain kingdom. Once at Bhanipur, Inky would come to grips with the disloyal kinsman whose emissaries had dogged him all the way to India, and whose attempts had shadowed the journey with incessant danger.

At Amritsar, where the train stopped, Billy Bunter laid in a supply of fruit and sticky cakes from the merchants who thronged along the train, and when the express rolled on towards Lahore he prepared to enjoy himself. He sat, happy and sticky, for quite a long time till his supply was gone. Where he put it all was a puzzle to the other fellows; but when it was all gone Bunter, like Alexander of old, looked round for new worlds to conquer. The other fellows had bought cakes, and had not yet eaten them, and Bunter eyed those cakes for a long time.

"I say, you fellows—" he said at last.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bursting?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If the esteemed Bunter is feeling ill—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "I'm not ill—I'm hungry!"

"Great pip!"

eat!" he said, with his mouth full. "This climate seems rather to make me hungry."

"Is there any climate that doesn't?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Let the esteemed Bunter rip!" said Hurree Singh cheerily. "In my country there is a belief in re-incarnation, and Bunter is a proof of it!"

"Eh—how do you make that out?" asked Bob.

"It is the esteemed belief that one does not live only one life," said the nabob seriously. "The same person is born and born again, under a variety of forms. I think it probable that my excellent relative, Baji Rao, was a tiger or a serpent in a previous state of existence!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Wharton. "You don't really believe those things yourself, Inky?"

The nabob smiled. How much he believed or discarded of the weird mythology of his native land the juniors never knew. Perhaps the nabob did not quite know himself.

"But is not Bunter a proof?" he said.

"How's that?"

"You have seen, in the Indian cities, the pariah dogs that roam the streets and eat up everything that they can discover?"

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"Yes," said Harry.
 "All is grist that comes to their mill," said the nabob gravely. "They will eat up anything and everything, and leave nothing. It occurs to my esteemed mind that Bunter, in his former state of existence, was a pariah dog—and he has not changed very much in his re-incarnation as a fat bounder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Why, you cheeky beast!" gasped Bunter.

If Bunter had believed in the weird theory of successive incarnations he would certainly have believed that in his previous existence he had been a monarch or an emperor, or a duke at least. Certainly he was not flattered by the idea that he had lived before as a pariah dog.

He glared at the nabob in wrathful indignation, while the other fellows roared.

"My hat! There must be something in it!" said Bob Cherry. "Why, the resemblance is really striking!"

"It leaps to the eye!" grinned Nugent.
 "The pariah dog will eat anything," said Bob. "Well, Bunter will eat anything! It's always on the hunt for food. Well, Bunter's always on the hunt for food! It howls when it's kicked out of the way, and you fellows know how Bunter howls when he's kicked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "So that point's settled," said Bob. "There's something in the jolly theory of re-incarnations, and Bunter was a pariah dog last time he lived on the earth. I wonder what he will be next time? A shark, perhaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "A slug, perhaps!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Perhaps a snail!"
 "You cheeky rotters!" roared Bunter.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter munched the cake, and blinked at the chuckling juniors in great indignation. But he found comfort in the cake.

"You can cackle!" he said. "I'd like to know what would have happened to Inky, that time on the Mediterranean steamer, if I hadn't mopped up his lemonade for him! It was drugged, and I got the drug instead of Inky! Catch you fellows sacrificing yourselves for a pal like that!"

"You didn't know Inky's lemonade was drugged when you bagged it," growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"
 "You're always bagging a fellow's tuck," said Johnny. "That time it happened to come in useful. That was all." Bunter sneered.

"I'm accustomed to being run down and belittled by jealous fellows," he said. "You wouldn't have done it. Of course, I did it for Inky's sake, to—save him. I don't expect you to acknowledge it. I don't expect any gratitude from Inky. But there it is."

"You fat chum—"
 "Shakespeare says that ingratitude is sharper than a thankless child's tooth!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Did you bag Inky's cake just now to save him over again?" asked Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"Oh, rats!"
 Hurree Jamset Ram Singh closed one eye at his chums, unseen by the Owl of the Remove.

"My esteemed chums, did you notice the man who sold me that cake?" he asked.

"Nunno."
 "You did not notice that he bore a

resemblance to the esteemed and rascally Nally Das?"

"Oh, my hat!"
 The juniors stared at Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. They had not specially noticed the cake merchant at Amritsar Station. But the cheery wink of the nabob reassured them. They realised that he was pulling the fat leg of the Owl of the Remove.

"The esteemed Bunter has eaten my cake," said Hurree Singh. "If it is poisoned he has saved me over again."

Bunter's fat jaw dropped.
 "Pip-pip-poisoned?" he stuttered.
 "The esteemed Bunter is noble and devoted, and he does not hesitate to take my terrific dangers upon his own excellent self," said the nabob. "The obligefulness is terrific!"

"Good old Bunter!" said Bob, entering into the jest. "If Bunter bagged your cake, suspecting it to be poisoned, of course, that alters the case. It was really kind."

"Noble!" said Nugent.
 "Splendid!" exclaimed Wharton.
 "Do you feel any pain yet, Bunter?"

"Eh?" stuttered Bunter.
 "If Inky's cake was poisoned, old chap, you'll soon be feeling the effects," said the captain of the Remove. "You will have saved Inky over again, same as you did on the steamer at Marseilles. I must say I never expected this devotion from Bunter!"

"I admit I never did," assented Bob. "Wants some pluck to eat a poisoned cake for another fellow's sake."

"Well, that's where Bunter comes out strong. We all know his pluck. He's told us all about it lots of times."

The expression on Bunter's fat face by this time was extraordinary. He sat with his mouth open, gasping and blinking at the grave faces of the juniors in horror and dismay. They regarded him with great solicitude.

"Feeling bad yet?" asked Bob.

"Ow!"
 "Of course, very likely the cake wasn't poisoned," argued Bob. "There's no actual proof—"

"Wow!"
 "If the esteemed Bunter feels the deleterious effects we shall soon know," said Hurree Singh; "and if he has swallowed the disgusting poison intended for my esteemed self he has saved my unworthy life, and the obligefulness is terrific."

"Groogh!"
 "Anything wrong, Bunter?"
 "Ow! Wow! You!" Bunter staggered to his feet. "Stop the train! Call a doctor! Help! I'm poisoned! Yoop! Yarooooooh! Help!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not Fatal!

COLONEL WHARTON dropped his newspaper and jumped up. The wild yells of Billy Bunter rang through the train and the colonel was naturally startled. Bunter collapsed on the floor, roaring.

"Good gad! What is the matter?" exclaimed the colonel.

"Yaroooooh!"
 "Bunter!"

"I'm poisoned!"
 "Poisoned?" exclaimed the colonel.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Beasts!" roared Bunter. "You don't care if I'm poisoned. You don't care if I expire at your feet. Yoop!"

"What is the matter with you, Bunter?" exclaimed the colonel testily. The laughter of the other juniors was a fairly

convincing proof that there was nothing serious the matter with Bunter.

"Stop the train!"
 "Nonsense!"
 "Call a doctor!" yelled Bunter.

"Absurd! What is the matter?"
 "I'm poisoned!"

"Bunter's eaten a little too much, I think, sir," said Bob Cherry demurely. "He feels as if he were on the Channel again."

"Very probable," grunted the colonel. "Have you eaten all those foodstuffs that I saw you buying at Amritsar, Bunter?"

"Ow! Yes. Wow!"

"Then it is no wonder that you feel ill," said the colonel severely. "You should be more temperate in a hot climate, Bunter. You must endeavour to control this greediness."

"Yaroooooh! I'm poisoned!" howled Bunter. "I ate Inky's cake, and it was poisoned. I believe he gave it to me on purpose!"

"Don't be absurd!"

DON'T FORGET, CHUMS!

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"Help!"
 The colonel scanned the grinning faces of the juniors.

"I suppose this is some jest on Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"Hem! Something in that line, uncle," admitted Wharton. "There's nothing the matter with him, really."

"I'm dying!" howled Bunter. "I can feel frightful pains 'all over me. Like daggers! Ow!"

It was very probable that the Owl of the Remove was feeling a little inward trouble. His feed on the train was likely to have caused trouble, even to Bunter's ostrich-like inside.

"He looks ill," said the colonel. "What is the pain you speak of like, Bunter?"

"Like burning daggers!"

"What?"
 "And red-hot pincers! Yaroooooh!"

"Where do you feel it?" demanded the colonel.

"Everywhere—all over! It's all over. Yow-ow-ow!"

"If it's all over, old bean, there's nothing to worry about, is there?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow! Beast! I mean it's all over me. Head to foot. Frightful pains, like red-hot daggers and burning needles—yarroooh! Call a doctor! Stop the train! I'm not going to be poisoned to please you!"

"But you wanted to take on Inky's danger, you know," chuckled Bob. "It's just in your line."

"Beast! Help!"

"What has put it into his foolish head that he is poisoned?" asked the puzzled colonel.

"I thoughtfully consider that some remarkfulness of my esteemed self put the idea into Bunter's idiotic head," murmured the nabob of Bhanipur. "It was a little jokefulness to subtract the swank from the fat and ridiculous Bunter."

Bunter sat up.

"You—you black beast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mean to say that your cake wasn't poisoned?" roared Bunter.

"Not to my knowfulness, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter.

"Beast!"

The juniors grinned cheerily as the train ran on to Lahore. Billy Bunter sat silent for a time; even Bunter had nothing to say. But as Lahore Station came in sight the fat junior recovered himself.

"You fellows thought you were pulling my leg!" he sneered.

"We jolly well did!" agreed Bob.

"The thoughtfulness was terrific."

"Well, you jolly well didn't!" said Bunter. "I knew it was a lark all the time—see? I jolly well made you think I was scared."

"You did!" crunched Bob. "We certainly thought you were frightened out of your silly wits. And we think so still."

"Yah!"

The Greyfriars party alighted at Lahore, and Bunter blinked round him in the lamplight, glimmering through the dusk of the Indian evening.

"Where's the hotel?" he asked.

"Echo answers, 'Where?'" answered Bob Cherry.

"The wherefulness is terrific," said the nabob.

"I suppose we're going to put up at an hotel?" exclaimed Bunter. "I'm tired. Hungry, too!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Frightfully hungry and tired out," said Bunter. "I want a meal next, then a bed. I say, sir, hadn't we better get off at once to the hotel?"

Colonel Wharton was speaking to a porter. He turned back and glanced at Bunter.

"What hotel?" he said. "What do you mean, Bunter? We are not staying in Lahore."

"Not staying in Lahore?" ejaculated Bunter.

"No."

"Then what the thump are we doing?"

"We are taking the train for Rawalpindi."

"Not this evening?"

"In twenty minutes," said the colonel.

"I'm tired!"

"Indeed!"

"And hungry."

"Well?"

"Well," spluttered Bunter, "I object to going on to-night! I object to sleeping in trains! I object—"

"Very good," said the colonel, unmoved. "My boys, come with me. Bunter, you may remain where you are."

"Eh?"

"Good-bye, Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry. And the Famous Five walked away with the colonel, followed by Pandy Din and the peon, and porters with their baggage, leaving Bunter rooted to the platform.

The Owl of the Remove stood and stared after them. It dawned upon his fat mind that as he had stated his vigorous objections to going on that night on the railway, the colonel was leaving him to his own devices. He gasped with wrath and dismay.

"Oh dear! Rotters! Oh!"

Bunter certainly had no mind to remain on the platform of the Lahore railway-station on his lonesome own. As the party moved off, without even turning their heads, Bunter made a rush after them.

"I say, you fellows, hold on!"

The Greyfriars fellows did not "hold on." The colonel was proceeding with rapid strides, and they were walking quickly to keep up with him. Bunter had to race after them, his fat little

legs fairly twinkling. He overtook them at last, and arrived with them in a breathless state at the train which was waiting to carry the passengers on into the hills of Rawalpindi.

Bob Cherry grinned at him as he rolled on to the train.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Changed your mind, old fat man?"

"Coming on to-night, after all?" asked Johnny Bull.

Bunter answered only with a snort. His objections seemed to have been overcome somehow; or perhaps he felt that he could not deprive the travellers of the benefits of his fascinating society. At all events, he was still with the Greyfriars party when the train pulled out of Lahore and rattled on to Rawalpindi.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Spy at Rawalpindi!

"IT'S c-c-cold!"

"Eh?"

"Kik-kik-cold!" stuttered Bunter.

"That must be due to a change in the temperature," said Bob Cherry gravely; and the juniors chuckled.

Bunter blinked morosely.

After the heat of the day, the cold was rather keen. The juniors were far in the North of India now, and though the days were hot, the nights were cold enough. Bunter's teeth chattered as the train pulled on among shadowy hills. Far away in the light of the stars the snow-clad summits of the Himalayas could be seen—and it was with a thrill that the Greyfriars fellows realised that they were looking at the famed Himalayas. But Bunter was not bothering about the Himalayas. He was, as usual, bothering about W. G. Bunter.

There had been a feed on the train, and even Bunter was satisfied with it. But he did not like the cold. Having groused long and often about the heat, he had now another topic for grouching—the cold. Bunter was never likely to be long at a loss for a topic for grouching.

Bedding was unpacked by Pandy Din—warm blankets and pillows and wadded quilts called razais; essential articles for railway travelling in India. The juniors rolled themselves up and slept cheerily, undisturbed by the rattle and roar of the train. Bunter, having annexed more than his share of bedding, made himself comfortable, and his dulcet voice was silent at last, being changed for a deep snore.

In the morning the Greyfriars party were at Rawalpindi.

They turned out cheerily enough, in sharp cold. But the heat revived as the sun rose higher, and Bunter ceased to grouse about the cold and groused once more about the heat.

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly well not going on any farther to-day!" he told the juniors. "I'm going to rest a day here at least."

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you I'm jolly well not going in another train!" hooted Bunter.

"The trainfulness is now finished, my esteemed fat Bunter," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Rot!" he said. "The railway runs right on the Peshawur."

"The railway does, my esteemed Bunter, but we do not!" chuckled the nabob. "We leave the railroad at

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"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. William George Bunter seemed to be experiencing a sudden recovery. He staggered to his feet, blinking at the laughing juniors with an infuriated blink.

"You rotters!" he howled. "You jolly well knew that Inky's cake wasn't poisoned!"

"So would you have known it if you hadn't been a silly funk!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The funkfulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come, come!" said the colonel, laughing. "You seem to be all right, Bunter. Please make a little less noise."

And Colonel Wharton went back to his seat and his newspaper. Bunter sat down again, eyeing the Famous Five furiously.

"You rotters! Taking me in—"

"Giving you a chance to show your jolly old devotion, same as you did on the steamer, old fat bean!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rawalpindi. Our route lies away from the railway into the hills."

"Oh!" said Bunter. He blinked towards the mighty Himalayas, barring the horizon to the East. "Blessed if I think much of your kingdom, Inky, if there isn't even a railway there!"

"The disdain of the esteemed Bunter is crushingly humiliating," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sorrowfully. "Should his words be heard in my kingdom, all the inhabitants will cover their heads with ashes and hide their faces from the sun."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Bunter. "Look here, if there isn't any railway, how the thump are we going to get to Bhampur? I suppose we're not going to walk up the Himalayas, are we?"

"I thoughtfully opine that the honourable colonel will proceed by car for a great distance."

"Oh! That's all right," said Bunter. "If it's a good car, with plenty of grub on board, I don't mind. But after that?"

"After that, the excellent horse-back!"

"Lucky I'm a jolly good rider!" said Bunter.

"Lucky if you are!" grinned Bob Cherry. "It won't be so easy as your stunts on the donkeys at Margate!"

"Of course, I'm accustomed to riding at home, at Bunter Court," said the Owl of the Remove, with dignity. "I don't suppose Inky's got at his palace any gees like those my pater keeps in his extensive stables at Bunter Court."

"I don't suppose he has!" agreed Bob, with a chuckle.

A carriage was waiting at the station for the Greyfriars party. Evidently, their arrival had been arranged for and expected. They drove from the station, down the Mall, Pandi Din following in a conveyance with the baggage. The peon had been left behind at Lahore—considerably to Bunter's disgust. Only the kitmutghar remained now to serve the party; but, fortunately, Harry Wharton & Co. were rather accustomed to taking care of themselves, and did not require all the attentions which Bunter considered his due. Perhaps Bunter missed the innumerable menials of Bunter Court; or perhaps he liked spreading himself on a journey where he had no bills to foot.

A military gentleman, an officer of the Rawalpindi garrison, welcomed the cavaliers at a bungalow on the Mall; where the juniors learned that they were to stay that day and the night; starting into the mountains the following morning. They were keen enough to start; and they were not at all sorry to leave the railway behind. The rooms of the Remove were quite ready to rough it; indeed, they were looking forward with the keenest anticipation to their journey into the lower ranges of the mighty Himalayas.

After tiffin Colonel Wharton took his young comrades out for a ramble through the town. Besides the extensive cantonments, there was little to be seen, but the juniors looked at the memorial statue of Queen Victoria and the public park and the golf-links, though their eyes often turned away towards the great mountains barring the eastern sky.

"We're being followed, sir!" Bob Cherry said to the colonel after a time.

Colonel Wharton glanced down at him with a smile.

"Do you think so?" he asked.

The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 966.

"I'm sure of it, sir," said Bob. "See that ragged beggar yonder—skulking by the park wall?"

"Yes? A wandering mendicant—a jockey!" said the colonel, with a nod. The juniors glanced at the man.

He was a brown-skinned, gaunt native, with black, matted hair, clad in little more than a loin cloth, and that dirty and ragged. They had seen swarms of such wandering beggars since arriving in India, and there was nothing specially to remark about this one.

"He was hanging about the bungalow, sir, when we came out," said Bob. "He has been hanging on our track all the time and never losing sight of us."

"Then we will give him another walk," said the colonel.

"Oh!" said Bob, a little puzzled.

The party walked on. Several times the juniors glanced about them, and they did not fail to spot the jockey, hovering in the distance—never looking directly towards them, but never letting them out of his sight. They left the town behind, and the juniors noticed that Pandi Din, who had been following, had disappeared. The colonel had spoken a few words to the kitmutghar in his own tongue, incomprehensible to the Greyfriars fellows, though Hurree Singh had started a little as he heard. Pandi Din had vanished a few minutes afterwards.

From the town the colonel led the way with long strides by a road shaded with trees and turned off at last into a path through a wood. The juniors followed him, and, glancing back as they entered the wood, they noticed the jockey in the distance.

It was clear enough that the man was shadowing them, and they wondered at the colonel's imperturbable calmness. The fact that they were watched brought clearly to their minds the peril that still haunted them; for they did not need telling that the jockey was one of the spies of Nally Das.

It was a long walk; and, fortunately, Bunter had remained behind to rest in the bungalow on the Mall. Bunter had declared warmly that he was not going to tramp about in the sun, and that he was going to have a snooze; and the Famous Five had been quite pleased to leave him snoozing. Certainly, this long walk would have made the fat juniors perspire. The Famous Five were sturdy and fit; but they were feeling fatigued when they emerged from the wood at last and followed another road back to Rawalpindi.

They looked behind a good many times, but nothing more was seen of the jockey.

"We've dropped that spy!" said Harry Wharton.

"Must have left him behind in the wood!" remarked Bob.

Colonel Wharton smiled.

"Quite so," he said. "Now, my boys, the road is direct from here to Captain Ferrers' bungalow, and you can return quite safely by yourselves. I have some little business to attend to."

Leaving the juniors on the road, the colonel turned back to the wood and disappeared among the trees.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged puzzled glances.

"Something's up!" said Bob sagely.

"There's something on!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I quite know what it is, though!"

"Perhapsfully I can enlighten my worthy chums," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I heard what the

esteemed Colonel Sahib said to Pandi Din when he dismissed him."

"I forgot you understood the lingo, old bean," said Harry. "But what did—"

"What has Pandi Din to do with it?" asked Johnny Bull.

The nabob smiled.

"The colonel sahib ordered Pandi Din to lose no time in getting to the wood and to wait there," he said. "The esteemed kitmutghar was to take cover in the wood and wait for us—and the spy."

"We didn't see him," said Nugent.

"Neitherfully, I think, did the spy," said Hurree Singh. "But he was there, my esteemed chums, and I thoughtfully opine that that is why the jockey followed us no further than the wood."

Bob Cherry gave a prolonged whistle.

"My hat! Then we took that jolly long walk really to lead that spying rotter into a trap!" he exclaimed.

"Just that!" grinned the nabob.

"And Pandi Din has bagged him in the wood!" ejaculated Nugent.

"I think so, my esteemed Franky."

"Good!"

And the juniors, understanding at last how the matters stood, walked on cheerily to the bungalow on the Mall, where they found Billy Bunter awake and getting anxious about supper.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

News of Nally Das!

COLONEL WHARTON strode by a shadowy path through the wood, a grim expression on his bronzed face. The juniors, accustomed to the kindly expression of the colonel, would hardly have known him now, so grim was his sunburned face. He had returned to the wood, where the kitmutghar had lain in wait for the spy with business on hand which the Removees of Greyfriars were not to witness.

A low whistle sounded softly among the trees, and the colonel turned from the path and plunged into a thicket. He came in a few minutes to a deep glade shaded by banyan-trees in the heart of the silent wood. Pandi Din, standing erect as a bronze statue, saluted him. At the feet of the kitmutghar lay the jockey, bound hand and foot, his dark, dirty face under his dirty turban alive with fear and apprehension.

The colonel looked down at him grimly.

"You have done well, Pandi Din," he said.

Pandi Din salaamed, with a faint grin on his brown face.

"It was easy, sahib. This dog followed the traces of my master into the wood. The sahib gave me ample time to reach the place and lie in ambush. I was ready for this son of a dog. He drew a knife when I seized him; but—"

The kitmutghar shrugged his shoulders.

"Speak, you dog!" said the colonel, his eyes on the apprehensive face of the jockey. "Your name?"

The man shook his head to signify that he did not understand English.

"You will make him speak, Pandi Din."

The kitmutghar grinned, and drew a hidden knife. The black eyes of the jockey rolled wildly.

"Mercy, noble sahib!"

"You have found your tongue, then," said the colonel contemptuously.

"Listen to me, you dog! You watched me arrive in Rawalpindi; you watched



The gang of savage decoits, armed to the teeth, swept towards the car with a wild rush. "My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "We——" Whirr! Something, that seemed like a huge bird, darkened the sky for a second. Then, like a bird of prey rushing upon its quarry, the fighting plane swept down. The yells of the dacoits were answered by the rattle and bang of the machine-gun above. (See Chapter 12.)

me at the bungalow of Ferrers Sahib; you listened, concealed as you thought, while I talked with the chauffeur about the journey to-morrow by car; you followed me in the town; you followed me to this wood. All the time you were yourself watched. You understand?"

"Sahib, I swear——"

"Silence! You are no jogee; you are a paid spy of Nally Das!" said the colonel.

The man started at the name.

"Your life hangs on a thread," continued Colonel Wharton. "You are not now in Bombay, or Delhi, or even Lahore; you are in the hills of Rawalpindi, where life is cheap. What has Nally Das paid you to spy on me?"

"I swear——" stammered the jogee huskily.

"At the first lie you are a dead man! Take care!"

Pandy Din made a movement with his knife, his ruthless eyes gleaming at the spy; and the man shuddered.

"Sahib, I was paid two hundred rupees."

"I will give you twice as much for the truth! The truth, mind! One false word will cost you your life!"

"I will tell the sahib the truth," muttered the wretched man through his chattering teeth.

"You learned that I leave Rawalpindi to-morrow with my companions and the Nabob of Bhanipur."

"Hah, sahib."

"You learned that we travel by car by a lonely road through the hills. You sent word of this to your master."

"It is true."

"Where is Nally Das?"

"In the hills above Rawalpindi," faltered the jogee. "My messenger was to reach him by the ruined temple in the hills."

"He knows, then, my plans for to-morrow?"

"He knows."

"In the hills of Rawalpindi there are many dacoits," said the colonel, his keen eyes fixed on the man's shrinking face. "It is easy for Nally Das to gather there a band of ruffians for any desperate deed. Speak!"

"My life is worth nothing if Nally Das learns that I betrayed him," muttered the jogee.

"Your life is worth less than nothing if you do not speak. If harm befalls the Nabob of Bhanipur on the road to-morrow, what do you think will be the value of your dog's life—you, left a prisoner in the hands of Ferrers Sahib at Rawalpindi, to be hanged as soon as news is received that Nally Das has succeeded?"

The wretch trembled.

"I will tell you all, sahib. Where the road passes the ruined temple of Kalce, Nally Das will be in waiting with a hundred of the dacoits of the hills. He has long made his preparations, and I was to wait and watch for the colonel sahib, and send him word. I have sent word; and if the colonel sahib takes the road to-morrow he will be slain, and the Huzoor Nabob will be taken a prisoner."

"You can tell me no more?"

"Sahib, I have told you all."

"Ach-cha!" said the colonel. "I believe you now. Pandy Din, you will take this man back to Rawalpindi, and leave him secure. Kill him if he attempts to escape!"

"On my head be it!" said the kichmutghar.

"Jogee, if you have told the truth, to-morrow night you are free, with four hundred rupees for your reward. If you have spoken falsely you will be hanged to-morrow at sunset!"

"Sahib, I swear——"

"Enough!"

Colonel Wharton turned and strode away, leaving the prisoner in the hands of Pandy Din.

Harry Wharton & Co. gave the colonel somewhat curious glances when he re-joined them at the bungalow on the Mall in Rawalpindi. But the colonel's face wore its usual kindly smile and gave no indication of his thoughts. In the evening the juniors sat in the moonlight garden chatting, before turning in, when a familiar sound of whirring and droning came to their ears.

"A giddy aeroplane!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking up at the clear sky.

The juniors stared up at the plane with interest. Strange enough it was to see the machine circling against the stars of the Indian sky, in the shadow of the Himalayas—the last word of Western invention in the heart of the changeless East.

"A fighting plane!" said the colonel, glancing up. "You may see it again, my boys—and perhaps hear the machine-gun going. You must be prepared for

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 966.

strange sights and sounds now that you are on the Indian frontier."

He paused and knocked the ash from his cigar.

"Hurree Singh I am bound to take with me," he went on. "But if any of you boys would choose to remain here in Rawalpindi, instead of going on into the mountains—"

"No fear!"

"No jolly fear, sir!"

"Then you must prepare for grim sights," said the colonel gravely. "We are going through hill-roads infested by dacoits—ruffians who watch for a chance to murder a soldier for his rifle, a dancing-girl for her earrings. Tomorrow you will see something of an India that you have seen nothing of so far—if you come."

The Famous Five felt a thrill. It was danger—and they knew it. But they did not falter.

"We're jolly well coming!" said Bob Cherry sturdily.

"And what do you say, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at the colonel. In the quiet, moonlit garden, under the deodars, it was difficult to visualise danger. Bunter grinned. He was not to be "done" so easily as all this.

"I'm coming," he said. "Danger's nothing to me—in fact, I revel in it. I'm not funky—like some fellows."

"The danger is real," said the colonel quietly.

Bunter winked at the circling aeroplane.

"That's all right, sir—if there's danger I feel bound to come and see these fellows through. Leave it at that!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob.

And it was left at that.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Bolt from the Blue!

"IT'S a good car!" said Bunter, deigning to approve.

It was a good car, there was no doubt about that. It was a roomy one, too, with ample space for the colonel and the Greyfriars juniors. It rolled out of Rawalpindi in the sunlight of the morning, a second car laden with baggage following, in the charge of Pandy Din.

Rawalpindi was left behind, the cantonments disappeared from sight, and the great lonely hills encompassed the gliding car. The road was good, and the pace was rapid. Bunter settled down in a corner seat with a bag of sticky cakes, though he had given rather a startled glance at the rifles that stood ready in the car, and at the revolver which lay beside the colonel on the seat.

It dawned upon Bunter's fat mind that there was danger on the road, as the colonel had told him—that the thought of an attack on the car in the solitudes of the hills was what was in Colonel Wharton's mind. But by the time that dawned on Bunter the party were twenty miles out of Rawalpindi, and return was not to be thought of. Billy Bunter comforted himself with sweet, sticky cakes and hoped for the best.

mile after mile glided under the wheels of the car, the native chauffeur driving on steadily, and wilder and wilder grew the mountain scenery round the travellers.

It was close on noon when Colonel Wharton looked sharply from the car and fixed his eyes upon a mass of ruined buildings by the roadside some distance ahead. It was the ruined temple of Kalee. Backward swept the colonel's glance, and it rested upon a moving object in the sky. Harry Wharton, following his glance, made out the aeroplane against the blinding blue.

"The plane!" he exclaimed.

"You will keep in cover here," said the colonel quietly. "You see that ruin by the roadside—"

"Yes."

"Nally Das is lying in wait there, with a hundred dacoits of the hills."

"Wha-a-at?"

"They may open fire," said the colonel, unmoved. "But it is more likely that they will rush the car, as they seek to take Hurree Singh alive, and dare not shed his blood if they can help it."

"A hundred!" repeated Johnny Bull.

"Or more."

"Then we're done for!" said Bob Cherry. "We can't handle a hundred of them, sir. But we'll jolly well die game!"

Colonel Wharton smiled.

"I have not brought you here to die in a trap," he said. "You will see! But take care; the danger is real enough, although every precaution has been taken."

Crack!

It was a signal shot from the ruined temple.

With a howl of terror, Billy Bunter rolled off his seat and plunged into the bottom of the car. But no one heeded Bunter.

Forth from the ruined temple—only a few moments before still and silent as the grave—rushed a wild crew—dark-skinned men in turbans, armed with tulwars, spears, and long knives—a gang of the desperate robbers of the hills of Rawalpindi. A hundred of them at least, brawny ruffians, armed to the teeth, and they swept towards the car with a wild rush. Ahead the road was blocked by a fallen tree.

The car jammed to a halt. From the shattered gateway of the temple the fierce face of Nally Das looked, watching the attack of the savage dacoits.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "We are—"

Whirrrrrrr!

Something that seemed like a huge bird darkened the sky for a second. Like a bird of prey rushing upon its quarry, the fighting-plane swept down.

The yells of the dacoits were answered by the rattle and bang of the machine-gun above.

"The plane!" shouted Bob.

"Hurrah!"

Then the juniors understood as they stared from the car with tense faces. The trapper was trapped, the bitter bit. A tearing hail of bullets from the plane swept through and through the gang of robbers, and the savage rush of the dacoits stopped and broke, and their threatening yells changed into shrieks of pain and terror.

From the ruined temple Nally Das watched, his dark face convulsed with rage. He watched for a few moments, and then he vanished—fleeing—knowing only too well that he had failed, and that only flight could save him.

But the mob of dacoits rushing in the open broke and fled in vain; the storm of searching bullets rained on them, and man after man rolled over, yelling and screaming.

With white faces the Greyfriars juniors watched the terrible scene that unfolded before their eyes like a scene at the theatre.

Of all the desperate gang that had rushed the car, sure of their prey, only one came within a dozen yards, and he only to fall before a sharp shot from the colonel's revolver. The rest, torn right and left by the rain of lead from the machine-gun above, scattered and darted wildly for safety among the rocks.

The juniors' rifles were ready, but they were not needed. Half the desperate gang lay, groaning, or terribly still, on the sun-baked rocks; the rest, yelling with terror, fled in all directions, casting away their tulwars and long-barrelled guns for greater speed. And as they fled the raining bullets still scarred them among the rocks.

It was over!

The road was cleared, the car glided on its way; and behind the Greyfriars party the vultures gathered from far and near, and the hyenas came creeping out of their lairs. Without a backward glance Harry Wharton & Co. dashed on their way, with nothing to fear from the dacoits of Rawalpindi.

THE END.

(Look out for the next thrilling story in this superb series, chums, entitled: "In the Heart of the Himalayas!" You'll find it in next Monday's MAGNET.)

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CURLEW ISLAND

by **David Goodwin**

The greatest serial story ever written
by this famous author.

(Introduction on page 24.)

Amongst Friends!

THERE was a footfall outside, the door opened, and a man came in, an enormous man, not quite so tall as Dr. O'Hara, but much broader and bigger, with a dark, heavy face and black eyes. He was wearing a costly-looking motoring overcoat, and like O'Hara he had a wealthy, prosperous air. He pulled his glove off and there was a diamond ring on his finger; his hands looked like legs of mutton. When he caught sight of the boy on the sofa he stopped abruptly.

"Who is this?" he demanded.

O'Hara made a graceful wave of his slim white hand.

"Allow me," he said, "to introduce you. Tommy, this is my friend Mr. Merton Haynes. Merton, this is our famous and much-sought-after young friend, Tommy Comber, late of Curlew Island and the prison ship *Bellerophon*."

The big man gave a violent start.

"Great powers!" he said. "What a bit of luck, O'Hara!" He stared at Tommy with a threatening expression. He seemed to be gloating over him, as if he were something good to eat. "How in thunder did he get here? He has saved us a lot of trouble and expense!"

"He came through the window, trying to borrow a little food. I had happened to see him sneaking around the house, and, as I naturally thought he was—well, another friend of ours, and quite a different bird altogether, I decided to make sure of him. You can imagine my satisfaction when I recognised he was Tommy Comber."

Merton Haynes gave a short laugh.

"It's our lucky day!" he said.

And he came to the side of the sofa and peered into Tommy's face with his dark, fierce eyes.

"You don't look much like your pictures, my young friend," he said.

"Don't I?" answered Tommy. "Well, that's a bit of luck for me, isn't it, sir? The less like myself I look, the better."

Haynes laughed again, showing a set of strong white teeth.

"Yes," he said. "But the clothes and the short-cropped hair—eh? They'd take a lot of explaining away, if the police turned up. It was very lucky you

chose this house—very lucky, my boy. You find yourself among friends here."

Tommy nodded. He didn't like the man much. There was a good bit of the bully about him, and Tommy had no use for bullies. But, for all that, he liked him rather better than the smooth and pussy-like Dr. O'Hara, who, somehow, gave him the creeps. In spite of their costly clothes and prosperous looks, they both had a dangerous appearance, it seemed to Tommy.

"That's all right, sir," he said. "I'm glad to meet friends, an' I never needed 'em so badly. But the point is, what the dickens do you want with me?"

Dr. O'Hara interrupted.

"Come on, Haynes," he said. "You take him by the legs, and I'll lift his shoulders, and we'll get him upstairs. He'll be safer there than down here on the ground floor. We don't know that the police mightn't track him here."

The two men lifted Tommy between them, and every step they made sent a spasm of pain through Tommy Comber's body, for he was as stiff and sore as if he had been beaten all over with a club. But they got him up the staircase and into a wide, low bed-room, where, to his surprise, there was a fire burning. Here was luxury. Tommy had never had a fire in his bed-room in his life.

The two men laid him down in a deep easy-chair by the hearth.

"He'd better have a bath. There's plenty of hot water in the kitchen," said O'Hara to Haynes. "Would you like a hot bath, my boy?"

"Would I?" said Tommy gratefully, and closed his eyes. He felt that it was the only thing on earth that would warm his chilled blood.

These two men seemed a very decent pair, after all.

Tommy had a dim recollection of being helped out of his soaked and filthy clothes, and, later on, of lying gloriously comfortable in a hip-bath of hot water.

Then he was in bed, and somebody was rubbing him all over with some warm, sweet-smelling oily stuff that seemed to take all the pain out of his limbs, and leave him in a sort of drowsy contentment.

And after that he fell asleep.

The first thing Tommy heard was somebody saying, in a rather hushed voice:

"Don't wake him up. Let the young beggar sleep as long as he can. Best thing for him."

Tommy opened his eyes. He saw Dr. O'Hara standing by the bedside, and beside him was a boy of about seventeen, with a dark, rather sullen face. He was holding a tray with a cup and saucer on it. Tommy wondered where he had sprung from. He also wondered where on earth he had got to, and why he was not on the *Bellerophon*. Then suddenly it all came back to him.

"Well," said the doctor smoothly, "and how is the patient to-day?"

Tommy stretched himself carefully. He was still pretty stiff, and his throat felt as if somebody had been sandpapering it; but, all the same, he was better—much better.

"I think I'm all right, sir," he said hoarsely. "Thanks very much. You've been good to me. How long have I been asleep?"

"You've been snoring like a horse ever since midnight," said the doctor, looking at his watch, "and it's now three o'clock in the afternoon."

"Three o'clock!" exclaimed Tommy, starting up in bed. "Great Scott! I must get up! I must be off!"

"Don't be a young fool!" said O'Hara, pressing him down again quickly. "You'll get up when I let you get up, not before. You're going to have a thundering good feed first. What can you give him, Pat?" he said.

"There's eggs, fish, and kidneys," said the boy, sullenly, "and tomatoes, sausages, ham, jam, coffee, tea, and marmalade—"

"That'll do nicely for a start," said O'Hara. "He looks as if he could do with the lot. This is my servant, Patrick Roche," he said to Tommy. "He's young, but a good cook; he's also a good fighter, and he knows how to hold his tongue, else he wouldn't be my servant. Smart-looking lad, isn't he?"

Tommy looked at him.

"If you're Irish, I'm a Dutchman, that's all," he thought. But he didn't say it aloud.

"Yes, he is, sir," said Tommy.
 "What would you like him to cook for you? You have only to give your orders."

"Oh, anything that's the least trouble, old chap," said Tommy to the boy. "I don't give a hoot, as long as there's plenty of it."

"We'll give you a better breakfast than you got on the 'Billy Rough'un,'" said O'Hara.

Tommy flushed up, but the doctor laughed.

"That's all right, youngster. Pat knows all about you, and he'll keep mum. He knows what would happen to him if he didn't. Give him the tea, Pat; put it on the table by the bedside here. Then go and cook his breakfast as quick as you can and bring it up on a tray. First of all," he added, as Pat left the room, "I'll overhaul you, Tommy, for I don't know how much damage you got yesterday. We'll make sure. Your right leg was covered with blood when I bathed you last night."

He made an examination of Tommy, in regular doctor's style. He took a little steel probe out of a case, and Tommy felt a sharp pain in the back of his calf.

"Your tyre's punctured, Tommy—here's a Number 5 shot in your leg," said O'Hara. "I've got it out now."

"That was the gamekeeper's gun, sir," said Tommy, who was lying on his face while the shot was dug out. "Oo-er! That knife of yours hurts a bit. He plugged me, while I was getting away on the bike."

"Well, that won't do you much harm," said the doctor; he made a brief examination of Tommy's throat, listened to his heart, and tapped him all over the chest.

"That'll do," he said finally. "You've been through enough to kill a couple of grown men, but except for giving you a slight cold in the head it seems to have done you good. Now you can get outside that cup of tea, and when you've had breakfast I shall have something to say to you."

Tommy sat up in bed.
 "Let's have it now," he said. "What does all this mean, doctor? Why are you hiding me from the police?"

O'Hara looked down at him with that curious, baffling smile of his.

"You'll know, when the proper time comes," he said, "and, meanwhile, here's the 'Daily Mail' for you. I think it will interest you to see what a stir Tommy Comber is making in the world—that a million people are reading about Tommy Comber this morning—and what a very tight place he is in."

He left the room, closing the door behind him, and Tommy heard the key click in the lock. That did not upset Tommy; he took a sip of the hot tea, which was much more welcome than the greasy, bitter cocoa he got on the Bellerophon, and settled himself in the soft sheets.

It was a queer business, and it was getting more queer every minute. O'Hara was a mysterious chap. Tommy had met a good many Irishmen at one time and another, and he felt quite sure he was not Irish, any more than the boy Pat was.

"It's rum," thought Tommy. "He speaks as good English as me—and better. But he's a foreigner of some kind, I'll swear to that. What he is I don't know. He ain't German; I know a German when I see one. That big chap, Merton Haynes, is foreign, too. What do they want with me, an' why

are they as pleased as two monkeys who've found a banana? Well, I bet I can give a guess at that. And they don't mean me to go back to the Bellerophon. Well, O'Hara, old scout, I'm with you that far."

O'Hara's Promise!

HE picked up the "Daily Mail" and opened it. Some big headlines on the centre page caught his eye at once.

"ESCAPE OF TOM COMBER.

Famous Boy-Convict Breaks Out Of Prison-Ship!

"Exciting Chase On The River."

Tommy chuckled, and read the account while he drank his tea.

"Thomas Comber, the fifteen-year-old boy who was sentenced to three years detention in the Curlew Island burglary case, made a sensational escape from the reformatory ship Bellerophon yesterday, and the Lower Thames is ringing with the fame of his adventures. He is still at large, and the police are searching for him."

"He was stroke-oar of the ship's whaleboat which was out at rowing practice yesterday afternoon in charge of an officer, when a fog came on suddenly and the boat was cut down by a steamer. Luckily the officer and crew were rescued, all except the boy Comber, who took advantage of the confusion to escape, being a strong swimmer. He was picked up by the

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

TOMMY COMBER, a bright young lad of fifteen, who assists his uncle,

JOSEPH COMBER, an experimenter, living on Curlew Island, a desolate stretch of land situated in the Thames estuary. "Nunks" as Tommy affectionately calls his uncle, invents a powerful explosive which he names "Comberite" and which he confidently expects will bring him fame and fortune. Of the latter Tommy is naturally promised a big share. Tommy's only other relation is "CHUFFER" FOSS, a half-cousin, and a rotter of the first water. In a set-to with Chuffer, Tommy proves that he can use his fists to good effect, with the result that Chuffer leaves the island swearing vengeance.

By a stile that night, Tommy is dreaming of the good times in store, when he is pounced upon by two unknown assailants and stunned. The miscreants then attack the inventor, whom they murder and rob, covering up their tracks by planting some of the stolen cash on Tommy's person. Tommy regains consciousness, but his mind is a blank. He meets DAN BENNETT, an old chum at Gravesend, and the two boys have a merry time. That evening, however, Tommy is arrested, and to his amazement and horror, charged with the murder of his uncle Joseph Comber.

Not satisfied with the evidence put up by Foss, however, the jury acquit Tommy on the graver charge. But of theft he is found guilty and sentenced to three years' detention aboard the reformatory ship Bellerophon.

After a series of exciting incidents, however, Tommy makes his escape. Although almost exhausted, he eludes his pursuers and gains sanctuary in the thick woods, where he rests his aching limbs.

That same night, realising that his hunger must be appeased, the young fugitive throws all caution to the winds and feloniously enters the premises of Dr. O'Hara. He is discovered, however, but to his surprise O'Hara displays great hospitality and gives him a meal. Afterwards, while Tommy is telling his story, the distant but unmistakable sound of an approaching motor-car causes him to jump up in alarm.

"It's all right, Tommy," says his host, with a curious smile. "It's not the police, but a friend of mine. We'll put you to bed in a minute. You'll be a different boy in the morning!"

(Now read on.)

barge Barking Creek, and being evidently a lad of enterprise, he offered the skipper a hundred pounds to help him escape, though it does not appear that he had that sum of money on him at the time, and he said he would owe it.

"The captain of the barge states that on his declining to help a convict to escape, even for an I O U of a hundred pounds, Comber seized a hand-spike and felled him and his mate to the deck before they had any idea that they were going to be attacked."

Tommy had a fit of choking and spilt the tea over his nightgown.

"Great Caesar's ghost! What a liar that bargee is!" he said. "He's been stuffing up the newspaper chap. All I did was to dust his ugly mug with the mop—and he asked for that, too!"

"The boy Comber then stole the barge's boat and managed to make his way ashore. Here he was seen by one of the ship's officers, who was just about to secure him after a sharp chase when Comber butted him violently in the stomach and again got clear away in the fog."

"By gosh, the truth isn't in them!" said Tommy indignantly. "I never butted anybody in my life; I only collared old Kellman round the knees. They're pilin' it up against me!"

"The boy must have spent the night in hiding, and nothing more was heard of him till noon yesterday, when Colonel Blake's police dogs, which had been sent for, picked up the trail, and he was seen on Lagden Hill. Here Comber by some means became possessed of a bicycle and some clothes, but he was recognised from his description by a gamekeeper, who, though the boy was riding at a furious pace, managed to puncture the back tyre of the machine by a shot from his gun, a feat which was highly creditable under the circumstances."

"The young fugitive, however, who seems to be a desperately determined character as well as being uncommonly lucky, contrived to coast down the hill on his disabled machine at a pace that defied all pursuit, and when the searchers arrived on the hill, all trace of him was lost for the time being."

"It is thought that he has made his way to the woods north of Warley and is lying there in hiding, starving and desperate. In any case, it is impossible for him to remain at liberty much longer; he cannot get food except by stealing it from some cottages or farm, and directly he shows himself there will be an end of his freedom."

"Considerable excitement prevails in the district, and all the inhabitants are keenly on the alert. A large body of police and searchers are engaged in the hunt, and Comber's recapture may be confidently expected to occur at any moment."

"Yes, I don't think!" said Tommy, taking another satisfying drink of tea. He glanced down the column of the paper at another heading.

"THE CURLEW ISLAND CASE,

A Famous Trial Recalled.

The newspaper printed a shortened account of Tommy's trial at Maidstone, which had now become more interesting than ever, and gave a new report of what had happened on Curlew Island. There were a lot of references to "one of the principal witnesses at the trial Mr. Benjamin Foss, of Gravesend."



Dr. O'Hara took a little steel probe out of a case, and Tommy felt a sharp pain in the back of his calf. "It was a Number Five shot in your leg, Tommy," said the doctor, "but I've got it out now!" (See page 24.)

"Mr. Benjamin Foss!" murmured Tommy. "Chuffer's getting quite famous, too! It's nothing to what he will be some day. He'll be as famous as Charles Peace."

Tommy saw another paragraph, which made him laugh rather grimly.

"Interviewed by our special correspondent at Gravesend, Mr. Benjamin Foss, who is the escaped prisoner's cousin, was unwilling to give any opinion on the affair. 'It is a very sad business,' said Mr. Foss. 'I can only hope that the unhappy boy, who has brought such disgrace on his relatives, may be captured before he dies of starvation and exposure, and before he has the chance to commit any further acts of robbery and violence.'"

"By gum, yes!" said Tommy, laying down the paper. "For once in his life Chuffer has told the truth! I bet Chuffer is on the hop, wondering when I'm going to pop up in the night and settle up that little account I owe him. The best news he's looking out for is that they've got me shut up again!"

It was a pleasant thought that Chuffer's days and nights were filled with a painful anxiety for fear the boy he had betrayed and disgraced might suddenly appear when Chuffer, a born coward as well as a liar, was not ready for him. And Tommy hoped not to disappoint him.

At that moment the door was unlocked, and Pat Roche came in with a tray, which he set down on the table beside Tommy's bed.

"Is that my breakfast? By gum, you're a brick, Pat!" said Tommy. "Let's get at it."

There was a fine fat fried sole, a dish of kidneys and bacon, some smoking-hot sausages, marmalade and strawberry jam, and a jug of steaming coffee. Tommy had never had such a break-

fast in his life, even on Curlew Island. It was laid on a fine white cloth, with gleaming silver forks and a silver salt-cellar.

As Tommy started on the sole, the boy stood by and watched him with a curious expression on his face.

"Say," he said, "will you tell me something?"

"Sure," said Tommy, "what is it?"

"Is it a fact you never did that job at Curlew Island at all?"

"Yes," said Tommy quietly, "that's a rock-bottom fact."

Pat nodded.

"Doctor O'Hara says so," he announced.

"Says what?"

"That it wasn't you who did it?"

"Well, then, the doctor's quite right. And here's luck to him," said Tommy, taking a swig at the coffee.

"Then why did your cousin—the boy they call Ben Foss—why did he swear that you did?"

"Ah! That's a question Chuffer Foss and I have got to settle up between us one day. And I hope it won't be long," said Tommy softly.

Pat walked to the door, and then turned round.

"If a chap I'd never done any harm to, behaved like that to me," he said slowly, "I should kill him."

Tommy's mouth was full of fish, so he only nodded. Then he swallowed the fish, and nodded again.

"I dare say it'll come to that," he said cheerfully. "The only thing is, a chap gets rather fed-up with being tried for murder."

The boy gave him another long, searching look with his dark eyes, and, going out, locked the door behind him. Tommy lay back and laughed aloud, before tackling the hot kidneys.

"That's a rum pup!" he chuckled to

himself. "And I don't like him much, any more than I like his two masters. It sounds a bit ungrateful, seeing how well they're doing me. But they ain't doing it for nothing; they're doing it for what they can get out of it. This house isn't a charity orphanage where they take in runaway prisoners for fun."

He finished his breakfast, and lay back with a sigh of deep content. With a mind much more at ease, he thought over his chances.

They looked good. He really seemed to be in luck. All the same, Tommy did not think he was going to keep his liberty for long. They were bound to find him sooner or later. O'Hara and Haynes might help him for a while. But they couldn't prevent him being recognised, and it wasn't possible to lie in hiding for ever. Besides, he had an idea that when they had got what they wanted—whatever it was—they wouldn't care whether he was caught or not. And another thing—they were playing a dangerous game if they kept him, because sheltering and aiding a runaway prisoner is an offence which can be punished by the law.

Yes, the odds were he would have to go back to the Bellerophon. The thought was so horrible that he kept his mind off it. But one thing he had set his heart on. Whatever risk he took, he meant to see Chuffer again, face to face and alone, even if recapture was the price of it.

He had just come to this decision when the door opened, and Dr. O'Hara came in, with Merton Haynes' big figure looming up behind him. There was a moment's silence, and the doctor looked at Tommy, smiling blandly.

"We are not interrupting you, I hope, Tommy?" he said. "You have finished your breakfast?"

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"Yes; I've done, thanks!" said Tommy.

Why it was he could not have told, but O'Hara's politeness made him feel sick. There was something curiously sinister about it. Haynes strolled across the room and seated himself on the window-sill, while the doctor came to Tommy's bedside and picked up the "Mail."

"You've read the paper, I see," he said. "I hope you liked what they've written about you?"

"It's the sort of giddy compliment I could do without, sir!" said Tommy shortly. "I wish there was less of it!"

Haynes gave a short, gruff laugh.

"Our young friend is modest—so modest!" he said. "He does not thirst for more fame."

He chuckled to himself, as if enjoying his joke. But he spoke with an accent, and Tommy was sure now that he was a foreigner.

"Ah, yes!" said O'Hara amiably. "But then Tommy Comber, I have come to the conclusion, is one of those people we can't spare. He is an uncommonly clever boy—very clever indeed!"

"It's the first time I've heard of it!" retorted Tommy. "I've always been thought rather a mug. Is it because I'm so jolly clever that you're hiding me from the police, sir?"

"It is natural to a kindly natured man like myself to assist a hunted fellow-creature!" said the doctor, smiling. Then he paused. "I suppose you

are not very anxious to go back to your friends on the prison ship?"

"Not if there's any more pleasant prospect, sir," said Tommy.

Merton Haynes grunted.

"Nothing is likely to be more unpleasant for you than that, you young fool!" he said harshly.

The bullying tone in his voice put Tommy's back up at once.

"I don't know that," he said quietly.

"There might be a lot of worse things."

The doctor's smooth voice interrupted.

"But our proposal, Tommy, my dear boy, is a very pleasant one indeed. How would you like to be really free again—absolutely free, and rich, never to have to serve your three years' sentence at all; to go about England just as you please, perfectly safe, and for nobody to know that you were Tommy Comber, or to be able to arrest you and send you back to your punishment on the Bellerophon?"

Tommy rose on one elbow, and stared at the doctor in amazement. For once there was no mockery in O'Hara's keen eyes. Tommy could see that he meant what he said. But it was an absolute mystery to him.

"I should like it jolly well," he said slowly, "if it could be done."

The doctor leaned forward a little.

"It can be done," he said, "and I will show you how to do it, if you obey me absolutely and do everything I tell you."

Before Tommy could answer there was

a step on the gravel and a sharp double knock at the front door below. Both the men started, and Haynes, who was looking out of the window, drew back suddenly, stifling an oath.

His face was white and dangerous. His hand flew to his hip-pocket, and Tommy saw that it grasped the butt of a revolver.

"By heavens, doctor," he muttered, "we're done! It's the police!"

A Narrow Escape!

AT the mention of the word "police," Tommy ducked down under the bedclothes like a rabbit, and pulled them over his head.

Dr. O'Hara turned towards Haynes with a threatening movement.

"Put that pistol away, you fool!" he whispered fiercely. "What do you think you're doing? If it's the police, leave them to me! Get out of this room, and keep quiet!"

O'Hara hurried to the door as the double knock was heard again. Tommy poked his head from under the bedclothes cautiously, and found that both the men had left the room.

His heart was beating fast. Somehow he felt more scared now than at any time during the two days when he had been hunted across country. He was helpless now, for they had run him to earth, and he no longer had the strength to make a run for it.

But he could not bear the suspense of lying in bed and waiting to be captured. Besides, Haynes' pistol had astonished him. He began to wonder whether Haynes and O'Hara were not more scared of the police than he was himself.

He crept out of bed, feeling very weak and sore, and stole to the open window. He dared not look out, but he could hear a deep, gruff voice asking questions at the front door just underneath, and Dr. O'Hara's smooth and silky tones answering him.

"Age about fifteen," said the gruff voice, "dressed in sailor clothes, broad an' well built for his hage. Name is Thomas Comber, but, o' course, he wouldn't give his name. Probably in a wet an' ragged condition, and most likely half-starving. Sure you haven't seen him anywhere round here, sir?"

"No," said Dr. O'Hara. "But I'll keep a sharp look-out for him, sergeant."

Tommy drew a deep breath of relief. He peeped out very cautiously. There was a row of scraggy geraniums in pots on the window-sill, and they acted as a screen. Looking down, he could see the helmet and jacket of a village police-sergeant standing in front of the door.

"You couldn't very well mistake him, sir," said the sergeant. "But isn't there a boy living in this house with you just now?"

"Only my servant, Roche," replied Dr. O'Hara, with a pleasant laugh.

"Well, you might tell him to keep his eyes open, too," said the policeman. "Boys is pretty sharp at that. I'm warnin' every house in the neighbourhood, sir. Lock up your door and windows at night. And if you've got a gun or anything like that in the house, I should put it away carefully in a safe place, for fear he might get hold of it if he happens to come here."

"What! He's dangerous, is he?" said O'Hara.

"Desp'it young villain, sir!" said the sergeant, shaking his head. "You'd hardly believe the things he's done since

he broke loose. He's a convicted thief, and there ain't any doubt at police headquarters that he did that job at Curlew Island, and was lucky to get off. That there lawyer saved him with the jury, though it's a sure thing he did the murder!"

Tommy started. He could not help it. And the sudden movement knocked one of the geranium pots off the window-sill. It toppled over and fell with a mighty thump on the crest of the policeman's helmet, bursting like a shell.

"Wah!" yelled the sergeant, sitting down heavily, with mould and geranium-roots cascading all over him.

Tommy ducked back into the bed-room as if he had been shot.

"Good gracious!" gasped Dr. O'Hara. "There's somebody up there," cried the sergeant, struggling to his feet, purple in the face, "an' I'm goin' to see who it is!"

"It's that confounded cat!" exclaimed O'Hara. "She's always climbing along that sill! She knocked a pot down yesterday! There she goes!"

"Cat!" cried the village policeman. "People that has cats like that oughter keep 'em under control! Look at me 'elmet! Bashed right in! If I hadn't had it on I'd ha' been done for! Look 'ere—"

"I'm very sorry, sergeant!" said O'Hara, swiftly taking a pound note out of his pocket and slipping it into the policeman's hand. "Unfortunate accident. Don't want you to lose by it. You know what cats are; nobody can control them! I hate 'em myself!"

The sergeant looked at the note, and put it in his pocket. Tips didn't often come his way.

"Well, well, sir," he said, straightening his helmet and brushing the mould off. "I'm much obliged! Thanky, sir! Haccidents will happen, as you say. I'll be gettin' along; I've a lot more houses to warn. You won't make any mistake about that boy Tommy Comber if you see him, will you, sir?"

"I'll make no mistake about him at all," said the doctor. "You can be quite easy about that. He won't get away from me if he comes within reach of this place. By the way, what will they do to him, do you suppose, when they get him back?"

"Flog him, for a start, I should think," said the policeman, "and dock his remission of sentence—make him serve his full three years. Oh, they'll put it across him all right, I've no doubt. Serve the young scoundrel right, givin' us all this trouble. Good-mornin', sir."

The heavy footfalls of the sergeant were heard, dying away as he left the grounds and disappeared down the lane.

Tommy had crept back into bed, hardly able to believe in his good luck. All was quiet in the house, and presently O'Hara and Merton Haynes came back into the room.

"Great powers!" muttered O'Hara. "That was a narrow shave!"

"What did you try to brain the policeman for, you young idiot!" growled Haynes, staring at Tommy.

"I didn't," said Tommy. "It was an accident. I was taking a dekho at him out of the window and the jolly old flower-pot fell down. Even if I had I don't think it's as bad as gettin' ready to shoot him, same as you did, sir. I don't like pistols, and I tell you that straight. Shooting people is dirty work, and he was only doing his duty after all."

Doctor O'Hara smiled his smooth smile.

"My friend Merton had not the least intention of shooting," he said. "In a moment of excitement he pulled out his pistol, which was indeed a foolish thing to do—he did it without thinking."

"What was he so excited about?" said Tommy.

"At the fear of losing you, my young friend," replied O'Hara softly. "We

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do not intend to lose you, now we've got you. Don't you think I got rid of your enemy the policeman very neatly?"

What Tommy was really thinking, was that Doctor O'Hara was a thundering liar. But it would have been ungrateful to complain, for he still felt cold all up his back at the risk he had run of being hauled off to the Bellerophon again.

"It was very smart, sir," he agreed.

"And now," said O'Hara, "we will get back to business at once. You wish to know what I want with you, and how you are to get your freedom. I expect you are anxious to hear what we are."

Tommy sat up in bed.

"Yes," he said, "and I'll tell you now, that I've seen you before, doctor. You were in the court at Maidstone Assizes when I was being tried. And I spotted you on the river, in a fast motor-boat, the day before yesterday."

"You have sharp eyes," said O'Hara quietly, "and you're quite right. Do you know what that motor-boat was for?

I was watching for a chance to help you escape from the Bellerophon."

"By gosh!" exclaimed Tommy. "Do you mean to say you intended to get me out of it, all along?"

"Yes, my lad, we did. I don't know that we should have succeeded. That ship is a very difficult place to get a boy out of. But we would have had a shot at it some night. As it happened, you gave them leg-bail on your own account, and your turning up at this very house was just a bit of luck, which saved us a lot of trouble and risk. It's a chance that mightn't come off again in a year."

"Great guns!" said Tommy excitedly. "Does this mean you know I'm innocent an' can prove it and make them let me go?"

Merton Haynes smiled grimly, and the doctor shook his head.

"No," he said. "I wish we could. But you can put that idea out of your head, once for all. I believe that you are innocent, Tommy, but I don't know it. I can't prove it. Nobody will ever be able to prove who killed your uncle, Joseph Comber, if it wasn't you. Nobody will be able to prove you didn't take his money."

"Look here!" said Tommy sharply. "What do you know about it? How do you come into it?"

"I'll tell you," said O'Hara. "I landed in England—from America—a week before you were brought to your trial—that's a month after your uncle's death. By the way, here is my passport, with my name on it, and here's the ship from my ticket on the ship that brought me, with the date on it. You might like to see that."

He showed Tommy a passport, and a slip of paper belonging to the steamer ticket.

"We read about your case, Mr. Haynes and I," he said, "and we went to see you tried. You wonder why, don't you?"

"No, I don't!" retorted Tommy. "You're after Comberite Powder! And to get Comberite Powder, you're after me."

"Go up top, Tommy," said Doctor O'Hara with a smile. "That's it! Now, nobody believed in that story of yours about your uncle's explosive that would blow a town up and leave nothing behind but rubbish. But Haynes and I know that there's something in it. We are interested in the sale and manufacture of high explosives. Now, supposing this powder of your late uncle's is all that's claimed for it—if we had the right to make and sell it, we could get a lot for it. We could make our own terms."

"Sure thing, you could!" said Tommy. "That powder don't cost any more to

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"CURLEW ISLAND!"

(Continued from previous page.)

make than ordinary gunpowder or cordite—and it licks either of them into fifty cocked hats."

"Very well. The thief wasn't after that bit of money in your uncle's safe. He was after the secret of this wonderful powder—which you call Comberite. Did the thief get it?"

"No! He never got it, for it wasn't there to get!" said Tommy. "My uncle never put that secret down on paper for a thief to steal."

"Then, did the secret die with your uncle?"

"No fear, it didn't!"

Doctor O'Hara leaned forward.

"Do you know that secret?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"I know something about it," replied Tommy quietly.

"Listen, then," said O'Hara, and both men moved nearer the bed. "You will go shares with us, Tom Comber. You will let us into this secret, and there will be money enough for all! And we shall save you from going back to three

years misery on the Bellerophon. That is the price of your freedom!"

"Tommy was silent. For a minute or more he lay thinking. Nunks had trusted the secret of Comberite to him. It was in his head—inside his skull, where these men could not get at it. Nunks had made him swear never to give it away.

But Nunks was dead, and he couldn't take Comberite with him. Tommy was Nunks' nephew and heir, his only kin and relative in the world—except Chuf-fer. The secret now belonged to Tommy himself. He knew Nunks wouldn't have minded—in a case like this. Tommy was the sole owner of Comberite Powder—for whatever it was worth. And it was worth the price of his liberty, and a bit more.

If O'Hara and Haynes were men who sold explosives, they would have a very poor time of it if anybody else were selling Comberite Powder. But if they got hold of it themselves, they might make a great fortune; well worth the

risk of helping Tommy to escape. There didn't seem any reason to doubt that O'Hara was speaking the truth. And yet Tommy mistrusted him—mistrusted him from the bottom of his heart. Somehow he couldn't help it.

"Well, what do you offer, sir?" he said at last.

There was a gleam of satisfaction in O'Hara's eyes.

"We will guarantee you your freedom, and make sure you don't ever have to go back to the Bellerophon," he said. "In return for all you know about the secret of that powder. You can go abroad, if you like, where they will never find you. And we'll give you a hundred pounds—a hundred pounds down, my boy, in ready money!"

Tommy stared at him for a moment. Then he lay back in bed and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Come off it, doctor!" he said, wiping his eyes. "What sort of a giddy mug d'you take me for?"

(Tommy's a fugitive from justice, right enough, but he's not such a fool as to part company with the secret of Comberite—worth a fortune—for a miserable hundred pounds, even with his liberty thrown in. Mind you read the continuation of this human story in next Monday's MAGNET, chums.)



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