

Wonderful FREE Gift INSIDE!

No. 967. Vol. XXX.

Week Ending August 28th, 1926.

The Magnet 2^o

Library

EVERY
MONDAY.

THIS
GRAND
STAND-UP
CUT-OUT
of H.L. COLLINS
*The Australian
Captain -*
FREE
In This Issue!



"IN THE HEART OF THE HIMALAYAS!"

(This week's fine story of Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in India.)

OUT NEXT WEEK— SEPTEMBER 1st!



360 PAGES
of delight-
ful school,
sporting and
adventure
stories,
plays,
puzzles,
coloured
plates, etc.

A REAL BARGAIN AT 6/-

AND HERE'S ITS YOUNG BROTHER!

A wonderful New Annual devoted to every hobby under the sun. The ideal book for the handyman, profusely illustrated.

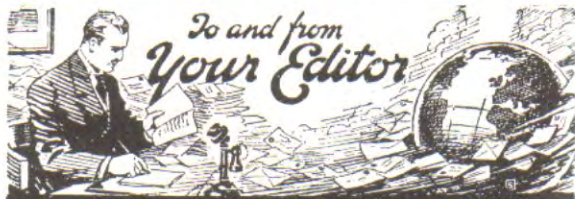
Every subject is dealt with in simple, non-technical language by an expert.



DON'T FORGET!!!

**"EVERY BOY'S HOBBY
ANNUAL!"**

**IS ON SALE NEXT
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 1st.**



NEXT WEDNESDAY'S THE DAY!

SEPTEMBER 1st! That date, I reckon, is marked indelibly in the minds of all my readers, for every year it sees the launching of a new "Holiday Annual"—the wonder volume known to practically every boy and girl in the world. This year's Annual is better than ever, you will agree, which is saying something when we consider the high-water mark of quality the "H. A." has reached in preceding years. There are, of course, numerous yarns dealing with your old friends, Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter. Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood also figure largely in its 360 pages. In addition, there are fascinating stories of sport and adventure on land and sea that will appeal to the most critical amongst you. The whole volume is a distinct success. Honestly, there's not a dull line in it. The gorgeous art plates and black and white sketches, executed by the leading artists of the day go to prove that no money has been spared to make this "Holiday Annual" a finer proposition than ever.

DON'T FORGET THE DATE, SEPTEMBER 1st!

That day, too, will see an entirely new Annual, entitled "EVERY BOY'S HOBBY ANNUAL," gracing the book-stalls throughout the kingdom for the first time. It's a real masterpiece, being devoted to every hobby known to boys and young men. Practical people—experts at their job—have made this new Annual a regular storehouse of information. No matter what your hobby is, you'll find it dealt with in thoroughgoing fashion in this volume. Diagrams and illustrations, photographs, etc., all help to show the reader "What to Do" and "How to Do It." No longer will you handymen have to lay down your tools when you pop across a knotty problem. The "Every Boy's Hobby Annual" will show you the way. In short, it's a real pal—a pal that will be of great help and comfort for many years. And this fine Annual is offered to you for the modest price of six shillings. Give your newsagent a look in and ask him to show you a copy of this wonder Annual. Only see him early, before the queue begins to form.

H. L. COLLINS.

Some of you, doubtless, are wondering how it is that this week's cut-out photo of H. L. Collins bears the date, July 3rd, when actually it was issued with the MAGNET dated August 28th. I can explain that easily enough. These cut-outs were in course of preparation when the General Strike overtook us in May. As a result, the release of our Free Gifts was put back a week. Each photo, as you know, bears the date of issue. Thus, if we had kept H. L. Collins as No. 1 in our Free Gift series, originally planned for release with the paper dated July 3rd, that and the subsequent cut-out photos would in each case have borne a wrong date. The simplest way out was to drop Collins from first place and reserve him for the last Free Gift, which meant that, with the exception of him, the rest of the Free Photos were dated correctly. So don't puzzle your heads about it, there's good chaps; put it down to the General Strike and not the bad workmanship of your editor.

For Next Monday :

"THE TERROR OF THE JUNGLE!"
By Frank Richards.

Another rattling fine story dealing with Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in far away India. Don't miss it!

"CURLEW ISLAND!"

Also another long instalment of this powerful story from the pen of famous David Goodwin. And a special

4-PAGE FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT

to which Charlie Buchan, the clever Arsenal forward, and Clem Stephenson, captain of Huddersfield, contribute special signed articles. Make certain of this bumper programme of good things by ordering your copy of the MAGNET now. Chin, chin, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE PERIL OF A PRINCE! Under cover, on top of a high rock that commands a view of the road, lurks an assassin, watchful and patient, rifle in hand. His glittering eyes spell the fate that lies in store for Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, when the car containing the schoolboy prince comes within range of his rifle!

In the Heart of the Himalayas!

A Thrilling Long Complete Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, relating their Adventures in India. :: :: By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In the Indian Hills!

"JOLLY, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry.

"Topping!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned a dusky grin, and remarked that the topfulness was terrific.

The Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, were all looking, and feeling, merry and bright.

Even Billy Bunter looked cheerful, and had a contented grin on his fat face.

Harry Wharton & Co. were far from Greyfriars now. Greyfriars School was on the other side of the round globe.

Camping out in the pleasant summer weather was always agreeable. But camping in the shadow of the mighty Himalayas was, as Bob remarked, "no end of a catch."

The chums of Greyfriars, on their way with Hurree Singh to his native home in Bhanipur, were drawing near their journey's end.

It had been a long and adventurous journey; and danger had dogged the way, by the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, Bombay, and Delhi, and Rawalpindi.

Rawalpindi, and the railroad, lay behind them now; the snort of the iron horse had never been heard in the mountain passes through which the journey now lay.

White with snow, even in the blaze of the summer sun, the great peaks of the Himalayas barred the horizon to the east. In the clear atmosphere of the hills, the mighty peaks seemed quite near at hand; but many a long hundred miles lay between the Greyfriars juniors and those soaring peaks that pierced the clouds.

The Greyfriars party had halted, in the heat of noon, for rest and refreshment. The car that had brought them up from Rawalpindi stood on the white road; the juniors were camped under a great spreading tree, whose vast branches could have sheltered a battalion.

Colonel Wharton was pacing to and fro at a little distance, in the shade, smoking his after-lunch cigar. The Punjabi chauffeur slept in the car. Pandy Din, the khitmutghar, had disappeared with a rifle under his arm, looking for game, or perhaps for an enemy. Harry Wharton & Co. sat with their backs to the big trunk of the tree, in the cool shade, and enjoyed a rest, and gazed at the scene about them. Mountain range rose on range, rising to the far-off mighty mass of the Himalayas. It seemed to the juniors that they were on the roof of the world.

"Jolly, and no mistake," said Johnny Bull. "It was no end of a wheeze to come along with old Inky. This is the rippingest holiday we've ever had, you chaps."

"Yes, rather," assented Nugent. "Why, even Bunter isn't grouching, for once."

Billy Bunter's eyes had closed behind his big spectacles. He opened them to blink at Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The topfulness must really be terrific, as Inky says, when Bunter isn't grouching," remarked Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Had enough lunch, Bunter?" grinned Bob.

"Well, I haven't done badly," said Bunter. "It was rather thoughtful of the colonel to have a good supply of grub packed in the car. I must admit I've done pretty well. Not like the lunches at home, at Bunter Court, of course."

"Of course not," assented Bob gravely.

"But not bad!" said Bunter tolerantly. "If the grub is going to be like this all the time I shall be satisfied. It's a good car, too—though not, of course, like my pater's Rolls."

The juniors chuckled.

"Taking it all in all, I'm not sorry I came," said Bunter generously. "You fellows haven't treated me really well; but, after all, I got used to your bad manners at Greyfriars."

"Oh!"

"Even Inky isn't really grateful enough, though I've travelled all this way to protect him," said Bunter, blinking at the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"My esteemed fat Bunter—" murmured the Nabob.

"Now, don't deny it, Inky!" Bunter wagged a fat forefinger at the dusky junior. "You're not grateful."

"The admitfulness of the soft impeachment is terrific, my esteemed Bunter."

"You're an ungrateful lot, in fact," said Bunter. "Still, as I said, I got used to your selfishness at Greyfriars. When a fellow doesn't expect much, he doesn't get disappointed. See?"

"Fathead!" said Bob Cherry politely.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We shall be at Bhanipur to-morrow," remarked Harry Wharton. "Then we shall see Inky in all his glory, with a giddy crown on his jolly old napper, riding the elephant of state."

The Nabob grinned.

"I suppose we shall put up at the palace?" asked Bunter.

"Quite so, my esteemed fat one."

"With slaves to wait on us?" asked Bunter.

"As many as the esteemed Bunter may like."

"And plenty of grub?"

"The grubfulness will be terrific."

Billy Bunter's fat face expanded in a cheery smile. Even Bunter was satisfied at the prospect.

"But we don't get to Bhanipur till to-morrow," he said. "There's to-night to be considered. What sort of an hotel are we likely to find to-night in these blinking mountains?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. "I suppose we're getting to an hotel for the night."

"Better suppose again!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "They must have forgotten that you were coming, Bunter, for they neglected to build a grand hotel in the mountains for you. It was an oversight."

Bunter stared.

"Mean to say that there isn't any hotel?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha! No."

"But we can't camp out," exclaimed

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.

Punter excitedly. "The days are beastly hot here, but the nights are beastly cold. In fact, it's a beastly country altogether; if you don't mind my mentioning it, Inky."

"Not at all, my esteemed Bunter. I am accustomed to the exquisite politeness of the fat Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"There's a dak bungalow, where we shall put up for the night, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"What on earth's a dak bungalow?" said Bunter peevishly. "I can jolly well tell you that I want a roof over my head to-night. I think it's up to you to make a fellow comfortable, when he's travelled half round the world to protect you from danger. I— What the thump are you blinking like that for, Inky?"

A sudden change had come over Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face.

"Do not move, my esteemed Bunter!" he said in a low voice.

"I don't mean to move," grumbled Bunter, who was reclining in a more or less graceful attitude, half-buried in fallen leaves. "But what—"

The gaze of the Nabob was fixed on the thick bed of leaves in which Bunter was sprawling. Harry Wharton & Co. followed his glance, and drew in their breath quickly. From the dead leaves a strange glitter caught their eyes, and a stealthy movement. A sinuous head, green and gold, with eyes that glittered like jewels, moved stealthily in the leaves, only a foot from the unconscious Owl of the Remove.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face was set and hard. He understood, better than the other fellows did, the fearful danger that had suddenly come upon the fat junior.

"Do not stir!" he whispered. "Not a movement! Bunter, keep still—do not stir or speak—on your life!"

Bunter caught his breath.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"Keep up your esteemed courage," said the Nabob softly. "It is a snake—and if you move, he will strike! Silence, and keep still—still as the grave, if you would live!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In Deadly Peril I

BILLY BUNTER sat motionless, as if petrified.

Indeed, he was almost petrified by sheer terror.

His round eyes, bulging behind his big glasses, turned towards the winding head of the snake, as it emerged from the leaves, and fixed on it in a glassy stare. A faint moan of terror came from Bunter, and that was all.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not move. They were several feet from Bunter, and they dared not startle the snake. A single movement might have caused the horrible creature to strike, and Bunter was well within reach of the poisoned fang.

Instinctively, the Greyfriars juniors left the matter to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. He had told them not to stir, and they did not stir; but they watched the snake's winding head with fascinated eyes, all the colour forsaking their cheeks as they watched.

The Nabob's face was set hard; he was cool and collected. He made no movement of any kind; and, fortunately, Bunter was too terrified, too utterly petrified with fear to move.

"Colonel sahib!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh called in

a soft, subdued voice just loud enough to reach the ears of Colonel Wharton, pacing under the big tree a dozen feet away.

The colonel halted, and glanced round, taking his cigar from his lips.

"Colonel sahib, look at Bunter—and for his life's sake, do not startle the snake, sahib!"

"Good gad!"

Colonel Wharton muttered the words through his teeth, as his startled eyes turned on Bunter, and he discerned the green and golden head that wound stealthily out of the leaves close by the fat junior.

"Do not stir, any of you!" came the colonel's quiet voice.

The juniors remained silent and motionless. But in the stillness of the hot noontide they heard the faint sound of the colonel taking out his revolver.

Bunter's eyes had closed behind his spectacles. The Owl of the Remove had faded.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not venture to look round at the colonel; they sat like statues. The green and gold sinuous body of the snake was winding out of the dead leaves, and one coil lay across Bunter's elbow—the hideous head was only a few inches from his side. Was the thing about to strike? It seemed so—and it was certain to happen if the reptile was startled. They knew that the colonel, from his distance, was quietly taking aim with his revolver, and upon the sureness of a single shot depended the life of Billy Bunter. There would be no time for a second shot if the snake was merely wounded—no time before the poisoned fang had done its deadly work on the helpless Owl.

It seemed an age to the juniors before the shot came—a century of waiting, and the anguish of their anxiety was almost more than they could bear. Yet it was only a few seconds before the ring of the revolver awoke the echoes of the rocky valley.

Crack!

Wharton, whose fascinated stare was fixed on the snake, saw one of the greenish, glittering eyes darken suddenly like a candle that was extinguished. The bullet, fired with unfailing aim, had blotted it out.

There was a sudden hissing and writhing, and the snake's head fell back in the dead leaves.

In an instant Hurree Singh, quickest of the horrified party to move, had leaped up and seized the insensible fat junior and dragged him away.

The coils of the snake were writhing and wriggling wildly in the leaves. The reptile was dead, killed instantly by the bullet that had smashed its head; but the tenacious life still lingered in the coiling body.

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry, white as a sheet.

Wharton sprang up and grasped his rifle, that leaned against the trunk of the big tree. The butt crashed down on the reptile's head.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Frank Nugent, wiping the thick perspiration from his brow.

"Bunter!" muttered Johnny Bull. "He's fainted!"

"The faintfulness will not hurt the esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Singh. "But the narrowfulness of the escape was terrific."

Colonel Wharton hurried up.

The old soldier's face was set and grim.

"Bunter's only fainted, sir," said Pch.

"Thank goodness that shot did it! If— if it had missed—"



"Do not stir," whispered Inky. "Not a movement! Bunter, keep still, on your life!" Billy Bunter caught his breath. "What do you mean?" he gasped. "Keep up your esteemed courage," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, softly. "It is a snake—and if you move he will strike!" (See Chapter 1.)

He shuddered.

"You must take more care, my boys," said the colonel quietly. "We are not now in Delhi or Lahore. We are in the wilds now, and our lives are in our own hands. Any bed of leaves in this valley may hide a poisonous snake. Bunter should not have lain there without first stirring out the leaves to make sure."

"We'll be jolly careful—after this!" murmured Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

There was a deep, quavering sigh from Billy Bunter, and his eyes opened behind his spectacles. He blinked round dizzily at the juniors.

"I—I say, you fellows, what's happened?" he stammered.

"All serene now, old chap," said Bob reassuringly.

"Safe as houses, old man," said Harry.

"I—I thought—" Bunter gasped with terror. "I saw a—a snake—a—a—" He scrambled to his feet and jumped away at the sight of the coiling body on the leaves. "Ow! Help! Keep it off!"

"It's all right, now, fathead—"

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter did not stop to learn that the snake was killed. He made a wild rush for the car.

"It's all right now, fathead!" roared Bob Cherry. "The danger's over, ass!"

"Ow!"

Bunter plunged headlong into the car. There was a howl from the Punjabi

chauffeur, who was taking a nap in the car in the shade. Bunter plunged in right on him, and awoke the native most unpleasantly by stumbling over him and plunging a fat elbow into his eye.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!" roared Bunter. "Gerraway! You silly nigger, wharver you mean by tripping me up! Ow! There's a snake after me! Wow!"

The Punjabi stared at him, and shoved him aside, and left the car. Bunter collapsed on a seat and gasped.

Harry Wharton & Co. came over to the car. They were grinning now. The party had been very near a tragedy; but Bunter had turned the scene into comedy immediately.

"You fat duffer!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't I keep on telling you it's all right? The snake's killed."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"You can get out of the car, fathead. I tell you it's all safe."

"I jolly well won't get out of the car!" roared Bunter. "I'm staying here till we start. I'm not going to be bitten by poisonous snakes to please you!"

"You silly ass—"

"Beast!"

"Stay in the car if you like," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But there's nothing to be afraid of now, you duffer!"

Bunter recovered himself a little.

"Sure the snake's killed?" he asked.

"Quite, ass! You wouldn't be here now, sitting up and taking notice, if it hadn't been."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"But the missfulness is as good as the milefulness!" said the Nabob of Bhani-pur reassuringly.

"If you fellows think I was frightened—" began Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! It did look like it—just a little bit!" said Bob.

"Just a few!" grinned Nugent.

"Nothing of the kind, of course. I hope I've got too much nerve to be frightened by a snake," said Bunter. "A snake isn't much. I should have taken it by the tail, you know, and knocked its head against the tree, and—polished it off, you know. There was nothing for you fellows to be alarmed about."

"Well, we were alarmed—for you," said Bob.

"For yourselves, you mean," said Bunter. "I daresay you were scared—you would be, at a snake. Not, my style."

The juniors gazed at Bunter. As he had fainted from sheer terror, while the reptile was alive, and fled in a blue funk from its dead body, his present attitude was even more Bunterish, so to speak, than usual. The Owl of the Remove gave them a scornful blink.

"If there's any more snakes, just call me," he said. "I'll stay in the car—not because I'm afraid of snakes, but—because these seats are jolly comfy for taking a nap. If you fellows are

frightened at a snake again, give me a call, and I'll come and protect you."

"You—you—you—" gasped Bob. "Why, you fat villain, you fainted from pure unadulterated funk!"

"I didn't faint!" roared Bunter. "I—I may have nodded off for a minute or two. A fellow gets drowsy in this heat. I was simply taking a nap."

"Taking a nap?" yelled Johnny Bull. "Taking a nap—with a poisonous reptile crawling over you!"

Bunter nodded. "Exactly," he said. "My nerve, you know! You'll always find me cool and collected in the moment of danger! Not like you chaps!"

"Oh, my hat!" "Great Scott! What's that wriggling near Bunter's foot?" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

As a matter of actual fact, nothing was wriggling near Bunter's foot. But the words were enough for Bunter. He did not stop to look. He came out of the car with a flying leap—so suddenly that he crashed into the group of juniors at the door, and sent them spinning right and left. Bob had not expected that outcome to his little joke. There was a roar as the juniors were knocked flying by Bunter's terrific weight being suddenly hurled at them. Bob rolled over, and Bunter rolled on him, yelling.

"Good gad!" Colonel Wharton strode up hurriedly. "What is it?"

"Help!" "But what—?"

"Snakes!" yelled Bunter. "Snakes in the car! Help!"

"Gerroff!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "You're squashing me! Yaroooh! Dragimoff!"

"Snakes!" yelled Bunter. "Save me! Snakes!"

"You fat idiot!" roared Wharton. "There's nothing in the car! Bob was pulling your silly leg, you fat dummy!"

"Oh! Ow! Wow!" gasped Bunter. A heavy shove sent him rolling off Bob Cherry, and he rolled on a prickly plant that grew by the roadside. He reposed on that plant for about a millionth part of a second, and then he leaped to his feet as if electrified.

"Ow! I'm stung! I'm bitten! I'm killed! Whoooooop!"

"Bunter!" roared the Colonel.

"I'm stung by snakes! I'm bitten by cobras! I'm poisoned! I'm dying! I'm expiring! Yaroooooh!"

"You absurd boy! You are not hurt. Be quiet! You have scratched yourself on some thorns, that is all."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Colonel Wharton, with a snort of impatience, strode away. Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five, who were grinning. He rolled back to the car.

This time he peered all over the interior of the vehicle before he ventured to stretch his fat limbs on the cushions. Then he settled down to repose, and the old familiar sound of his deep and resonant snore was heard, till it was time for the party to proceed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not to be Chucked!

HERE was a thoughtful frown on the fat brow of William George Bunter as the big car glided along the road through the hill-passes. The long, white road wound on, seemingly endless, here passing through the thick shades of a forest, there winding along a rocky valley where hardly a herb grew; and again climbing a high

ridge, snorting with exertion, and then whizzing down at great speed on the farther slope.

The road was good, the work of the engineers whose unending labours are opening up the remote spaces of India. It ran where, in olden days, a camel-track had run—days not so very far back, when the only communication between Bhanipur and British India had been by caravan and ox-wagon. Even yet the railroad had not penetrated as far as Hurree Singh's native state, but well-laid roads opened up an easy passage for motor-cars. By strange, wild, and gorgeous scenery the car glided on, the Punjabi chauffeur sitting like a bronze statue at the wheel; the baggage-car following, driven by Pandey Din, the khitmutdar.

The incident of the snake had made the juniors rather serious for a time, and it had been a warning to them that they were now in the wilderness, and needed to be on their guard. But it had not affected their spirits, and it was a cheery party that crowded into the big car. Colonel Wharton sat outside with the chauffeur, with a rifle across his knees, and his keen eyes on the alert. The juniors had their rifles with them, too. Peril after peril had cropped up in their path, and they were ready for anything that might happen. But William George Bunter was looking unusually thoughtful, and he unburdened himself of his thoughts at last.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Any more snakes?" asked Bob cheerily. "Now, don't jump out of the car because I say snakes, Bunter! We're going too fast for your acrobatic stunts!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! The fact is, I'm not satisfied," said Bunter.

"That's no news, old fat man," said Bob. "Are you ever satisfied? But what's the special trouble now?"

"After we got out at Rawalpindi in the car, we were attacked by a gang of dacoits," said Bunter. "Of course, I wasn't scared—"

"Of course not," assented Bob. "You hid in the bottom of the car while the trouble was on; but you were only looking for a pin you'd dropped, or something of the sort—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now we've got among poisonous snakes and things," said Bunter. "I tell you I don't like it! There may be a tiger next."

"Are there any tigers in these parts, Inky?" asked Bob.

The nabob grinned.

"Lots!" he answered. "In fact, my esteemed chum, the loveliness is terrific. And if a tiger should see the esteemed Bunter, he would follow him for miles. Tigers like nice fat pigs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter would be an esteemed and excellent morsel for a hungry tiger," said the nabob blandly.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"And there are wild elephants in the forests," went on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Sometimes they wander out into the roads. Wild elephants are very ferocious. It is fortunate for our excellent selves that we have Bunter with us to protect us."

"That's all very well," said Bunter, "but I can't say I like it. Mean to say we might run into a herd of wild elephants?"

"Certainly!"

Bunter looked more thoughtful than ever. His thoughts did not seem to be wholly pleasant ones.

"You shouldn't have come, old fat

man," said Bob. "The colonel left you behind in Bombay, you know, and you would follow on. He offered to fix you up at Rawalpindi, till we got back from the hills. If you haven't any sense, old bean, you should try to cultivate a little pluck."

Snort from Bunter.

"I've got more pluck than any other fellow here, and chance it," he said. "All the same, I don't like it, and I tell you plainly that I don't like it. I've a jolly good mind to go back to Rawalpindi. You fellows can't complain. You're ungrateful and disrespectful. Considering everything, you can't expect me to stick to you."

"Think of the grub at Bhanipur!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly.

"Oh, blow Bhanipur! I don't think much of Inky's country, if it's anything like this!" said Bunter peevishly. "I could make myself quite comfortable at Rawalpindi. How far have we come?"

"About a hundred miles, I fancy. Rather a long walk back for you, Bunter, if you leave us in the lurch!" grinned Bob.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Well, ass?"

"Mean to say that your uncle wouldn't turn back and land me at Rawalpindi, and leave me out of this beastly journey?" demanded Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You can ask him!" he said. "My opinion is that he wouldn't!"

"You fat duffer!" growled Johnny Bull. "Do you think we're going to lose two or three days' journey because you're in a funk?"

"That does it!" said Bunter savagely.

"I'm going back!"

"Fathead!"

"I'm not going to be trampled on by wild elephants, and bitten by poisonous snakes, and torn to pieces by savage tigers, to please you!" hooted Bunter.

"I'm not going to be murdered by dacoits, either, see?"

"All those things won't happen to you, old bean," said Bob consolingly. "If a tiger gets you, he won't leave anything for the snakes, the elephants, or the dacoits."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And on the other hand, if an elephant tramples on you, there won't be a shiny spot left for the tigers, the snakes, and the dacoits," argued Bob; "and if it's the snakes that finish you off, the elephants and tigers, and dacoits wouldn't touch you afterwards."

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter, while the juniors chuckled.

"If you're chopped up by dacoits," continued Bob cheerily, "even you needn't worry about elephants and tigers afterwards. A chap can only die once, old bean. Isn't that a comfort?"

Bunter did not seem to derive much comfort from that undoubted fact. Apparently he did not want to die even once.

"I'm going back!" he howled. "I'm chucking this—see? You fellows have only got yourselves to thank."

"We'd try to bear it," grinned Nugent.

"The sorrowfulness of calamity would be averted by the strength of fortitude," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Don't be an ass, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "There's no going back now. Screw up your courage, if you've got any, and stick it out."

"I tell you I'm going to chuck it!" roared Bunter.

Billy Bunter glared at the Famous Five. Bunter had been doing an

unusual amount of thinking, and the outcome was, as he had stated, that he did not like it. He had been told, even before leaving Greyfriars, that the journey would be a dangerous one. But Bunter feared no peril that was far off. But though his fat intellect worked slowly, it worked. It had penetrated into his podgy mind at last that the danger was there, and that it was very real. The affair of the snake had put the lid on, so to speak. Bunter had made up his fat mind that he was fed-up, and that he was going to chuck it. He declined to recognise the undoubted fact that it was too late.

"Call out to your uncle to stop the car, Wharton!" he snapped.

"What for, ass?"

"To turn back!"

"Fathead!"

Billy Bunter rapped on the glass screen that separated the juniors from the driver and the colonel. The latter turned his head, and looked into the car inquiringly.

"Stop!" shouted Bunter.

"What?"

"Stop!"

The colonel stared at him through the glass.

"I want to go back!" roared Bunter.

"What?"

"I'm chucking it!"

Colonel Wharton gave him a fixed stare, with quite an extraordinary expression on his bronzed face. Then he turned his back on Bunter again, and though Bunter rapped his knuckles loudly on the glass, and roared, the colonel gave no further heed. Bunter turned his spectacles angrily on the captain of the Remove.

"Has your uncle gone deaf, Wharton?" he bawled.

"I think not," said Harry, laughing. "I think you'd better shut up, Bunter. It's too late to turn back."

"Don't I keep telling you I'm chucking it?" roared Bunter.

"Ass!"

Bunter turned to the glass screen again, with a ferocious glare. He rapped on it again and again, and at last the colonel turned his head once more.

"Silence!" the juniors heard him rap out.

"Sha'n't!" roared Bunter.

"What?"

"I'm going back!" yelled Bunter. "I'm fed-up! I'm jolly well sick of it, and, if you want to know, I'm jolly well sick of you, too! Put that in your pipe and smoke it, and be blown to you!"

The colonel gave the Punjabi chauffeur a sign, and the car jammed to a halt. Bunter grinned triumphantly at the juniors.

"I thought that would fetch him," he said. "I'm jolly well not standing on any ceremony with your blessed uncle, Wharton. Stiff old military stick! Yah!"

Colonel Wharton stepped down, and opened the car door. The Famous Five sat silent, reading more in the colonel's grim face than the Owl of the Remove read there.

"Step out, Bunter!" said the colonel quietly.

Bunter blinked at him.

"No need to get out," he said. "I'm going back in the car, of course. Tell that nigger to turn round."

The colonel did not reply. He reached into the car, and gripped Bunter's collar with a powerful hand. Heavy-weight as he was, Bunter found himself jerked out of the car like a cork from a bottle.

"Ow! What—"

Colonel Wharton sat on the step of the

car, and Bunter found himself sprawling face down on the colonel's knee.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Yaroooh! Whoop! Help!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack, smack, smack!

It seemed like a horrid dream to William George Bunter. He was being spanked—actually spanked, by a hard and heavy hand that smote with terrific vim. There was a sound like the beating of a carpet as the colonel spanked, and from William George Bunter came sounds resembling the voice of the Bull of Bashan of olden time.

Bunter was set on his feet, yelling.

"Now get into the car!"

"Sha'n't!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—yes—all right! I'm getting in, ain't I?" yelled Bunter, as the colonel made a movement towards him.

And he got in, sprawling in his haste. The door slammed after him, and Colonel Wharton resumed his seat beside the chauffeur. In the car, Bunter picked himself up from among five pairs of feet, and blinked with an infuriated blink at the grinning chums of the Remove.

"If—if that beast thinks I'm going to stand this!" he gasped.

"Not going to stand it?" asked Bob.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Sit down, then!"

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter sat down again, hard.

When he picked himself up once more Bunter resumed his seat, and did not state any more of his thoughts. Judging by the expression on his fat face, his thoughts were ferocious, if not homicidal. But Bunter decided to keep them to himself. One thing was clear to his fat mind. He had decided to chuck the journey; but the journey, at this stage, was not to be chuckled. In spite of dacoits, snakes, tigers, and wild elephants, Billy Bunter was booked for Bhanipur.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Dak Bungalow in the Hills!

"THAT'S it!" said Bob Cherry.

It was the dak bungalow.

The car halted, and the Greyfriars juniors turned out, glad to stretch their legs again.

The sun was setting, the sky ablaze with crimson and purple and gold. The long, hot day was drawing to a close. Already the cold of the mountain night was creeping in, and the juniors had donned their coats, mindful of the danger of chills in the sudden change of temperature at sunset.

Billy Bunter blinked disparagingly at the dak bungalow.

Even the Owl of the Remove could scarcely have expected to find a first-class hotel in the wild wastes of the Himalaya foothills. Possibly he had expected a handsomely appointed bungalow like that of Ferrers Sahib, in which the party had stayed a night at Rawalpindi. But the dak bungalow was a building of the plainest description; it afforded a shelter from the night, and little or nothing more.

"Stopping there, are we?" asked Bunter, with a snort, as he blinked at the low buildings.

"Just there, old fat man," said Bob.

"Looks to me a good bit like a cattle-shed."

"Go hon!"

"I'm not going to stand this sort of

thing, I can tell you!" said Bunter morosely.

"Fathead!"

Snort from Bunter. The fat junior was in a sulky temper.

Many times during the long journey from Greyfriars to the Indian frontier Bunter had threatened to quit the party; and always he had had the chagrin to find that such threats were received with equanimity, if not indeed with enthusiasm.

Certainly, Bunter had never meant to quit. He had been left behind at Bombay, and had followed on. He had had the offer of being left in ease and comfort at Rawalpindi, to be picked up on the party's return; and he had refused the offer. Any fellow but Bunter would have considered, after that, that he was booked for the journey, and would have ceased from troubling, and let the weary be at rest. Not so Bunter.

At long last it had dawned upon the Owl's obtuse brain that the dangers and discomforts of the journey were very real, and much greater than he had realised; and he had made up his fat mind that he did not want any more.

It was like Bunter to arrive at that conclusion, when it was no longer possible for him to quit.

Certainly, he could not walk back a hundred miles by the hill-passes, of which he did not know a yard of the way. Still, more certainly, Colonel Wharton had no intention of turning back and losing two or three days' time to please him.

Bunter did not seem to realise that, having made his bed, he must lie on it. He was, at long last, in grim earnest in his desire to quit the party; and he took it as an immense grievance that he could not do so.

It was only one day more to Bhanipur where the fat Owl could expect to roll in ease and lazy comfort. But one more night, and one more day, in the savage hills were exactly one night and one day too much for Bunter. He still shuddered at the remembrance of the rushing gang of dacoits who had attacked the car in a lonely pass. But the dacoits had been cut to pieces by machine-gun fire from the aeroplane which had followed the car, and what was left of the gang had fled for life.

Bunter had recovered, to some extent, from that scare. But the poisonous snake, in the dead leaves upon which he had unthinkingly sprawled, had put the lid on. In a country infested by dacoits and poisonous reptiles, there was no comfort for W. G. Bunter—and he wanted to chuck it. And his indignation was absolutely boundless when he learned that "chucking" it was out of the question.

He rolled after the party to the dak bungalow, with a morose and frowning face.

He had made up his fat mind very late in the day; but he had made it up. He was going to "chuck" it. How, was the question; and Bunter was determined to find ways and means.

In the meantime, he was in need of rest and refreshment, especially refreshment. But he was not going to keep on this rotten trip in the Indian hills; he was determined on that.

The khansama came out of the bungalow to greet the travellers, salaaming profoundly to the colonel sahib. The Greyfriars party entered, with curious eyes on their surroundings. They had heard a good deal of the dak bungalows of India; but this

was the first they had stayed in on their long journey. Only in the large cities of India is the hotel accommodation anything like that of Western countries; in the provinces, and on the long country roads, the dak bungalow takes the place of the hotel or inn of Europe.

A thoughtful Government provides the dak bungalow for the convenience of travellers, where otherwise there would be no shelter; and these rest-houses are found all over the Indian peninsula. But the traveller must take his own bedding, and generally his own food and servants; and when travellers are many on the road a room may be kept only for twenty-four hours. The keeper of the dak bungalow is called the khansama, which may mean butler or steward, the literal meaning being "master of the household arrangements."

Generally the khansama can speak English—the rather decorative English of the Indian native. Colonel Wharton and the Remove fellows were greeted in their own language—as nearly as the khansama's flowery Eastern mind could get to the plain language of the West.

"Being greatly delighted to welcome noble sahibs. Honourable sahibs condescend to enter unworthy dwelling."

The honourable sahibs condescended to enter.

Fortunately, the khansama had been in earlier days cook in the English cantonments at Rawalpindi, and he was able to provide the travellers with an excellent supper, which he helped Pandi Din to serve with his own plump, dusky hands.

Billy Bunter, morose as he was, did full justice to the supper. Indeed, the khansama's pilau was so excellent that Bunter did it more than justice, and the quantity he stowed away made the keeper of the dak bungalow open his eyes wide.

After supper Pandi Din carried beds and blankets from the car to the rooms assigned to the party in the dak bungalow.

"Better turn in, Bunter, old top!" said Bob Cherry. "You must be tired out."

Bunter blinked at him.

"No more tired than you fellows!" he grunted. "You've come as far in the car as I have."

"But we didn't go so far with the pilau!" grinned Bob.

"Beast!"

Colonel Wharton was speaking to Pandi Din, in the khitmutghar's own tongue. The juniors noticed that Pandi Din left the dak bungalow, with his rifle under his arm, and they could guess that he was going to scout.

Since the fight with the dacoits nothing had been seen of the enemy; Nally Das had vanished in the hills. But the colonel evidently thought it possible that the Rajah Baji Rao might make yet one more attempt, through his emissaries, to prevent Hurree Singh from reaching Bhanipur. It was the last chance of the plotting rajah; for, on the morrow, the Nabob of Bhanipur would be encircled by armed guards.

"Jolly night, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry, looking out of the doorway at the dark, velvety sky strewn with stars.

"It's cold!" growled Bunter.

"It isn't warm," agreed Bob. "But if it was you would be grouching because it was, old fat man. Keep smiling!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.

"I shouldn't wonder if there was a tiger hiding in those magnolias," said Bunter.

"Half a dozen, perhaps," said Bob genially. "Go and look."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! More giddy travellers!" said Bob.

There was a clatter of hoofs on the road.

In the bright starlight a troop of horses and horsemen came in sight, winding down the mountain road from the East.

The juniors watched them curiously.

"That lot must be coming from Bhanipur," said Harry Wharton. "Are they your people, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was regarding the approaching party with keen interest. He shook his dusky head.

"It is an Afghan horse-dealer and his troop," he said. "Bhanipur is famous for its breed of horses, my esteemed chums; like Jodhpur, in the south. Many merchants come to Bhanipur to buy horses, and lead them away to sell in the markets at Lahore and Lucknow. I have seen that horseman years ago—he is a well-known horse-trader; his name is Dost Hamid."

"A giddy old acquaintance!" said Nugent.

The nabob smiled faintly.

"There is no acquaintance between a nabob and a horse-dealer, my esteemed Nugent. I am in my own country now. Moreover, Dost Hamid the Afghan is a Mohammedan—that is to say, an infidel dog, from the point of view of a Hindu. While the worthy horse-dealer would regard me, prince of the country as I am, as a dog of an unbeliever."

"Oh, my hat!"

Dost Hamid rode at the head of his troop, evidently an important man, in his own eyes and the eyes of his followers.

He was a tall, powerful man, with a face the colour of mahogany and a thick beard, dyed red. His dark, flashing eyes looked out keenly from under thick, black brows.

Following the Afghan came more than a dozen men, leading strings of horses. There were more than sixty horses in the troop, most of them handsome animals. The Greyfriars fellows realised that they were getting a glimpse of the export trade of the little State of Bhanipur.

Dost Hamid halted before the dak bungalow, glanced at the group there, but did not salute them.

"A curse upon all unbelievers!" he said aloud, in his own tongue—fortunately, incomprehensible to the juniors.

Then he dismounted.

"Did he speak to us?" asked Nugent. "If he's saying good-evening in his own lingo, it would be only civil to answer."

The nabob grinned.

"He was greeting us politely, my esteemed Franky."

"What did he say?" asked Johnny Bull.

"You would not care to hear, my worthy Johnny."

"Oh, rats! Give it a name," said Bob. "You're our giddy interpreter in these parts, you know."

"The excellent and ludicrous Dost Hamid was kindly cursing us as unbelievers," explained the nabob.

"Oh, my hat! The lot of us?" asked Wharton.

"Certainly; both the Englishman and

the Hindu are unbelievers to the Mussulman."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The cheekfulness is terrific," agreed the nabob. "The Mohammedan does not, after all, belong to India; he is an intruder, like—"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh broke off quite suddenly.

"Like what?" asked Bob unsuspiciously.

"Nothing, my esteemed chum."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"Were you going to say like the jolly old white man, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face coloured faintly.

"My esteemed chums must excuse me," he murmured. "But here I am in my own country, and the thoughts that arise in my mind are not always the same thoughts as at Greyfriars."

It came again into the minds of Harry Wharton & Co. that they did not know their Indian chum quite so thoroughly as they had supposed. There was a "native" side to Hurree Singh's mind, which had never been in evidence at Greyfriars.

The khansama went out to greet Dost Hamid, though with much less graciousness than he had displayed to the colonel sahib. But his manner was respectful, and, to the juniors, it seemed tintured with fear. They were not surprised at that, for the Afghan looked what he was—a lawless man, likely to be as ready with his knife as with his fist, and as ready with his fist as with his tongue.

"So that crowd are coming away from Bhanipur?" asked Billy Bunter, with a thoughtful blink at the horse-dealers.

Hurree Singh nodded.

"Then they will be going down to Rawalpindi?" asked Bunter.

"That is so."

"Good!" said Bunter.

The juniors glanced at the Owl of the Remove. Something, evidently, was working in the Owl's fat brain.

"What about it?" asked Bob.

"Oh, nothing!"

Bunter rolled out into the starlight. Whatever his thoughts were, he did not seem to intend to communicate them to the Famous Five.

"What has that fat duffer got in his silly noddle now?" asked Bob, staring after the fat junior.

"Goodness knows!"

"Luckily, it doesn't matter," said Bob.

And the juniors continued to watch the horse-dealers camping under the trees, dismissing William George Bunter from their minds.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Dead of Night!

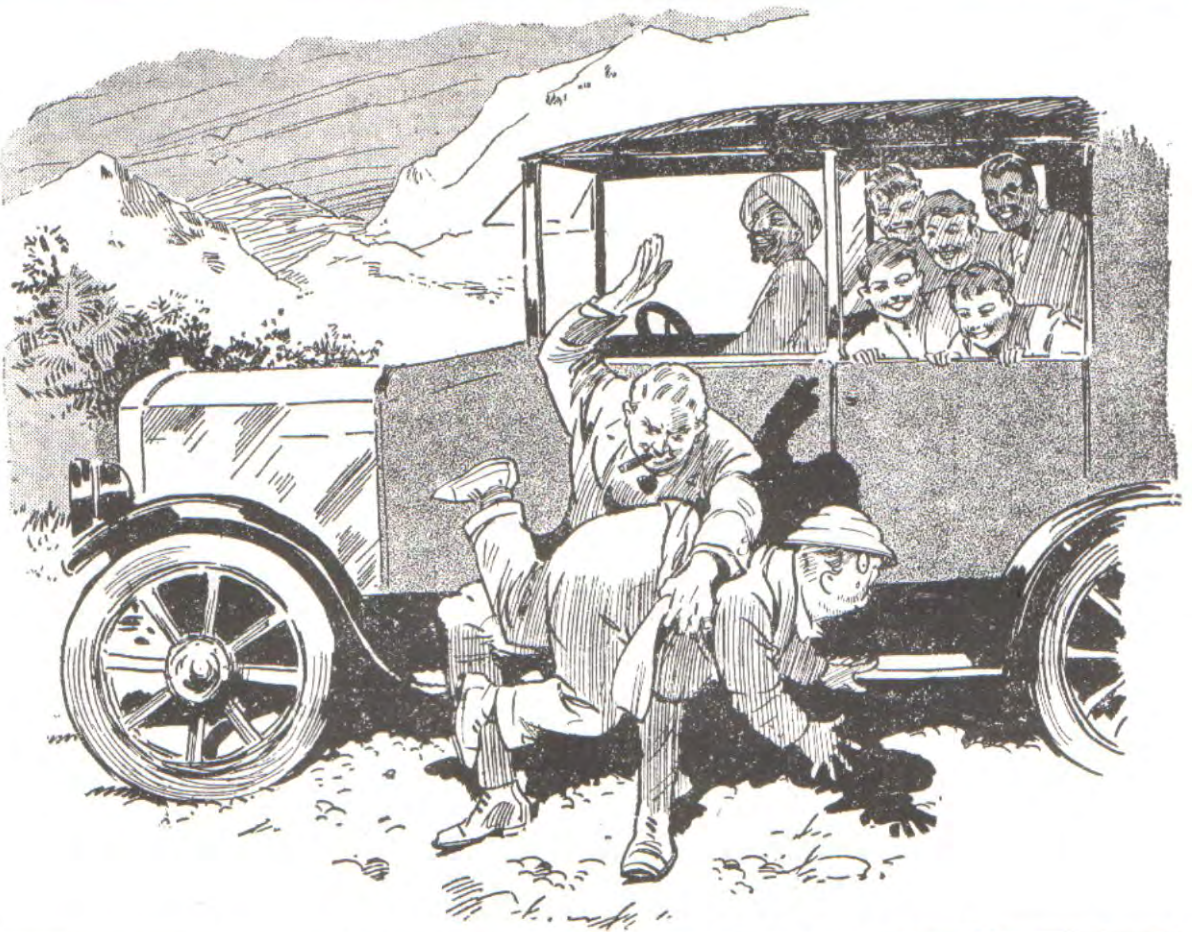
"SPEAK English!"

Dost Hamid sat on a heap of saddle-bags under a tree, smoking his hookah after his supper. Like dim shades, his men could be seen camped among the resting horses under the stars.

The burly horse-trader turned his head and stared at Billy Bunter. He stared at him hard, without answering.

Bunter blinked at him.

He was far from understanding the haughty pride and savage disdain of the Afghan. To him, the horse-trader of Kabul was simply a "nigger," like the Bengalee of the south. Bunter was never likely to learn to distinguish between one inhabitant of India and



"Step out of the car, Bunter," said Colonel Wharton. Bunter blinked at him. "No need to get out," he said. The colonel did not reply. Bunter suddenly felt himself seized by the collar. Next moment, he was jerked out of the car and stretched across Colonel Wharton's knees. Smack! Smack! Smack! "Yaroooh! Whoop! Help!" roared Bunter, as the colonel spanked him with a heavy hand. (See Chapter 3.)

another. Between the Afghan and the sleek native of Bengal there is less similarity than between the Englishman and the Italian. But to Bunter's mind all men with dark skins were "blinking niggers"; merely that and nothing more.

"Do you speak English?" he asked irritably.

Dost Hamid nodded surlily.

"Why the thump don't you answer, then?" snapped Bunter. "Look here, I hear that you're a horse-trader, taking your horses down the hills to Rawalpindi."

Another nod. The Afghan was a man of few words, and he did not seem to desire to waste any of the few upon Billy Bunter.

"I want a lift down to Rawalpindi," explained Bunter.

The Afghan stared.

"I've come up here with a lot of rotters," the Owl of the Remove further explained. "I want to go back, and I want a lift. See? I'll pay you twenty rupees to take me back to Rawalpindi."

"I am no driver of a tonga," said the horse-trader surlily.

Bunter did not know what a tonga was, though he could guess that it was a conveyance of some kind.

"I suppose you could fix me up on a horse?" he said. "Fix up some sort of a palanquin on a horse, and that will

be all right. I'll make it twenty-five rupees."

The Afghan's eyes glittered for a moment.

"A curse upon all unbelievers!" he said. That seemed to be his favourite remark. "The little sahib talks of rupees. Where are the rupees?"

Bunter frowned.

For a "blinking nigger" to doubt his word in this way was really intolerable. Bunter was inclined to kick the horse-trader for his impudence. But the Afghan looked rather too hefty a man to be kicked. It was extremely fortunate for Bunter that he decided not to deliver the kick; for assuredly a thrust of Dost Hamid's Afghan knife would have been his reward.

"Look here, blow you!" growled Bunter.

He drew out a handful of rupees to show the trader. Billy Bunter was quite well supplied with cash. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh had been his banker since he had arrived in India; and Bunter, when he ran out of money, always succeeded in drawing a fresh supply from the nabob.

The Afghan's eyes glittered again.

"The little sahib can pay," he said. "Be it so."

"When do you start?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"One hour."

"Good! You're not staying here the night, then?"

"I stay to feed my horses and my men," said Dost Hamid. "In one hour we take the road down the mountain."

"That's all right. I'll come with you," said Bunter. "Those rotters will be fast asleep then, and the old fool, too."

Dost Hamid looked at him inquiringly.

"You see, they can't do without me," said Bunter. "They won't let me go back if they can stop me. I'm going, all the same."

The horse-trader smiled—a smile that might have alarmed the Owl of the Remove had he been less short-sighted.

But Bunter had no doubts.

To the Owl of the Remove a horse-trader was a horse-trader, and he did not suppose there would be any danger in getting a lift from the Afghan. In fact, he supposed that danger would be over once he was quit of the Greyfriars party. Hurree Singh was in incessant danger from some attempt by his ambitious kinsman, Baji Rao. The attack of the dacoits had been on Hurree Singh's account. Once parted from the nabob, Bunter had nothing to fear from Hurree Singh's enemies. Nally Das and his associates would not waste a thought on him. So far, Bunter was right, and it did not occur to his

fat mind that he might be getting out of the frying-pan into the fire; that Dost Hamid, the horse-trader, might have other avocations as well as trading in horses; and that it might be as safe to meet a dacoit in the hills as to meet the Afghan in a solitary place.

"Mind, not a word to the colonel sahib," said Bunter anxiously. "He wouldn't let me go if he knew."

The horse-trader grinned.

"Not a word," he agreed.

"Not a syllable to those other fellows, either."

"On my head be it!" said Dost Hamid gravely.

"That's all right, then. They won't part with me if they can help it," said Bunter. "But I know I'm jolly well not going to be bitten by snakes, and murdered by dacoits, to please them! I'll come out here in an hour's time—what?"

"Be it so."

"That's settled, then."

Billy Bunter rolled away in the shadows, quite satisfied. Dost Hamid stared after him, and grinned over his hookah. Bunter, from sheer funk, was running into a danger from which a courageous fellow might well have shrunk. He was not aware of it yet, and the horse-trader certainly did not mean to tell him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!" said Bob Cherry, as the fat junior came into the dak bungalow. "Where have you been, old fat top?"

"That's telling," said Bunter mysteriously.

"Ph?"

"Mind your own business," said Bunter.

Bob Cherry stared at him.

"You fat idiot—" he began.

"Go it!" said Bunter, with a sneer. "You'll feel a bit different when I'm gone, I can tell you. I've stood by you fellows a jolly long time, but I can tell you I'm fed up with your ingratitude, and I'm done with you. I wash my hands of you."

"Well, they can do with a wash, I dare say," said Bob.

"Bah!"

Bunter rolled away to his room. The juniors were going to bed now. Johnny Bull shared Bunter's room; but Johnny was a sound sleeper, and Bunter did not anticipate any trouble with him when he made his start. Johnny Bull, when he turned in, noticed that Bunter's snore was not echoing as usual; but he was tired with the day's journey, and he was soon asleep. It did not even occur to him that Bunter was remaining awake.

Bunter, as a matter of fact, dared not sleep. Once his eyes had closed in slumber it was fairly certain that he would have snored on till morning, in which case his little scheme would have been knocked on the head. Dost Hamid and his troop would be gone before morning. So, though it cost him tremendous efforts, Bunter remained awake and waited.

As soon as Johnny Bull's steady breathing assured him that Johnny was fast asleep, Bunter rose and dressed himself in the glimmer of starlight from the high window. He packed his bag, in which he had already placed a good supply of eatables. Bunter had learned little of the manners and customs of Hindustan, but he had learned, at least, that it was always judicious to take a supply of food on a journey. That was an important matter which was not likely to escape Bunter's notice. He put on a warm coat—the night was extremely cold. Indeed, it was so cold that Bunter

was inclined to abandon his little scheme and remain in the shelter of the dak bungalow. But his resolution remained firm.

He was done with the ungrateful juniors of Greyfriars, and he was going. He was done with the stern old colonel, who had spanked him—spanked William George Bunter! He would have liked to blink into the colonel's room and tell him that he was done with him, and that he was going; but he did not venture to do so. He did not want to be spanked again; both his dignity and his fat person suffered from such an experience.

Bunter did not even realise that, had there been some safe method of sending him back to Rawalpindi, the colonel would willingly have taken advantage of it. Little as Bunter enjoyed the colonel's company, the colonel enjoyed Bunter's still less. It was true that, by a series of curious chances, Bunter had more than once proved useful on the journey, and for that reason the old military gentleman would have tolerated him patiently. But Bunter was quite mistaken in thinking that Colonel Wharton had any objection to his departure. Quite the reverse was the case.

But the plainest of plain English was not enough for Bunter on such a subject. He found it very hard to realise that any person could willingly forego the delights of his company.

If the colonel was willing to let him go, too, why didn't he arrange with the horse-traders to take him down to Rawalpindi instead of Bunter having to make the arrangement surreptitiously?

Certainly, the colonel could have made that arrangement easily enough with Dost Hamid.

It did not occur to Colonel Wharton to do so, for the simple reason that the lawless Afghan was not to be trusted, being a man who did not value a human life at ten rupees.

All that, however, was quite hidden from Bunter. To his obtuse mind Dost Hamid was a horse-trader, who would naturally give a fellow a lift for a reasonable tip.

Bunter did not like natives, or trust them, but he quite failed to see any difference between one native and another. To his fat and fatuous mind, Pandi Din, the faithful khitmutghar, and Dost Hamid, the horse-trader, were much of a muchness; indeed, he did not see much difference between them and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh himself.

Bunter was destined to learn that there were considerable differences in these matters.

He stole quietly to a window—the unbarring of the door would have made too much noise. Bunter was assured that if his intended flight was discovered it would be stopped. That undoubtedly was the case; Colonel Wharton would never have allowed him to risk his life in the company of the lawless horse-traders. But Bunter did not understand the reason; he only knew that his flight would be stopped, and he was determined that it should not be stopped.

The open, unglazed window was covered by a netting. Billy Bunter opened his knife and cut away the netting.

Then he dropped his bag into the magnolias outside the window, and clambered after it.

There was a stirring from Johnny Bull. Some sound had reached his ears and disturbed him.

Bunter paused, and remained motionless at the window. Johnny Bull

grunted, turned his head on his pillow, and slept peacefully again.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

He dropped from the window after his bag.

His fat heart was beating fast as he picked himself up and picked up his bag.

In the distance, under the dim trees, he could see moving shapes as the horse-traders prepared for their journey. Bunter scuttled across to the camp of the Afghan.

There had been no alarm. Bunter had escaped from the dak bungalow undiscovered. The die was cast now.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Like a Lamb to the Slaughter.

HIGH over the mountain the moon sailed in silver splendour, streaming down light upon mighty forest and towering rock and plashing stream. From the dak bungalow the troop of horse-traders went winding down the mountain, Dost Hamid riding ahead grim and silent on his big black horse, his men following him with the strings of animals, clattering, plunging, whinnying, amid a muttering of Afghan threats and curses.

Behind the red-bearded Afghan came a horse with a fat figure on its back that blinked to and fro through glimmering spectacles.

Bunter was en route.

Once or twice Dost Hamid glanced at him, with a cruel, sardonic grin, but otherwise he gave no heed to the Owl of Greyfriars.

Bunter was far from being a good rider. But he was able to cling on to the back of a horse, and he clung on, feeling extremely uncomfortable, and with growing indignation. He had bargained for a palanquin, in which he might have travelled quite comfortably, and, in fact, fast asleep. He had been given a horse, and he did not like it. He was determined to have that little matter out with the horse-trader, but he decided to let it wait for a time; he was anxious to get away from the vicinity of the dak bungalow as fast as he could. It was firmly impressed upon his fat mind that the Greyfriars party would not lose him if they could help it, and that if they discovered his evasion they would be after him.

As soon as the promised palanquin was provided, Bunter would be able to take it quite easily, sleeping and eating by turns during the journey down the mountain. Those rotters—Harry Wharton & Co.—could keep on over the passes if they liked, among dacoits and poisonous snakes and tigers. Bunter was fed-up with it. And if they landed in some scrape through being left without Bunter's advice and assistance—well, serve them jolly well right! They deserved it for their black ingratitude!

About a mile from the dak bungalow Bunter decided that it was high time to settle the question of the palanquin. The jolting of the horse was making him quite uncomfortable.

"I say, you know!" he called out.

Dost Hamid did not turn his head.

"Do you hear me?" hooted Bunter.

The Afghan glanced round darkly.

"What about that palanquin?" demanded Bunter.

Dost Hamid pulled in his horse. He signed to Bunter to pull to the side of the road and let the troop with the strings of horses go by. Bunter obeyed, and the traders went clattering by, some

JUNGLE THRILLS!

Where every tree may conceal a savage wild beast, ready to strike.

Where every bush lends cunning shelter to a venomous reptile.

Where lurks the assassin, watchful and patient.

Where every footstep may lead to certain death!

And into the midst of these dangers, on the back of a wounded runaway elephant, Hurree Singh is borne—a helpless, bewildered passenger!

Mind you read next week's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in far away India, entitled:

"THE TERROR OF THE JUNGLE!"

Order your copy of the
MAGNET to-day!



of the dark faces turning on Bunter with curious looks.

"Well, what about it?" demanded Bunter impatiently. "We agreed on a palanquin—what you call a palkee in your beastly language, you know. I can't stick on this beastly horse much longer! A bargain's a bargain! I can jolly well tell you that I sha'n't pay you if you don't keep to it!"

Dost Hamid did not answer. He waited in silence till the whole troop had gone by and disappeared beyond a winding of the road.

Bunter and the horse-trader remained alone on the road under the glimmer of the moon.

Bunter was too short-sighted and too obtuse to mark and read the expression on the Afghan's dark face. He did not even realise that a man like Dost Hamid was a dangerous character. A black man who dyed his beard red was, in Bunter's eyes, more a figure of fun than anything else. But, in spite of his blissful ignorance and his fatuity, a feeling of uneasiness came over Bunter as the sounds of the troop died away down the winding mountain road.

The spot was a solitary one, the dak bungalow a mile off, and no other building within fifty miles. On either side of the road dark forests climbed the slopes of the hills—shadowy, grim, impenetrable. Bunter found his heart beating faster; he did not know why.

"Well, where's the palanquin?" he exclaimed, and there was a quiver in his voice. It was as if his nerves understood more than his intelligence. "I don't see it! What are we waiting for?"

"Dismount!" said Dost Hamid.

Bunter dismounted. The Afghan did the same and proceeded to tether both horses by the roadside.

"Follow me!" he said.

He strode off the road into the shadow

of the trees. Bunter followed him, concluding that the palanquin was awaiting him there. A dozen yards from the road the Afghan halted. Bunter stopped.

"The little fat sahib has left his friends!" said Dost Hamid grimly. "They do not know that he has travelled with the men of Kabul!"

"No," said Bunter.

"They never will know!" said Dost Hamid. "Give me the rupees!"

"Oh, really, you know," protested Bunter. "I'm jolly well not going to pay you till we get to Rawalpindi, you know!"

"Give me the rupees!"

There was a growling tone in the man's savage voice that sent a thrill of terror through the Owl of Greyfriars.

"I—I say—" he stammered.

He caught the glittering, threatening glance of the Afghan's dark eyes and stopped. The man's thick red beard, which had struck Bunter as ridiculous before, looked terrible now in the glimmer of the moon through the thick branches overhead. A shiver ran through Billy Bunter from head to foot.

Without another word, he groped in his pocket for the rupees.

"All of them!" said Dost Hamid.

"Look here—"

The Afghan laid his hand upon a long-barrelled, silver-mounted pistol in his girdle.

"Every rupee!" he said grimly.

"D-d-do you mean that—that you're going to rob me?" gasped Bunter, the truth—part of the truth, at least—dawning upon his fat brain.

"Dog of an unbeliever, are you to keep me waiting?" said the Afghan.

"Give me the rupees, son of a thousand pigs!"

Bunter, with a trembling hand, passed over the rupees to the horse-trader. He dared not keep back a single coin. There were more than a hundred rupees in all, and the horse-trader's black eyes

glittered with greed as he grasped them and thrust them away into his pouch.

"That is all?" he snarled.

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"A curse on all unbelievers!" said the Afghan.

"I—I say, look here! You'll jolly well get into trouble for this, you know!" gasped Bunter. "Do you think I'm going to let you rob me like this? I'll jolly well report it at Rawalpindi, I can tell you! You won't be allowed to keep my money!"

"Does the little fat sahib think that he is going to Rawalpindi?" asked the horse-trader, with grim irony.

"You awful rotter!" gasped Bunter. "Mean to say that you've brought me here to rob me, and mean to leave me stranded?"

The Afghan laughed.

Bunter was afraid of the man—terribly afraid now. But his rage for the moment was stronger than his fear. He had been duped, and instead of a comfortable journey down to Rawalpindi, he had the prospect of finding his way back up the mountain road alone, past midnight, encompassed by the dangers of the Indian night, to rejoin the party he had left. His little round eyes fairly glittered through his spectacles.

"You—you awful rascal!" he spluttered. "You black scoundrel! You won't get away with it, all the same! Colonel Wharton won't let me be robbed like this by a black thief!"

Had there been any thought of mercy in the Afghan's savage mind, Bunter's words would have banished it. To the Afghan, as proud of his blood and descent as any English sahib could be, the term "black man" was a deadly insult, to be wiped out only in blood. Even in the streets of Rawalpindi, or in the bazaar of Lahore, Dost Hamid would have answered such an insult with a shot from his pistol or a stab from his knife. His sinuous fingers

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.

closed almost convulsively on the silver-chased butt of the long pistol stuck in his broad Bokhara belt.

"But the colonel sahib does not know that you travelled with the horse-traders!" he said grimly.

"He will know when I tell him!" howled Bunter.

"But the little fat sahib will not tell him!"

"I jolly well will! I—"

Bunter broke off suddenly as the horse-trader drew the long-barrelled pistol from his belt. With a rush of understanding, the terrible truth came into his mind. He had been brought there into the lonely forest by the mountain road, not only to be robbed, but to be murdered!

Bunter gave a terrified gasp, and his fat knees knocked together. His eyes dilated behind his big spectacles as the Afghan raised the pistol and the long barrel was pointed at him.

"A curse on all unbelievers!" said Dost Hamid. "The death of an infidel is always meriting the blessing of the Prophet!"

Bunter's fat legs refused to support him. He fell helplessly on his knees.

A moment more, and the shot would have sped.

Crack!

It was not the report of Dost Hamid's pistol. It was the clear, sharp ring of a rifle close at hand.

There was a sudden, terrible yell from the Afghan. The long-barrelled pistol crashed to the earth, still undischarged, and Dost Hamid's right arm dropped to his side, streaming with blood, smashed at the elbow by the bullet that had sped from the shadows of the forest.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

BILLY BUNTER was still on his knees, his brain swimming.

In his utter terror, he did not know what was happening.

He fancied that the Afghan had fired, and it was some moments before he knew that he was not hurt, and realised that Dost Hamid was staggering like a drunken man, clapping his shattered right arm with his left hand, and howling out curses mingled with cries of pain.

Bunter blinked round him dazedly.

A figure that seemed familiar was emerging from the trees, running swiftly to the spot, a smoking rifle in hand. The newcomer was a native, and there was something familiar in his look, but Bunter was too dazed to recognise him in the dim light that filtered through the branches.

Dost Hamid turned a glare of fury on him. His dark face was convulsed with pain and rage. His left hand released the shattered arm, and groped for the long Afghan knife in his belt.

The man with the rifle came up, panting.

"Stand clear, little sahib!" he panted.

"Pandy Din!" gasped Bunter.

It was the khitmutghar.

Bunter remembered, though he had hardly heeded, that Pandy Din had gone out with his rifle from the dak bungalow, to keep watch during the night for Hurree Singh's enemies. The watchfulness of the khitmutghar had been fortunate for Bunter.

"You getting out of the way?" rapped out the khitmutghar.

Bunter staggered to his feet.

He understood that the matter was not

at an end; his life still depended on the khitmutghar.

He tottered to a tree, and stood leaning against it, gulping for breath, staring on the scene in terror.

Dost Hamid's right arm hung helpless, blood streaming down it and dropping from his dusky fingers. But the long Afghan knife was flashing in his left hand. His injury was a terrible one, and many a strong man would have sunk under it; but the man from the Kabul mountains was virile all through, tough and wiry as a wild beast.

Bunter did not understand, but the Afghan understood that he was not to escape with his wound. Bunter knew nothing of the blood-feuds of the Indian hills; but Pandy Din knew. Not for his life would Pandy Din have dared to let the Afghan live. The blood-feud of Dost Hamid and his kindred would have followed him, dogging his footsteps with the danger of death, till sooner or later he fell under a bullet from behind a rock, or a knife-thrust in the dark.

With set teeth, snarling like a wild animal, Dost Hamid closed in on the khitmutghar, the long Afghan knife gleaming in his left hand. The rifle-butt crashed on him, and he staggered. The knife clattered on the ground. But a moment more, and the Afghan had dodged the whirling rifle, and closed on Pandy Din and grasped him.

Bunter, watching breathlessly, understood that the khitmutghar had intended to crush in the Afghan's skull with his rifle-butt; but Dost Hamid had been too quick for him. The khitmutghar had to drop the rifle now, and use both hands to struggle with the man from Kabul.

Dost Hamid had one arm against two; but he was a much more powerful man than the khitmutghar, sturdy as the latter was. His left arm was wound about the khitmutghar, crushing him to the Afghan's brawny chest, and he received without heeding a rain of fierce blows in his dusky face. Pandy Din grasped him with both hands and struggled, striving to throw him down. The terrible agony of his wound did not seem to affect the Afghan, or only to drive him to mad fury. The two men struggled furiously and savagely, reeling to and fro, watched by the hapless Bunter's terrified eyes. The fat junior stood petrified under the tree.

The Afghan seemed to be failing, when Pandy Din's foot caught in a trailing root, and he went over.

He crashed to the ground, with the Afghan above him, and in an instant the horse-trader's brawny knee was planted on his chest. Dost Hamid's left hand changed its grip to the khitmutghar's throat, and his grip was like that of a band of steel.

Fiercely the fallen man struck, and struck again, unheeded. He strove to get at the hunting-knife in his belt, but his belt was under the gripping knee of the Afghan, and he could not reach it.

Pandy Din's eyes rolled horribly as the savage grip tightened on his throat.

Only a couple of feet away from him lay the long Afghan knife which Dost Hamid had dropped. But it was beyond his reach, though his desperate fingers groped for it.

The Afghan's eyes were blazing with savage triumph now. His right arm, streaming crimson, hung like a broken branch; but his left hand closed ever more tightly on the khitmutghar's throat. Pandy Din's despairing eyes turned on the Greyfriars junior under the tree.

Bunter shuddered.

He knew that his rescuer was at his

last gasp—that a few minutes more would see the khitmutghar a dead man in the choking grip of the horse-trader. And then—

Bunter tried to pull himself together. His terror was so great that he was shaking from head to foot. He dared not approach the Afghan, though his life and the khitmutghar's depended on it. But the despairing eyes of Pandy Din stirred him, and he moved from under the tree. His trembling hand picked up the long Afghan knife, and he thrust the handle of it into the hand of Pandy Din.

There was a flashing gleam of steel as the knife swept in the air, a desperate yell from Dost Hamid, and the horse-trader rolled off his victim.

Pandy Din, his throat released from the choking grasp that had been crushing out his life, lay panting and gasping for breath. By him, in the herbage, lay the Afghan horse-trader.

Pandy Din did not heed him. He had struck once, with the long Afghan knife, and he knew that he need not strike again. One deep groan came from the horse-trader of Kabul, and then no other sound. The burly body lay still.

For several minutes the khitmutghar lay panting. But he rose to his feet at last. Bunter's terrified eyes turned on the still figure of the horse-trader.

"He is—is—is—" he stuttered.

Pandy Din did not answer, but he smiled grimly. The silver-mounted handle of the Afghan knife was sticking out of Dost Hamid's loose garments; from its position, Bunter knew that the long blade must be buried to the hilt in the ruffian's body. He shuddered, and turned away.

Pandy Din picked up his rifle. He reloaded it, and then looked round and listened. There was no sound, save the distant howl of a jackal in the forest.

"Little sahib, the others are gone?" asked Pandy Din.

"Long ago," said Bunter, with chattering teeth. "That brute—I—I mean—he sent them on, while he kept me behind, to—to—" He broke off, gasping. The khitmutghar understood.

"At the next camp the horse-traders will miss their chief," he said. "If they return for him they will find what the jackals have left."

"The jackals!" muttered Bunter.

Pandy Din made a gesture, and Bunter glanced round. From the shadows of the forest two or three pairs of shining eyes looked at the scene; the scavengers of the hills were already gathering. The wretched Owl shuddered from head to foot. That would have been his fate but for the intervention of the khitmutghar. That, as it had chanced, was to be the fate of the greedy horse-trader. If his men came back in search of him they would find a few bones, picked clean, and nothing to tell them how he had come by his death.

"Little sahib, you should not have wandered so far in the night," said the khitmutghar; "I will take you back to the dak. But—he robbed you—"

Pandy Din moved towards the still body of the horse-trader.

Bunter shuddered.

"It's nothing—it doesn't matter! I—I don't want to touch the money now!"

"As the little sahib wishes. Follow me."

Bunter was only too glad to follow the khitmutghar from the scene of the tragedy.

As they went he heard behind them the savage snarling of the beasts of

(Continued on page 17.)



Harry Wharton's Football and Cricket Supplement

No. 17 (New Series). Vol. 2 Aug. 28th, 1926

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.

BOUNDARIES and GOALS!

THE willow-tree, from which cricket-bats are made, is ready for use twenty-five years after it has been planted. In spite of all suggestion to the contrary, we are able to state that no batsman has stayed at the wicket long enough to see a willow grow up.

Johnny McIntyre, the famous Blackburn Rovers player, is the proprietor of an hotel at Blackpool, which is called The Life Boat. With a name like that the business ought to be all right—easier to swim than sink, as we might put it.

In one cricket match this season Brown, of Hampshire, scored a century, kept wicket in the first innings of his opponents, and bowled three men out in their second innings. That can certainly be called an all-round performance.

Shin-guards were first used in football as long ago as 1874. So when people give you the impression that it is only in the modern game that players kick the other fellows' shins in mistake for the ball they are obviously wrong.

Last season Stoke lost over £5,000, while their near neighbours, Port Vale, showed a profit of nearly £2,000. So now we can understand why there was a suggestion that the two clubs should amalgamate. You can have two guesses as to where the idea originated.

West Ham United are among the clubs which have changed their colours for the new season. Instead of the old claret and blue, their registered colours are now red, white, and blue. We shall now have to call them Union Jacks.

Preston North End have an adverse balance of £17,000—an item of which they are certainly not proud. Yet some people are always asking what becomes of all the profit which is made out of football.

Doncaster Rovers have engaged for this season Frank Keetley, making the fourth player of that family now with the club. Altogether a victory for the Rovers will soon be a sort of family affair.

Mr. George B. Ramsay has resigned the secretaryship of Aston Villa after holding the office since 1886. He has seen the club rise from a local Bible class team to a club known in every corner of the Empire; he helped to instruct its earliest players, discovered and obtained the old Perry Bar ground—at a rent of £5 per year—played in the first and last match there, continued in office with the Villa, record Cup-winners, through all their triumphs, and has stayed on to see a "gate" of five shillings and threepence transformed at palatial Villa Park, with its £70,000 grand stand, into £11,000 paying £5,457! Surely such a man has earned his retirement.

The new manager of Reading is Mr. Andrew Wylie. He will have to live up to his name in order to keep the club in a high place in the Second Division, in which League they will now play for the first time.

LESSONS of the SEASON!

THE time has come to look back on this memorable cricket season. It is good to look back, to examine where we stand in the hope that the lessons of one season may help us towards improvement the next.

It has been a disappointing season so far as the England v. Australia matches are concerned, inasmuch as such a proportion of the Test matches failed to produce a definite finish. For this state of affairs there are many explanations, the weather being predominant amongst them; but I am going to give you one which is not generally mentioned. It is that the wickets we prepare for cricket in this country are a bit too good. They are all in favour of the batsmen and all against the bowlers.

TOO PERFECT PITCHES!

Looking back over the season, there has scarcely been an instance of even a county side getting out for a very small score. If you look up the records books you will find hundreds of cases of first-class teams being dismissed for less than fifty runs. But such cases have scarcely been added to at all during the present season. Some people would say that it is because our batsmen are better than they used to be, or alternatively that the bowling is not so good. I believe that it is the carefully-prepared wickets, the covering of pitches against the rain, and the general consideration for the welfare of the batsmen which nowadays makes for big scores and drawn matches. So I think one lesson of the season is that we want more of the sporting element left in the pitches.

COME ON, THE YOUNGSTERS!

Another lesson of the season is that there are not as many good young players coming along as we should like to see. The men who have played the most important part in this season's cricket are the veterans of the game, or, at any rate, those who can no longer be called young. I believe that right through the season it would have been possible to choose an England team of over thirty-five years of age, and each would have beaten the best of those under thirty-five. This being so, it is high time the youngsters got busy. Take it from me that there is going to be plenty of room in the near future for young and capable cricketers.

There may be a direct connection between the foregoing lesson and another one which I shall now mention. It has been throughout very obvious that the spirit of enterprise has been lacking from the cricket generally. There has been very little of the mighty hitting stuff; too much sitting on the spile and too great a tendency for ordinary bowling to be treated as if it were very good bowling. It is in the school clubs of the country that we must start to instil the spirit of enterprise.

Another obvious lesson from this season's cricket is that England to-day is extremely short of real break bowlers. We have plenty of swervers and "fancy" bowlers of other kinds, but very few who can impart effective spin. Perhaps if we get back to more natural, more sporting pitches, we shall also show the young spin bowler that it is worth while for him to perfect himself in the art.

One thing this season has done—advanced the democratic spirit in cricket. For the first time we have had amateurs and professionals sharing the same dressing-rooms, and for the first time we have had a professional as temporary captain of an England team which had amateurs in it. We are getting on. One of these days we shall say, in thinking about England's captain—who is the best man and not, as we have always said previously, who is the best amateur?

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.



AUSTRALIA'S CAPTAIN!

A Nutshell Biography of "Horseshoe" Collins, who forms the subject of this week's Free Gift.

Australia. Said Douglas: "If that fellow, Collins, fell off the Dome of St. Paul's he would find a feather bed waiting to receive him when he reached the ground."

It must be a big inspiration to a cricket team when every man feels that anything their captain does is sure to come out right.

4 HOURS 40 MINUTES BATTING—40 RUNS!

Born at Sydney on the 21st January, 1889, Collins is thus 37 years of age. Young enough to remain as energetic as ever, and yet old enough to have gathered the experience which helps to make a good captain. At school he was nicknamed "Mauldy," which in the Australian vernacular means left-handed. But, as a matter of fact, although Collins bowls with the left hand, he bats right-handed. And a very sound, full of grit, batsman he is, too. The biggest innings of his career was the 282 which he scored for New-South Wales against Tasmania, in 1912, but the value of an innings should never be reckoned by the number of runs made,

and Collins himself always looks back with a certain amount of justifiable pride to a "knock" in which he managed to total forty. This was at Manchester in a Test match against England in 1921, and in making those forty runs, Collins occupied the wicket for no less a time than four hours and forty minutes.

NOT ALWAYS SO SERIOUS AS HE LOOKS!

Australia did not want runs particularly then; what they wanted was to get the time over, for they were in great danger of losing the match. Collins, going in first, as he has done repeatedly, was the man who did most to save the game. Not always does he adopt this patience on a monument attitude, of course, but he has never been a lightning scorer. In these days he mostly leaves the bowling to others, but he is still quite good enough to go on for a spell to keep the runs down while his other trundlers have a rest.

Small, and rather slender, he has not the commanding personality of Armstrong, but he has strength to a surprising extent, and his experience of cricket embraces games in Fiji, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. He is not always as serious as he looks, and during the last series of Tests, in the match at Sydney, when there were nearly fifty thousand people present, he turned to Maurice Tate, who was bowling, with this remark: "How would you like to-day's takings for a benefit?"

"Paul Pry" Gets Behind the SCENES!

Interesting anecdotes of the season's cricket.

By Our Travelling Correspondent.

RIGHT through this cricket season, now gradually drawing to a close, I have travelled far and wide following the game, and have mixed with all the leading players. Poking my nose into dressing-rooms, and occasionally having to dodge out pretty quickly, I have picked up many little stories of famous players. Some of them I shall tell to you here, and I think they will serve to show that cricketers, idolised as they undoubtedly are, remain just human.

A sense of humour saved a glum situation at Nottingham. You will remember what a fiasco that first Test match proved to be; how the rain came down so mercilessly that the pitch was very quickly under water. The men chosen to play for England were gathered together in the dressing-room, watching the drip, drip of the merciless rain. They all looked as if they had lost a pound note and found a ha'penny.

WELL PREPARED!

Presently the door of the dressing-room opened, and a quaint figure presented itself to the gaze of the Englishmen. It was that of Roy Kilner, attired so that his own mother would not have known him. He had a so-wester on his head, a mighty macintosh covering him from head to foot, sea-boots on his legs, and in his hands a fisherman's rod. And as he shoved his

head into that dressing-room, he asked: "Can anybody tell me what sort of bait they use on this ground?" There were roars of laughter all round, and this little joke of Roy's put everyone in a much better temper.

SHOCKING!

There are few players with a bigger fund of stories than Jack Hobbs, and this is the best I have heard him tell during the summer. A match had been arranged between two teams of clergymen to take place at the Oval, but heavy rain delayed the start, and, of course, prevented the spectators from appearing to watch the match. One spectator, however, was noticed wandering round from time to time, and according to Hobbs, one of the clergymen was so struck with this seeming devotion to the game that he went over and spoke to the solitary figure. "You must be very enthusiastic," said the parson, "to come out and stay through the rain to watch two teams of clergymen play." "Oh, no," said the spectator. "I am not so great an enthusiast as all that. You see, this happens to be the only place I know where they have an all-day licence."

WHAT'S IN A NAME!

During the Test match at Manchester, Patsy Hendren went to the ground at Old Trafford rather later than the other members of the England team, and when

he got to the ground, he discovered that he had come away from his hotel without his ticket. But, of course, being a player he had a right to go in for nothing, so up he strolled to the man at the gate. "May I go in?" asked Patsy. "You may if you have a ticket," was the reply, "but not unless." "Well, I haven't a ticket," confessed Hendren, "but you had better let me in because I am one of the players. Don't you know me? I'm Patsy Hendren." The gate-keeper turned to Hendren with a look of utter unbelief. "Now, look here, my lad," he said. "Don't try to come that old yarn with me. I have already let six fellows through who all said they were Patsy Hendren, and I am not going to let another through under any circumstances." And Patsy had to stand aside until a prominent man, connected with the Lancashire club, came along and declared on his honour that this was the real Hendren, and that the others had used his name improperly.

AN UMPIRE WITH GOOD EYESIGHT.

Many tales could be told concerning little incidents in which players and umpires have been concerned, but I have only space for one such story. An England bowler sent down what he thought was a straight ball, and when it struck the batsman's legs a confident "How's that?" went up. "Not out," replied the umpire. At the end of the over the bowler told the umpire that he thought he had made a mistake. "Oh, no," replied the umpire, "I am quite sure the batsman was not out, because the ball would have missed the wicket by an eighth of an inch." Whatever else we may think of the umpire he certainly had a high opinion of his own eyesight, but an eighth of an inch is certainly running things a bit fine.

ENTER MR. FOOTBALL!



By
'REFEREE'

IT has often been said that the football season starts too early, and that by commencing the big games in August other games are encroached upon. But the people who follow football are generally ready for it. Already the League programme of big matches in Scotland has been started, and this week-end the whole of the big clubs in England will follow suit—start on a campaign of over eight months. The players have spent the whole of this month getting themselves fit for the fray, and perhaps some of them are thankful that the game starts in August, for although training in this month is very much like hard work, on the other hand it is easier to get off superfluous weight in comparatively warm weather than it is in cold weather.

"GOOD-BYE-EE!"

Some of the trainers have had hard work to get their players down to what may be called real fighting weight. During the close season, when little serious training is indulged in, some footballers put on weight at a great pace, and it is said that one trainer fainted when he saw a player come back a few weeks ago. This player had weighed eleven stone when he left for home last May. When he turned up again he seemed to be about twice as far round the waist, and had actually put on three stone and a bit. But it is nearly all off now, and on Saturday next the little cricket ball will be kicked out, and Mr. Football will enter into possession.

A FOOTBALL TRAGEDY!

So that you will be able to pick up the threads where they were left off, it may be of interest if I summarise the big changes so far as the clubs in the leading Leagues are concerned. From the First Division Manchester City and Notts County have disappeared, and must now struggle along in the Second Division. This means that once more such a big place as Nottingham is without a First League club, while the departure of Manchester City from the top class was a real tragedy, especially seeing that they got to the final tie for the Cup. However, there is very little room for sentiment in big football, and even Cup Finalists have to suffer relegation unless their League record is good enough to save them from such a fate.

To take the places of Notts County and Manchester City, The Wednesday and Derby County are now in the top class. These are both clubs which have had experience of First Division football in the past, and naturally they are largely content to trust their immediate future to the players who gained promotion for them last season.

GOOD AND BAD MOVES!

When we turn to the Second Division we find that rather a peculiar thing has happened. Stoke City and Stockport County, the clubs which finished in the lowest places in the Second Division

have both been given places in the Northern Third, while Coventry City, who played in the Northern Third Division last season, have been switched over to the Southern Third Division. There is rejoicing in Reading over the fact that the club is now in the Second Division, for they have never been in that class of football before. Grimsby Town, the other club promoted to the second class, have previously had experience in that section. Indeed, though many of my readers may not



CHARLIE BUCHAN
the famous Arsenal forward, in unfamiliar kit.

remember it, they were at one time in the First Division.

A REST FOR THE "LAW-MAKERS!"

We started last season with big alterations in vital rules of the game—changes affecting the off-side rule and the throw-in rule. Well, there are no changes on that line to worry our heads or argue about this season. Not a single law relating to the actual play has been altered. The law-makers have had a holiday, as it were, and the only new thing of importance to remember is that it has now been officially decided that the player throwing the ball in after it has been out of play must stand with both feet behind the touch-line. Last season a lot of referees

allowed the thrower to stand with his feet on the line, but this is not to be permitted any longer.

HOLDING ITS OWN!

Now to consider what sort of a season it is going to be. Personally I think it will be a highly successful one if the whole of the players will make up their minds and throw their hearts into the job of playing the game in the real spirit of sport. The balance sheets of the big clubs, issued during the summer, show that, generally speaking, the attendances at the big matches last season were up to the average. Thus both the people who declared that the offside change would ruin the game from the onlookers' point of view, and also those who thought that the offside change would bring many more spectators have both been proved to be wrong. The game held its own last season, but it should go one better this time round.

AN IMPROVEMENT ANTICIPATED.

By this time all the players have had plenty of opportunity of studying tactics under the new offside rule, and the present season ought to see an improvement as the result of knowledge gained of new tactics required. All sorts of experiments were tried by various clubs last season in order to test the possibilities of the change in the offside rule. We ought to reap the benefit of these experiments during the present season.

I don't think we need worry any more about goals being too cheap in football owing to the offside change. The odds are still on the defence in all games in which the competing clubs are on anything like an equality, and it will continue to be so during the present season.

RECKLESS BUYING!

Fortunately there has not been a great number of changes in the players who will represent the various clubs. Changes of a minor character there have been, but I do not recall any close season which has been so free from what we call sensational transfers. This does not mean that we have done with the business of paying big money for star players. Some clubs are sure to start badly, and then they will get reckless and spend thousands on players who are no better than those they could get for nothing if they looked round much nearer home.

ALL CONFIDENT!

I shall be very much interested to see if Huddersfield Town can keep up their winning ways. They have gained the championship of the First Division for the last three seasons, thus establishing a new record. This was a wonderful feat on the part of Huddersfield, and they will try their very hardest to keep on top. But sooner or later there must come to Huddersfield, as to all other clubs, a period when reconstruction of the side will be necessary. And when that period arrives the run of Huddersfield's success may be temporarily checked.

Anyway, they will soon be off now. Everybody is starting full of optimism. I have just made a tour of the bulk of the leading clubs to find out what they think about their chances. And there is so much optimism everywhere that it seems as though about 21 clubs are all confident of being able to wrest the championship from Huddersfield Town. 'Twas ever thus.

The Throw-In Nuisance!



ONE of the big objectives of the rule-makers of football must always be to evolve the right sort of "punishment" to fit the "crime," and in this respect one wonders if the present throw-in rule answers to this principle of justice. I agree that if a full-back or a half-back, struggling with an opponent, or making a fairly good clearance, just fails to keep the ball in play a throw to the other side may be considered a fitting way of restarting the game. But

all of us who have seen much football know quite well that on many occasions when the ball goes out of play the act is deliberate, and sometimes not even dictated by a desperate emergency. Is there any way in which the deliberate kicker-out can be adequately punished? The one obvious course which suggests itself is that instead of the other side being awarded a more or less harmless throw-in on these occasions they should be allowed a free-kick from the place where the ball goes beyond the line.

A forceful article contributed specially by

John Duncan

(the famous Leicester City player).

It can be argued that such a punishment might be rather drastic, but on the other hand it may easily be for the good of the game.

WHY THE OFFSIDE RULE WAS CHANGED.

Consider why the off-side rule was altered. We have talked so much about the change in the off-side law that I fancy many followers of football have come to the conclusion that an increase in the number of goals was the real objective in the alteration of the off-side rule. Such a view is, of course, wrong. The alteration in the off-side rule has made it easier for the forwards to get goals, and more difficult for the defenders, but the real reason for the alteration was to reduce the number of irritating stoppages consequent upon forwards being continually pulled up for off-side. It is even suggested in some quarters that the off-side alteration has led to more kicking out, and it is easy to imagine such being the case.

REDUCING THE STOPPAGES.

If it is agreed, then, that no effort should be spared to keep the game of football moving, to reduce the number of stoppages to the minimum, then I suggest that a further decrease would be effected by giving the referee power to award a free-kick rather than a throw-in for cases of deliberate kicking out. Perhaps the game is already fast and furious enough for the players, but we have to bear in mind the spectacular side of the sport, and we should certainly reduce the stoppages by the award of a free-kick instead of a throw-in. With such a rule in operation the full-back would be more inclined to take a risk rather than to play for safety by placing the ball beyond the line. Even now we award a corner-kick if the full-back or goalkeeper places the ball over his own goal-line. If the same principle were applied when the ball was deliberately kicked into touch I do not think many people would say that the rule was too drastic. I should like to see it tried, anyway.

They used to do things more in accord with my ideas in the old days. Years ago a one-handed throw-in was allowed, which meant that the half-back was able to throw the ball much farther than he can do now when he has to bring the ball over his head with both hands. I have often heard it said that to many old stagers this one-handed throw was as good as a free kick. And I can well believe it.

J. Duncan

GRAND NEW LIMERICK COMPETITION!

"BOUNDARIES"

FIRST PRIZE £2-2-0

AND 6 HANDSOME PRIZES OF 10/6

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. 8,
Gough House, Gough Square,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

so as to reach that address not later than Thursday, September 2nd, 1926.

You may send in as many attempts as you like, but all efforts must be written on an 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.



A. E. DIPPER (Gloucester)

The mainstay of Gloucester is Dipper,
Who loyally backs up his skipper.

Many "hundreds" he's made
With his right trusty blade,

Example last line:—

Since the day he first played as a nipper.

MAGNET "BOUNDARIES" COMPETITION No. 8.

FREE COUPON.

8

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

LAST LINE

Name

Address

Closing Date, Thursday, September 2nd.

IN THE HEART OF THE HIMALAYAS!

(Continued from page 12.)

prey that had gathered for the horrid feast.

He hurried on.

For once Billy Bunter exerted himself. Pandy Din stooped to cast loose the two horses that the Afghan had tethered, and to start the animals trotting down the road the way the troop had gone. Then he went on with rapid strides towards the dak bungalow. Bunter's little legs going like clock-work to keep pace with him.

Only a short time before Bunter had crept out of the dak, expecting and hoping never to see it again. Now he was longing for the sight of it—longing to creep within the shelter of its walls. Every shadow of the forest, every gleam of the moonlight on the rocks had terrors for Bunter; the shadowy night was peopled with foes to his terrified imagination. And when at last the dak bungalow was reached, and the khansama opened to the knock of Pandy Din, Bunter staggered in, almost fainting with relief.

"Tain't rising-bell, you chaps! Let a fellow sleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you think you're back at Greyfriars?" roared Bob Cherry. "We've got to get on to Bhanipur this morning, fathead."

"I'm tired."

"It must be catching," said Bob. "You make me tired, too."

"Turn out, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We've got to get on the road, you know, and the khansama has breakfast ready."

"Blow the khansama!"

"Do you want to be left behind, fathead?" asked Nugent.

Bunter was about to answer "Yes," when the recollection of the previous night's terrible experience came with a rush into his mind. He started up, gasping.

"Don't you leave me behind, you beasts!" he spluttered. "I sha'n't be long. I'll be ready in a tick!"

"Right-ho! You didn't seem so keen on coming on to Bhanipur yesterday," said Wharton in surprise.

"Blow Bhanipur!" snarled Bunter. "Bless Bhanipur! I'm not going to be left alone among these murdering niggers, I can tell you!"

Din waited on the breakfasters; Colonel Wharton had already finished, and was standing by the car with the Punjabi chauffeur.

Bunter breakfasted in sulky silence.

He was in a tremor with what he had been through; it had been more than enough to shake the nerve of the Owl of the Remove. And, he was by no means thinking of deserting the party now. The mere thought of getting out of sight of English faces threw him into a cold perspiration. He would not have accepted a lift on a Royal elephant from the greatest native prince or king in Hindustan. No inducement would have made Bunter trust himself alone among the natives again. Fortunately, his alarming experiences had not affected his appetite. His breakfast was as gargantuan as usual, and made the khansama regard him with wondering admiration. But he kept his eyes wide open on his companions; he was not going to be left behind. At the first sign of starting, Bunter was prepared to leave even his breakfast unfinished.

"The horse-traders are gone," Bob Cherry remarked, with a glance towards the spot where Dost Hamid and his men had camped the night before.

MONEY FOR "MAGNET" READERS!

Result of "Boundaries" Competition No. 2.

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

F. E. JONES, 355, Cooksey Road, Small Heath, Birmingham,

for the following:—

Though Sandham is not very tall,
He knows what to do with the ball,
When "Andy" hits out,
All the spectators shout
"He's landed that one in Pall Mall."

The six prizes of 10s. 6d. each have been awarded to the following:—IVOR BROWN, 52, Mount Pleasant, Waterloo, Liverpool; KENNETH DAWES, 3, Hampton Villas, Hampton Road, S. Chingford; DONALD C. SIMPSON, Linton Downs, Kelso, Scotland; CHARLES SONES, Station House, East Kirkby; T. F. TAPLEY, 113, Standhill Road, Thorneywood, Nottingham; LAWRENCE T. WATTS, Long Marston, York.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Changes His Mind!

"WAKE up, fatty!"
Snore!
"Wake up, ass!"
Snorrrrrrrr!

Billy Bunter was going strong. Having lost most of his sleep the night before, the Owl of the Remove was making up for lost time.

Harry Wharton & Co. were up, in the sunny morning; the last stage of the journey was to be done before the heat of day came on. But Billy Bunter was not prepared to turn out

After the khitmutghar had brought him back to the dak bungalow, Bunter had dropped into bed, and immediately into slumber. He had hardly stirred since; and Johnny Bull, on awakening, had heard the old familiar sound of his snoring. The Famous Five did not know, as yet, of Bunter's adventure in the night.

"The giddy sleeping beauty seems to be growing stronger than usual!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But he's got to wake! I'll squeeze a sponge over his chivvy!"

"Gerrrrroooooogh!" spluttered Bunter, as he woke up quite suddenly, under the application of the wet sponge.

He sat up and blinked.

"My esteemed Bunter—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"A rotten lot of murdering niggers!" howled Bunter. "I'm not going to be robbed and murdered to please you, though. I was jolly nearly done in last night by a black villain."

The juniors stared at him.

"Last night?" repeated Bob.

"Ow! Yes."

"Too much supper, I suppose," said Bob. "You've been dreaming, Bunter. It was a giddy nightmare."

"Yah!"

"It was the pilau that did it!" grinned Johnny Bull. "The khansama made up a ripping pilau, and you overdid it, Bunter. You had enough for nine or ten. You can't really do with more than enough for six."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing happened last night, old bean," said Nugent reassuringly. "Pandy Din was on guard all night, and there was no alarm."

"I tell you—" roared Bunter.

"Oh, come along to brekker, and tell us your dreams afterwards!" said Johnny Bull.

And the Famous Five went out to breakfast set among the shady trees. Bunter joined them in a few minutes, looking peevish and sulky, and still tremulous. The khansama and Pandy

Bunter shuddered. The mere recollection of the red-bearded Afghan was enough to make him tremble.

Colonel Wharton came through the trees, and stopped at the table. His eyes fixed sternly on Bunter.

"G-g-good-morning, sir!" stammered Bunter.

He knew that Pandy Din must have reported the night's happenings to the colonel sahib, and he was uneasy as to how the colonel would take it.

"You had a narrow escape last night, Bunter," said the colonel quietly.

"I—I know."

"It was utterly foolish and reckless to leave the dak in company with natives whom you did not know," said Colonel Wharton.

"I—I know," mumbled Bunter. "I offered to tip that villain Dost Hamid for a lift down to Rawalpindi. I—I never knew—"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared.

"Did anything happen in the night, uncle?" asked Harry.

"Yes. Bunter started for Rawalpindi with the horse-traders, and but for Pandy Din he would have been murdered by Dost Hamid for his rupees."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"I—I thought it was all right," mumbled Bunter. "The black villain

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.

was just pulling my leg; getting me away from here so that he could knock me on the head and bag my rupees. Oh dear!"

"You utter idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The idiocy of the esteemed Bunter is marvellous!" said Hurree Singh, staring blankly at the fat junior.

"It appears, Bunter, that you do not desire to finish the journey to Bhanipur," said Colonel Wharton. "You should have stayed behind at Rawalpindi, as I advised you. But if you wanted to go back you should have told me; there was no need to be sur-reptitious. I should have been only too glad to make arrangements to send you back in safety."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at the colonel.

"You wouldn't let me go back when I wanted to," he stuttered. "I—I thought I—I—"

"Certainly I should not have turned back myself, as you had the impudence to ask!" snapped the colonel. "That was a different matter. Are you absolutely obtuse, Bunter?"

"That's it!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Brains were left out of Bunter, sir; he got an extra allowance of fat instead."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I think you are the most obtuse boy I have ever seen, Bunter," said the colonel. "You are certainly the most troublesome. However, as no harm has resulted from your folly, to you, at least, we need say no more about it. I shall arrange for you to be taken back to Rawalpindi, and you will remain at Captain Ferrers' bungalow there till we return from Bhanipur. You are quite unfitted to travel in this country, and it was foolish of you to come. I will engage a reliable man to take you—"

"A white man?" gasped Bunter.

"Do not be absurd! We are the only Europeans for fifty miles around here. I shall find a reliable native."

"I won't go with a nigger!" howled Bunter, in alarm. "I'm not going to be murdered!"

"Silence! I tell you I shall find a reliable man, and he will take care of you till you reach Rawalpindi!" snapped the colonel.

"I won't go with a black man!" roared Bunter.

"You will go with a Rajput trader who is expected here shortly. And I advise you not to call him a black man, Bunter, or you may not reach Rawalpindi without receiving the chastisement you deserve for your ignorance and insolence."

With that Colonel Wharton turned and strode away, apparently having no more time to waste on William George Bunter.

Bunter turned a helpless blink on the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows—"

"It's all right, Bunter," said Harry Wharton soothingly. "You can depend on my uncle to see that you will be safe."

"The esteemed Rajput may be trusted, my worthy, funky Bunter."

"Anyhow, you've asked for it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I won't go with a black man!" howled Bunter. "I was nearly murdered last night by a black villain of an Afghan. Why can't you all come back with me to Rawalpindi, and go on to Bhanipur later?"

"Fathead!"

"I say, you fellows, you talk to the old codger," said Bunter anxiously. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.

"Tell him I want to come to Bhanipur—in fact, I'm awfully keen. See? You talk to him, Wharton; the old codger is your uncle, you know."

The captain of the Remove looked at Bunter.

"As you're leaving us to-day I won't punch you," he said curtly. "But if you speak of my uncle like that again, look out for trouble!"

"Beast!"

"You're booked, old fatty!" said Johnny Bull. "What the thump are you grousing about? You want to go back, don't you?"

"I'm not going with a black murdering villain!" yelled Bunter.

"You will be safe enough, you silly owl!"

"Rats! Rot! Besides, I—I want to come on to Bhanipur!" gasped Bunter.

"Now I come to think of it, I want to come with you, Inky."

"The wantfulness is all on your side, my esteemed Bunter."

"I'm coming on to Bhanipur!" groaned Bunter. "I—I don't mind dacoits and—and snakes and—and—and tigers. In fact, I—I like 'em."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fix it up with the old—I mean with the colonel, Wharton! Remember all I've done for you, old chap!"

"It's settled, you ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

The Famous Five left the breakfast-table. Bunter was left—still eating—but at the same time blinking after them, in alarm and dismay. To be left at the dak bungalow, to wait there for the Rajput trader to arrive, and to travel a hundred miles with the Rajput, was a prospect that made Bunter almost cringe with terror. The khansama had been polite and attentive; but he was a native, and after the colonel was gone he was quite capable—in Bunter's terrified opinion—of poisoning the fat junior in a pilau, or knocking him on the head and burying him under the magnolias. Even if the khansama did none of those awful things, the Rajput trader would undoubtedly—so it seemed to Bunter's scared mind—shoot him through the head for his watch and chain, or the clothes he stood in. What difference was there between a blinking khansama and a blinking Rajput and a blinking Afghan horse-trader?

Bunter could see no difference, and he was determined that he was not going to trust himself out of sight of a white man's face. He almost suspected the colonel of really wanting him to be knocked on the head by some ferocious native in those awful mountains.

One thing was settled in Bunter's mind—he wasn't going to be left behind. But as it was settled by all the rest of the party that he was to be left behind at the dak bungalow, it was evident that the Owl of the Remove had a very difficult problem to solve, and that his fat wits were likely to have some unaccustomed exercise in the solving of it

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"BUNTER!"

"Where's Bunter?"

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

It was time to start.

The cars were ready, the baggage was packed on the baggage-car; Colonel Wharton had completed his arrangements with the khansama with regard to William George Bunter. The Famous Five looked for Bunter to say good-bye to him, and the colonel desired to see him to give him some necessary advice, and to hand him a sufficient sum of cash for his needs at Rawalpindi. And Bunter was not to be found.

Harry Wharton & Co. had left him still breakfasting. Evidently Bunter had finished breakfast—he was gone.

Supposing that he had gone into the dak for a nap, the juniors sought him there. But he was not there.

They sought him up and down the gardens, but he was not to be seen. They shouted to him, but there came no answer.

The Owl of the Remove seemed to have vanished into thin air.

"Where on earth can the fat chump be?" exclaimed Johnny Bull, in exasperation. "Is he hiding somewhere, to give us a lot of trouble for nothing?"

"He can't have gone out," said Wharton. "He's too jolly scared to go out alone after what happened last night."

"Then where is he?"

"Echo answers—where?"

"The wherefulness is terrific."

"Let's ask the khansama," said Bob impatiently. "Bother the fat duffer! The giddy khansama may have seen him."

But the khansama knew nothing.

"Not seeing the little fat sahib," he said. "He walking out on road, but afterwards not seeing him."

"He went out on the road?" exclaimed Harry.

"Han, sahib! Not seeing him after."

"Well, my hat!"

The juniors returned to the car, where Colonel Wharton was waiting for them with growing impatience. The colonel eyed them grimly.

"Why have you not brought Bunter? I must speak to him before we go."

"Can't find him, sir," said Bob.

"What?"

"The khansama says he went out on the road after brekker," said Harry Wharton, puzzled and perplexed.

"Goodness knows why! I—I suppose he hasn't got into any fresh trouble?"

The colonel knitted his brows.

"Pandy Din!"

The khitmutghar came up from the baggage-car.

Colonel Wharton gave him a few words in his own tongue, and the khitmutghar salaamed and hurried away.

"I—I suppose we're waiting, uncle, till we know what's become of Bunter?" asked Harry hesitatingly.

"Pandy Din will search for him for an hour," said the colonel curtly. "If he is not found in that time, he must take his chance. Doubtless he has only gone for a walk, and will return to the dak. But whatever foolish thing he may have done, we cannot wait long. We have an appointment to keep at the frontier of Bhanipur, and we must cover a good distance before the heat of the day comes on."

"After all, nothing could have happened to him," said Bob. "He was too jolly scared last night to think of going far from the dak."

"It's a silly trick to bother us!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's changed his silly mind, and doesn't want to be left behind. I shouldn't wonder if he's hiding in the gardens all the time."

"Let's look, anyhow; we may as well while we are waiting."

Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded to search for the Owl of the Remove. Up

ANSWERS
Every Saturday —PRICE 2:

and down and round they went, calling to Bunter; but there was no reply, and they did not find the fat junior.

It seemed probable that Bunter was concealing himself somewhere, in the belief that the party would not go while he was missing. It was, in fact, exactly one of the fatuous devices that might have been expected of Bunter. In the gardens surrounding the dak there were endless nooks where the fat junior might have lain hidden.

Whatever might be the explanation, he was not found. The juniors returned to the car at last, exasperated and a little troubled in mind. They found Pandu Din there. The khitmutghar had been equally unsuccessful.

Colonel Wharton looked at his watch.

"We can wait no longer," he said. "I will give instructions to the khansama to take every care of Bunter, and to have him searched for if he does not return soon. Word will be sent to us at Bhanipur. You need have no anxiety. Get into the car."

There was nothing else to be done, and the Famous Five stepped in. The throb of the engine echoed among the Indian hills.

The khansama came bowing and salaaming to take leave of his distinguished guests. He bowed and salaamed all the while he was receiving the colonel's instructions with regard to Bunter.

"On my head be it!" he said solemnly.

Colonel Wharton stepped into the car, and the khansama stood bowing and salaaming as the party started. When the juniors looked back he was still "going it," as Bob Cherry expressed it, and he disappeared from sight at last, still bowing and salaaming as if he had a spring in his back.

Colonel Wharton had entered the car with the juniors, instead of sitting beside the chauffeur as on the previous day. They noticed that he kept his revolver in his hand, and he bade them keep their rifles loaded and ready. The Punjabi chauffeur had a revolver on the seat beside him; and Pandu Din, driving the baggage-car behind, had his weapons at hand. It was clear that the colonel looked for danger on the "last lap" of the journey to Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh's kingdom.

The road ran like a long white ribbon up the valley, amid towering hills thick with forest. The colonel's keen glance watched on either side, incessant, unrelaxing.

"The last danger will be over in a few hours," he said. "We must be on our guard until then."



"A curse on all unbelievers," said Dost Hamid. "The death of an infidel is always meriting the blessing of the Prophet!" Bunter's fat legs refused to support him. He fell helplessly on his knees. A moment more and the shot would have sped. Crack! It was not the report of Dost Hamid's pistol; it was the clear, sharp ring of a rifle close at hand. There was a sudden yell from the Afghan, and his right arm dropped to his side. (See Chapter 6.)

"The dacoits?" asked Harry.

The colonel shook his head.

"The lesson the dacoits received from the fighting-plane has been more than enough for them," he answered. "I doubt whether Nally Das could bribe a single one of the robbers of the hills to attack us again. There is no danger from the dacoits. The danger is now from the retainers of the Rajah Baji Rao—Nally Das and his own associates. I do not think they would venture upon an open attack so near the frontier of Bhanipur, and, in fact, Baji Rao would not venture to let his own men be seen engaged in such an attempt. He dare not let it become publicly known that he is plotting against the Nabob of Bhanipur. But—"

Colonel Wharton knitted his brows.

"So far, only attempts have been made to kidnap Hurree Singh," he said. "Baji Rao hesitates to shed the blood of a nabob of Bhanipur. He knows that he is suspected, and if his guilt should be proved, it means his ruin. But now that the game is nearly lost, now that Hurree Singh is about to enter his kingdom, I fear that he may take more desperate measures. He would not dare to order his men to attack us openly. Kidnapping Hurree Singh is no longer possible for him. But he might quite probably place everything on a last throw of the dice, and take the risk of assassination. A marksman hidden by the road might—"

The colonel broke off, his keen eyes sweeping the road.

The juniors breathed more quickly.

They understood that the situation had changed. Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh was no longer threatened by the kidnappers. He was safe from that, secure now, unless his desperate kinsman should use the last resource of assassination. If the nabob was threatened now at all, it was his life that was threatened.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We'll look after you, Inky, old man, and see that you don't get potted before you get to Bhanipur."

The nabob grinned.

"The serenity of this is terrific!" he said. "It is the last chance of the worthy and treacherous Baji Rao, and I thinkfully opine that something will happen yet fully before we reach the border of Bhanipur, where my guards await us. But as the English proverb says, it is the cracked pitcher which goes to the well and saves a stitch in time."

The car sped on by the mountain road.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

In Ambush!

AND where was Billy Bunter? Harry Wharton & Co. would have been surprised could they have seen the Owl of the Remove. It did not cross their minds for a moment that the fat junior had not been left behind at the dak. As a matter

of fact, Bunter, so far from being left behind, was ahead of the Greyfriars party.

It was firmly fixed in Bunter's fat mind that he wasn't going to be "left." To be left alone among "niggers" was too terrifying; Bunter could not and would not realise that all would be well for him under the arrangements made by the colonel. Every dusky face was, for him, the face of a possible or probable robber and assassin; every "black" man was more or less of a Dost Hamid. But he knew that Colonel Wharton had made up his mind, and that if he stepped into the car when it started he would be lifted out again and handed over to the khansama.

To the uneasy and terrified Owl, it seemed that his valuable life was at stake. The terrors of the road, dacoits, snakes, tigers, wild elephants, were as nothing compared with the catastrophe of being left alone among niggers. He did not want to go onward; but much, much less did he want to go back. And in that difficult position Bunter's fat brain had laboured at high pressure, and he had evolved a plan.

So while the Greyfriars party were making their preparations for departure, Bunter had slipped quietly away. The khansama had seen him go out upon the road, but had seen no more of him. That was not surprising, as Bunter had turned his back on the halting-place, and gone tramping forward towards the border of Bhanipur at his best pace. The well-laid road, winding over the mountains, was a certain guide; even Bunter was not capable of missing the way. He kept to the middle of the road, with fearful eyes blinking on either side, for dacoits, tigers, Afghan horse-traders, wild elephants, and other fearsome creatures. And he covered the ground with unusual speed, dreading every moment to hear behind him the buzz of the Greyfriars car. He did not want to hear that—yet; not while he was still near enough to the dak bungalow to be sent back there.

Bunter's stratagem was, he flattered himself, a masterly one. He was going as fast and as far as he could ahead of the party. When they came up with him, they would simply have to let him step aboard again; they could not refuse to let him hook on, as it were. To pass him by and leave him stranded on the mountain road, miles from the dak, miles from anywhere, was really impossible. And Colonel Wharton would not turn back in the car and lose time.

Bunter knew that a messenger had been sent forward overnight from the dak bungalow to announce the hour of the Greyfriars party's arrival at the Bhanipur border. Some time would be lost when Bunter was missed, at the start. That was fairly certain. After that there would be no more time to lose. If he was overtaken half a mile, or a mile, from the dak, the colonel might turn back with him. But at a greater distance it was extremely unlikely that he would do so.

Would he or milled he, so to speak, the colonel would have let the fat junior hook on again.

It seemed quite a masterly scheme to the Owl of the Remove.

He tramped on as fast as he could, making the most of his time, hoping that his absence would cause a long delay at the dak.

"The beasts!" he murmured. "The rotters! They couldn't possibly leave me stranded on the road, to walk back six or seven miles. They're bound to

pick me up when they come up. Simply bound to! The old codger may think I could walk back alone, but the fellows will put in a word for me. Besides, I shall be worn out—and hungry, too! Even that stiff old codger must have some human feelings somewhere. He's a beast, but he's not beast enough to leave me to expire on the road. I'll make out that I've sprained my ankle, too, and can't walk."

Bunter grinned.

"As soon as I hear the car I'll sit down, and then they can come up and find me crippled—unable to walk. It will be up to them then. Beasts!"

Bunter tramped on valorously.

When the road ran down an incline he broke into a trot. The success of his masterly scheme depended on being a good distance from the dak when the party overtook him. If it meant only a short time to be wasted, he more than suspected that the colonel would run him back to the bungalow in the car.

There were drawbacks to the scheme, of course. Bunter was in a state of palpitating funk at finding himself alone on the mountain road, even in the bright sunshine of the morning. But he had only the choice between two evils—of trying on this dodge, or allowing himself to be left alone among "niggers." And the latter alternative was not to be thought of.

He blinked right and left, watchful for dark faces, and the sight of a native sent him scuttling in terror behind a tree. The native was only a coolie, tramping along the road with a bundle on his back. But Bunter remained in cover, palpitating, till he was out of sight, and then resumed his way, blinking round watchfully for another possible enemy.

The road wound mostly downward, the summit of the pass having been cleared the previous afternoon. Bunter made quite a good speed, and mile after mile vanished under his tramping feet. Whether the car had started yet from the dak bungalow he did not know; but there was no sound of it, so far, on the long, white road behind him.

Bunter halted at last.

The sun was high in the heavens now, and the heat was growing. The road before him ran on through a narrow rocky gorge, shadowy even in the blaze of the Indian sun. The shade would have been welcome enough to Bunter, but the high rocks, shutting in the view on all sides, scared him. In the wide valley he had been able to observe the approach of any possible enemy; there were broad spaces on either side of the road. But once within that narrow gorge, a score of dacoits might have been hidden unseen within a dozen feet of the road. Snakes, and tigers, and elephants, for all Bunter knew, might be lurking in those rocky recesses, waiting for a chance to spring out on him. He stopped, and blinked into the deep gorge into which the white road descended, and shook his head. He would have preferred to cover a greater distance before stopping to wait for the car, but his fat heart failed him.

"Beasts!" he murmured, referring, perhaps, to the possible denizens of the rocky gorge, or perhaps to the Greyfriars party.

He sat down in the shadow of a huge boulder by the roadside, after carefully inspecting the spot for snakes.

There he waited, occasionally blinking back the way he had come for a sign of the car.

It was certain, by this time, that the party must have waited at the dak to search for him, for there was no sign yet

of the party on the road. Bunter began to hope that they had not waited too long. The solitude of the mountain road, the deep silence of the hills, had a terrifying effect upon him, now that he was waiting. It seemed to Bunter that he was alone in a vast solitude, and yet, to his uneasy imagination, every rock and boulder hid a fierce enemy.

In the deep stillness of the mountains a slight sound and movement at a little distance sufficed to set his nerves twittering. He was blinking back along the road, but the sound came from the other direction. Bunter turned his eyes towards the rocky gorge ahead, and his heart almost died within him at what he saw.

From the shadows of the gorge a man had emerged.

The man was a native, which alone would have been sufficient to scare the Owl of the Remove in his present frame of mind. But that was not all. The man was Nally Das!

More than once Bunter had seen the Hindu who had attempted to kidnap Hurree Singh in far-off England, and who had dogged the party on their journey, besetting their path with perils. Bunter crouched lower in the shadow of the great boulder, scarcely daring to breathe. He knew what to expect if Nally Das saw him. The Hindu's presence showed that another attempt was to be made on the nabob, almost on the border of his kingdom; and had Bunter been discovered there, certainly he would not have been allowed to live to give a warning. Once more the Owl of the Remove, in his cunning fatuity, had thrown himself into fearful peril.

But the Hindu was not looking towards him, and Bunter was almost hidden by the great rock that loomed over him by the roadside. Nally Das stood on a rock and stared away up the road, his shoulder turned in Bunter's direction. Bunter watched him in breathless terror. He knew that the Hindu was looking for the Greyfriars car. The Greyfriars party were watched for in the shadowy gorge ahead.

For a full minute Nally Das stood motionless on the rock, his eyes searching the vacant road. Then he turned and disappeared.

Bunter breathed again.

Silently, with terrified caution, he crawled round the base of the great boulder, to place it between him and the Hindu, if Nally Das should return to scan the road again. From beyond the rocks he heard a voice calling—the voice of Nally Das.

"Kalouth!"

Bunter knew the name of the Hindu's confederate. Kalouth had been with Nally Das in England, when Wibley of the Remove had fallen into the hands of the kidnapers.

There were sounds of footsteps. Bunter lay and trembled. If the two Hindus came round the big boulder they could not fail to discover him, and that was death! But the footsteps ceased, and he heard a murmur of voices. He recognised the Hindustani without understanding it. From the tone of Nally Das' voice, however, he guessed that Baji Rao's chief emissary was giving instructions. Kalouth replied only with a grunt or two of assent. Then there was silence. Footsteps died away in the gorge.

They were gone.

Bunter moved at last. Keeping in the cover of the big rock, he blinked desperately out on the road. He would have given all the treasures of the East

to see the colonel's car in the distance. But it was not in sight.

Still keeping in cover, he blinked towards the gorge. Far in the distance he had a glimpse of a Hindu's back. One of the Hindus was departing, and though Bunter could not see clearly at the distance, he was sure that it was Nally Das. The man was going, but he had left his confederate somewhere among the rocks at the mouth of the gorge.

Bunter backed away silently.

His idea was to scramble away among the boulders, and strike the road again at a safer spot, nearer to the dak bungalow. Cautiously he went, blinking back every moment, and keeping well away from the road. And suddenly he saw Kalouth from behind.

The man had climbed to the top of a large rock at the opening of the gorge, and lay there, on his face. Before him, on the rock, lay a rifle, and Kalouth

"The car!" panted the Owl of the Remove.

The Greyfriars car was coming at last. Bunter scrambled among the rocks to the roadside; in the distance he saw the coming car, with the baggage-car behind. And only a hundred yards ahead, at the opening of the gorge, the hidden rifleman waited.

Bunter's heart thumped.

At that spot the winding road was hidden from the watching Kalouth. Not till the car was within twenty yards would he see it. Bunter realised that he was safely out of sight of the watching assassin, and he stepped into the road.

He did not venture to call out.

Trembling in every fat limb, with perspiration streaming down his face, he stood in the middle of the road, and raised his fat hands to the Punjabi chauffeur; and, with a grinding of brakes the car came to a halt.

"Believing, no doubt, that I should not waste time in returning with you to the dak."

"I—I—"

"You were quite right," said the colonel curtly. "I have already lost too much time on your account, Bunter. I cannot turn back."

"You—you see—" stuttered Bunter.

"But, although I cannot be delayed, there is no such pressing haste for the baggage-car!" said the colonel grimly. "I shall, therefore, send you back to the dak bungalow in Pandi Din's car, Bunter."

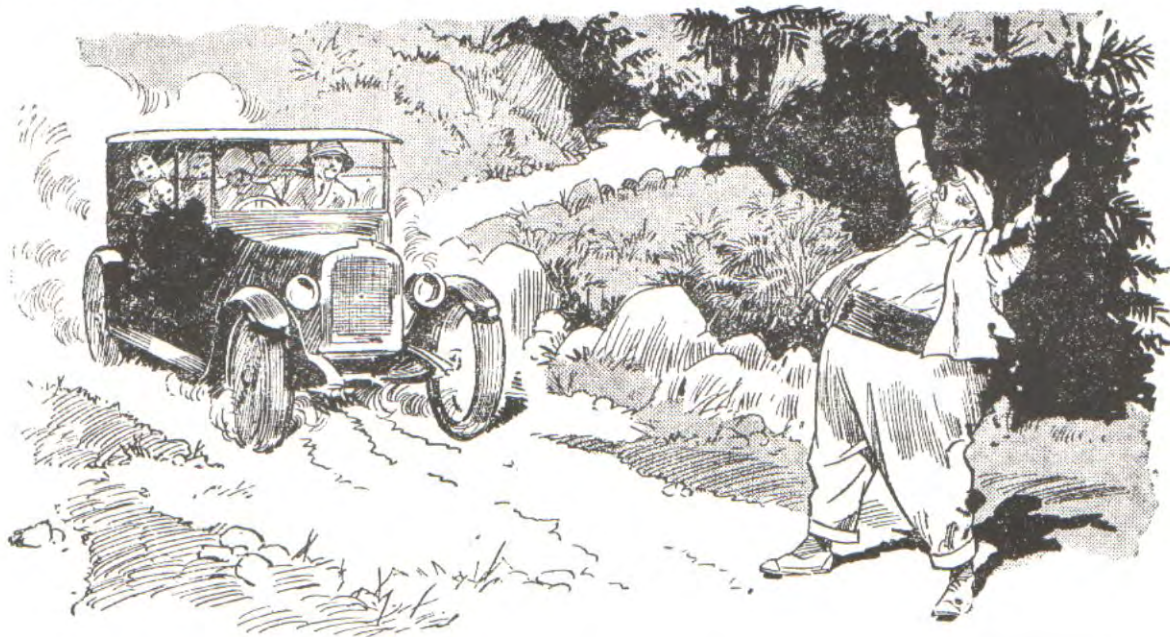
"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

That possibility had not even occurred to the fat brain of the Owl of the Remove.

"Pandi Din!"

The baggage-car had halted. The khitmughar stepped down, and came to the colonel's car, saluting.

"Pandi Din, you will turn back."



Only a hundred yards ahead, at the opening of the gorge, the hidden assassin waited. Bunter's heart thumped. He did not venture to call out as he stepped into the road. Trembling in every fat limb, with perspiration streaming down his fat face, Bunter raised his hands aloft as the car containing Harry Wharton & Co. came in sight. (See Chapter 10.)

was watching along the barrel. Bunter saw little more than his legs and the back of his turban; but the man's attitude told him everything. Kalouth lay there, watching the road, with rifle ready, to fire into the car from cover as it came by. In such a position, with a magazine-rifle, a good marksman might have picked off every member of the Greyfriars party before he could have been dislodged.

One blink at the ambushed assassin was enough for Bunter. But for the necessity of silence, he would have taken to his heels. But he dared not risk causing the Hindu to turn his glance towards him. Silently, cautiously, Bunter picked his way among the boulders, and hardly breathed till he had placed a hundred yards between him and Kalouth.

There he was safe, screened by the great boulders piled ruggedly along the roadside.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

The perspiration was streaming down his fat face.
Whirr!rrr!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Clearing the Road!

"BUNTER!"

"That fat idiot!"

"Here, of all places!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Where the thump did he spring from?"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared in amazement at Bunter. They had wondered what had become of him; but it had never crossed their minds that he was ahead of them on the mountain road. Bunter rolled to the door of the car as it stopped, and met the surprised stares of the juniors, and the grim frown of Colonel Wharton.

"So you are here!" said the colonel quietly.

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

The old military gentleman's lip curled.

"I think I understand. You came on ahead, while you were being searched for at the dak."

"Yes; I—I—" stammered Bunter.

taking Bunter Sahib to the dak," said the colonel. "You will then follow on as speedily as you can."

"On my head be it, sahib."

"But—" gasped Bunter.

"Get into Pandi Din's car, Bunter."

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Nothing doing, old fat bean," said Bob Cherry. "You really shouldn't be such a troublesome passenger, you know."

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"The farewellfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!"

Bunter grabbed hold of the door of the car.

"I—I tell you—" he spluttered.

"You are wasting time, Bunter," said the colonel.

"I—I—I tell you—"

"Stand back, Bunter, and step into Pandi Din's car," said Colonel Wharton curtly. "Do you hear me? I have no more time to waste on you!"

Bunter spluttered.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 967.

Harry Wharton & Co. remained silent. They would have relented towards the fatuous Owl of the Remove, certainly, and allowed him to hook on again. But it was for the colonel to give orders; and they did not think of arguing with him. But Bunter—though his little scheme had been a lamentable failure—had a card up his sleeve that neither the colonel nor the juniors suspected. He had not, indeed, realised himself that he had a trump card to play. He hung on to the door of the car and spluttered.

"I say, you fellows— Look here, Colonel Wharton, I've got something to tell you—danger—"

"Hook it, old man!" murmured Bob Cherry soothingly.

"The hookfulness is the proper caper, my fat, ludicrous Bunter."

"I've seen Nally Das!" yelled Bunter desperately.

The colonel's bronzed hand was about to jerk him back from the car.

"Nally Das!" ejaculated Wharton.

"And—Kalouth!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! The jolly old enemy are on the road, then," said Bob Cherry. "They're the two blighters who tried to kidnap Inky at Greyfriars."

Colonel Wharton gave the Owl of the Remove a keen, searching look. Bunter was full of prevarication and trickery, as he had discovered very early in their acquaintance. But the fat junior was evidently in earnest now; his terror was unmistakable, and the colonel realised that it was not wholly due to his fear of being sent back among "niggers." Something had happened on the mountain road while Bunter was there ahead of the car.

"Explain yourself, Bunter!" the colonel said sharply.

Bunter spluttered out his story.

Pandy Din stood back, waiting for orders; but there was a glitter in his black eyes, and the juniors noticed his hand seeking the hunting-knife in his belt. The khitmutghar was ready to deal with the ambushed assassin on the mountain road. His eyes were on the colonel's face, waiting for a sign.

"My hat!" murmured Harry, gazing at the Owl of the Remove in wonder. "It seems to be Bunter's jolly old destiny to come in useful on this trip. Who'd have thought it?"

Hurree Singh nodded.

"The esteemed Kalouth would give me the finishing potfulness, as the car passed," he remarked. "It is Baji Rao's last card."

"More likely to miss, though, with the car going at a good speed," said Johnny Bull.

Colonel Wharton compressed his lips. He had been keeping a watch, as the car glided on, with the keenness of an eagle; but he was well aware that the ambush described by Bunter might have been successful. Kalouth, in cover on top of the high rock, commanding the road with his rifle, might not have been spotted in time—indeed, it was most likely that he would never have been discerned before he had time to fire at least one shot. And it was certain that he was a good marksman—he must have been selected for that.

With the car going slow, he could have picked off the nabob, or any other victim he chose; with the car going fast, he could have shot the chauffeur, and sent the car rushing to sudden destruction on the rocks.

The risk was one that the travellers had to take in the wild passes of the Indian frontier; only watchfulness

The Magnet Library.—No. 967.

could have saved them, and it was likely enough that in this instance it would not have saved them. But the warning given by the Owl of the Remove was enough.

The colonel asked a few questions, drawing out of Bunter all the information he could give. Then he glanced at Pandy Din. The khitmutghar had listened attentively.

The glance from the Colonel Sahib was enough.

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

He stepped away from the road, and disappeared among the boulders and scrub of the hillside.

The cars remained motionless. Harry Wharton glanced at his uncle.

"We stop here?" he asked.

"Until we receive a signal from Pandy Din that the road is clear," answered Colonel Wharton.

The juniors waited in silence. Bunter leaned on the car and gasped, but he did not speak.

Even Bunter understood that there was tragedy in the air. The juniors' hearts beat almost painfully. Kalouth, the hidden assassin, watching for his prey, like a hyena, among the rocks, deserved no pity or mercy. But the moments were terrible to the Greyfriars fellows, unused to the ruthless warfare of the Indian frontier. And they were not without anxiety for Pandy Din. The khitmutghar had vanished—no sign or sound betrayed his existence to friend or foe.

The juniors knew that he was creeping stealthily among the strewn boulders of the hillside, to approach the ambushed assassin from behind, and take him by surprise. They knew what would happen if he succeeded. But Kalouth must have heard the car before it halted. The halt, out of his sight, might make him suspicious; he might be watching for a surprise attack. The ring of his rifle might tell that Pandy Din had gone, not to success, but to death.

In deep silence, their hearts almost aching with the intensity of their anxiety, the Greyfriars party waited. Minute followed minute, and each silent minute seemed an age to them as they listened.

There was a sound at last—a sudden, strange sound from the distance. It was a hoarse, desperate cry.

The juniors started, and exchanged glances. Colonel Wharton's bronzed face alone remained unmoved.

It was a death-cry that the juniors had heard. In that tense moment a life had gone out like a candle that is snuffed. But who had perished, out of their sight, among the sun-baked rocks? They waited, in anxiety that had grown intolerable, till footsteps rang on the stones, and a dusky, smiling face looked at them from the road. It was the khitmutghar.

He salaamed to the colonel.

"The road is clear, sahib."

"Ach-cha!" said the colonel, with a nod; and the khitmutghar went back to the baggage-car.

"I—I say!" gasped Bunter.

The colonel gave him a look.

"You may get in, Bunter."

Bunter scrambled into the car.

The engine throbbed again. The Punjabi chauffeur drove on. Pandy Din, still with a smile on his dusky face, followed with the baggage-car. No more was said of Kalouth. The khitmutghar had done his work silently but surely. And if the juniors needed any witness of the assassin's fate, they soon had it. A dark shadow for a moment hovered

overhead, shadowing the sunshine. It was a vulture settling down among the rocks. Another and another of the obscene birds came speeding to the spot, as the car dashed on at a high speed by the road through the gorge.

—

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Welcome to Bhanipur!

"HELP!" "What—" "Yaroooh! Help! Whoop!" Help! Niggers! Help!" yelled Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. started up in amazement and alarm.

The Greyfriars party had halted at noon, their journey nearly over. They had stopped in a wide, green valley, and camped under spreading trees. In the distance ahead, on the long, white road, glimpses of tall buildings could be seen—the towers of the frontier fortress of Bhanipur. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was in sight at last of his native land.

After tiffin, the juniors rested in the shade of the trees; and, as the heat of noontide passed, they waited to hear the colonel's word that it was time to proceed. But the colonel, pacing at a little distance with a cigar, gave no word, and the juniors waited. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face was wreathed in smiles. It was long since the school-boy nabob had seen his own country, and the home-coming was joyful to him.

The little kingdom looked amid the mountains of the Indian frontier was home to him, and the usually calm and impassive nabob was bubbling with satisfaction. Billy Bunter, having lunched, as usual, not wisely but too well, had taken a nap, and now he had awakened, and gone to the car to rummage for lemonade and a soda syphon. And all of a sudden he came rushing back to the party under the trees, yelling with alarm.

"Help, help, help!" he yelled.

"What's the row, you thumping ass?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Niggers!" yelled Bunter. "Thousands of 'em! Savages—niggers—murderers! Oh dear! I wish I hadn't come! Why couldn't you leave me at the dak, you beasts? Yaroooh!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled.

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"Yow-ow! Help! Run for it!" roared Bunter.

"But what—" exclaimed Wharton.

He broke off, as a sound of many hoofs reached his ears. There were horsemen on the road—by the sound, many scores of them. The tattoo of innumerable hoofs echoed along the valley.

The juniors ran into the road.

From the distance towards Bhanipur a numerous cavalcade was advancing. A gigantic elephant, in gorgeous trappings of scarlet and gold, towered high, surrounded by a troop of armed horsemen. There were a hundred native troopers, armed with carbine and tulwar, with officers in resplendent native uniforms. Almost every hue of the rainbow shone from the troop in the bright sunshine. Over all towered the great elephant, with a howdah on his back, in which sat a little fat gentleman, with a dusky face under a turban that gleamed with precious stones.

"Who—what—" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"We're done for!" yelled Bunter.

"Run for it!"

And the fat junior set the example, running for his life. He fairly flew, till

he pitched into a sunken ditch a hundred yards from the road, and landed there with all the breath knocked out of his fat body. Breathless and terrified, Bunter lay in the ditch, gasping, expecting every moment to see a ferocious face and a gleaming weapon above him.

But the Famous Five did not heed Bunter.

They did not share his alarm. That numerous cavalcade, advancing from the direction of Bhanipur, had startled them for a moment, but they realised very quickly that they were friends, not foes. The ecstatic grin on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face would have reassured them, had they needed to be reassured.

"My esteemed chums, it is my excellent avuncular relative, the noble Jam, with the guards of Bhanipur," said Hurree Singh. "They have come to escort us to the palace."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob.

"Some escort!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"It is the Jam Bahadur, Hurree Singh's uncle," said Colonel Wharton, his eyes fixed on the little fat brown gentleman in the howdah. "My messenger reached the Jam Bahadur last night, and he has come to meet the nabob."

With a clatter, the cavalcade arrived, and halted to a blare of trumpets and a clash of cymbals.

The huge elephant came to a halt. At a touch from the mahout, the driver perched on its neck, the gigantic animal knelt. Dusky officers in gorgeous uniform assisted the little brown gentleman from the howdah. With great curiosity the Greyfriars juniors gazed at the Jam Bahadur, Hurree Singh's uncle and regent, of whom they had often heard the nabob speak at Greyfriars. He was a little gentleman, and he was fat and brown, but he had a great air of dignity, and his brown, plump face was wreathed in happy smiles as he greeted his nephew and nabob.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh embraced the gorgeous Jam, with a rush of words in his own tongue of which his comrades understood nothing. Then the Jam greeted the colonel, an old acquaintance, and then the Famous Five were presented. They found that the Jam Bahadur spoke English—an English that was very like his nephew's.

"Already being acquainted with honourable youthful sahibs letterfully by nephew and lord," said the Jam graciously, "I happy in being servant to noble friends of lord and master. Welcome to kingdom of Bhanipur in name of lord and nabob."

And the juniors grinned politely, very favourably impressed by the hospitable Jam, though his gorgeous attire struck them as being really more suitable for a circus than a palace.

The Jam, though he was Inky's uncle and guardian and regent, and evidently an affectionate relative, treated the schoolboy nabob with the deepest respect; while the guards regarded him with awe, and the officers knelt to touch his feet with their foreheads. Harry Wharton & Co. had often wondered what old Inky's manners and customs were like in his own Kingdom, and now they saw for themselves. The dusky prince who received the homage and owed respect of the Jam Bahadur and the officers of the guard, hardly seemed the same fellow who had been treated with Lower Fourth unceremoniousness in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

"My only hat!" Bob Cherry murmured to Wharton. "Is this the same old Inky we've always known? Blessed

if I shall thump him on the back, or buzz a boot at him while we're in Bhanipur. I should expect one of these johnnies to slice off my napper!"

Wharton chuckled.

"My esteemed friends, we are now about to enter Bhanipur," said Hurree Singh, beaming. "You will be my guests at the palace, which we shall reach this evening. Will the excusefulness be terrific if I leave you for short time, to travel on elephant with Jam? The longfulness since I have seen my esteemed uncle is great."

"That's all right, old bean!" said Harry. "Hem! I suppose I'd better not call you old bean now. I'll make it Highness."

"Fathead!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "In my kingdom and at esteemed Greyfriars the samefulness is the proper caper. To my subjects I am Huzoor, which is to say Highness; but to my esteemed and ridiculous friends the old-beanfulness is still terrific."

"Good old Inky!" chuckled Bob.

Respectful hands and bent backs assisted the Nabob of Bhanipur to the howdah on the huge elephant. The Jam Bahadur joined him there. There was another clash of cymbals and a blare of trumpets. The nabob was coming home, with musical honours, as Bob remarked to his chums.

The juniors turned to the car.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Bunter?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Bunter! Bunter!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "He's bolted! He doesn't know yet that these johnnies are an escort from Bhanipur."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The absurd boy!" exclaimed Colonel Wharton, laughing. "Look for him at once—he cannot have gone far."

"Little fat sahib fall in ditch," said Pandy Din, pointing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They cut across towards the ditch—fortunately a dry one—in which the terrified Owl of the Remove was sprawling. Bunter had almost recovered his breath, but he had not ventured out of the ditch; he hoped that he might lie unseen there—as indeed he had, by all but the khitmughar. Every sound he heard from the direction of the road filled the Owl of the Remove with fresh terrors. He had no doubt at all that the Greyfriars party had been cut to pieces by overwhelming numbers of "niggers." That was serious enough; but the most serious matter was—what was going to happen to Bunter himself? He lay in the broad ditch and quaked.

The sound of footsteps came to his ears, approaching his hiding-place, and he quaked afresh.

A grinning face looked down at him.

"Ow! Keep off!" yelled Bunter. "Mercy! I'm not here! Ow! Wow! Keep off! Yaroooh!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, you frabjous ass—"

Bunter blinked at the juniors. He was amazed to recognise the familiar faces grinning down at him.

"You!" he gasped. "Have you got away?"

"You fat duffer!"

"Cut off!" panted Bunter. "Don't stop here and draw the brutes on me! Run for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You burbling ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "There's no danger; it's an escort from Bhanipur. It's Inky's uncle, the Jam, and a troop of giddy guards. Catch on now, fathead!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

The fat junior scrambled up. Harry Wharton & Co. grasped him and dragged him out.

Bunter blinked round him anxiously.

"I—I say, you fellows, you—you're sure?" he gasped. "I—I say, I—I don't like the look of those niggers!"

"Fathead!"

The chums of the Remove marched Bunter back to the car. The fat junior was still uneasy; but he was somewhat reassured when he saw the dusky face of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinning down at him from the gorgeous howdah on the back of the big elephant.

"Oh! I—I suppose it's all right!" gasped Bunter.

"Yes, ass! Come on!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm not going on that beastly elephant!" exclaimed Bunter. "He looks jolly dangerous—"

"You frumpitious ass, you wouldn't be allowed on the bullifant!" said Bob Cherry. "It's a Royal bullifant—a bullifant of State—only glorious Jams and Nabobs ride on that bullifant. You're going in the car."

Bunter sniffed.

"That's all very well!" he said. "But I don't see why we can't go on the elephant, if it's a special sort of thing. I suppose we're as good as blinking niggers."

Evidently the Owl of the Remove was hard to satisfy.

But the juniors did not trouble about satisfying him. Bunter was keeping the procession waiting.

Bob Cherry grasped him and up-ended him into the car. That settled the matter.

Bunter landed in the car with a roar. "Take your seats!" said the colonel, laughing.

"Ow! Wow! Wow!"

Bunter scrambled up and took his seat; the Co. followed his example; the colonel sat down; and the car moved on. Behind the gigantic elephant the Punjabi chauffeur toiled the car along at a walking pace, Pandy Din following in the second car; and round the party the cavalymen of Bhanipur rode with clattering hoofs.

With a burst of music, a tattoo of many hoofs, a jingling of brides and accoutrements, the cavalcade moved on to Bhanipur. In great state the procession passed under the arched gateway of the frontier fortress of Hurree Singh's kingdom, and along a street crowded with acclaiming natives, amid louder and louder blasts of barbaric music.

"Some reception!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Then by a road shaded by great trees, mile after mile, till the capital city of Bhanipur was reached, in the blaze of the sunset, and the procession halted at the palace of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Greyfriars party had reached their destination at last; after many perils and strange adventures, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, welcomed them to the palace of his fathers!

THE END.

(Mind you read the next magnificent yarn in this splendid series. It deals with the further adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in far away India, and is entitled: "THE TERROR OF THE JUNGLE!" By Frank Richards. It's one continuous thrill from beginning to end.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.

A DISGUISE THAT NOBODY COULD PIERCE! A new nose, in fact a new face altogether. That's what a clever surgeon offers Tommy Comber, the fugitive from justice, for a share in the valuable secret of Comberite Explosive!

CURLEW ISLAND!

David Goodwin's Greatest Serial Story.



TOMMY COMBER'S SURPRISE PACKET FOR THE REWARD-HUNTER!

The Price of Liberty!

THE two men stared in astonishment. Merton Haynes turned red in the face, and, glaring at Tommy, made a threatening gesture. But O'Hara checked him.

"I suppose I look a bit of a boob," said Tommy, chuckling, "but I didn't know I was as bad as that. A hundred quid! Can't you make it guineas? That's only another liver!"

"A hundred pounds is a lot of money," said the doctor in a hushed voice. He seemed almost awe-struck. "Do you realise how much a hundred pounds is, my lad, or what you can do with it? A hundred pounds—"

"Cheese it!" said Tommy. "I've never had a hundred shillings in my life, but—"

"Except when you came away from Curlew Island in the night with twenty pounds of stolen money in your pockets!" interrupted Merton Haynes with a snarl.

"What d'you mean by that?" exclaimed Tommy hotly.

"Be quiet, Merton. Leave him to me," said O'Hara quickly. "Do you refuse our offer, Tommy?"

"I was telling you," said Tommy. "Don't shove me against the wall. I ain't a born fool. I s'pose you thought a hundred pounds would seem to me like all the money in the world. But it ain't, quite. Comberite Powder, if it's all I claim for it, is worth tens of thousands of quids. It may be worth a million. I'm not givin' it away with a

pound of tea. I'm not givin' it away at all. I might sell a share of it, but I want a fair price."

O'Hara stood up, and his piercing eyes seemed to bore right through Tommy.

"Have you forgotten that a word from us will send you back to three years of prison?" he said grimly.

Tommy looked him straight in the face.

"All right," he said quietly. "There's the door. Go and call that copper back. You can send me to the Bellerophon. Three years won't last for ever, and the powder's mine when my stretch is finished. I'll take care you never see anything of it. You've got me, haven't you? But I've got you, too. Don't forget it! You want that powder, but you'll never have it unless I hand it you; and sending me back to prison is the one sure way you'll lose it. I'm ready to go!"

The two men looked at him in silence. Haynes was black with suppressed fury, but Dr. O'Hara gave no sign at all. He was watching Tommy.

"You've got pluck, anyhow," said O'Hara, with his suave smile. "And if you hadn't pluck you would be no use to us. If our offer isn't good enough, what do you want—more money? How do we know you've really got anything to sell? We don't know what the powder can do. We should be buying a pig in a poke."

"I don't ask you to do that," said Tommy. "I can deliver the goods. I'll make the powder, and I'll show you what it can do."

"Do you mean to say that you, a boy of fifteen, knows enough chemistry for that?"

"Bet your life!" replied Tommy. "My uncle trained me and taught me. I know the game."

"How strong is this powder?" asked Haynes. "Do you know that?"

"Yes, I do. My uncle knew just how strong it was, and he told me. Do you know what T.N.T. is—the stuff they used in the War to load torpedoes with?"

"Of course we do," said Haynes. "Well, Comberite is just twenty-five times as strong as T.N.T."

Haynes uttered a hoarse exclamation, and sprang to his feet.

"Great powers!" he gasped, "are you telling the truth?"

Tommy stared him full in the face, and, without answering, turned back to O'Hara, who waved his hand.

"Leave him to me, Merton," he said sharply. "I understand Tommy Comber better than you do. Now, my lad, we've got to have that powder, and we'll go shares with you. But you'll have to show us it will do what you say. We shall put up all the money, and take all the risk of failure. We'll warrant you your freedom, and give you a quarter share in all profits we make out of Comberite. That's fair."

"Done!" said Tommy. "That's fair. There's three of us, and maybe I ought to have a third share. But as you're putting up all the money, and I haven't got a cent, a quarter is all right. I'll have it down in black and white, on

paper, and the paper will be sent to a bank, so that even if I'm copped again, I shan't lose my share."

"The boy's a regular young Jew!" growled Haynes.

"Jews are all right," said Tommy, grinning. "I've met some jolly decent Jew boys in my time. They don't like being done down, and no more do I. I'm a sportsman, and I'm all for fair play. You needn't pay me till you get the goods. But I'll have that hundred quid in cash before I do anything, just for a bit on account. Then, if I can make the stuff, and show it's what I say it is, and you're satisfied, you'll pay me another thousand pounds to be going on with. Then you can fire ahead and make a fortune for us all, sir."

"But the recipe—the secret?" said O'Hara sharply. "Where is it?"

Tommy winked and tapped his forehead.

"It's here, sir," he said. "An' that's where it'll stay for the present. I'm not going to hand it over to you to play with. I'll make the giddy stuff myself, and if I can do that, we're all Isle o' Wight!"

"If you can do it? Do you think you might fail?"

"That's where the shoe pinches, sir," said Tommy. "I'll be quite straight with you. It ain't an easy job. If I make any mistake at all I shall blow myself to blazes, or else get nothin' at all."

"You had certainly better do it," said O'Hara quickly. "How long would it take you to make this powder, supposing you had all the things you need?"

"Can't swear to that. Might be a few days, might take a month," said Tommy. "I could make the stuff right away if I had the chemicals and apparatus, but it's got to be done in the proper way. I can't make Comberite in a back bedroom, sir. I'll have to have a couple of good big sheds, and the farther away from any houses the better. It must be in some lonely place, where I can do the experiments. If anything goes wrong an earthquake'll be nothing to it. A few pounds of Comberite goin' off suddenly would be pretty sure to wreck everything within a couple of miles."

"You shall do the job in any conditions you please," said O'Hara approvingly. "Of course you can't do it here. We will fix you up a hut and some sheds down on the loneliest part of the Thames marshes, and you can stay there till the work is done. We'll see you're not interfered with."

"But I should be recognised," objected Tommy. "I'm bound to be. However lonely a place it is, somebody'd be sure to see me sooner or later, and give me away. And then, ho for the old Bellerophon!"

O'Hara shook his head.

"You may be seen," he said, "but there's no reason why you should be recognised as Tommy Comber."

"What on earth do you mean, sir?" exclaimed Tommy.

"I mean that I can fix you up so that nobody will know you."

"What, a disguise?" said Tommy scornfully. "That's no good. Anybody can see through a disguise, except in a story book."

Dr. O'Hara smiled.

"I don't mean a wig and a moustache," he said dryly. "It's rather late in the world for that sort of thing. But I'm a surgeon and a scientist." He studied Tommy's face for a few moments attentively. "In a few days, and without hurting you to speak of," he added, "I can make you as safe from the police as if you were dead and buried!"

"Great Scott! But how?" said Tommy, sitting up, rather alarmed.

"Oh, there's no particular secret about it. Any surgeon could do it. I can not only change the tint of your skin and the colour of your hair, but alter the shape of your nose a trifle, make your forehead look a bit deeper. You would hardly believe what an immense difference it will make. You wouldn't know yourself in the looking-glass. In fact, I can make you better looking," said the doctor. "Your face is nothing to write home about, as it is."

"Guess again!" said Tommy. "I dare say it ain't, but it's my own face, and I don't fancy letting you carve it like a ham."

"My dear lad, there'll be nothing of that sort," laughed Dr. O'Hara. "I shall not use a knife."

"What will you use, then?"

"Just injections of paraffin wax and the X-Rays," replied O'Hara carelessly. "It's child's play. Quite easy. Of course, if you're afraid—"

"No, I'm not afraid!" retorted Tommy. "And you mean to say I shall be able to go out into the world, free and easy, after you've done with me, and nobody will know me, even my own pals?"

"Exactly. Your own mother wouldn't know you, if you've got one."

"Great Caesar's ghost!" exclaimed Tommy. "I'm on!"

The idea was so wonderful that for a moment or two he lay back, thinking it over. O'Hara spoke with such confidence, it was impossible to doubt he could do what he said. He was a remarkably clever fellow, as Tommy had seen already. And the idea of going out, safe from any risk of arrest, and meeting anybody he chose—Chuffer, for instance, who would not know him from Adam—excited Tommy more than anything that had gone before.

"It's a bet!" he said. "You can start on me whenever you like!"

"I'll begin to-morrow, if you are well enough," said the doctor. "I shall have to get the necessary things."

"Half a mo'," said Tommy. "You've got to agree to one thing, sir. When you've finished faking my face, I want that hundred quid on account, and I've got to have five days off, before I start

~~~~~

#### WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

**TOMMY COMBER**, a bright young lad of fifteen, is falsely charged with the murder, on Curlew Island, of his uncle, **JOSEPH COMBER**, an inventor of a powerful new explosive named "Comberite," the formula of which he passed on to Tommy before he met his tragic end. **"CHUFFER" FOSS**, Tommy's half-cousin and enemy—a suspicious character, and chief witness at the trial.

In spite of the damning evidence put up by Foss, Tommy is acquitted of the grave charge of murder, but of theft he is found guilty and sentenced to three years' detention aboard the reformatory ship *Bellerophon*, stationed in the Thames estuary.

After a series of thrilling experiences, however, Tommy effects an escape from the ship and seeks sanctuary on shore in the thick woods. Then, overcome by the pangs of hunger, the young fugitive throws all caution to the winds and feloniously enters the premises of Dr. O'HARA. He is discovered, but to his surprise, O'Hara displays great hospitality, feeds him well, and afterwards introduces him to his friend, **MERTON HAYNES**. These two queer individuals listen to Tommy's story, and realising that the lad is in possession of a secret worth a fortune, O'Hara promises Tommy certain freedom and a hundred pounds if he will divulge the secret of Comberite.

"Come off it, doctor," answers Tommy, highly amused at the "bait." "What sort of a giddy mug do you take me for?"

(Now read on.)

work. Five days' holiday. I shall go up to London, and one or two other places."

Merton Haynes started up with an oath.

"Confound the boy! Who are you to make terms?" he snarled. "Why, we have only to send you back to your ship, and you will be flogged like a dog!"

"And you can then say good-bye to your giddy powder!" replied Tommy, calmly. "And that's that!"

"Hush, Merton—hush!" said O'Hara, and he turned his piercing eyes on Tommy. "Five days' holiday and a hundred pounds! This is an extraordinary request, my lad. We must know more about it. We can't turn an escaped convict loose with all that money. What is it you want to do in those five days?"

Tommy did not intend to tell O'Hara that. But he had to give one reason, and it must be a true one.

"I'm going to have a beano," he said. "A real old spree. Wouldn't you, if you were me? I've had a rotten time. I've been tried for murder, spent a month in a prison, although I was innocent; been nearly drowned, chased, shot at, and all the rest of it. After a dog's life like that, I can't settle down to mess about with chemicals in a lonely hut on a marsh somewhere, not till I've done a bit of high kicking."

"I see," said O'Hara, with a sardonic smile. "You want to take the taste of prison out of your mouth, is that the idea?"

"That's the idea. If you can disguise me like you say, there can't be much risk about it. Of course, I shall be a bit careful what I do—I mean, I don't intend letting the cops get hold of me, at any price. I've had enough of that."

"Well, it sounds reasonable," said O'Hara slowly. "It would be safer to get you out of this house as soon as possible. But how do we know you will keep your word, and not give us the slip?"

"How do I know you'll keep your word by me and not try to do me in the eye over that powder?" said Tommy.

"We've got to trust each other. If either side begins to play dirty tricks, there'll be nothing doing, and no profit. That's all."

"You've put it in a nutshell, my lad," said O'Hara. "Merton, this boy can be trusted, and we're going to trust him. We'll play fair by you, Tommy. There'll be plenty for everybody when this job comes off, and cheating is a fool's game when there are thousands of pounds at stake—or at any other time. And we're not afraid of your getting away from us," he added quietly. "You are never going to get away from us, my boy. Now, here's my last word. You may go to London for a week directly you are ready. We'll give you fifty pounds—not a hundred. That's quite enough for you to take away with you. And you will have to go to an address that we shall arrange for you, so we know where you are. And we shall keep an eye on you."

Tommy reflected a moment.

"All right," he said cheerfully. "I won't be too stiff with you. Fifty and a week; that ain't unfair. There's always the chance the powder mayn't come off, or if it does, that I shall blow myself into sausage meat, and then you'll be out of pocket. You've treated me pretty decent. Chalk it up!"

"That's settled, then," said O'Hara, rising, "and now we'll send up Pat with a hot lunch for you, and a bottle of stone ginger to drink the health of the village policeman in."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 967.

When he was alone, Tommy realised how absolutely he was in the power of these two men, and, for that matter, of the boy Pat. But he did not worry. He felt he had a bit of power over them, too, and would have more if this amazing idea of the disguise really came off. And anything was better than going back to the Bellerophon. Tommy had been more or less bluffing when he said that they could send him back if they chose. They would have lost everything if they had. But the mere thought of the prison ship again made him shiver. He had tasted liberty once more.

The rest of the day passed quietly enough. Excellent meals were brought him, and when he was not eating he dozed. He slept like a top that night, and woke next morning feeling considerably refreshed. Most of the stiffness and soreness had left him, and the touch of fever had gone.

But Dr. O'Hara never came near him to start the promised treatment, and Tommy was told that he had gone away. There was nothing to do but eat and sleep, and even the joy of being in a real bed again instead of the Bellerophon's hammocks began to wear off. He asked for something to read, and Pat brought him two or three detective stories.

Tommy, however, could not take much interest in them. He was finding his own adventures more exciting than anything he had ever read about, and he wasn't able to turn over the page of his life and find out what came next. But he was already tired of being cooped up in the bed-room, for the door was always locked on him after the meals were cleared away. And the muslin curtains were kept drawn, which made the room rather dark.

Several times he got out of bed and took a turn up and down the room. He found his strength returning, and his limbs growing supple again. In the afternoon he drew one of the curtains back, and took a look out from behind the cover of the geranium-pots.

There wasn't much to see—only the weedy drive, and the hedges of the lane, and a grove of trees. He thought he

caught sight of somebody moving about in the lane, and guessed that a watch was being kept to make sure he did not try to get away. He had no idea of doing anything of the sort. He was much better off where he was. But, thinking it was better not to show himself at the window, he got back into bed.

In the evening Dr. O'Hara arrived in a big motor-coat, examined Tommy, and felt his pulse.

"You'll do," he said, with satisfaction. "To-morrow, Tommy, you will be able to say good-bye to yourself. It's too late to begin to-night. By the way, they've put up your reward to ten pounds."

"Why, it ain't the price of a prize pig!" said Tommy. "I'm worth a sight more than that!"

"You are indeed!" said O'Hara grimly. "I wouldn't lose you for your weight in gold!"

Tommy finished his supper and settled down for the night. The house was very still and silent, but for a long time he could not sleep. He felt a curious restlessness, and his brain was busy. It was a clear night outside, and presently the moon rose and flooded the room with a silver-white radiance that, even through the curtains, made it nearly as light as day. At last he dozed off, but just before he lost consciousness a faint noise roused him.

In a moment Tommy was wide awake again. He saw a black shadow cast on the wall, and the curtains stirred. Then one of the geranium-pots fell down with a thud.

Somebody was clambering in at the window!

Tommy sat up briskly. At the same moment a long arm pushed in through the window, pointing something at him, and a hoarse voice whispered:

"If you move or speak I'll blow yer brains out!"

#### At the Pistol's Muzzle!

**T**OMMY did not move. He had no wish to have his brains blown out; and if the visitor's voice was anything to judge by, he meant business.

The man, whoever he was, climbed in cautiously through the open sash, breathing heavily. He knocked down another geranium as he did so, and Tommy wondered that it did not wake up the inmates of the house. But, except for this midnight visitor, nobody was stirring. The house seemed still as death.

Tommy's first thought was that the intruder was a burglar, who had chanced on this lonely house as a likely place to break into. And, in fact, Tommy rather hoped he was one. A burglar was much less dangerous to him than anybody else would be. But the next moment the hope vanished.

"Got yer!" said the visitor, in a whisper of deep and fierce satisfaction. "You're Comber, the runaway from the reformatory ship. I knew it. Nobody can't take me in. An' ten quid ain't a bad night's work."

Tommy had to admit that the game was up. Neither O'Hara nor anybody else could save him now that he had been run to earth and recognised. He groaned inwardly. The village policeman was not such a fool as he seemed, after all. Evidently this was the same man, and he had been thinking things over, and had come back to make sure.

Tommy tried to think of the right thing to say in such a case.

And yet he did not give up. The only thing to do was to put the best face possible on it.

"Well, it's a fair cop!" he said quietly. "You've got to do your duty, I reckon. But what's the idea of climbin' through the window? Isn't the front door good enough for you?"

"Door!" said the stranger. "Think I'm a fool? If I tell the owner o' the house he'll want to cop the reward instead o' me! No fear! I've got you first, an' if anybody else comes they're number two! I pity anybody that interferes with me now! I'm the winner, I am!"

"What! Then you aren't a policeman?" gasped Tommy.

"Me? Go on! I'm Bill Dykes, the rabbit-trapper, that's who I am. An' I've trapped a rabbit to-night with a hide worth ten jimmy-o-goblins!" said the visitor, chuckling horribly.

Tommy felt a shock of wrath and rebellion. He didn't mind a policeman so much; it was a policeman's job. But it was rough to be run to earth and given up by an outsider like this. He got a better look at the fellow now. The moonlight shone on his face as he stood by the bed peering at Tommy with greedy satisfaction.

He was quite young—about eighteen or nineteen—and very ugly; there was a cast in his right eye, and he had a big, savage mouth and two rows of ragged, black teeth. He was powerfully built, and had shoulders like the arms of a gallows.

The thing that astonished Tommy most was the pistol that was pointing at his head; it was an extraordinary-looking thing—a huge old muzzle-loading double horse-pistol.

"Is that what you shoot rabbits with?" asked Tommy.

"No, it ain't! But my granfarver shot a thief with it once; an' it'll shoot another thief to-night if you get up to any games. I've loaded it up to the muzzle," said his captor, grinning.

He kept the pistol levelled, and rubbed his other hand up and down his knee, chuckling with delight. He was gloating over Tommy as he might have gloated over a rabbit in a trap; he was so pleased with his prize that he seemed in no hurry.

"I tracked you down, I did!" he said. "I found that old busted bike in a ditch, and I reckoned you were somewhere around. They told about that bike in the papers. You stole it! The police couldn't trail you, but I done it proper. Hard ground or soft makes no difference ter me. I found where you hid up in a haystack, an' I picked up yer footprints, an' they led to this 'ere house. I kep' a watch on the place, an' I knew there was someone here as didn't oughter be. I saw yer face at the window this afternoon."

"Those two blokes who live here don't know who you are, I guess. If they do know, they'll get a month or two in quod for shelterin' a runaway prisoner; so they better not interfere with me. I reckon I'll get you out o' this quiet an' quick in a minute or two. You're my meat, an' I don't give you up to nobody."

"All right, Bill Dykes, don't get excited about it," said Tommy. "You needn't point that old gaspipe at me; I'm quite harmless!"

"I ain't takin' any chances," said Bill.



**FOOTBALL AGAIN**

Don't miss the wonderful "Opening of the Season" Number of FOOTBALL FAVOURITE, boys! It's on sale every-where on Wednesday, August 25th.

**FOOTBALL FAVOURITE**

"I'm pullin' this 'ere trigger the moment I sees you do anything serspicious; else you might get away. You're like me, you're a hard lot. You've done up two chaps that tried to cop you—an' you're a murderer, anyway!"

"I'll tell you one thing, Bill," said Tommy. "I'm as innocent as you are—I don't know if that's saying much—and I've got three years to serve for something I never did at all. That's pretty rough, isn't it? How would you like it if you were in my place? I'm not lying to you. I give you my word they got me for a thing that another fellow did. Can't you let a chap go?"

There was a bolt on the inner side of the door. Bill Dykes saw it, and shot the bolt home, keeping Tommy covered.

"You may be innocent, for all I know. I don't care a toss whether you are or not," said Bill. "I'm goin' to get ten quid by you, an' that's enough for me! I'll keep the door while you get up an' do what I tell yer."

"You're a nice, amiable chap," said Tommy, lying back, with his hands behind his head, on the pillow. "I like you better and better the more I see of you. I like your face, too; it'd get the gold medal at any beauty show."

Tommy's heart was beating rapidly, for he was going to take a chance. His fingers closed tight on the end of the pillow.

"It looks as if I'll have to go with you, doesn't it? I'm not feeling very fit. Shall I walk, or will you carry me?"

"Get up!" said Bill.

Bill! Bang!

With a single swift sweep of his arm Tommy flung the pillow with all his might. It wrapped itself across Bill's face and sent him staggering backwards, with a yell, and there was a terrific roar as the horse-pistol went off and blew a hole in the ceiling just as Bill tripped over a chair and hit the floor with his back.

Tommy gathered up the bedclothes as if they were a fishing-net and took a flying leap on top of him. In a moment they were both struggling and fighting like a couple of wild-cats in the midst of a mass of sheets and blankets all over the floor.

"You would, would you?" panted Tommy, getting the upper hand, as his opponent tried to throw him off. "You'd blow holes in me if I don't go back to the Billy with you—what? You want ten quid? This is where you get it!"

But Bill Dykes, the trapper, had plenty of steam in him, and Tommy found he had taken on a bigger job than he could handle. They rolled over and over, and Bill made a snatch at the pistol he had dropped, and got hold of it. Tommy grabbed at his wrist, and the

second barrel went off with a roar like a small cannon, luckily hitting neither of them.

Bill was not only older, but much more powerful than Tommy, who was in no condition just then for a free fight. He was banged and buffeted to and fro, and found himself getting weaker, though he fought as gamely as a terrier. Bill got him under, knelt on him like a doormat, and got hold of the empty pistol by the barrel.

"Nah then!" panted Bill.

For some moments past there had been a hammering at the door, and somebody was shouting, "Open! Open!"

In the nick of time the bolt gave way, and the door came flying inwards. Mr. Merton Haynes tumbled headlong into the room, with Dr. O'Hara close behind him.

They flung themselves on Bill Dykes and tore him off his captive. There was a howl and a volley of powerful language, a sound of violent thumping. After that Tommy did not really know what happened until he found himself out of the fray, sitting on the bed, panting for breath and looking, with some bewilderment, at Merton Haynes, who had now got Billy, the trapper, underneath him on the floor.

Haynes' face was congested with rage; he looked like some savage beast of prey. He was kneeling on Bill, and holding his throat with a grip of iron, squeezing harder and harder, while Bill had given up the struggle altogether; his eyes were sticking out like a crab's.

"I say, steady on!" panted Tommy.

"I think, my dear Haynes," said Dr. O'Hara, lighting a cigarette which he took from the pocket of his dressing-gown, "it might be as well not to strangle the gentleman completely, until we find out who he is, and why he has honoured us with this unexpected visit."

"Lie still, you dog, or it will be your last moment on earth!" hissed Haynes, relaxing his grip a little and suddenly stuffing a handkerchief, which served as a gag, into Bill Dykes' mouth. "Give me a rope, O'Hara—quick!"

O'Hara took the strong twisted silk cord from the waist of his dressing-gown, and tossed it to Haynes, who turned Bill Dykes over on his face as easily as if the big, hulking fellow had been an infant, and bound his arms in a twinkling. Then he set Bill on the floor, with his back against the wall, trussed up like a turkey, his mouth stopped by the handkerchief and his eyes bulging with terror. Dr. O'Hara smiled.

"A rope seems to suit you, my friend," he said. "Judging by your

face, you were born to wear one round your neck some day—if you live long enough, which doesn't at present seem likely. Tommy, do you know anything of this enterprising fellow? I suppose a complete stranger would hardly take such a liberty with you as to hit you on the head with the butt of a pistol?"

"He says he's Bill Dykes, the rabbit-trapper, and tracked me by my old bike that I left in the hedge. And he came in by the window, because he wants the ten quid reward for me, and didn't mean to be interfered with by anyone else," explained Tommy. "He held me up with that horse-pistol, so I hove the pillow at him. I think he's only out for money."

"That's no reason why he should shoot holes in my nice clean ceiling," replied Dr. O'Hara, putting the pistol in his pocket. "March him downstairs, Merton. An animal like this is not going to be allowed to meddle with our plans. You did a very bad night's work for yourself when you climbed in through that window, Bill Dykes, the rabbit-trapper. You are going to learn what a rabbit feels like when it is trapped."

Get this week's issue of  
**"The GEM LIBRARY"**  
and read  
**"THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER SPRAY!"**  
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.  
A Powerful Long Story of the Chums of St. Jim's.

"Do you feel this?" said Merton Haynes, jerking the prisoner on to his feet and poking a revolver into the small of his back. "It is not a horse-pistol, and it does not miss. Walk downstairs very quietly in front of me, very quietly, you dog!"

Bill could not reply, but he obeyed like a lamb, shuffling out of the room. O'Hara followed.

"I say," exclaimed Tommy, "what—"

"Don't you worry, Tommy," said Dr. O'Hara. "Put the clothes back on the bed and cover yourself up," he added. "I wouldn't have you catch cold for anything."

He shut the door and locked it before Tommy could say any more. There was silence for some time. Presently he heard something like a stifled yell downstairs, and the sound of voices talking. Then another yell. Tommy was feeling very anxious; he tried to get out, but the lock of the door was stout and defied him. He thumped on it, but there was no answer. The

## ANOTHER HOBBIES MODEL!

Isn't this just a cute little boat; not a little toy, but 21 ins. long with a sturdy engine to drive it under steam for a long distance. The steam is carried out of the funnel as smoke, the boiler is fitted with a safety valve, and a rudder guides the boat any direction you wish. The boat is well built, is cut from the solid, in fact, and is finished in three colours of bright enamel. A funnel, lamp, and full instructions are sent with the boat in a strong box.

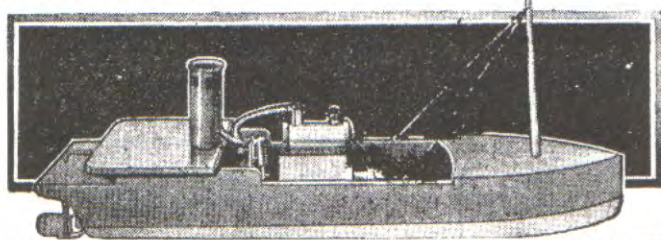
FREE Send a post-card to-day for illustrated leaflet and all details.

### HOBBIES STEAM TUG Price 11/9 Complete (Postage 6d. extra.)

21 ins. LONG—31 in. BEAM—HULL PAINTED TWO COLOURS ENAMEL. MAST AND FUNNEL DETACHABLE.

Obtainable from Hobbies Branches in London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Southampton, Brighton, or direct from

HOBBIES Ltd., Dept. 34, DEREHAM, NORFOLK



# CURLEW ISLAND!

(Continued from previous page.)

house was now in absolute darkness. It lasted for half an hour. He was just thinking of climbing out of the window when O'Hara came up and opened the door. He carried a candle, and was smoking a cigarette as usual.

"I say, what's happened?" cried Tommy.

"It's quite, all right," replied the doctor gently. "Your handsome friend will not trouble you any more."

"Great Scott!" gasped Tommy, in horrified tones. "You don't mean you've done him in?"

The doctor looked at Tommy curiously and smiled.

"It was hardly necessary, my boy," he said, after a pause. "He hoped to make ten pounds out of you. It was quite simple. We—er—gave him twenty pounds to hold his tongue!"

"But how do you know he won't give us all away?" said Tommy. "He knows all about it now, and everything depends on him."

"That is so. But he will have to give himself away if he does that," said the doctor. "Don't ask too many questions, my boy. Bill Dykes is satisfied—quite satisfied."

Tommy looked, at him, and wondered if he were speaking the truth.

"And I am very pleased with you, Tommy—you handled your part of that job very well," said the doctor gently. "To-morrow we will get busy. Good night, my dear boy, and pleasant dreams to you."

He looked the door, and Tommy pulled the clothes over himself.

"By crums! I wonder what's going to happen next?" he murmured as he dozed off dead-beat. "These chaps don't stick at much!"

(Tommy's not far wrong there; his friends are capable of any villainy. But they are booked for a surprise if they think young Comber is easy to fool! Mind you read next week's fine instalment, chums.)



## WE TRUST YOU

2/6 deposit with order is all you remit in advance for a world-famed Mead "Marvel" 400A Cycle. Nothing more to pay till you have ridden the machine one month. Sent Packed FREE and Carriage Paid.

**MARVEL, 400 £4 19/6 CASH.** Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Factory-soiled cycles astoundingly CHEAP. Tyres and Accessories at popular prices. Write TO-DAY for sumptuously illustrated Catalogue, and reduced wholesale prices of 28 New Season's models.

**Mead CYCLE CO. INC. (Dept. B601), SPARKBROOK, BIRMINGHAM**

## JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Age 16½ to 16½ years.

Men also are required for

|                          |   |   |              |
|--------------------------|---|---|--------------|
| SEAMEN (Special Service) | - | - | Age 18 to 25 |
| STOKERS                  | - | - | Age 18 to 25 |
| ROYAL MARINE FORCES      | - | - | Age 17 to 25 |

**GOOD PAY. ALL FOUND. EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.**

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. and R.M.: 5, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 121, Victoria Street, Bristol; 30, Gunning Place, Liverpool; 55, Whitehall, London, S.W.1; 269, Deansgate, Manchester; 116, Rye Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne; or 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.



## SAFETY REVOLVERS NO LICENCE REQUIRED.

Accidents impossible. For theatricals, sports, etc. Protection against footpads, dogs, etc. NEW MODELS. Blue steel or nickel finish.

|             |   |   |                |
|-------------|---|---|----------------|
| Six chamber | - | - | 8/9 post free. |
| Eight       | - | - | 10/6           |
| Ten         | - | - | 14/-           |

Highpower, Cameras, Cycles, Gramophones, etc., free on request.

**JAMES MANSFIELD & CO., Ltd., 71, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.**

## BOY FARM LEARNERS

THE Government of Ontario has a new Scheme in successful operation for placing suitable boys, aged 15-17, with selected farmers in Ontario. FREE PASSAGES; wages, board, and lodging; reception, supervision, and after-care by the Government, for three years. Apply: Ontario Government, 163, Strand, London, W.C.2, or local Shipping Agent.

## FOR ONTARIO, CANADA.

**£2,000 WORTH CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL.**—Samples catalogue free, 12 by 10 Enlargement, any photo, 8d.—**HACKETT'S WORKS, July Road, LIVERPOOL.**

**AGENTS WANTED** to sell Private Christmas Cards. Latest Novelties. Sample Book Free. Highest commission and prizes. Apply **DENTON & CO., Dept. D.18, ACCRINGTON.**

**300 STAMPS FOR 6d.** (Abroad 1/-). Including Airpost, Triangular, Queensland, Nigeria, New South Wales, Rhodesia, etc.—**W. A. WHITE, Engine Lane, LYE, STOURBRIDGE.**

NN

## AMAZING BARGAIN OF "MONARCH" (Regd.) DE-LUXE CAMERAS

This Wonderful Camera, costing 1/9 only (complete with outfit) **TAKES PERFECT LARGE PHOTOS SIZE 3 1/2 X 2 1/2 ins.** Lens, Viewfinder, &c. and Complete Accessories: Best Quality Plate, Developing and Printing OUTFIT together with easy instructions for use.

Send P.O. 2/- today!

**THOUSANDS OF TESTIMONIALS!!** W. J. Thomas, Esq., writes:—"Developed and printed photo, and think it as good as if it were taken with a Camera which cost £3."

Miss E. Le Chement writes:—"I was astonished to see the result of my first effort. The picture is as good as that done by a proper photographer."

Miss P. Syme writes:—"To look at the snaps one would think they were taken by an expert instead of an amateur."

Miss Peggie Millar writes:—"Received Camera. It's taking perfect photos." 1926 Catalogue, 1,000 Big Bargains, Post Free! **THE LEEDS BARGAIN CO. (U.J.), 31, Kendal Lane, Leeds.**



## STAMP OUTFIT for Collectors POST FREE!

Pocket Case, Watermark Finder, 62 Different Stamps (50 Unused), Perforation Gauge, Price List and Guide, Finest Stamp Mounts, British Colonials. This fine parcel absolutely free. Send postcard only, requesting Approvals.

**LISBURN & TOWNSEND, LONDON ROAD, LIVERPOOL.**



## An AMAZING OPPORTUNITY for CYCLISTS!

From PLANTATION to PUBLIC direct.

Avail yourself NOW of this astonishing offer.

A PAIR of High Grade large studded Cycle Tyres at less than the price of one in the shops. Manufactured from Finest Gum dipped Cord Fabric. Grade 1, Black Para Rubber. NON-SKID and PUNCTURE-PROOF and of wonderful resiliency.

**GUARANTEED FOR 12 MONTHS**

**CARRIAGE PAID TO YOUR DOOR 8/6**

Please state size when ordering. PAIR

**The JAVA & GENERAL RUBBER CO.**  
100-102, GOWER STREET, LONDON, W.C.

**FREE TO SHORT PEOPLE**—A beautifully illustrated book, entitled "How to Build Stature and Create the Body Beautiful." Write at once for a Free Copy. It shows a simple, quick way to be taller and stronger. Sent privately. Enclose 3d. stamps. Address—**CARNE INSTITUTE, 492, Cowbridge Road, CARDIFF, S.W.** (Established 20 Years.)



## 24-NOW AND THE BIKE IS YOURS

I supply the finest Coventry built cycles on 14 DAYS' APPROVAL, PACKED FREE AND CARRIAGE PAID, on receipt of a small deposit. Lowest cash prices, or easy payment terms. Write for Free Bargain Lists NOW.

**ezrien** THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, 1018 18 CROYDON

**A LOW MONTHLY INSTALLMENT TO SUIT YOUR POCKET**

## SECRET SERVICE DISGUISE OUTFIT!

Really Wonderful Value. 3/- complete, post free. Postage overseas, 6d. Dept. XX, **MILTON, 128, BEULAH HILL, LONDON, S.E.19.**

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS

PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER.