

STREETS AHEAD OF ALL OTHER SCHOOL-STORY PAPERS!

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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



TREED!

(A "striking" incident from the grand school story of Greyfriars—inside.)



EAST TO WEST!

To commemorate the first successful Atlantic flight from East to West, which was accomplished by Baron von Hunefeld, Captain Kohl and Commandant Fitzmaurice in the monoplane Bremen, a special plaque has been designed. Our photo shows both sides of the plaque. It will be recalled that the intrepid airmen, after thirty-four hours in the air, were forced down on Greenly Island—a frozen waste 1,000 miles north of New York, which was their avowed objective. Eight unsuccessful attempts—resulting in a loss of seven lives—had previously been made, and the Bremen's (and her crew's) conquest of the air and ocean adds another important chapter to the history of Aeronautics.

FIT AS A FIDDLE!

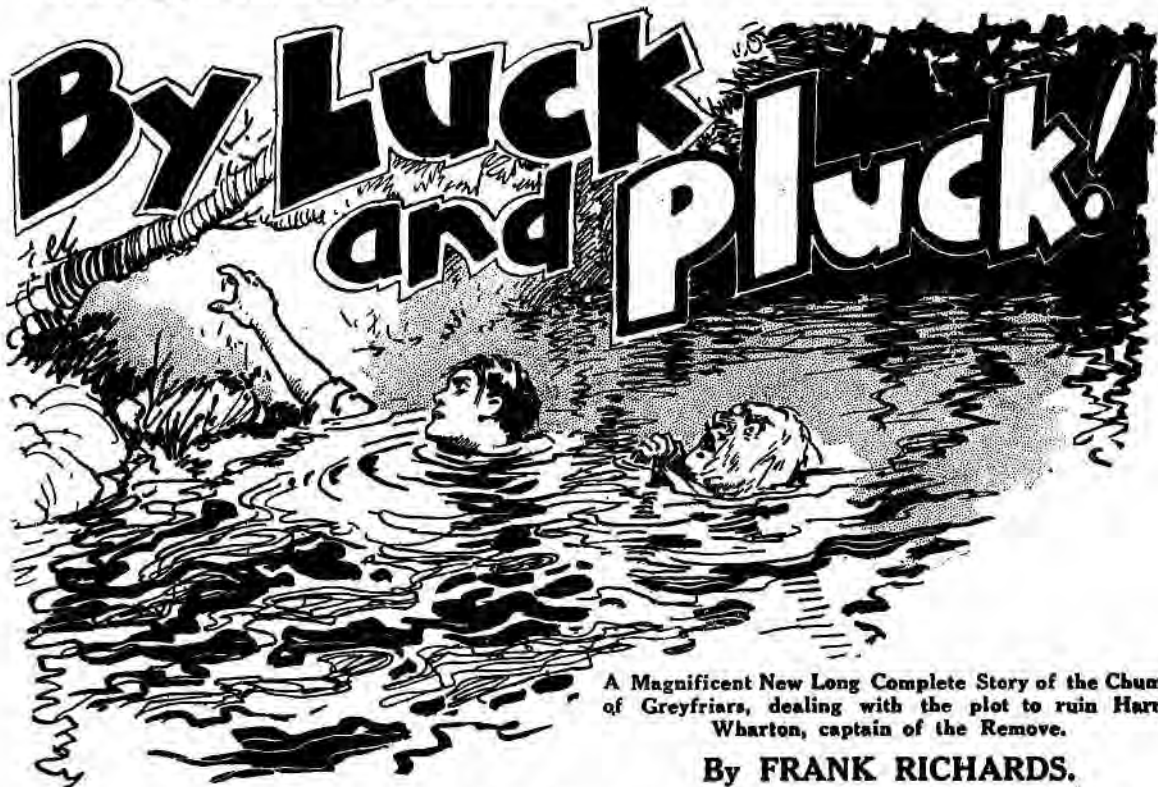
To become a flying officer in the Royal Air Force candidates have to undergo a very rigid medical test before they come to tackle such subjects as the theory of flight, aerial navigation, aerial photography, etc., let alone actually handling a plane. Eyesight must be perfect, nerves must be good, and heart and lungs sound as a bell. The photo in circle shows a candidate for the R.A.F. being tested as to his capacity for flying at high altitudes. And there's no "fudging," boys—the R.A.F. medical specialists and the weird scientific gadgets they use see to that.



MODERN TRANSPORT!

Here's a picture showing the welcome greeting given by the monks of the Hospice of St. Bernard to the driver of the first motor-caterpillar tractor to reach the Hospice during the winter. The Hospice was founded by St. Bernard de Menthon in the year 962 A.D. and the pass is named after him. Many a traveller who had lost his way owes his life to the famous St. Bernard dogs, whose heroic rescue work can never be forgotten, and the monks in residence at the Hospice. Once again science and the motor have triumphed over Nature.

COUNTING HIS CHICKENS! Da Costa, the new boy in the Greyfriars Remove, has set out to ruin Harry Wharton, the fellow who has befriended him. But just when Da Costa is congratulating himself that he has accomplished his dastardly plan Fate steps in and takes a hand in the game!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, dealing with the plot to ruin Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Great Occasion!

AND the cake!"

"Here you are!"

"And the tea!"

"Here!"

"And the jam!" Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles. "For goodness' sake, don't forget the jam! That's important!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Where's that jam?" demanded Bunter. "One of you fellows been scoffing it? I say, you fellows, it's rather thick to scoff the jam we got in for the picnic. Beasty, I call it!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chortled. Certainly they did not want to leave behind the jam that had been specially laid in, with many other good things, for the picnic that afternoon. But had the jam been left behind by mischance, they would not have regarded that as an absolutely irreparable disaster. They could have borne it with a certain amount of fortitude, at least.

Not so William George Bunter! There were to be eight at the picnic; and, ample as the supplies were, Bunter doubted whether they would go round. Numerically there were eight; but counting Bunter as only one was, in the case of a feed, hardly good arithmetic. When Bunter honoured a spread with his presence he did not take mere samples. He loaded such goods in bulk. Bunter counted for at least three or four.

Moreover, Bunter liked jam! He liked anything that was edible, short of cannibalism. But jam was his favourite. Jam-tarts, jam-sponge, jam-puffs, jam pure and simple—Bunter loved them all, with a deep affection that he never wasted on the human race.

"Where's that jam?" roared Bunter. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The jam-jar was standing on the table in Study No. 1, quite near Bunter. But

the Owl of the Remove did not seem to perceive it. Bob Cherry turned it on its side and rolled it across the table towards Bunter.

"Look here, you cackling duffers, where's that jam?" howled Bunter.

"Save!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. But Bunter did not "save!"

He was blinking round the goods on the table, which were to be packed into a large basket. He did not observe the jar rolling towards him till it was too late—and the jam rolled off the edge of the table where the fat junior was standing.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter knew where that jar of jam was at last. He leaped clear of the floor of Study No. 1, and hopped stork-like on one leg, clasping the other foot in both hands.

"Yoop! Oh, my toe! You silly chump! Yarooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull picked up the jar. Bunter's foot had broken its fall, and the jar was intact. Judging by the fat junior's wild roars, his foot had been broken as well as the fall of the jar.

"All serene!" said Johnny Bull cheerily. "Don't worry, Bunter; the jam's all right!"

"Yow-ow-ow! My toe! Wow!"

"Never mind your toe! We don't want your toe for the picnic."

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"Are you going to pack the basket, Bunter, or are you keeping on with that song and dance?" asked Bob.

"Yow! Beast! My foot's smashed—my toe's broken! I can't move! Ow!" Bunter sank into a chair and glared at the grinning juniors with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. "You'll have to wait now! I was going to the island first to get the picnic ready while you fetched the girls. Now I won't! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "Feeling as bad as that?"

"Yow-ow! Yes! Worse!"

"Too bad to come to the picnic?"

"Eh?"

"We'll let you off, old fat bean," said the captain of the Remove. "You can't go to a picnic with a broken foot and a smashed toe! Better go to the dorm and lie down for the afternoon."

"Oh, I—I'm feeling better now!"

A wink passed round among the Famous Five of the Remove. Then there was a general shaking of heads.

"Better rest your foot, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull gravely. "You can't be too careful with broken bones."

"I—I think the bones ain't broken."

"Your foot can't be smashed without bones being broken, old chap. Let's help you to the dorm."

"I—I—I think it's not smashed, after all. In fact, it's all right. Of course, the pain's fearful!" added Bunter hastily. "Agonising! But I never was a fellow to make a fuss about a little pain. I'm going, all the same! Hand me that jam to pack in the basket."

"That's brave of you, Bunter—noble, in fact," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, I always had pluck!" said Bunter. "Not like some fellows in the Remove."

"But we can't take advantage of it," said Bob, shaking his head. "We shall have to lose you, after all."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Lie down for the afternoon, old chap, and rest that foot! If there's anything left over from the picnic we'll bring you back a bun."

"The bring-backfulness of the bun will be terrific, my esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Janiset Ram Singh. "You must not travel as far as Popper's Island in a state of preposterous painfulness."

"The—the pain's gone!" gasped Bunter.

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"Impossible!"

"It's quite gone—in fact, it wasn't very bad, after all! I say, you fellows, help me pack this basket, and don't jaw so much."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I ever heard of broken bones mending so suddenly as that!" said Bob Cherry. "If you're sure they're really set, Bunter—"

"Beast! Hand me that bag of tarts."

And the packing of the picnic-basket was resumed. It was a large basket; but when all the goods were packed into it it was full almost to the brim.

The chums of the Remove had rather "spread" themselves on that picnic. It was a great occasion; Marjorie and Clara of Cliff House School were to share in the picnic, and it was to take place on Popper's Island, up the river. Bunter was going first—with the basket of tuck and the tea-things and cushions and hassocks, getting a lift in a boat which Vernon-Smith was taking up the Sark. Harry Wharton & Co. were to call at Cliff House for Marjorie and Clara, and walk with them across the fields back to the river, and row them to the island in state.

It was an excellent arrangement, from all points of view. Bunter was glad to keep the tuck under his eye—and he had already planned a series of extensive snacks while he was getting the spread ready on the island. The Famous Five were pleased to see him start first, not desiring to inflict the fat junior on the Cliff House girls in the walk from Cliff House to the river. So all parties were pleased.

Bunter finished packing the big basket at last, and the lid was closed and fastened. Then the juniors left Study No. 1 and walked out into the summer sunshine.

"Wharton!"

"Oh dear!" ejaculated the captain of

the Remove involuntarily, as he heard his Form master's voice.

Mr. Quelch looked out of the doorway.

"What? What did you say, Wharton?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!" stammered Harry.

"I—I mean—"

The Remove master made a gesture.

"The Head desires to speak to you, Wharton. You will go to his study immediately."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch disappeared, and the Famous Five looked at one another. Billy Bunter, unheeding, rolled away with the big basket. It was a heavy load for Bunter, but for once he did not complain. Considering what the basket contained, Bunter would even have been pleased had it been heavier.

"You fellows wait?" asked Harry. "The Head mayn't keep me long—it can't be a row!"

"Right-ho! If it's a jaw, tell him to cut it short, because we're booked for a picnic," suggested Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed, and went back into the House. His chums waited on the steps while the captain of the Remove made his way to Dr. Locke's study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Up the River!

VERNON-SMITH stood in the boat that rocked beside the school raft, oar in hand, and grunted. Tom Redwing, his chum, was standing on the raft, looking back past the boathouse towards the school.

"Is that fat fool coming?" grunted the Bounder.

"Can't see him yet."

"I shan't wait long."

"Oh, give him a few minutes!" said Redwing, good-naturedly. "We agreed

to give Bunter a lift as far as the island."

"You did!" grunted the Bounder.

"You, too, old man! After all, we're in no hurry," said Tom. "We've got the afternoon before us, Smithy."

"Oh, rats!" said Smithy.

But he waited. Smithy and Tom Redwing were going for a long pull up the river that afternoon—miles past Popper's Island. It was quite easy for them to give the Owl of the Remove a lift to the island, and drop him there, before they proceeded farther on their way. But probably Tom was more responsible for the good-natured offer than the Bounder, who was not always as considerate to others as he might have been.

A junior who was seated idly upon an upturned boat on the raft glanced at the two as they were speaking. It was Arthur da Costa, the new fellow in the Greyfriars Remove—the olive-skinned Eurasian who shared Study No. 1 with Wharton and Nugent.

The Eurasian was not looking bright that bright afternoon. He was not on speaking terms now with his study-mates, and it was understood in the Remove that he was going to change out of the study as soon as he could. Indeed, it was rumoured that Harry Wharton had turned him out once, and only allowed him to return on condition that he changed out as soon as it could be contrived. Once or twice the Eurasian, as he sat on the boat near the two juniors, had seemed about to speak, and now he leaned forward a little and addressed Redwing.

"You fellows going up the river?"

"Yes," answered Tom, while the Bounder favoured Arthur da Costa with a far from agreeable stare.

"Like me to steer?"

Tom Redwing hesitated. He was good-natured to a fault, and hated saying no to anybody; though he did not like Da Costa. He glanced at the Bounder. Smithy made no bones whatever about saying no if he meant no.

"No!" he said coolly.

Da Costa's eyes glinted.

"Sorry, old man, but we don't really need anybody to steer, you know," added Redwing.

"And if we did we'd take any other chap but you, Da Costa," said the Bounder deliberately. "After the dirty trick you played on Wharton, the less I see of you the better I shall like it!"

"You are no friend of Wharton's," said the Eurasian.

The Bounder's lips curled.

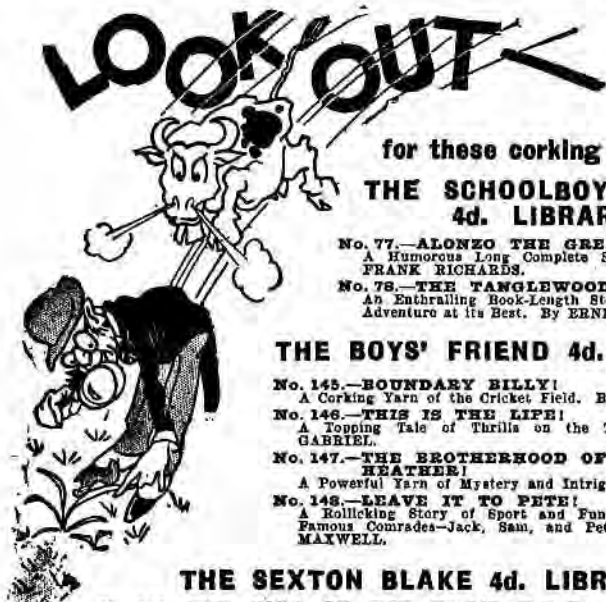
"Perhaps not. That makes no difference—a dirty trick is a dirty trick, I suppose. But you wouldn't understand that, I dare say."

"Chuck it, Smithy, old man," murmured Redwing. "I dare say Da Costa meant no harm—"

"Oh, rats!" said the Bounder gruffly. "He found Quelch's watch in Wharton's desk, that that fat fool Bunter had taken for an idiotic practical joke, and hidden there. He accused Wharton of stealing it. If Bunter hadn't owned up, Wharton might have got into a fearful scrape. Pah!"

"The watch was supposed to be stolen, and I found it in Wharton's desk," muttered the Eurasian. "What was I to think?"

"Lots of things, except what you did think. And what were you doing spying into Wharton's desk at all for?" asked the Bounder scornfully. "I don't know who Captain Marker is, or why



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The jar of jam rolled off the table and landed on Bunter's fat toe. "Yaroooh!" The Owl of the Remove leaped clear of the floor and hopped stork-like on one leg, clasping the other in both hands. (See Chapter 1.)

he took you from your school at Lucknow, and sent you to Greyfriars; but I jolly well think that he might have minded his own business, and left you there. Your sort are not wanted in the Remove."

"Cheese it, Smithy old man!" said Redwing. "Here comes Bunter."

Billy Bunter rolled across the raft, heavily laden. He blinked round for the Bounder's boat.

"I say, you fellows, here I am!" chirruped Bunter. "Shove this basket in the boat, will you, Reddy? Mind you don't drop it—there's crocks in it."

Tom Redwing landed the big basket safely in the boat. He jumped in after it.

"Now, roll in yourself, barrel!" said the Bounder. "You've kept us waiting for you, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Jump in, you ass!" hooted the Bounder. "We've wasted enough time on you already. If you keep me waiting another second you'll have to get some other chump to bother about giving you a lift to Popper's Island."

He cast loose the painter.

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter.

"Jump!"

The boat was rocking away from the raft. Billy Bunter blinked at the widening strip of water, and hesitated. The Bounder shoved off with an oar.

"If you're not coming, stay there!" he snapped. "Good-bye!"

"Stop!" yelled Bunter. "You've got the grub!"

"That's all right. I dare say we can do with it at the end of our pull," said Vernon-Smith.

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter in horror. "You—you—Smithy! Come back, you beast! I say,

you fellows, Wharton and the rest are going to bring the girls to the island—they'll expect to find tea ready when they get there. I say, old chap—

Beast! Rotter! Burglar! Yaroooh!"

Bunter almost danced on the edge of the raft, brandishing a fat fist at the grinning Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Vernon-Smith.

Certainly, the Bounder had not the remotest intention of rowing off with the basket of tuck and leaving Bunter behind. But the bare possibility of it was sufficient to cause Bunter the deepest alarm.

Tom Redwing picked up his oar, laughing, and tooled the boat back to the raft.

"Jump in, Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "All right! Oh dear!"

Redwing held the boat to the raft while the Owl of the Remove stepped in and carefully deposited his valuable person in the stern seat. Then he shoved off again, and the boat glided out into the middle of the Sark. Da Costa stood on the raft staring after it, with a clouded brow and set lips. The Eurasian, with more of the faults than of the good qualities of Europe and Asia in his mixed nature, was sensitive like all half-castes, and the Bounder's hard words had stung him deeply. But since the affair of the missing watch that had been found in Wharton's study, Da Costa had had a good many hard words to listen to in the Greyfriars Remove.

Heedless of the Eurasian, Smithy and Redwing bent to their oars, and they fairly made the boat fly.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, as the water rushed past the gunwale, "this isn't a boat race, you

know! There's no such hurry as all that."

"Fathead!"

"I tell you there's no hurry!" hooted Bunter. "My pals will be a good hour after me, at least, as they've got to walk to Cliff House to fetch the girls. I shall have lots of time to get tea ready."

Tom Redwing smiled, and the Bounder chuckled. It was one of William George Bunter's little weaknesses, that he could only see things from his own point of view. At the present moment Redwing and Smithy and their boat only existed for the purpose of giving William George Bunter a lift to Popper's Island. At least, that was Bunter's view. The view of the Bounder and Redwing differed considerably.

"Ow!" ejaculated Bunter.

"What's the matter now, ass?"

"I got a splash!"

"That's all right. You'll get some more before we reach the island."

"Beast!"

Two pairs of arms, plying the gleaming oars, made the boat fairly fly. A larger boat, manned by Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth Form, rocked clumsily in the way, and Bunter's fat heart jumped into his mouth. For a moment it looked like a collision. But the Bounder and Redwing knew how to handle a boat, if Coker & Co. did not.

"Here, where are you fags going?" roared Coker of the Fifth, in indignation and wrath. "Keep out of the way, you cheeky fags!"

The Bounder's boat glided round the Fifth Form craft, and as it passed, Smithy reached out with an oar and

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tipped Horace Coker on the chest. There was another roar from Coker of the Fifth as he disappeared from view below the gunwale. Potter and Greene grinned, as if they saw something funny in this collapse of their leader; but the next moment they yelled, as a heavy splash of water sprayed them from head to foot.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Groooh!"

Coker scrambled up furiously.

"After those fags!" he roared. "I'll smash 'em! I won't allow them to have a boat out! I'll spifficate them! After them!"

Coker & Co. grasped their oars and rowed in pursuit. The Bounder's grinning face looked back at them. He did not fear being overtaken by Coker & Co.—with Horace Coker catching crabs at a rate never excelled by the luckiest of fishermen.

"Put it on, Reddy!" grinned the Bounder.

In five minutes the Fifth Form boat was dropped hopelessly behind, and Coker & Co. were left to argue out whose fault it was. The Remove boat glided on swiftly up the winding Sark, between green wooded banks and smiling fields, with the glorious green downs in the distance.

Popper's Island was reached at last. That green little island in the middle of the Sark, which was very wide at that point, belonged to Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, lord of many an acre of land along the river. But there were public rights on that island from ancient times, acknowledged by earlier lords of the manor, but fiercely disputed by Sir Hilton, who was the proud owner of a large board on the island, which announced to all whom it might concern that trespassers would be prosecuted. Headless of that threatening board, and the irascible old gentleman who had had it placed there, the Bounder drew up the boat to the island.

"Hop out!" he snapped. "Sharp!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Shut up, and hop out!"

"Beast!"

Redwing gave Bunter a hand out, on the sloping green grass that bordered the little island. He handed the big basket after him, much to Billy Bunter's satisfaction and relief. He had been haunted by lurking fears that the Bounder might yet kidnap that basket of tuck.

"All right, old fat man!" asked Redwing.

"Yes, all right! You can buzz off as soon as you like, and be blowed to you!" answered Bunter, doubtless by way of expressing his thanks for the lift.

Redwing laughed and pushed off. Leaving William George on the island, the Bounder and his chum pulled away with vigorous strokes up the river. Their last sight of Bunter showed that fat youth kneeling beside the open basket, transferring jam-tarts from a capacious bag to a still more capacious mouth—the first snack of a long series of snacks!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Called Off!

HARRY WHARTON tapped at the door of the Head's study, and entered. Why the Head wanted to see him he could not imagine; but any junior called into his headmaster's study naturally entered that apartment with a certain amount of misgiving. So the captain of the

Remove was relieved when Dr. Locke gave him quite a benign glance over his glasses. It was not a licking, evidently; not even a "Head's jaw."

"Ah! I asked Mr. Quelch to send you to me, Wharton," said the Head. "I have a few words to say to you, as head boy of your Form."

"Yes, sir," said Harry, wondering what was coming, and inwardly hoping that the words would really be few. There were certain drawbacks, sometimes, to the distinguished position of head boy of the Form.

"What I have to say refers to the very disagreeable matter of the dispute concerning the island in the Sark," said Dr. Locke.

Wharton repressed a start.

As Billy Bunter had already set out for Popper's Island, and Harry Wharton & Co. were to follow on, with the Cliff House girls, this beginning was a little alarming.

"That certain public rights exist on this island seems to be generally believed in this neighbourhood," said the Head. "But the island is a part of Sir Hilton Popper's estate, and, as lord of the manor, he claims undisputed rights over it. You are aware, Wharton, that he has forbidden trespassing on the island."

"Yes, sir, I know that," said Harry.

"That Sir Hilton Popper may be exceeding his exact and just rights is perfectly probable," went on the Head. "But a thoughtful lad like yourself, Wharton, will see clearly that Greyfriars boys should not enter into disputes with a local land-owner."

Wharton did not see that clearly at all. But he refrained from saying so. He was there to listen to instruction, not to argue.

"Moreover, as Sir Hilton is a governor of the school, disputes of this sort place your headmaster in a very awkward position," said Dr. Locke. "For these reasons, Wharton, the island has been long placed out of school bounds. By placing the spot out of bounds, I supposed that I had put an effectual end to all disputes on the subject."

Harry Wharton did not smile. Or, if he did, he smiled only inwardly. The Head's supposition, as a matter of fact, was ill-founded.

"But," resumed the Head gravely, "I have received complaints from Sir Hilton that the island has, nevertheless, been trespassed upon. I decline to believe, without proof, that the trespassers were Greyfriars boys; but Sir Hilton professes no doubt upon the point."

Wharton did not answer. He was thinking of an excursion to the island that had taken place only the week before.

"Senior boys, of course, can be relied upon not to prolong this unprofitable dispute," said Dr. Locke. "Junior boys are frequently more thoughtless. Sir Hilton not only declares that the late trespassers were Greyfriars boys, but that the boys in question belonged to the Remove."

"D-does he, sir?" murmured Wharton. "He does—no doubt because certain Remove boys picnicked on the island some time ago, causing Sir Hilton to lay a complaint at that time. I have sent for you, Wharton, therefore, to give you a very particular warning. The island is out of bounds, and I shall take a very serious view of any breaking of bounds in that direction. I have drawn up a notice to place upon the board to that effect, and you will kindly affix it there when you leave this study."

"Ye-es, sir."

"In the event of any boy transgressing, the punishment will be most

severe," said the Head. "I shall myself administer a flogging to any offender who sets foot on the island."

"Oh, sir!"

"I am compelled to take severe measures," said Dr. Locke. "School bounds must be observed, especially when a dispute of this kind is involved. You understand me, Wharton?"

"Quite, sir."

"Very well. You may go. Take this paper with you."

Harry Wharton left the Head's study. Dr. Locke had been very kind and benevolent, but Wharton could not help thinking that perhaps the Head suspected that an excursion to the island had been planned for that very afternoon. Certainly his injunction had come at a very awkward moment.

Wharton stopped at the notice-board to affix the new notice. His chums came in from the quad, and they read it together. It was short, if not sweet, stating that any Lower boy who transgressed school bounds, so far as Popper's Island was concerned, would be flogged by the headmaster.

With feelings too deep for words, the Famous Five read through the cheery notice, and went out into the quad again.

There they looked at one another expressively.

"That puts the lid on!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The lidfulness is terrific," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed picnic on the island had better be called off."

"It's not worth a Head's flogging," said Nugent, "and as old Popper has been complaining again, it's very likely he may keep an eye on the island on a half-holiday, or tell one of his keepers to watch it."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"It's a rotten shame!" he said. "Everybody knows that the island is—and always has been—open to the public. It's disputed even whether it belongs to the estate of Popper Court at all; it's part of the land that never was enclosed before Sir Hilton's time. I fancy he would sit up if a solicitor asked him to show his title deeds. But, of course, the Head wouldn't go into all that. He doesn't want trouble with a governor of the school."

"I'd go, all the same, so far as old Popper is concerned!" growled Bob Cherry. "But we don't want a row with the Head."

"And the old blighter may look in," said Nugent. "We can't have trouble with the girls present, that's certain."

"It's off," said Harry. "I suppose Bunter's gone. But he's as slow as a snail, and I dare say we can stop him. Better lose no time."

"My hat! If Bunter's started in the boat—"

"Come on!"

That the excursion to the island that afternoon had to be given up was clear. It was not only the danger of a Head's flogging for delinquents—though that was serious enough. But it was clear that Sir Hilton Popper was now at Popper Court, as he had recently made a complaint to the Head—and very probable that trespassers on the island would be caught and reported. A picnic interrupted by a keeper, or by the irate baronet himself, was not much of an entertainment, especially with the Cliff House girls present.

Indignant and resentful as they were, the chums of the Remove realised that they had better keep clear of Popper's Island that day, at least. The picnic could take place somewhere else—at the old priory in Friardale Wood, or in some other

pleasant spot. But if Bunter was gone to—

Generally William George Bunter could be relied upon to resemble the tortoise in his rate of progress. Still, even Bunter had had ample time to get down to the river; and if Smithy and Redwing had been ready, it was highly probable that he was already gone. Which undoubtedly made the matter rather complicated.

The Famous Five went down to the boathouse at a rapid run. Stopping Bunter was the most important matter in hand; other details could be thought out afterwards. But when they ran out on the school raft there was no sign of the Owl of the Remove, or of Vernon-Smith, or Redwing. Harry Wharton stared up the river. There were several boats and skiffs to be seen, but among them there was no sign of the Bounder's handsome craft.

"Gone!" growled Bob.

"The gonefulness is terrific!"

Da Costa, still seated on the upturned boat, glanced sourly at the cluster of juniors on the edge of the raft. Only a week before he had been on good terms with these fellows, but that was all over now. Da Costa hardly knew whether he was glad or sorry that it was over. Friendship with Harry Wharton & Co. meant giving up the scheme which he had been sent to Greyfriars to carry out by the plotter in far-off India. It meant breaking with Captain Marker and Mr. Gedge, and giving up all the prospects that had been promised him as the reward of his treachery. If it was a blow to him in one way, it was a relief to him in another to find himself on terms of enmity with the junior whom he had been sent to Greyfriars to ruin.

Harry Wharton glanced at him, and was about to speak—to ask him whether he had seen Bunter leave—but he checked himself. He was not on speaking terms with the Eurasian; in Study No. 1 he ignored his existence utterly.

But Bob Cherry, without thinking, called out to the Eurasian.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Da Costa, have you seen Bunter here?"

"Yess," answered Da Costa in his lisping voice.

"Did he go in a boat with Smithy and Redwing?"

"Yess."

"That settles it!" said Bob. "They're gone—and they're out of sight! Smithy and Redwing are hefty men in a boat; I shouldn't wonder if they're at the island already."

"Jolly near it, I suppose!" said Wharton. "And it's more than time we got off to Cliff House, if we're not to keep the girls waiting!"

"Blow old Popper!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Bless him!" said Nugent.

"Lynching is too good for him!" grunted Bob. "But it's no use wasting time slugging old Popper. We can't picnic on the island, that's a cert, and get a Head's flogging when we come back. 'Tain't good enough!"

"Only Bunter's booked for it if we don't get hold of him jolly quick!" said Harry. "He's bound to land on the island now; and the sooner we get him off the better! Look here, you fellows, get off to Cliff House and explain to Marjorie and Clara; and I'll get after Bunter in my skiff, and bring him back. It won't take me long to scull up the river to the island. That's the best way out."

"Bother old Popper!" growled Bob.

But it was evidently the best way out of the difficulty, and no more time was lost. Bunter was already booked for punishment as a breaker of bounds—if he was discovered on the island. Certainly the Famous Five had been aware that Popper's Island was out of bounds when they planned the picnic—but they had not known that Sir Hilton Popper was at home and on the war-path; and in case of trouble they would have expected only lines, or a gating, until the new announcement of a Head's flogging as a penalty altered the matter very considerably.

Bunter had been included in the picnic-party as a treat for the fat Owl, more or less as a reward for his having owned up to the practical joke with Mr. Quelch's watch; and leaving Bunter in the lurch was impossible. In the circumstances, any member of the Co. would have taken the flogging rather than have allowed it to fall to Bunter.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry carried out the light skiff that belonged to the captain of the Remove. Four members of the Co. started to walk to Cliff House, losing no time, as they were rather overdue there. Harry Wharton took his sculls and shot away up the river at a great rate.

Arthur da Costa watched him as he went.

There was a strange look on the olive face of the Eurasian.

The juniors had discussed the matter in his hearing without a second thought, not supposing for a moment that he was interested in it—or, indeed, thinking of him at all. They were not likely to dream of the thoughts that were passing through the mind of the boy from the East. Da Costa stood staring after the flashing skiff till Wharton vanished round a bend of the river; and then, with a glint in his deep black eyes, he turned away.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Stranded!

BILLY BUNTER'S fat face was beaming.

In the fat life of William George Bunter there were many pleasures. He was fond of sleeping. He was fond of talking, he could enjoy both almost without limit. But both these joys faded into insignificance, in comparison with the enjoyment of a spread. A spread made William George Bunter feel that life really was worth living, and when the spread was ample he had no more to ask of Fate.

It was ample now—extremely ample. When they asked Billy Bunter to honour the picnic with his fat presence the Famous Five knew what would be needed. Funds had been subscribed by all the members of the Co.; the spread was on a scale that was likely to satisfy even William George Bunter. So full was the large basket packed with good things that even Bunter's series of extensive snacks made little impression upon it. Wherefore the fat visage of W. G. Bunter beamed like unto the harvest moon.

(Continued on next page.)



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Smithy and Tom Redwing had long vanished up the river. Bunter, after a snack or two, carried the big basket from the bank into the interior of the island. It would have been very pleasant picnicking by the green margin, under the shady trees that spread over the water. But that side of the island was opposite the towpath that bordered the woods of Popper Court. Even before the Head's latest announcement—of which Bunter as yet knew nothing—it was necessary when picnicking on Popper's Island to use a certain amount of circumspection. Picnickers spotted from the bank of the river were sure to find themselves in trouble.

Bunter halted in the middle of the little island, under the branches of a big oak. Round about that spot the trees and thickets screened the view from the river, only glimpses of the sunny water showing between boughs and branches. It was a beautiful spot; and, what was more to the point in the circumstances, it was secluded, and screened from general view, either from the towpath or from craft on the river.

Under the old oak Bunter unpacked the basket. Snack after snack vanished into the inner Bunter; still the supplies were ample. Bunter set out the good things with a beaming, sticky face. He arranged the crockery; he set up the spirit-stove ready to boil the kettle; he filled the kettle; he placed the cushions and the hassocks; he unpacked the sandwiches. In class Bunter was considered by Mr. Quelch an absolutely lazy youth. But in handling a feed Bunter was not lazy. Work of that kind was one of Bunter's pleasures.

"Ripping!" said Bunter.

Having completed his labours, Bunter felt entitled to a rest, and he sat down at the foot of the oak, leaning back against the gnarled old trunk, with a glass of ginger-pop in one hand, and a jam-tart in the other.

No wonder his fat visage beamed! This was life!

His fat ears caught the sound of a dashing scull in the river, but he gave it no heed. It was not nearly time yet for the picnic party to arrive. The Famous Five had to fetch the girls from Cliff House, and then row them up to the island in the boat. Certainly they could not arrive for a good while yet. Bunter did not mind waiting. He did not miss the company of the juniors, or even of the Cliff House girls; he had better company. Billy Bunter was a sociable fellow; still, he never asked for better company than a bag of jam tarts.

But he started a little as he heard through the trees the sound of someone landing on the island. He did not suppose that it was the picnickers—but it was certainly somebody. Bunter grunted. He did not want any other Greyfriars fellow to butt in; especially fellows like Bolsover major or Skinner, who might have helped themselves to the feed without the formality of an invitation.

"Bunter!"

It was Harry Wharton's voice calling—not loudly, however. It was not necessary to shout, to be heard across the tiny island; and Wharton did not want to be heard from the river bank.

The captain of the Remove had reached the island, and made fast his skiff to a drooping willow, and jumped ashore. An empty paper bag, in which jam tarts had been packed, remained on the greensward to indicate that Bunter had been there. But the fat junior was out of sight.

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter sat up and took notice. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,061.

He heard the captain of the Remove tramping through the thickets.

"I say, you fellows, you're early!" said Bunter peevishly.

Wharton emerged from the greenery, into the open space under the big oak. Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Oh, here you are," said Harry.

"Where are the others?"

"Not coming!" explained Wharton. "I've rushed here to take you off. We're going to picnic in the old priory instead."

"You silly ass!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the captain of the Remove in great wrath.

"You burling chump!" he went on. "Blow the old priory! We're going to picnic here!"

"I tell you——"

"Think I'm taking all this trouble for nothing?" hooted Bunter. "Go and eat coke!"

"You ass!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "Old Popper's been complaining to the Head again——"

"Let him complain, and be blowed to him!"

"The Head's put a notice on the board—any fellow landing on this island is going to be flogged."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Old Popper's on the warpath again," said Harry. "As likely as not the old codger will come rooting along here this afternoon—it would be like him! He knows some of us were on the island last week. Pack up that stuff—the sooner we get off the better."

"Well, of all the silly idiots, I must say you take the cake," said Billy Bunter. "All this trouble for nothing."

"No time to talk, Bunter! If we're spotted here, we shall be up for a Head's flogging after call-over. Is that what you want?"

"Ow! No!"

"Pack up, then."

Harry Wharton began to gather up eatables, crockery, and other things, and stack them in the big basket. Bunter, grunting with annoyance, lent a fat hand. Bunter had had only snacks so far; but they had been rather extensive snacks, and made him disinclined to move in a hurry. Indeed, only the danger of a Head's flogging would have made him stir at all.

Grousing and grunting, the Owl of the Remove helped to repack the picnic basket. His movements were slow; but Wharton's were rapid enough. In five minutes the basket was repacked.

"Now come on, old fat man," said Harry good-humouredly. "You'll enjoy the picnic all the more when we get to the old priory. We shall find the other fellows and the girls there."

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Bunter.

"What is it?" asked Wharton impatiently.

"I want a ginger-pop before I start. I'm thirsty!"

"You fat ass!" exclaimed Harry. "Come on!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Get a move on, fathead! I'll carry the basket!"

"I should jolly well think so," exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "If you think I'm going to carry that basket, you're——"

"Shut up and come on!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton went tramping through the thickets and trees, back to the shore where he had tied his skiff to the willow. He came out on the water's edge at a run, Bunter labouring and grunting behind him. Bunter was rather short of breath at the best of

times, and after so many snacks, he was shorter than ever.

Harry Wharton dropped the basket on the greensward. He stared at the water with unbelieving eyes. Six or seven minutes ago he had left the skiff, with the sculls in her, lying at the water's edge, with the painter tied to the drooping willow branch. From the branch hung a cord—sagging in the water. The skiff was gone.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Enemy!

"MY beloved 'earers!" said Skinner of the Remove. "If you have tears, as jolly old Mark Antony remarked, prepare to shed them after call-over. Five good boys—five shinin' characters—five noble examples to the rest of the Form—are going to be flogged!"

There was a laugh from Skinner's hearers.

Arthur da Costa, passing the group of Remove juniors in the quad, paused to listen to the humorous Skinner.

"It's on the board in the Head's reverend fist!" went on Skinner. "Any naughty youth trespassing on Popper's Island is to get it where the chicken got the chopper. And where has his Magnificence Wharton gone? Where have his high-minded pals gone? I grieve to say it, my young friends, but they've gone trespassing on Popper's Island."

Snoop and Stott, and one or two other fellows, chuckled. There were few fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who would not have been sorry to hear that the Famous Five were "up" for a flogging. Still, there were a few, and those few found Skinner entertaining.

"Sure they're gone to the island?" asked Snoop.

"I'm sure they were going—and so I suppose they've gone," said Skinner. "They may have started before that paper was put on the board—but that won't make any difference; they jolly well knew the island was out of bounds: it was put out of bounds terms ago. If they're spotted there, it will be a case of floggings for five. And old Popper is the man to spot them; he knows jolly well they were there last week. I'd bet two doughnuts to a bath bun that he will be prowling along the river on the look-out some time to-day; he knows it's a half-holiday here. He likes that sort of thing. I've heard of him sitting up all night in a wood watchin' for poachers night after night. Depend on it, they're on the island now, and old Popper's fiery eye will spot them there. I was thinkin' of givin' the Beak a tip to put in some Swedish drill this afternoon to get his muscle up for the execution. He's gettin' elderly, and five floggin's in one day is some job."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Wharton!" sighed Skinner. "Thus will the mighty be fallen, my beloved 'earers! Fancy Wharton up for a Beak's beating! What about his jolly old dignity? It will be a black mark against him, too—as head of the Form. Common or garden persons like us, my humble friends, can do these things and take a licking and be forgotten—protected, my dear 'earers, by our natural obscurity. But the head boy of the Remove—the captain of the Form! Excuse this emotion; I weep to think of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner's hearers, as Harold Skinner wiped his eyes.

Arthur da Costa passed on, leaving



A larger boat, manned by Coker, Potter and Greene, of the Fifth Form, rocked clumsily in the way of the Remove craft, and Bunter's fat heart jumped into his mouth. "Here, where are you fags going?" roared Coker of the Fifth in indignation and wrath. "Keep out of the way, you cheeky fags!" (See Chapter 2.)

Skinner & Co. chortling. Those particular Removites, at all events, were not much concerned about the sword of Damocles that they supposed to be impending over the Famous Five.

Da Costa smiled faintly as he passed on, and wheeled out his machine. A few minutes later he was speeding away as fast as he could drive the pedals.

Da Costa had laid his plans, even while he was listening to the talk of Harry Wharton & Co. on the school raft. Now he was heading for the island in the Sark. He knew exactly where that island was, and how to reach it by the shortest route. Pedalling rapidly by footpath and bridle-path, he came out on the bank of the river a mile or more above the school. On the bicycle, and by short cuts which cut off all the loops of the winding stream, he knew that he was a long way ahead of Wharton in his skiff.

Where a footpath through the fields joined the towing-path by the river, Da Costa dismounted, and concealed his machine in a mass of hawthorn-bushes. From that point he proceeded on foot up the tow-path.

In a few minutes more he came in sight of the island.

He stared across the branch of the Sark that divided the little island from the river bank.

No one was to be seen there. If Bunter was there, he was out of sight. But Da Costa did not expect to see the fat junior; even Bunter would have sense enough to keep out of sight on a spot that was out of school bounds.

Wharton was not yet there, Da Costa knew that. Swiftly as the captain of the Remove was pulling up the river, he could not possibly have equalled the speed of a bicycle taking short cuts.

Da Costa stopped opposite the island and dropped behind a clump of thick bushes.

Anyone passing along the path would only have supposed, on observing him,

that a schoolboy taking a walk by the river had lain down in the grass for a rest.

But Da Costa was not there for a rest. Through the bushes he was watching the lower stream keenly.

It was more than five minutes more before Harry Wharton came in sight, sculling swiftly.

Da Costa's eyes gleamed at him.

For his first few weeks at Greyfriars, the mind of the half-caste had wavered. He had hardly known whether he was to count himself Wharton's friend or foe. But that time of doubt had passed. The incurable suspicion and duplicity of his nature had provoked the contempt and dislike of the captain of the Remove. A feather's weight might have sufficed to turn the scale in the Eurasian's wavering mind. It was turned now, and to Wharton's dislike he returned a bitter enmity—all the more bitter and implacable because it was hidden. There was no further doubts in the Eurasian's mind. He was at Greyfriars to carry out Captain Marker's instructions—Captain Marker, who in far-off India had plotted a schoolboy's disgrace and ruin. For what motive Da Costa did not know, but for a very powerful motive, as he could not possibly doubt.

Da Costa watched the captain of the Remove like a cat.

A public school and University career, with the opportunity of studying law and returning to his own country a barrister, that was the reward promised Da Costa for his treachery—a rich reward for the poor, envious, despised half-caste of the school in Lucknow.

It was not an easy task that had been set him.

Such a fellow as Skinner or the Bounder, such a weak, vacillating fellow as Hazeldene, might have been brought to disgrace, by playing upon his vices or follies, or even revealing them to the

school authorities; but Wharton was not such a fellow.

Wharton had his faults, his best friends would not have denied that; but none of his faults was of a despicable kind. If his temper was hasty, as his friends had to admit, if he carried his head too high, as Skinner & Co. averred, these were not faults to bring a fellow to disgrace and ruin, even at the hands of an insidious enemy.

It was only by foul play that the scheme could be carried out. Spying and betrayal might have served Da Costa's turn in the case of a fellow like the Bounder, but in Wharton's case there was nothing to spy upon, nothing to betray. His ways were open to all eyes.

It was a difficult task, even for an unscrupulous enemy, master of all the wiles of the wily East. It was a slow task, a long task. Da Costa knew that it must be so. So long as he succeeded at the finish he would be satisfied, and the plotter in India would be satisfied.

If Wharton was to be blackened, if some false accusation was to be fastened on him, it was not a matter that could be effected at one fell swoop. The beginnings must be slow, gradual, culminating at last in the blow that was to crush him. Such a scheme was not likely to occur to any Western mind, however bitter and malicious. To the boy from the East it came almost as naturally as breathing. Da Costa, while in London with Mr. Gedge, had visited the law courts many times, and smiled scornfully at the clumsy lying he had heard there. Lying did not come naturally to the Western man—even to the bad characters. In the East, as Da Costa well knew, a false accusation could be prepared in a few hours, with a dozen eye-witnesses prepared to swear to what had never occurred, and forged documents in plenty to bear out the

false witnesses. Captain Marker had done well for himself in picking on the Eurasian to carry out his scheme at Greyfriars.

But Da Costa, though prepared to call upon all the almost incredible falseness of the East, in carrying out his scheme, knew that the more truth that could be mixed with the falseness the more likely it was to prevail.

Hence his present proceedings. If the head boy of the Remove openly and deliberately disobeyed his headmaster's commands, and was flogged for the offence, it was a good beginning. That was what Wharton was now doing—at least, what he could be made to appear to be doing. If he was caught on the island, he would be reported to the Head and flogged. His Form-master would be angry and incensed. The first step would have been taken, by drawing upon the captain of the Remove the anger and distrust of his masters.

As Skinner had sapiently remarked, the matter was more serious in Wharton's case than in any other Remove's. Wharton was head of the Form, and trusted by his Form-master rather to keep other juniors out of scrapes than to lead the way into them. A most emphatic notice had appeared on the board, signed by the headmaster himself, forbidding visits to Popper's Island, and almost before the ink on it was dry Wharton had started for the island. Da Costa did not need telling how serious a view the headmaster and the Form-master would take of that if they knew.

With gleaming eyes, the Eurasian watched Wharton arrive at the island, secure the skiff to the willow-branch, and step ashore.

His look was anxious now.

Bunter was out of sight, and Wharton had obviously come there for Bunter. If he remained on the shore and shouted for Bunter to join him, Da Costa was powerless. To show his hand in the matter was to put Wharton on his guard against treachery. But the captain of the Remove was not likely to utter shouts that would be heard in the woods of Popper Court, where any keeper might hear them, and learn from them that a trespasser was on the island.

But it was a relief to Da Costa to see the captain of the Remove disappear into the thickets and trees on the little island.

Wharton vanished from his sight, and Da Costa sprang up from his cover. He threw his cap, his jacket, his boots, and socks in the bushes, and plunged silently into the water, careless of the rest of his clothes. The Eurasian could swim like a fish. How many minutes he had he did not know, but he did not waste a second. He plunged into the water a little above the island, and the current helped him. Almost in a twinkling he had reached the tied skiff and caught at the gunwale.

A moment more and he was kneeling inside, his pocket-knife sawing across the cord.

It parted, and the skiff moved out on the current at once.

Da Costa grasped a scull, and paddled himself swiftly and silently across to the bank.

The skiff fairly shot across the narrow arm of the stream, and bumped into the rushes.

Da Costa scrambled out, breathless with haste.

It was easy to drag the light skiff out of the water, up the grassy bank. In a few seconds it was out of sight behind the bushes. Da Costa, breathing hard, in hurried gasps, dripping with water, settled down behind the bushes in the

wood bordering the tow-path, to watch again.

He had had plenty of time. It was still a matter of minutes before Harry Wharton and Billy Bunter appeared from the trees of the island, and stopped on the shore, the captain of the Remove staring blankly at the place where he had left the skiff.

Da Costa grinned maliciously in his cover. He had succeeded, and his enemy was now in the hollow of his hand!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Up Against It!

"WHAT the thump—"

Harry Wharton stared at the empty place where the skiff had been, and then looked along the stream. Winding as the Sark was, he could see for some distance down the river, but there was no craft of any sort in sight. Boating parties seldom came so far up the river, and that distance was out of bounds for Greyfriars fellows. Wharton's first thought was that the painter had fallen loose and the skiff had drifted. That seemed to be the only way of accounting for its absence. Yet it could hardly have drifted out of sight in so short a time; and the remnant of the rope still hung to the willow. It had not parted where he had tied it, and he knew that the other end had been quite secure to the ring in the skiff. His second thought was that the cord had snapped under the pull of the current, and yet that was scarcely possible. Almost in bewilderment he stood and stared.

Bunter came puffing and panting behind him.

"Well, where's the boat?" asked Bunter.

"Gone!"

"What?" yelled the Owl of the Remove.

Wharton looked worried.

"I left it here," he said. "I tied it up to the willow—"

"You left it farther on, of course!" said Bunter. "For goodness' sake look for it! We've got to get off here!"

"I left it here!" snapped Wharton.

"Has it flown away?" asked Bunter, with fat sarcasm.

"You silly owl! Can't you see the rope still hanging from the willow?" growled the captain of the Remove.

Billy Bunter turned his big spectacles on the cord.

"Well, of all the silly chumps!" he exclaimed in disgust. "That rope must have been rotten to part like that."

"It was a good rope."

"Then how did it snap?" jeered Bunter.

"I don't know!"

"Well, what are we going to do?" demanded Bunter. "You came here to fetch me off, didn't you, with the grub? How are we going to get off, if you've lost the boat?"

Wharton made no reply. He reached for the branch of the willow, and pulled it in, to bring the sagging cord within reach. A glance at the loose end showed what had happened. The cord had been cut with a knife.

Wharton set his teeth.

"Some rotter has taken away the boat," he said. "You can see that the painter has been cut."

"What rot! Who'd do it?"

"You blind owl, look at the rope!" exclaimed Wharton, exasperated. "Can't you see it's been cut?"

"Well, suppose it has, that doesn't help us," said Bunter. "Finding out that it's been cut won't mend it. How

are we going to get off this rotten island? You brought me here, Wharton, and I can jolly well tell you I'm not going to have a Head's flogging to please you! I—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You fat idiot, I've got to think this out. Shut up!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton stared up and down the stream, and at the opposite bank. No one was in sight.

"Some boat must have passed while I was with you, and they've bagged the skiff," he said. "A lark, very likely. Some silly fool thought it would be funny to strand us on the island. It's not likely that the skiff's been stolen. It is some fatheaded jape."

"But how are we going to get off?" hooted Bunter. "I don't care whether the beastly thing's stolen, or whether it's a jape. What I want is to get off this rotten island."

"If it's a jape, the silly chump has most likely got the boat out of sight somewhere, quite near at hand," said Harry. "But—who the dickens—and where is it?"

"Shout, then!" said Bunter. "If it's a silly japer, he will bring the boat back when you shout. He can't want to leave us here for the night, if it's only a practical joke."

"If it's a practical joker, you can depend on it he's got his eye on us now," growled Wharton, "and if we shout we may bring some of Popper's keepers down on us."

Snort from Bunter.

"Well, it's up to you," he said. "I tell you what, Wharton—I'm hungry!"

"What?" roared Wharton.

"Hungry! I think I'll have a snack. Looks as if we shan't get to the picnic in a hurry, now! No good wasting time."

"You fat chump!"

"Yah!"

With that elegant rejoinder, William George Bunter opened the picnic-basket, and proceeded to take a substantial snack. It was, as he had said, up to Wharton to find a way off the island. Bunter had not a single idea in his fat mind on the subject. Bunter saw no reason why he should waste time while the captain of the Remove thought it out. And he did not waste time. Even if there was a Head's flogging looming in the offing, Bunter could find solace in jam-tarts and jam-puffs and ginger-pop.

Wharton stood with a clouded and angry brow.

He scanned the river, and the opposite shore. Beyond the tow-path, at that point, lay the deep, shady woods that belonged to Sir Hilton Popper, with here and there a notice on a board, where little green paths ran up into the wood, announcing that trespassers would be prosecuted. Sir Hilton Popper had used up quite a considerable quantity of timber on those kindly notices on various parts of his estate.

If a practical joker was responsible for the loss of the skiff, where was he? Hidden in the opposite wood, watching? But in that case, where was his boat?

It did not occur to Wharton, naturally, that anyone had swum off from the bank to cut loose the skiff. The light skiff might have been dragged easily enough into the thick wood for concealment. But a boat! It did not seem probable. True, the practical joker might have come along in a skiff also; but, even so, it was scarcely probable that he would drag two skiffs out of the water into the wood. And he could not have had much time for it.

Wharton was quite puzzled.

It was driven into his mind that the taking of the skiff was not a practical joke on the part of some boating-man with a misdirected sense of humour. Yet it seemed improbable that the skiff had been stolen.

Had some unknown "rotter" deliberately stranded him on the island to get him into a row at Greyfriars?

A fellow like Skinner might have done it, passing the island in a boat, and recognising Wharton's handsome little skiff tied up to the willow.

But it was very improbable that a slacker like Skinner would ever have pulled so far up the river.

The thought of Da Costa came vaguely into Wharton's mind for a moment. But he knew that Da Costa had been sitting on the school raft when he started up the Sark in his skiff. The Eurasian, or any other Remove fellow, could not have followed him up the river in the time, by water. That he had been followed by any other method did not, naturally, occur to Wharton.

He had to give the thing up.

The skiff was gone, and if either a thief or a keeper had taken it, it was still gone, and the captain of the Remove was up against the problem of getting off the island without it.

To Wharton himself that would not have presented great difficulties.

At the cost of getting wet, he could have swum to the bank with ease, leaving, certainly, the basket of tuck behind.

But there was Bunter. He could swim about six strokes in a swimming-bath. Follows who had trusted to Bunter's own account of his powers would have believed that the Owl of the Remove could swim the Channel with ease, and swim back again without much trouble. But it was only with his fat chin that Bunter could do these things. In the river he was much more likely to swim like a leaden plummet than like a fish.

"Well, my hat!" said Wharton at last.

The time was passing.

By this time, probably, Bob Cherry and the rest had arrived at the old priory, and would be expecting Wharton and Bunter there with the picnic-basket. No doubt they would wonder why the captain of the Remove did not come. But they were not in the least likely to surmise that his skiff had got loose and left him stranded on Popper's Island.

There was no help to be expected from that quarter.

There was no help to be expected from any quarter. If the skiff had been taken for a practical joke, it was clear that the joker intended to keep it up to the extent of leaving the juniors stranded. If it had been stolen, it was gone for good. Wharton and Bunter had to get off the island somehow without it, and without help, and Wharton made up his mind to it.

Bunter had finished his snack. There was a perceptible diminution in the contents of the picnic-basket by this time. He was blinking at the captain of the Remove morosely and inquiringly.

"We've got to get off, Bunter," said Harry, returning to the fat junior at last.

"I'm waiting," grunted Bunter.

"How are we going to do it?"

"Swim!" said Harry.

"Don't be a silly ass! We can't swim it!"

"I can help you in the water," said Harry. "It's not far across, and you can swim a little, anyhow. With my help you can manage it."

"I can swim better than you, and

chance it," grunted Bunter. "But what about our clothes?"

"We shall get wet, of course," said Harry impatiently. "That can't be helped. It's the only way out, Bunter."

"You silly chump!" bawled Bunter. "Do you think I'm going to get soaked to the skin?"

"We can't get off without."

"And what about the tuck?"

"We shall have to leave that."

"Leave it!" Bunter seemed scarcely able to believe the evidence of his own ears. "Leave the tuck!"

to the skin? They'll know at once that we've been on the island, and had to swim off. You want to get me a flogging! After all I've done for you—"

"We can dry ourselves somehow—"

"Go and eat coke! I'm not going to be drowned and flogged just to amuse you, I can tell you!" hooted Bunter. "You got me on this beastly island. You find a way off without drowning a chap. Yah!"

"I tell you—"

"Rats!" hooted Bunter. "You can't

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"Yes, you ass! It can't be helped."

"You dummy!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"You burbling idiot!"

"We can shove the basket into the thicket and get hold of it again later," said Harry. "It can't be helped, Bunter."

"It jolly well can be helped!" roared Bunter. "I'm not going to be drowned to please you, Harry Wharton. Go and eat coke!"

Wharton breathed hard.

"There's no danger, Bunter, if you hold on to me. I can get you safe ashore all right."

"And turn up at Greyfriars drenched

swim for toffee! Catch me trusting myself in the water! Yah!"

Wharton tried hard to be patient. He was powerfully tempted to kick the Owl of the Remove from one side of Popper's Island to the other. But kicking Bunter was no solution of the problem.

"Well, then," said Harry at last, "you stay here out of sight, Bunter, while I swim off, and I'll get back with a boat as soon as I possibly can."

"You're not going to leave me here alone to be caught by old Popper!" howled Bunter.

"Look here, you ass—"

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"Yah! Rotter! Landing a fellow in a scrape like this, and letting him down! Might have expected it of you!"

"Can't you see it's the only thing to be done?" exclaimed Wharton, very nearly at the end of his patience.

"No, it isn't. I'm not staying here alone—like your cheek to suggest it. Of course, you want to get clear, and leave me to be caught! I'm not going to be caught by old Popper to please you, Harry Wharton! Look here, we can wait till Smithy and Redwing come back. They've gone up the river, and they'll be back sooner or later. They'll give us a lift."

"They won't be back till close on calling-over. We can't wait hours here, Bunter. And the girls and the other fellows are waiting for us at the old priory by this time."

"Let 'em wait, and be blowed to 'em—"

"It's a practical certainty that we shall be spotted here and reported, Bunter, if we stay here all the afternoon."

"Beast!"

Wharton gave a sudden start. "Hook it, Bunter; we're seen!"

Against the dark green of the wood opposite, a tall, angular figure appeared—with a gleaming eyeglass jammed on one side of a prominent bony nose. It was Sir Hilton Popper, and he was staring across at the island. Bunter, who was sitting beside the picnic basket, was screened by the drooping willow, and the baronet's eye did not fall on him. But Harry Wharton was standing in full view; and the gleaming eyeglass of Sir Hilton Popper fixed on him instantly. Billy Bunter, with a terrified gasp, rolled back into the bushes. But as Harry Wharton followed he realised that cover would not be of much use to him, for the deep voice of the lord of Popper Court rang across the arm of the river:

"You young scamp, Wharton—I know you! Greyfriars boy, by gad! I knew it! Wharton! Don't hide yourself, you young rascal! I know you!"

With that loud, angry voice ringing in his ears, Harry Wharton plunged into the island thickets. He had been recognised by Sir Hilton Popper, standing on the forbidden island—and the fat was in the fire now, with a vengeance!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Doggo!

ARTHUR DA COSTA lay still as a tiger crouching in a jungle of his native country. A footstep came to his ears from the deep wood—someone was approaching through the old oaks and beeches. All the wooded land by the river, in that region was, as Da Costa knew, on the estate of Sir Hilton Popper, and public access to it was strictly prohibited. He had no doubt, therefore, that the footstep was that of one of Sir Hilton's keepers, or of the baronet himself. And Da Costa, crouching in the wood, was in point of fact now a trespasser himself, quite as much as the fellows on the island. Only a narrow path ran by the river open to the public; the adjoining wood was private property, and a dozen boards warned off trespassers.

The wood was not fenced. Here and there little wild, shady paths ran up among the trees; but no human foot was allowed to tread those paths

without the permission of Sir Hilton Popper, monarch of all he surveyed over that part of the creation. Da Costa was in the wood—he had shoved Wharton's skiff deep under a wild, tangled mass of brambles, out of sight; and he was himself crouching in a thicket of saplings, in deep cover. But one of the little shady paths, thick with ferns among the jutting roots of old trees, ran within a few feet of him, and it was by that little path that the footsteps came. The man who passed brushed the thicket where Da Costa lay hid.

The Eurasian scarcely breathed. Anyone who stepped off the public path into the wood was a trespasser—liable to prosecution, in theory, at least. A Greyfriars boy was not likely to be prosecuted, it was true; but he was absolutely certain to be reported to his headmaster for punishment. It would have been a sorry ending to Da Costa's wily scheming, had he been the fellow to be taken before Dr. Locke and flogged for trespassing on Sir Hilton's land.

He was not only trespassing on the estate of Popper Court, but he was out of school bounds—school bounds being naturally much too limited to allow fellows to wander miles from the school without special leave. To stand well with masters and prefects was necessary to Da Costa, if he was to succeed at Greyfriars; and he was in danger now, if discovered, of being not only flogged for trespass at Popper Court, but of being noted as a reckless breaker of bounds. He suppressed his breathing, as the tall form passed his cover—fortunately for Da Costa—without perceiving him.

Only when the passing man emerged from the wood, out on the open bank of the stream, did Arthur da Costa venture to raise his crouching head and peer through the interstices of the thicket.

Standing on the bank was the tall, angular figure of Sir Hilton Popper. Da Costa had never seen the baronet before, but he had heard him spoken of, and had no doubt that this was he. Obviously, the tall man in shooting clothes and eyeglass was not a keeper.

He knew that the juniors regarded it as probable that Sir Hilton would keep an eye on the disputed island that afternoon. It was no surprise to the Eurasian to see him there.

He listened to the angry shout that the baronet directed towards the island. There was no reply from Harry Wharton; the captain of the Remove had disappeared from sight. Da Costa lay like a snake in cover, watching and listening—uneasy for himself at the same time. Wharton was stranded on the island, and had been discovered there by Sir Hilton—Da Costa had succeeded perfectly so far. He had been debating in his mind some means of drawing the attention of a keeper to the island, when Sir Hilton had saved him the trouble by arriving on the spot of his own accord. Nothing could have suited the schemer better, so far as that went. But now that his scheme was a success, the Eurasian was keenly desirous of getting away unseen—and at present he could not venture even to stir, without the risk of drawing the tall gentleman's attention to himself.

Sir Hilton, as he received no answer to his angry shout, stood staring at the island for some moments, and then paced up and down the bank, fuming to himself. Da Costa lay very low.

He wondered savagely why the

baronet did not go. He knew who the trespasser was, and had only to report him to Dr. Locke for punishment. But Sir Hilton did not go. He paced up and down the bank, and finally stopped and stared at the island again.

"Boy!" he thundered.

Only the echo of Sir Hilton's powerful voice answered him.

"Wharton, come off that island at once! Do you hear? I order you to leave that island immediately!"

No reply from the island. It was certain that the Greyfriars junior heard, but if he heard he did not heed.

"Impudent young scoundrel!" Da Costa heard the baronet mutter.

Still Sir Hilton did not go. Da Costa's eyes glittered at him from the thicket, bright with anger. It would have suited Da Costa's plans admirably for Sir Hilton to retire from the spot and leave the rest in the hands of the Greyfriars headmaster. But Sir Hilton was too angry and autocratic a gentleman to be contented with that. He had a Malacca cane under his arm, and he wanted to lay that cane round the junior who had trespassed on the island. It did not even occur to his mind that Wharton was there without a boat; and the junior's refusal to come off added fuel to the fire of his wrath. Sir Hilton was not the man to walk away, leaving a trespasser defying him on his land.

Sir Hilton, as he paced the grassy bank, glanced several times into the shady openings of the wood. Once or twice Da Costa's heart throbbed with the fear that he was seen. But he soon realised that the baronet was expecting someone. Ten minutes or more had passed, when a keeper emerged from the wood a little farther along the bank, and touched his hat to the baronet.

"Joyce!" rapped out Sir Hilton. "There is a trespasser on the island; I saw him with my own eyes. It is a Greyfriars boy; I have no doubt the same boy who was there last week. Go to the boathouse as quickly as you can, and bring a boat here without losing time."

"Yes, sir."

Joyce hurried away.

The baronet twisted his stubby, grey moustache and stared across grimly at the island. Dr. Locke had declined to believe that the late trespassers on Popper Island were Greyfriars boys. He would not be able to doubt when Sir Hilton detained this particular trespasser at Popper Court and telephoned to Greyfriars for a master to be sent to fetch him to the school. That was Sir Hilton's intention.

The tall gentleman moved out of the blaze of sunshine on the river-bank at last and stepped into the shady wood. There he leaned on a tall tree, only a few feet from Da Costa's hiding-place. The scent of a cigar came to the hidden Eurasian; Sir Hilton was smoking a cigar while he waited for the keeper to return with the boat from Popper Court.

Da Costa wondered savagely how long he would be. He knew that Popper Court was a considerable distance from the island, and no doubt the boathouse was in the vicinity of the house.

Sir Hilton threw away the stump of his cigar and gave utterance to an impatient grunt.

He detached his tall figure from the oak and stepped out on the river-bank again, staring impatiently in the direction Joyce had taken.

The keeper was not yet in sight. Da Costa heard the baronet give a short of angry impatience. He stood and stared at the island again. Then, to the Eurasian's immense relief, he



As soon as Wharton vanished from sight Da Costa plunged into the water, swam to the tied skiff and caught at the gunwale. A moment more and he was kneeling inside, his pocket-knife sawing across the cord. (See Chapter 5.)

strode away up the bank, no doubt to meet Joyce on his way back with the boat.

Da Costa breathed more freely when the footsteps died away.

He rose from his cover. The heat of the sun had almost dried his clothes, though they showed very plain traces of their immersion in the water. Now that the coast was clear he did not linger. Keeping in the wood for a little distance so that no eye from the island should see him, he hurried away, and, emerging on the towpath at last out of sight of the island, broke into a run. He reached the spot where he had left his bicycle, mounted the machine, and pedalled away.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, of Course!

"THE game's up!" grunted Wharton.

"Beast!"

It was a difficult position to deal with, and that was Billy Bunter's contribution to dealing with it.

"Nice mess you've landed me in!" he growled.

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton's brows were knitted. He knew that Sir Hilton had seen him on the island and recognised him, and there was no escaping a report to the Head, and a Head's flogging. That was an absolute certainty now.

But it was not the thought of the flogging that troubled Harry most, though that was a painful prospect. What would the Head think of his conduct in going directly to the island immediately after the headmaster's grave warning on the subject, addressed to him personally?

Wharton felt that he had had no choice in the matter; he could not have left Bunter stranded there.

That, however, would not excuse him in the Head's eyes, even if he could give it as an explanation.

His conduct was sure to appear to Dr. Locke as utterly disrespectful and lawless. From the Head's study, where Dr. Locke had given him that warning, he had gone immediately to the island. It looked like an act of reckless defiance of authority, exceeding even the defiant recklessness of the Bounder in his most insubordinate mood. Wharton respected his headmaster, and did not want to incur his bad opinion; he did not want to be marked as a fellow who found pleasure in eluding and defying authority. The Bounder's reputation was certainly not one that the captain of the Remove desired to share.

But there was no help for it now, and it worried the captain of the Remove deeply.

Bunter was not worrying about anything of the sort. Bunter was, as usual, thinking only of his worthy self.

As an aid to thinking, he was disposing as rapidly as possible of the contents of the picnic-basket.

There was, at least, that comfort for the fat junior.

Evidently that basket of tuck would never be saved from the island now, and Bunter wisely considered that it would be a pity to waste it.

Wharton did not heed him.

He stood leaning on a tree, deep in gloom thoughts. All this time Bob Cherry and the rest would be waiting at the old priory; worse still, Marjorie and Clara would be waiting. That could not be helped, any more than the other misfortunes of that disastrous afternoon—which had opened so brightly, and was closing so cloudily.

All the trouble was due to the unknown hand that had taken the skiff from the willow-branch.

Wharton's eyes gleamed as he reflected on that.

It was no practical joke, that was certain now. It was the hand of an enemy that had struck him treacherously.

But whose hand?

That was a question the captain of the Remove could not answer.

He kept an eye on the bank, and when the tall figure of Sir Hilton Popper disappeared in the direction of Popper Court he stirred at last.

"He's gone, Bunter!"

"Blow him!" answered Bunter, with his mouth full.

"Stop guzzling a minute, you fat porker, and listen to me!" snapped Wharton irritably.

"Beast!"

"Old Popper saw me here, but he hasn't seen you. No need for him to know that you've been on the island at all if you keep out of sight."

Billy Bunter sat up and took notice, as it were, at that. This remark touched upon a matter of importance—the well-being of William George Bunter.

"Smithy's bound to pass the island when he comes back," said Harry. "He won't be back much before call-over; they're making a long pull of it. But he will come along sooner or later; and if you hail him, he will give you a lift. If you keep doggo till then you're all right."

"Luckily, I've got something to eat," remarked Bunter. "You wouldn't care if I missed my tea—I know that!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Beast!"

"You heard what the old dodger said to the keeper," said Harry. "They've

(Continued on page 16.)

THE OLD BOYS' DINNER!



DICKY
NUGENT.

When Dr. Birchermall sets out to make a stew for a gathering of Old St. Sam's Boys, he fairly makes a hash of it!

LICKHAM, I've fairly done it now!"

Dr. Birchermall rung his hands, at the same time tearing his hair and clawing his beard. With his disengaged hand he jesticulated wildly. He was in a state of pannick.

"What's the trubble, sir?" asked Mr Lickham perlutely.

"It's my memmery!" groaned the Head. "I must be getting absent-minded in my old age. To-day is the occasion of the Old Boys' Dinner, and—bust me!—I'd forgotten all about it until now. I reminded myself to remind myself of it, too, by scribbling a note on my shirt-cuff, and tying a peace of red tape round my finger. But I forgot to remember to remember not to forget!"

Mr. Lickham smiled.

"But there is no harm done, my dear doc—"

"No harm!" hooted the Head. "No harm, you frabjusz chump! A hundred Old Boys are coming to St. Sam's to-day to partake of a 'tarbly dote' dinner, and I've given the cook and the entire kitchen staff a day's hollerday!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm fairly in the soop—or, as the vulgar say, in a dilemmer," said Dr. Birchermall. "I had arranged for the masters and boys to have a froogal dinner of bred-and-cheese to-day; but I cannot ask the Old Boys to dine off bred-and-cheese. They are too well bred, and it would be hard cheese if they were given a cold snack. After coming down here by cheap eggscursion, they will eggspsect a first-class fare—"

"Natcherally!" said Mr. Lickham. "And Mrs. Buxom has gone, and all the kitchen wenches with her. Here's a pretty kettle of fish! What's to be done, Lickham? Can't you show me the way out?"

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Lickham, throwing open the door of the Head's study. "This way for the eggst!"

"Fatted! I mean, the way out of this dilemmer."

Mr. Lickham put on his thinking-cap—the only sort of cap that a master was

permitted to wear in the Head's prezzence.

"Sir," he said, after a paw, "there is nothing for it but to prepare the dinner yourself, with the aid of voluntary helpers."

Dr. Birchermall brightened up.

"That's not a bad wheeze," he said. "Have you ever done any cooking, Licky?"

"Well," said Mr. Lickham reflectively, "long ago, before I came to St. Sam's, I did six months in chokey for cooking the accounts of the firm I worked for."

"Bah!" snorted the Head. "I don't mean that sort of cooking. I mean the culinary sort. Now, if I were to give you some meat and spuds and carrots and onions, would you be able to make a hash of it?"

"Undoubtedly, sir," said Mr. Lickham. "I should make a fearful hash of it! If you take my advice, sir, you'll soopervise this job yourself. My own stile of cooking, though distinctly original, is somewhat off the Beeton track. But you, sir, with your wonderful ability, capability, and adaptability—"

"Flattery, thy name is Lickham!" said Dr. Birchermall, with a grin. "You are quite right, though. I'm the man for the job, and I mean to see it threw. I will sally fourth, and compel voluntary workers to come to my aid."

So saying, the Head wandered off to the skool kitchen, on the door of which he posted up the following notiss in his immaculate fist:

"VOLUNTEERS WANTED!"

For Compulsory Work in the Skool Kitchen!

Apply Within!"

Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright, and Stedfast and Loyle and Trew, and Frank Fearless and Tubby Barrell, came trooping into the kitchen readily enough. They burst out larking when they caught

sight of the Head, for instead of his gown and mortar-board he wore a sheff's costume and a sheff's cap. In this guys the Head looked even more comical than usual.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dr. Birchermall frowned.

"Cut the cackle!" he said sharply. "Peel off your coats, and then proceed to peel these spuds! I am having a hundred Old Boys for dinner—"

"My hat! Have you turned cannibal, sir?" asked Jack Jolly in alarm. "A hundred Old Boys for dinner! Why, you'll be bilious before you've eaten one!"

Dr. Birchermall snorted. He looked at Jack Jolly as though he could have eaten him.

"A hundred Old Boys are coming here as my gests," he eggspained, "and I want you to help me prepare a real slap-up dinner for them. I want your voluntry help, my boys, and anyone who refuses to give it will be birched black and blew. Now the first corse will be a stew—"

"A fearful stew!" mermered Merry.

"And the second corse will be a hash—"

"A terrible hash!" mermered Bright. "And the hash will be followed by curry! Colonel Fiery Sparkes, our respected Guvverner, is also an Old Boy, and he is hot stuff at scoffing curry. Not that I wish to curry faver with the colonel—"

"No, no, sir!"

"Of corse not, sir!"

"Shall I show you how to make a stew, sir?" inquired Stedfast.

"Certainly not, Stedfast! It would be

like teaching your grandfather to suck eggs! I know eggactly how to make a stew. As for curry, that's simplissity itself! A child could make it. You collect the hottest things you can find—curry powder and chillies, peppercorns and red-hot pokers and horse-raddish, and a liberal quantity of musterd. When you have mustered these ingredients together, sprinkle a few pounds of K.N. pepper over them, and there's your curry! Colonel Sparkes will eat it with rellish—

"Wooster rellish or Yorkshire rellish, sir?" inquired Jack Jolly.

"None of your sauce, Jolly!" said the Head sharply. "We will now get to business!"

And the preparation of the proper ration began.

Never had the historick kitchen of St. Sam's prezented such an animated appearance. All was hustle and bussle and chaos and confusion. Fellows dashed hereabouts and thereabouts, like mad tearabouts, without thinking of their whereabouts.

Jack Jolly, trying to carry six duzen soap-plates at once, dropped the lot, and the amatura cooks found themselves ankle-deep in crockery.

Frank Fearless was reaching down a big bag of flower from the top shelf, when the bag suddenly burst open, and a shower of flower descended upon Dr. Birchmall, covering him as with a garment.

"Ooooooh! Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered the Head. "Where did that snowstorm come from?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dr. Birchmall frantickally gouged flower out of his eyes and ears, while the juniors went merrily on with their work.

The stew was soon made, to the Head's satisfaction, though weather it would be to the satisfaction of the Old Boys remained to be seen.

Dr. Birchmall was stirring the stew when there was a sudden shout from Frank Fearless.

"The Old Boys are here, sir!"

Dr. Birchmall dashed to the window. Sure enuff, the distingwished guests were arriving, the old Old Boys steering their bath chairs, and the young Old Boys fording their Fords threw the puddles in the quad.

"See to the curry, my boys!" panted the Head.

And, forgetful of his flowery state, he rushed out of the kitchen to welcome his guests.

II.

VERY distingwished indeed were some of these Old Boys—men who had made their mark, be-kawse they were unable to write their names. You see, when they were boys at St. Sam's, writing had not been part of the skool curriculum.

There was Colonel Fiery Sparkes, who sat on the Bored of Guvverners whenever they happened to annoy him. There were several famous Cabinet-makers, both in the political and carpentry sense. There was Slim Jim, the finest crackman the underworld had ever perduced. There were many selly-brated cat-berglars, and Jool-theeves, and jail-birds. And there was a hefty, pugilistick-looking man, whom the Head could not quite place. Wishing to learn his eyedentity, Dr. Birchmall tapped the hefty jentleman on the sholder.

"Hallo, old boy!" he said jenially.

"Are you an Old Boy, old boy?"

"I am!" was the grim reply. "You don't recognise me, I s'pose, you bald-headed, bearded old buffer!"

"Well—you seem very familiar," said the Head. "But I can't quite place you."

"My name is Bodger—Bill Bodger," said the Old Boy. "I was a pupil 'ere in the first years of your 'Eadmaster-ship. D'you 'ear? You sacked me from St. Sam's for a triflin' offence—jest for 'ittin' a master on the 'ead with an 'ammer. Sacked me for it, you did! An' now," said Mr. Bodger grimly, "I've come back to 'ave me revenge!"

Dr. Birchmall turned pail. And he coward, like the cowered he was, before the mennacing glare of Bill Bodger.

"My—my dear good fellow!" mermured the Head soothingly. "You should not bare mallis. You should not nurse feelings of ranker and revenge in your boozum. If I sacked you, I was meerly doing my duty. Dash it all, Mr. Bodger, you must have dissiplin at a skool! You can't have boys rushing round the place hitting masters on the heads with hammers! However, that is a closed chapter now; it has been nocked on the head long ago. Let us forgive and forget!" But Bill Bodger was not to be placated. He had come to St. Sam's to reek his venjence on Dr. Birchmall, who had sacked him for such a potty offence.

"R-r-revenge!" he snarled, rolling his r's horribly. "That's wot I've come 'ere for, an' that's wot I means to 'ave! We're stayin' at the skool for a week, so I shall bidé my time. But you shall not escape me, Birchmall! You shall not escape my just venjence!"



The Old Boys seized Dr. Birchmall, turned him upside down, and lowered his head into a tureen of stew.

So saying, Bill Bodger lounged away to chat with a famous berglar, who had formerly been kaptin of St. Sam's. He left Dr. Birchmall shaking from head to foot, as if with the pawsey.

"Bless my sole!" gasped the Head. "What an unplezzant person! And fancy him harboring a grudge against me all these years! I shall have to mind my eye!"

But the Head soon dismissed Bill Bodger from his mind. And after greeting the rest of the Old Boys, with much bowing and scraping, and salooting and salemunning, he hurried away to the dining-hall.

The Old Boys, who had brought helthy appytites with them, followed the Head like ravvenus wolves. They would have taken the dining-hall by storm had not Dr. Birchmall stood with his back to the door, barring their entry.

"One minnit, jentlemen!" said Dr. Birchmall. "Before you discuss the magniffiscent dinner which has been prepared under my supervision, I wish to

diskuss a little financial matter with you."

The faces of the Old Boys fell. And before they had time to pick them up, Dr. Birchmall went on:

"It has been the custom, from time immaterial, for the dinner subscriptions to be collected from Old Boys after the meal. That custom, jentlemen, has grave disadvantages. It leads to a lot of bilking—jents slipping out of the door without paying, and that sort of thing. So I'll collect the ninepence now, if it's all the same to you!"

And the Head whipped off his sheff's cap, and held it out eggspectantly.

The Old Boys, with much grumbling and grousing, dropped their ninepences into the cap, and passed into the dining-hall.

Having collected all the subs, Dr. Birchmall crammed the munny into his capacious pockets, and sounded the dinner-gong.

Bang! Crash!! Bonk!!!

As if by magic, Merry and Bright appeared suddenly from nowhere, carrying a tureen of stew. They dumped it down carelessly on the floor of the dining-hall, and there was a yell from Colonel Fiery Sparkes as the skalding spray swamped over his legs.

"Yarooooop! You clumsy young rascals!" yelled the irate marionet. "You've swamped me with skalding licker! It's altogether too thick!"

"Too thick!" said Dr. Birchmall. "I assure you, colonel, the stew is quite clear. You've no right to say it's too thick till you've tasted it. I made that stew, jentlemen, with my own hands!"

Despite the zellus efforts of the amatura cooks, the stew was not fit for piggs to eat. That was probably why the Old Boys left it! As for the curry, it was so hot that when Colonel Fiery Sparkes swallowed a large spoonful, fiery sparks issued from his mouth! He started sneezing and spluttering, and coughing and choking, while the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Water!" gasped the colonel. "Bring me some iced water at once! I'm on fire! My elementary canal is parched and blistered by that abominable mess!"

"If you are allooding to my curry—" began the Head, with dignity.

"I'll curry you!" hooted the colonel.

"Do you call this a dinner, you scurvy nave? We've been robbed—swindled out of our ninepences, by gad!"

"Coller him!"

"Duck him in the stew!"

The next minnit Dr. Birchmall found himself the senter of a sort of Rugby scrum. The Old Boys, headed by Colonel Fiery Sparkes, seized his sacred and scared person, and turned him upside-down, and lowered his head into the tureen of stew. Luckily the licker was lukewarm by this time.

The Head was in a fearful stew! He gergled and spluttered wildly, and at the same instant a shower of munny fell from his pockets and scattered over the floor. In the mad scrinmudge which followed, most of the Old Boys managed to get their dinner-munny back.

When Dr. Birchmall emerged from his bath of stew, he looked a horrible site. He fled shrieking from the dining-hall—speeded on his way by the hefty boot of Bill Bodger—and he solumly vowed that never again, as long as he lived, would he supervise the cooking of an Old Boys' Dinner!

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's shacker, boys, entitled: "A VOW OF VEN- JENCE!")

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,061.



(Continued from page 13.)

gone for a boat; and old Popper has walked off to hurry the man up. It's a chance to get clear; I'm not going to be taken off the island by old Popper. If he lays hands on me I shall hit him—and that might mean the sack. I'm going to swim off."

"And leave me here to face them alone?" sneered Bunter. "It's like you, I must say!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You fat fool, I can't help you by staying! You can hide, and they won't suppose anybody is here, not finding a boat."

"You can hide, too, then. You've no right to desert me here after landing me in this mess. Of course, you want to put it all on me."

"The other fellows and the girls are waiting at the priory all this time," said Harry. "I've got to get to them."

"Any excuse is better than none, of course. I might have known you'd leave me in the lurch if there was trouble."

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep.

"Can't you see—" he began.

"I can see that you want to clear off and leave me to it. Cowardly, I call it!" said Bunter.

Wharton breathed harder.

"I'll stay," he said.

"So you ought," said Bunter. "It's your fault from the start. What did you want to picnic on the island at all for? Lots of other places. If you'd have a little sense—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Shen't!" hooted Bunter. "You land me in this scrape, and coolly talk about swimming off and leaving me to it! Talk about funks!"

"If you want to be kicked, Bunter—"

"Beast!"

"Well, shut up!"

William George Bunter, catching the gleam in Wharton's eye, decided to shut up. Besides, he had another use for his capacious mouth. Good things from the picnic-basket were still vanishing there. Many had already vanished. But there was room for more. Billy Bunter never gave a thought to the Plimsoll line when he was taking in cargo.

The splash of oars on the river came a few minutes later. Wharton looked through the foliage at a boat pulled by Joyce with a pair of oars, and Sir Hilton Popper sitting grim in the stern. The boat came down with the current, rapidly, for the island.

"Cover, you fat ass!" said Wharton curtly. "They're coming!"

Billy Bunter jumped up in alarm.

"What about the grub?" he gasped.

"You fat chump!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Get into this tree, I'll give you a bunk up—sharp! Stick close and don't make a sound, and ten to one they won't spot you!"

"Wait till I get this cake in my pocket— Yarooooooh!" roared Bunter, as the captain of the Remove

grasped him, and fairly wrenched him away from the picnic-basket. "Leggo! Beast! Ow!"

"Get into that tree, you born idiot! Haven't you the sense of a bunny rabbit?" howled Wharton.

"Yah! Rotter!"

But Bunter clambered into the tree, helped up by the captain of the Remove. He could never have lifted his own weight into it unassisted. But once in the lower branches, Bunter was able to scramble higher, and he disappeared into a dense mass of foliage.

The boat was close to the island landing-place now. Harry Wharton looked round for cover for himself. He had only too strong a suspicion of what Sir Hilton intended to do with the Malacca-cane he carried under his arm. And he suspected, too, that the baronet intended to take him into his personal custody as a trespasser; and Wharton had no intention, if he could help it, of being marched back to Greyfriars as a delinquent in custody. His prospects were unpleasant enough without that added humiliation.

He clambered into a thick tree that grew on the edge of the island, with long branches overhanging the water. The foliage was thick enough to conceal half a dozen fellows.

Wharton hoped that the baronet, finding no boat there, would conclude that the trespassers were gone. But if the island was searched, Sir Hilton and his keeper could hardly search the branches of five or six big trees as well as the bushes and thickets.

"I say, Wharton—" called out Bunter suddenly.

"Quiet!" called back Wharton, in a suppressed voice.

"You can hand up something out of that basket."

"Quiet, you idiot!"

"Look here, that keeper will bag the basket—that stands to reason. Trust him for that!" came Bunter's voice from the branches of the elm. "I shall get jolly hungry if I have to wait here for Smithy—"

"Will you shut up?" hissed Wharton.

"Well, hand me up a cake, at least. I can do with a cake—that big one with the sultanas. Do you hear me, Wharton?"

Wharton made no reply. The boat was closing in on the island. Perhaps it occurred to Billy Bunter's obtuse brain that it was judicious to keep silent now. His dulcet tones died away.

The boat bumped on the shore, and Joyce held it while Sir Hilton Popper stepped out. Joyce made the painter fast to the willow, and as he did so observed the hanging rope.

"He's gone, sir, I think!"

"What?" hooted Sir Hilton.

"This rope has been cut, sir, and there ain't any boat that I see," answered the keeper.

"The young rascal! He must have escaped as soon as my back was turned!" exclaimed Sir Hilton. "Good gad! The young rascal!"

Apparently, Sir Hilton regarded the supposed escape of the Greyfriars junior as a new delinquency. Anyone who opposed the lofty will and pleasure of Sir Hilton Popper was a delinquent in the eyes of the lord of Popper Court.

"The young rascal!" fumed the baronet. "However, there is no doubt as to his identity. I saw him plainly; I recognised him. It was Wharton—that impudent young rascal Wharton! As the boat is here, Joyce, you may row me as far as the school. I shall call on Dr. Locke immediately."

Sir Hilton was about to step back into the boat, when from the elm tree there came a sudden howl.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! I'm falling! Yooooop!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated the baronet.

He spun round.

High over the underwoods on the island towered the great elm. In the thick branches there was a slithering, crashing sound, and a wild swaying and shaking and rustling.

Sir Hilton and his keeper stared as if transfixed. Something—something decidedly heavy—was hurtling through the foliage of the big branches; and suddenly that something came into view.

Billy Bunter grabbed bough after bough in his downward course, but his weight was against him, and he continued on his way earthward in a series of jerks. But he got a grip on a low, thick branch at last, and swung there.

Clinging to the branch with both hands, his feet a couple of yards from the ground, Bunter gasped and spluttered and yelled for help. Sir Hilton had a startling view of an extensive pair of trousers swinging from the elm branch; while from the upper half of Bunter, still hidden in foliage, came wild yells:

"Yaroooooh! Help! Yooooop! Help!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Treed!

SIR HILTON POPPER stared blankly at Bunter's trousers—all that he could see of Bunter, so far. Joyce stared also, and grinned.

"Good gad!" ejaculated the baronet. "More than one of them 'ere, sir," said Joyce. "That ain't young Master Wharton."

"Yaroooooh! Help!"

"Come down at once!" roared Sir Hilton. "How dare you hide yourself in a tree? By Jove! I have no doubt the other young rascal is hidden in a tree also! Boy, descend!"

Bunter descended.

He had no intention of doing so; but his fat hands slipped on the branch of the elm. The centripetal attraction of earth did the rest. Bunter shot down and landed in the thick grass under the elm.

He rolled there, roaring.

The grass was thick, and the fall was not very serious. But Bunter might have broken every fat limb he possessed, to judge by what followed.

"Ow, ow, ow! Wow! Yaroooooh!"

Sir Hilton strode to him. He stirred the sprawling fat junior with the end of his cane.

"Boy!"

"Yaroooooh! I'm killed—I mean, frightfully injured! My back's broken! Send for the doctor! Yooooop!"

"Get up!"

"Yow-ow-ow! I can't move— Yarooooooh!"

Billy Bunter found all of a sudden that he could move, as the baronet gave him a lick with the Malacca. He moved as if he had been electrified.

"Who are you?" snorted Sir Hilton, as the fat junior stood before him, gasping and quaking.

"Ow! I'm Bunter! Wow! I wasn't trespassing! I—I—"

"Wharton is here. Where is he?"

"Ow! You may as well show up, Wharton, the old beast knows you're here!"

"What the—what?" roared Sir Hilton, taking a business-like grip on the Malacca.

"Ow! Nothing! I—I didn't mean you were an old beast, sir!" gasped

Bunter. "I—I wouldn't dream of letting you think what I think of you, sir—Yaroooh!"

A lick from the cane elicited a howl from Bunter. He backed away hurriedly from the baronet.

"So there were two of them!" said Sir Hilton grimly. "Fortunately, we have found this young rascal!"

Bunter groaned. He could not see anything fortunate in it.

"Wharton is undoubtedly here also," said Sir Hilton. "Look for the young scoundrel, Joyce."

"Yes, sir."

"They must have hidden the boat, Bunter—if your name is Bunter—where is the boat that brought you to this island?"

"Ow! Gone!" groaned Bunter. "Some beast cut it loose and hiked off with it! Oh dear! That's how we got left here! Ow!"

"Oh!" said Sir Hilton. He understood now. "Now point out where Wharton is hidden, Bunter, or I shall chastise you with this cane."

"I'm here!" came Wharton's cool voice from the overhanging elm. It was useless to conceal his presence longer.

"Oh, you are there!" snapped Sir Hilton, striding to the water's edge again, and staring up at the elm.

"Descend at once!"

"I'm in no hurry, thanks."

"I order you to descend!" roared Sir Hilton.

"Nice afternoon, sir, isn't it?"

"What—what!"

"Lovely weather for a day up the river," continued Wharton, invisible in the branches of the elm.

"Boy!"

"I do hope that you've enjoyed your afternoon out, sir."

Sir Hilton spluttered with wrath. As Wharton was booked for a Head's flogging, in any case, he had apparently decided upon having his money's worth, as it were. And certainly he had no intention of descending within reach of Sir Hilton Popper's thick cane. A Head's flogging was likely to be enough, without one from Sir Hilton to start with.

"Boy, come down out of that tree!" raved Sir Hilton. "I shall take you to my house in custody, sir, and a master will be sent to fetch you to the school."

"I shouldn't like to give a master all that trouble, sir," answered the invisible junior. "If it's all the same to you, I'd rather walk home on my own."

"You insolent young rascal!"

"Bow-wow!"

"You—you—you—" spluttered Sir Hilton. "As soon as you are within my reach, Wharton, I shall thrash you—thrash you with this cane."

"Guard with your left at the same time, sir."

"What—what!"

"I fancy I should dot your nose, sir, while you were busy with the cane. Still, to save trouble, I'll stay here."

"You—you—you—you—" articulated Sir Hilton.

"Sing it, sir," suggested Wharton.

"What—what!"

"Singing is good for stuttering, sir."

"I—I—I—" Sir Hilton choked.

"Joyce! How dare you laugh, Joyce! Do you wish to be discharged, sir? Get into that tree, and bring down that impertinent schoolboy! At once!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Joyce, reduced to instant gravity under the fiery glare of Sir Hilton's eye.

He clambered actively enough into the elm.

Harry Wharton shifted promptly. He moved out on a long branch that hung

over the water, almost half-way across the arm of the Sark that separated the island from the river-bank.

Joyce stopped at the branch, holding on to the trunk. The branch was strong as well as long; but Joyce was a man experienced in woodcraft, and he did not need telling about the uncertainty of the elm, a tree given to sudden and unexpected snags. As Joyce was not a swimmer, he did not relish the possibility of a sudden plunge into deep water, neither did he want to take the chance of drowning a schoolboy. Wharton, sitting astride of the branch, worked his way out almost to the end.

The captain of the Remove was reckless now. He was in the position of a fellow who was up against it, and had nothing more to lose, and his mind was made up to give the irate lord of Popper Court all the trouble he could. He, too, was quite well aware that the long elm branch might snap suddenly as it sagged under his weight; but a plunge in the water had no terrors for the best swimmer in the Greyfriars Remove.

Sir Hilton shouted and gesticulated to the keeper. "Bring that young scamp down from the tree, Joyce! Do you hear me? Bring him down at once!"

Joyce worked his way a few feet out from the trunk. He was three times the schoolboy's weight, and even close to the trunk, his heavy bulk made the branch creak and sag.

Wharton smiled at him coolly from a dozen feet distance. "Better go slow, my man! The water's jolly deep here, if you take a header. And you'll spoil your nice velvetens."

"Joyce, why are you stopping?" hooted Sir Hilton.

"This 'ere branch won't bear my weight, sir," said Joyce. He wriggled on another foot, which brought him over the edge of the water beneath.

There he stopped dead. "I can't get any forrarder, sir."

"Wharton, go back along the branch at once!"

"Rats!"

"What?" roared the lord of Popper Court.

"Rats! Many of them, old bean!"

Sir Hilton Popper was a dignified gentleman, but he almost pranced with rage as he listened. He brandished the Malacca cane at

Wharton, who smiled at him in return.

"Will you get down out of that tree?" shrieked Sir Hilton.

"No fear! I'm enjoying this, sir," said Harry cheerily. "It's the first time I've had a front seat to see a baronet doing a song and dance."

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter, and Joyce turned his face away from his employer to hide his emotions. But Sir Hilton Popper did not see anything of a risable nature in the junior's answer. He seemed on the verge of an attack of apoplexy.

"Joyce!" he spluttered at last.

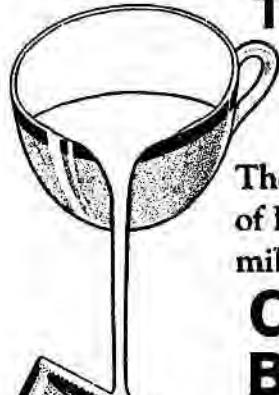
"Yes, Sir Hilton?"

"Remain where you are, and see that—that—that young scoundrel does not escape! I will compel him to return towards you."

Sir Hilton strode into the game-keeper's boat and cast it loose. Using

(Continued on next page.)

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one oar as a paddle, he drove it under the long elm branch, that, sagging under Wharton's weight, drooped within a few feet of the water.

Wharton set his lips.

This was rather an unexpected move, and it looked like a winner, so to speak. Standing in the boat as it glided under the branch, Sir Hilton Popper gripped his cane, with the evident intention of laying it round the junior hard. Wharton was within easy reach of the man in the boat, and he had no defence whatever.

The baronet's angry eyes glinted at him. He was going to thrash the junior along the branch, and after a few licks with that hefty Malacca, there was little doubt that the schoolboy would be glad to clamber along again, even into the arms of Joyce, the keeper.

But Sir Hilton Popper did not allow for accidents—which certainly should have been allowed for, when a man was standing up in an unguided boat pushing across a swift current, and looking upward at the same time.

Two or three paddling swipes with the oar drove the boat out under the drooping branch, and Sir Hilton dropped the oar and grasped his cane. Standing up, his eyes fixed on Wharton, he aimed a lash at him as the boat floated under. Sir Hilton put a lot of force into that lash—and swiped!

There was a roar from Wharton as the cane landed on him, and a wild ejaculation from Sir Hilton Popper, as the boat rocked and almost capsized. The tall gentleman made a frantic effort to recover his balance, but he could not recover it. The boat rocked violently, the gunwale touching the water, and Sir Hilton stumbled over, and there was a loud splash.

The boat righted, still rocking, and drifted away on the current. In the midst of foam and bubbles Sir Hilton Popper went down under the surface, and Joyce and Harry stared in horror at the widening circles over the spot where he had disappeared.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Wharton?

"**S**ISTER ANNE, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

Bob Cherry asked that question, with rather dismal humour. The jennickers—minus the picnic—were at the old priory in Friarale Wood. They had waited long, and they were waiting still.

Wharton had not come, Bunter had not come, and the basket of tuck had not come. The picnic might possibly have proceeded without Wharton and Bunter; but it could not possibly proceed without the basket of tuck. Marjorie Hazeldene was sweet and patient, as she always was; but Miss Clara Trevlyn was growing a little sarcastic.

Johnny Bull stared along the footpath through the woods. But there was no sign of anyone coming.

"Are you sure Harry knew you were coming here?" asked Marjorie.

"Oh, yes, that was fixed," said Bob. "He had to hook Bunter and the tuck off the island and bring them here to meet us."

"You're sure he understood?" asked Miss Clara.

"Oh, yes; no doubt about that!" "Boys misunderstand so easily," remarked Miss Clara. "Give them a chance, and they would rather make mistakes than not."

A remark which seemed to indicate

that Miss Trevlyn was getting a little cross.

"Hem!" murmured Nugent.

"The understanding of the esteemed Wharton is terrific, beauteous miss," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But something must have happened."

"Wharton may have been spotted going to the island," said Johnny Bull. "Old Popper seems to be on the war-path. He may not be able to get here."

"Looks like it, anyhow," said Miss Clara. "Or he may have forgotten that we are waiting here," she added sweetly.

"Oh, he couldn't have!" said Bob. "Wharton isn't a forgetful ass."

"Sure?" asked Miss Clara, with the same sweetness.

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

The juniors looked at one another. The picnic was going to be a frost, that was clear; and it did not seem useful to wait any longer for the fellows who did not arrive.

"We'd better go back to Cliff House to tea," said Miss Clara decidedly. "It's getting jolly near tea-time."

"But if Harry comes—" said Marjorie.

"He will guess that we are gone," said Miss Clara, still sarcastic. "His understanding being terrific, he will guess at once that we are gone, when he sees that we are not here."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Well, it's not much use hanging on," he admitted. "Awfully sorry this has happened. It's a sell, and no mistake! Something must have happened to Wharton. We can leave a message for him, in case he turns up."

"Good egg!" said Nugent.

"You will come to tea at Cliff House," said Marjorie. "Miss Primrose will let us have our friends to tea in the school-room, Clara."

"Hear, hear!" said Miss Clara.

Bob Cherry hooked a lump of chalk out of the soil—so near the Kentish downs the earth was half chalk—and shaped it with his pocket-knife. Then he scrawled on a prominent slab of stone, part of the ruins of the old priory that had once stood on that spot:

"GONE TO CLIFF HOUSE. FOLLOW ON!"

Having left that message, which could not fail to catch Wharton's eyes if he came to the place at all, the juniors and Marjorie and Clara quitted the priory and walked back to Cliff House.

Miss Penelope Primrose, the Head of Cliff House School, graciously permitted the four juniors to tea there with their friends; after which, Bob Cherry & Co. bade farewell to Marjorie and Clara, and departed in a somewhat worried frame of mind.

Bunter was a very unreliable fellow, especially when he had a basket of tuck in his keeping; but Wharton could only have been prevented from keeping the appointment at the old priory by some mischance, they knew that.

Something had happened, and they wondered uneasily what it was. The most probable supposition seemed to be that the captain of the Remove had been spotted in getting Bunter off the island. What might have followed the juniors did not know, excepting that it was trouble of some sort.

They arrived at Greyfriars at last, and Bob called to Gosling as they went in at the gates:

"Has Wharton come in, Gosling?"

"Ain't seen him, sir," answered the school porter.

"Seen Bunter?"

"No, sir."

The juniors walked in. Arthur da Costa was lounging near the House, and he gave them a rather curious look. Da Costa had been long back at the school, and he had changed his clothes, and there was nothing about him to indicate how he had been occupied that afternoon. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's eyes turned on him with quite a momentary flash of keenness. Never for an hour had the Nabob of Bhanipur ceased to regard the Eurasian with distrust. The strange story Bunter had told, weeks before, of the talk he had overheard between Da Costa and Mr. Gedge, lingered in the nabob's mind, if in no other. But even to the nabob's keen and wary mind there was nothing to connect Da Costa with the mischance, whatever it was, that had happened to the captain of the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry called out to Skinner. "Seen anything of Wharton and Bunter, Skinner?"

Skinner and Snoop, who were loafing about as usual, cut across at once when they saw the Co. come in.

"You fellows nailed?" asked Skinner, with a grin.

"Eh—what?"

"Did they spot you on the island?" grinned Snoop.

"We haven't been on the island."

Skinner winked.

"Tell that to the Marines, or to Quelch!" he said.

"You silly chump," said Bob, "we chucked the island after the Head's new notice was put up. Have you seen Wharton or Bunter?"

"No. Are they on the island?"

"Find out!" grunted Bob.

The juniors went into the House. They soon discovered that Wharton and Bunter had not returned. Then they repaired to the boathouse, where they found that Wharton's skiff was not in its place there.

"Well, this beats the whole band!" said Bob. "Wharton can't have got back from the island yet; his skiff would be here. What on earth is he doing there all this time?"

"Blessed if I know!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Unless he's playing Robinson Crusoe, with Bunter for Man Friday."

"Something's happened," said Nugent. "I can't make it out; but something must be up. Wharton's not the man to have a boating accident—"

"Not likely. But something's happened," said Bob. "He must be still up the river, at any rate. We'd better run up in the boat. Lots of time before call-over. We can keep clear of that blessed island. Even old Popper can't grouse at a fellow passing it in a boat and looking at it."

And as there seemed nothing else useful to be done, the four juniors ran out the boat and pulled up the Sark, wondering what had happened, and by this time in a state of considerable uneasiness.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Luck and Pluck!

"**O**H!" gasped Joyce.

"Oh, crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

Wharton, clinging to the sagging branch of the elm, stared at the circles on the gleaming surface of the river.

The keeper's boat, caught in the swirling current, drifted swiftly away, and bumped into the rushes and reeds a score of yards down the Sark, and caught there. From the surface of the stream a bare head and a prominent

bony nose emerged, and Sir Hilton Popper gasped for air. The boat was already far out of his reach, but he was not far from the island. But a dozen feet of deep water might as well have been a dozen miles to a man who could not swim.

Only for a moment was the baronet's face visible. His first wild gulp took in air; his second, water. Gurgling wildly, Sir Hilton went under again, whirling away in the current.

There was a gasp of horror from Joyce.

"Sir Hilton—he'll be drowned!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

Splash!

The drooping branch shot up as Wharton's weight was taken from it. The sudden jolt unhooked the keeper from his hold, and Joyce dropped from the tree into the thickets below. Splashing in the margin of the stream, Harry Wharton was in the water, swimming with powerful strokes after the baronet.

Sir Hilton Popper came up again, struggling wildly and helplessly. Before he could disappear once more the captain of the Greyfriars Remove had grasped him.

With a grip on Sir Hilton's collar, Wharton kept his head above water, and Sir Hilton was able to breathe the atmosphere instead of the waters of the Sark.

"Grooogh!" gasped Sir Hilton.

"Ooooooch!"

Wharton, keeping himself and the baronet afloat, glanced round anxiously. The current had swept the struggling man past the spot where the keeper's boat was jammed in the rushes at the river-bank. It was impossible to reach the boat, and the island was already far behind. There was no help for Harry Wharton, and, in deep water and a rushing current, his life and the life of Sir Hilton Popper depended on his own efforts.

Fortunately, the captain of the Remove was a splendid swimmer; he was strong and fit, and his courage was unbounded. His task was a heavy one, for the baronet was quite unable to help himself. Wharton dared not let go of him for a second. But swimming with one hand, he slowly and laboriously guided himself towards the bank, allowing the current to carry him down to the bank of the Sark, and grabbed at a bush that grew half in the water.

"Oooch!" spluttered Sir Hilton.

"You can get hold now, sir!" panted Wharton.

"Grooogh!"

Sir Hilton grasped at the bush and held on. Wharton, relieved of his burden, scrambled ashore actively enough.

Then he helped the baronet up the bank.

Sir Hilton Popper sank down on the grassy towpath in a pool of water, gasping and spluttering wildly.

Wharton leaned against a tree across the path, breathing in great gasps. He had taken his life in his hand, though without stopping to think of that, in plunging into the river after Sir Hilton. But by luck and pluck he had won through; though he was aching and giddy with the strain of the struggle.

Sir Hilton sat up.

His hat was gone, his eyeglass was gone, his cane was gone. He was drenched to the skin; his clothes hung wet on his bony limbs, and he had a shrivelled look. His face, usually purple, was white as chalk.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Good gad! Oh!"

He staggered to his feet. He stared at the shining river rushing past, and



Sir Hilton Popper stared blankly at Bunter swinging from the elm branch. "Come down at once!" he roared. "How dare you hide yourself in a tree? Boy, descend!" Bunter descended. He had no intention of doing so, but his fat hands slipped on the branch. The Owl of the Remove shot down, to land in the thick grass with a thud! "Ow! Ow! Ow-wow! Yaroooh!"
(See Chapter 9.)

then stared at the exhausted junior leaning on the tree.

"Good gad!" he repeated.

Then he sneezed.

"Good gad! I shall catch cold! Grooogh!"

Wharton did not speak. He was hardly able either to speak or move just then. He had overtaxed his strength, and he was fagged out. He leaned on the tree, breathing hard and deep.

"You young rascal!" said Sir Hilton Popper. "You young scamp! I might have been drowned! What?"

He sneezed again.

"You young scamp! You might have been drowned, too! Huh!" He glared at Harry Wharton. "Wait here!"

The tall gentleman tramped away up the towpath. Wharton had no choice about waiting there, as he was told. Sir Hilton's part had been mostly passive in the struggle in the river, and Wharton's had been active, and the junior was quite spent. He hardly heard what the baronet said, and gave him no thought. He could only rest where he was till his strength revived.

Sir Hilton's long legs carried him quickly enough to the spot where the boat had caught in the rushes. He stepped into it, grasped the oars, and rowed across to the island. Joyce and Billy Bunter stared at him as he came.

"Get in!" said the baronet curtly.

"Take the oars, Joyce."

Billy Bunter rolled into the boat. He did not even think of the basket of tuck at that moment. In the stress of the almost tragic happening, the Owl of the Remove had forgotten even the tuck.

Sir Hilton rapped out an order to Joyce. The boat pulled down to the place where Wharton stood on the towpath and nosed into the rushes.

"Get into the boat, Wharton."

The junior did not stir. At a sign from Sir Hilton, Joyce stepped out. Sir Hilton held the boat fast while the keeper lifted the junior in. Resistance was impossible; the captain of the Remove dropped heavily in the stern seat. Sir Hilton snapped at Joyce again, and the keeper took the oars, and the boat turned up the river, Joyce pulling strongly against the current.

"Faster!" snapped Sir Hilton.

Joyce was already pulling his hardest. Billy Bunter blinked dolefully at the green banks rushing past. He was booked for Popper Court now—to be taken back to Greyfriars as a trespasser! On that point there seemed to be no doubt, and Bunter's fat face was glum and dismal.

The Popper Court boathouse was soon reached. There the baronet took hold of Harry Wharton's arm and led him ashore. He gave Bunter a glare.

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"Follow me!"

"Ow! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled dismally after the baronet and Wharton. Joyce stared after them, with a peculiar expression on his tanned face. His private opinion of Sir Hilton Popper was that he was a peppery old rip—that was Joyce's own description of his master in his own circle of friends at the Peal of Bells. But Wharton had, in all probability, saved the baronet's life, and Joyce wondered that even a peppery old rip wasn't satisfied with that.

Billy Bunter's steps grew slower and slower as they came in sight of the mansion of Popper Court. Sir Hilton was not looking back at him—was giving him no attention whatever—seemed, in fact, to have utterly forgotten his fat existence. There are times when it is quite agreeable to be forgotten, and this was one of them. Bunter's steps lagged more and more, his big spectacles gleaming at the baronet's back, more and more distant to the view. Bunter stopped at last, and rolled away in another direction. No calling voice came to his anxious ears; Sir Hilton had evidently forgotten him.

Billy Bunter rolled away through the park with a wary eye open for keepers, clambered over a fence, and dropped into a lane. While the captain of the Remove was marched into Popper Court, William George Bunter was hoofing it for Greyfriars School—slowly, wearily, with many winding miles before his lagging feet; but glad, at least, to have escaped from Sir Hilton Popper, and debating in his fat mind whether by calling on all his wonderful powers of fabrication he would be able to convince the Head that he hadn't been on Popper's Island at all that day.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Painful Prospects!

POPPER'S ISLAND was silent and deserted when Bob Cherry & Co. arrived in their boat. The juniors laid on their oars, and Bob stood up and shouted.

"Wharton! Bunter!"

Bob's voice carried right across the island and to a considerable distance on both sides of the river. It woke a thousand echoes, which answered him; but he received no other answer.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob.

The woods answered, "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" but that was all.

"They're not there!" said Nugent.

"Must have heard me, if they're not deaf," said Bob.

"If they're not deaf, you mean!" said Johnny Bull. "A deaf man would have heard that yell anywhere up to ten miles."

"Fathead! What's become of them?"

"Goodness knows! Can't see Wharton's skiff here," said Nugent. "Blessed if I can make head or tail of it!"

"They seem to have vanished away like a pair of giddy Boojums!" said Bob. "I'm going ashore to look for them. Pull in."

The boat glided under the willow where Wharton had tied the skiff long before. The hanging rope caught Bob Cherry across the face, and he gave an ejaculation.

"That's a boat's painter, and it's been cut! They must have got off in a fearful hurry if they had to cut the painter. What the merry thump has been happening on this jolly old island this afternoon? Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the grub-basket!"

Bob jumped ashore, and one of the first objects to catch his eye was the big picnic-basket. He stared at it.

"They've gone, and left the grub!" He looked into the basket. "Bunter's been here, right enough! Half the grub's gone! But where are they?"

It was a complete problem for the quartette. The rope on the willow showed that a craft had been tied up there that day, it having been cut with a knife looked as if the owner had departed in a great hurry. But if Wharton and Bunter had left the island in the skiff, why had they not taken the picnic-basket? And what had become of them, anyhow? A sudden alarm might have caused them to cut the painter and clear, but they seemed to have vanished into space.

"They're not at the school, and they're not here," said Nugent. "They haven't been back to the boathouse. They can't have gone up the river when we were expecting them at the Priory. But if they haven't, where are they?"

"Ask me another!" said Bob.

"If anything happened to them on the way back, where's the dashed skiff?" said Johnny Bull. "It must be somewhere; and it's nowhere between the school raft and here. Is this blessed island haunted?"

Bob Cherry lifted the picnic-basket into the boat. It seemed impossible that any accident could have happened on the island; but the juniors spent some minutes searching through the thickets. Only the traces of footsteps rewarded them; and Bob Cherry, who had a keen Scout's eye, examined the trampled greensward attentively.

It was easy to pick out the traces of men's boots among the tracks that had evidently been left by the schoolboys.

"Lots of hoof-marks here," said Bob. "All fresh, and four different sizes! One pair of number elevens has been here—a keeper's, of course. It's getting clear, old chaps! Wharton and Bunter were spotted on the island, and taken off by keepers. They must have got here in a boat, and I suppose they towed the skiff away."

"Looks like it!" said Johnny Bull.

He had examined the tracks, and come to the same conclusion.

Bob gave an expressive grunt.

"It was rotten bad luck! Wharton had to take the chance to get Bunter off the island, and he got grabbed along with him! There'll be a fearful row at Greyfriars over this!"

"The rowfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dismally. "The fogfulness is a dead cert!"

The juniors returned to the boat. Wharton and Bunter and the skiff had vanished, and the tracks of men's boots in the greensward and in the mud of the island margin told their own tale. In a dismal mood the four juniors pulled back to the school boathouse.

"And it was going to be such a jolly afternoon!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"The jolliffulness will not be great," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dolefully. "The esteemed Wharton will be flogged. The Head will be infuriated!"

"Well, he's bound to be waxy at Wharton going right off to the island just after the beak had specially warned him off!" said Bob.

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Nugent.

The juniors put up the boat and walked up to the school. It was borne in upon the minds of all of them that it would have been judicious, in the first place, to pay a little more heed to school bounds. It was true that Sir Hilton Popper had no real right to prohibit landing on the island; but that was not the point; the spot was out of

bounds, and the headmaster's decision should have been a law to all Greyfriars fellows. The juniors realised that now; a little late in the day, certainly. What was done could not be undone.

So far as they could learn from fellows in the quad, nothing had been heard of Wharton at the school yet. If he was in a sort of custody at Popper Court, Sir Hilton seemed in no hurry to part with him. But as the Co. stood in a dismal group discussing the possibilities, a fat and weary figure rolled in at the gates, and plugged on to the House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!"

The Co. surrounded the fat junior at once, all asking questions. Billy Bunter, fatigued and morose, blinked at them through his big spectacles, indignant and resentful.

"Blow Wharton!" was his reply.

"Where is he, fathead?" howled Bob Cherry.

"Has old Popper got him, you ass?"

"Where have you been?"

"What's happened, you crass chump?"

"Go and eat coke!" howled Bunter. "I'm tired! I'm fagged out! I'm hungry! Blow Wharton! Old Popper's got him, and he got me, too, only I had sense enough to dodge away and hook it. Wharton hadn't! Serve him right—getting a fellow into a scrape like this!"

"That settles it!" said Bob. "He's at Popper Court, then?"

"Yes, he is, and blow him!" growled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Wharton will be flogged—that's a cert! But I'm jolly well not going to be flogged! See? I'm going to tell the Head that I wasn't on the island at all."

"What's the good of lying, fathead, if old Popper spotted you there?" snapped Johnny Bull.

"Beast! You fellows can swear that I was with you all the time—"

"What!"

"Your word is as good as old Popper's any day!" said Bunter argumentatively. "He can be satisfied with getting Wharton flogged! You fellows all stand together and swear that I was with you at the old Priory, and never out of your sight for a minute! That ought to see me through all right! What?"

"You fat villain!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, stop kicking me, you beast! Yaroooooh! Ow!" Billy Bunter dodged away and fled into the House.

Arthur da Costa tapped him on the arm, as he rolled wearily into the Remove passage.

"Where is Wharton, Bunter?" asked the Eurasian.

"Find out!" grunted Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was too tired to remember his manners—such as they were.

"I hope he is not caught on Popper's Island," said Da Costa.

Bunter glared at him.

"Rats!" he answered. "You're jolly glad! Yah! Not that I was on the island," he added. "I've been at the pictures in Courtfield all the afternoon. What are you grinning at, you beast? Old Popper can swear that he saw me on the island, if he likes. The Head will take my word. He knows me!"

"Yess?" lisped the Eurasian. "Will anyone who knows you take your word, Bunter? You surprise me!"

"I don't want any cheek from a nigger!" yapped Bunter, and, leaving the half-caste scowling blackly at that epithet, he rolled on to Study No. 7, where he plumped down into the armchair, with a plump that made the chair creak and the study almost shake.

Peter Todd was in the study, and he

glanced inquiringly at the fat, dusty, perspiring Owl.

"Had a jolly good time?" he asked. "You look it!"

"Oh, ripping!" gasped Bunter. "I've been watching a cricket match over at Highcliffe, Toddy!"

"Eh! Haven't you been on the island?"

"What island?" demanded Bunter. "I don't know anything about any island."

Peter looked at him. There had been no secret in the Remove about the little excursion planned for that afternoon. Peter had supposed that the Owl had been there, and as Bunter denied having been there, the inference was that he most certainly had been there!

"Didn't you go to Popper's Island, after all?" asked Peter.

"No! Forgot there was such an island! You see, the Head's put a new notice on the board about that island, so I never went," explained Bunter. "Wharton told me about the notice when he came to take me off."

"To take you off what?"

"Eh! Oh! Nothing!"

"Not the island you haven't been on?" grinned Peter.

"Certainly not! Don't you go spreading it round that I've been on Popper's Island, Peter," said Bunter anxiously. "I wouldn't, you know—I never break bounds, on principle. Some chaps have principle, I hope! Old Popper's got Wharton, and he's going to stick to him and hand him over to the Head. He may say he saw me on the island. He may fancy he did. If he makes out that he saw me there, I shall tell the Head plainly that the old codger was seeing double. Very likely he drinks!"

"Oh, my hat!" yelled Peter. "I wouldn't tell the Head that!"

"Well, a fellow's bound to tell the truth—"

"The truth! Ye gods!" gasped Peter.

"I say, Peter, the Head may not take my word—"

"He may not!" agreed Peter. "Very probable, I think."

"But if you come with me to him, and swear—"

"Come with you to the Head and swear! My dear chap, I never swear even in my own study! Catch me swearing in the Head's study!"

"You silly chump! Swear that you were with me at the pictures all the time in Courtfield—"

"All the time you were watching the cricket match at Highcliffe?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean, old fat man! If you're asking me to tell lies I'm going to kick you! Now, are you asking me to tell lies?"

"Beast!" growled Bunter, and let it drop at that. Evidently Peter Todd was not the eye-witness he required.

Softly, outside Study No. 7, Da Costa stepped away. His black eyes gleamed. So Harry Wharton had been taken into personal custody by Sir Hilton Popper, and was to be handed over to the headmaster by the baronet! That made the matter about as serious as it could be made.

Arthur da Costa, as he walked away, felt that he had not wasted his time that afternoon. He began his long and difficult task at last, and all was going well. Slowly but surely the meshes of the net were to wind about the unsuspecting captain of the Remove—slowly but surely, till he was hopelessly entangled.

Bob Cherry and his friends, at the door of the House, were waiting and watching glumly for Harry Wharton's return. They knew what to expect from

what they had learned from Bunter. Either Sir Hilton would telephone to the school for a master to be sent to fetch Wharton, or he would bring the delinquent to Greyfriars in person. In either case, the most serious kind of trouble was to follow. Had Bob Cherry and Co. guessed what was passing in the mind of Arthur da Costa, the Eurasian would have been booked for a lively time. Fortunately for him they did not.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter in Search of an Alibi!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"It's jolly old Bunter!" said Skinner, with a chuckle, as the Owl of the Remove rolled into the Rag. "One of the bad boys, you men! One of the naughty bad lads who are going to be walloped!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"
"Had a good time on the island?" grinned Snoop.

Bunter blinked at Skinner & Co. He had been looking for them, and he had found them in the Rag—loafing, as usual, after tea.

Bunter, like the elder Mr. Weller, was pinning his faith to an alibi. Harry Wharton, bagged by the baronet, was hopelessly caught out. When Wharton was marched into the school in the personal custody of Sir Hilton Popper, he would not be able to deny that Sir Hilton had bagged him, even if disposed to adopt Bunter's methods of getting out of a scrape. But the Owl of the Remove was more favourably circumstanced. He had got away. He had walked into Greyfriars on his own.

There was nothing to prove that he had been on the rotten old island at all—only the fact that Sir Hilton Popper had seen him there. Certainly, that was somewhat convincing evidence—so far as it went. But Bunter did not despair. One fellow's word was as good as another's, he considered. Bunter's own word was, perhaps, not readily taken by anybody at Greyfriars—he had to admit that his Form master did not rely upon his statements, and that even his Form-fellows—who should have known him—regarded him as a fibber who left Ananias and George Washington hopelessly in the shade. His bare word was really not likely to be taken against Sir Hilton's explicit statement. It was hard, it was beastly, it was unjust; but there it was—it was the fact, and Bunter had to deal with the facts! An alibi was the thing!

If he could prove an alibi, all was well! Obviously, if he had been somewhere else, he could not have been on Popper's Island when old Popper supposed that he had seen him there! His own word—good as gold as it was—was not enough; but a few eye-witnesses would do the trick! Peter Todd had let him down—indeed, offered to kick him for the suggestion. Skinner & Co. were not so particular. Therefore, the Owl of the Remove rolled in search of Skinner & Co., with the hope of establishing an alibi with their kind assistance.

He would have preferred fellows like Bob Cherry and Peter Todd, with a reputation for truthfulness, as his witnesses. Skinner & Co. had not a high reputation in that line. But Bunter realised that a reputation for truthfulness, and a readiness to tell lies, could not easily be found in the same person. The two things really did not go together. So Harold Skinner and

his friends were Bunter's only resource.

Skinner & Co. surrounded him, grinning. They were deriving great entertainment from the misadventures of the Famous Five that afternoon. They had seen the four chums waiting at the door—like a set of moulting fowls, as Skinner described them. For once that happy circle of juniors looked thoroughly dismal; wherefore, Skinner looked merry and bright. Skinner had one of those agreeable natures which could always derive entertainment from the misfortunes of others.

Bunter's worried and lugubrious looks were more than enough to tell Skinner & Co. that bad luck had fallen on the picnicers—even if they had not known it already from the dismal aspect of the four fellows waiting for Wharton to come in.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, after a cautious blink round the Rag—"I say, where have you been this afternoon?"

"Oh, loafing around!" said Skinner. "Not on any jolly old island out of bounds, like the bad lads who are going to be flogged!"

"Suppose I was with you?" suggested Bunter.

"Eh! What?"

"I'll tell you exactly how it stands," said Bunter, while Skinner & Co. stared at him. "Old Popper is going to make out that I was on that beastly island with Wharton. Of course I wasn't. He's got Wharton at Popper Court now—he bagged him all right. I got away—I mean I wasn't there."

"Did he see you there?" asked Snoop.

"He couldn't have, as I wasn't there," said Bunter. "But I know he's going to make out that he did. He's unscrupulous, you know. The Head will take his word before mine. But if you fellows would rally round, and come with me to the Head, that will make it all right. Old Popper will have to admit that he was mistaken, if it's proved that I was with you all the afternoon. See?"

Skinner & Co. gasped. They could not quite "see" themselves going to the Head with a statement like that.

"You see, old Popper can't feel so jolly certain about me," went on Bunter. "He saw another chap with Wharton. Well, Remove chaps are much alike, ain't they? As I got away, he can't swear that it was me. Might have been any chap, really."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner & Co. William George Bunter seemed a little unaware of the fact that he rather stood out from the rest of the Remove, in personal appearance. It was true that a good many of the Remove fellows looked much alike, at a casual glance. But William George Bunter was the only member of that Form who was double-width.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Bunter peevishly. "Look here, the Head's bound to take your word, if you all stick to it. Suppose I was watching a cricket match at Courtfield Picture Palace—I mean, suppose we all went to see the pictures at Highcliffe—I—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Better get it a little clearer than that before you pitch it to the Head!" yelled Skinner.

"I expect my pals to rally round at a time like this," said Bunter warmly. "It means a flogging if I don't stuff the Head—I mean, if he doesn't believe that old Popper was making a silly mistake, you know. He was! I never

was on the island at all! I went to Lantham to see a football match—"

"A what?" roared Bolsover major. "I mean a cricket match. You fellows came with me, see? Pitch it hot and strong, and the Head will take it in!"

"My only hat!" said Snoop. "You want us to walk into the lion's den, and tell the Beak a string of whoppers to get you off a licking?"

"Oh, don't give me any of that: I've had that from Bob Cherry and Toddy already!" snapped Bunter. "I've come specially to speak to you fellows because you don't mind telling whoppers."

"What?" roared Bolsover major. "You catch my meaning?" asked Bunter. "You being an awful liar, you know, Bolsover, old chap, you won't mind one more."

Bolsover major glared speechlessly at Bunter. If he was, as Bunter happily pointed out, an awful liar, he did not seem to relish the pointing out of that circumstance.

"And you're a worse fibber than Bolsover, Snoop—and you, Skinner—well, every man in the Remove knows what a liar you are!" said Bunter, blinking at the three. "I'm putting this to you fellows because you're not so particular as other chaps, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner. "We're not so particular as other chaps, aren't we?"

"That's it! As you don't mind telling lies, you know—"

That this way of putting it was a little lacking in tact did not occur to the powerful brain of William George Bunter. He was, therefore, quite unprepared for what followed.

Why Skinner & Co. collared him, banged his head on the table, kicked him, and finally hurled him headlong out of the Rag, Bunter did not know. It was quite a mystery to him.

But they did! Why they did it might be doubtful; but there was no doubt at all that they did it! Bunter found himself extended in a more or less graceful attitude in the passage outside, and the door slammed on him.

It was some minutes before the fat junior recovered his breath, after this unaccountable outbreak on the part of Skinner & Co. He did not enter the Rag again—he had had enough of Skinner & Co. He rolled away dismally to the Remove passage, feeling that the prospect of establishing an alibi was decidedly doubtful. In the Remove passage, however, he came on Hazeldene; and his hopes rose once more. The poet tells us that hope springs eternal in the human breast; and that was certainly the case with William George Bunter.

"I say, Hazel, old chap," exclaimed Bunter, "you're just the fellow I want to see. I'm in a scrape."

Hazel grinned. Most of the Remove knew by this time that the picnic party were in a scrape.

"Old Popper makes out that I was on his beastly island," explained Bunter. "I wasn't, you know! I've been to the pictures, and"—Bunter sunk his voice confidentially—"I want a chap to mention that he saw me there—to speak out, you know, to the Head, in a frank and manly way. See? What about it?"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Hazel. "Try next door!"

"Oh, really, Hazel! You ought to help me out of this," urged Bunter. "Think of Marjorie, you know."

Hazeldene stared at him. "What about Marjorie?" he asked. "Marjorie's got nothing to do with it. The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,061.

The girls never went to the island, after all."

"I mean, what will she feel like if she hears I've been flogged?" urged Bunter. "You know Marjorie's rather sweet on me, old chap—"

"Eh?" "Absolutely spoony, in fact. And so—Yaroooh!"

Cases of assault and battery, for no reason that Bunter could comprehend, seemed to be quite common in the Remove that day. Hazeldene, as if annoyed somehow by Bunter's remarking on the fact—well known to Bunter, if to nobody else—that Marjorie Hazeldene was "spoony" in his fat direction, seized the Owl of the Remove by the collar, banged his head on the passage wall, sat him down on the floor, and kicked him. Bunter yelled, and roared, and squirmed. Hazel did not seem satisfied with one kick; he went on kicking Bunter, as if he found enjoyment in it, or was taking it on as a form of physical jerks. Bunter rolled over, roaring and yelling, and by the time he escaped into Study No. 7 and slammed the door, he was feeling as if he had been under a traction engine.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Wow! Oh, dear! Beast! Ow!"

Billy Bunter gave up his search for an alibi after that. For quite a long time he was too busy rubbing his injuries, and groaning over them, to think about alibis.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

All's Well that Ends Well!

MR. QUELCH looked surprised. The Remove master was standing at his study window, gazing out into the sunset over the quad. Having finished the various tasks that generally kept him busy on a half-holiday, Mr. Quelch was taking a little rest and enjoying the beauties of nature. Old trees, thick in summer green, ancient buildings, clad with almost equally ancient ivy—storied windows, richly lighted—met the pleased gaze of the Remove master, who never tired of the view from his study window. Of a more modern and less picturesque nature was the broad drive that approached the House, and on the drive appeared a vehicle of a still more modern, and still less picturesque nature—a motor-car! That was why Mr. Quelch looked surprised.

The sight of the car in itself would not, of course, have surprised him. But this particular car he knew belonged to Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court. And the tall, angular figure of the baronet been seated in the car, Mr. Quelch would not have been surprised. But the car had only one occupant—a schoolboy! And that schoolboy was Harry Wharton, of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch fairly blinked. Wharton of the Remove had doubtless spent his half-holiday out of gates, but that he should return to the school in Sir Hilton Popper's car, driven by Sir Hilton's own liveried chauffeur, was most surprising.

It was not only surprising to Mr. Quelch. It was amazing to Bob Cherry & Co., waiting for Wharton, and expecting every minute to see him arrive with a frowning and incensed baronet. At the sight of the car they supposed that Sir Hilton had come with his prisoner. But at the sight of Wharton sitting alone in the car they did not know what to think—especially as they could see that the junior's face was cheery and smiling.

Skinner & Co. stared from the big window of the Rag. Other fellows gathered round in various directions, all looking on. A fellow who came home from a half-holiday in state, like this, was worth looking at. Arthur da Costa sighted him from an upper window, and came hurrying down, amazed. The look on Wharton's face was sufficient to tell him that matters were not as he supposed—as he had planned. Something had gone wrong—something he could not divine—but it was obvious at a glance that the captain of the Remove was not returning to Greyfriars as a delinquent.

The big car halted, and the chauffeur dismounted and opened the door. Harry Wharton stepped out.

He gave his friends a cheery nod and a grin. Sir Hilton's chauffeur saluted him with a grave politeness and toolled the car away, leaving Harry Wharton standing in the midst of an interested and rather excited crowd. Before his friends could demand an explanation, however, Mr. Quelch came rustling out. The Remove master wanted to know!

"Wharton!" "Yes, sir!" said Harry cheerily.

"You appear to have returned to the school in Sir Hilton Popper's car," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "Sir Hilton was kind enough to offer me a lift home in his car, sir, as I have been to Popper Court."

"Oh," said Mr. Quelch. "You have visited Sir Hilton at Popper Court?"

"Yes, sir; he met me by the river and insisted upon my walking to the Court with him," said Harry.

Mr. Quelch could not help feeling puzzled. He was glad, of course, to see that a boy in his Form was apparently on such amicable terms with a governor of the school. But he had never even imagined that Sir Hilton Popper had any sort of kind regard for Remove fellows.

"I am aware, sir," went on Wharton, with deep respect, "that Popper Court is outside school bounds, sir. But Sir Hilton being a governor of the school, and insisting upon my going there, sir, I did not feel that I could refuse."

"Quite so, Wharton—quite so!" said Mr. Quelch. "Certainly you could not have refused such a request from a governor of the school. In view of the disputes that have sometimes occurred I am very pleased at this. I trust you have had a pleasant visit to Popper Court."

"Very pleasant, sir—I had a ripping tea!" said Harry.

Mr. Quelch smiled. "I am glad to hear it," he said, and went back to the House, leaving Wharton to his friends.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry blankly. "You had a ripping tea with the old Popper bird, Harry?"

"Yes, old chap." "And he didn't bite?" "Not at all!"

"Well, it beats me!" said Bob. "The beatfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"How did you wangle it, Wharton?" shouted Skinner from the window of the Rag.

Wharton took no heed of that question. He went into the House with his friends. The Co. could see plainly enough that there was something behind all this, and that Wharton did not intend to mention what it was until he was out of hearing of ears that it did not concern.

Da Costa stepped aside from the doorway as the Famous Five came in. His



"I've come specially to speak to you fellows," said Bunter, "because you don't mind telling whoppers." "What?" roared Bolsover major. "You catch my meaning?" asked Bunter. "You're an awful liar, Bolsover, old chap. And you're a worse fibber than Bolsover, Snoop—and you, Skinner—well, every man in the Remove knows what a liar you are!" (See Chapter 13.)

face was almost white. He could not understand; but he knew that somehow, strangely, mysteriously, he was defeated. The chums of the Remove passed him without heeding him, only Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh's eyes dwelling on his white, disturbed face for a second. Feeling, rather than observing, the nabob's penetrating glance, Da Costa controlled himself instantly. It was as if his face had been ironed out, so suddenly and completely did all expression disappear from it. But one flashing glance had been enough for the nabob.

Not till the chums of the Remove were in Study No. 1, with the door shut, did Harry Wharton explain.

"Cough it up, old bean!" said Johnny Bull. "You've got us all gasping."

"We are on the tenter-hooks of curiosity," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Wharton told very succinctly what had happened on the island. Hurree Singh's eyes glinted as he heard how the skiff had been removed, leaving the juniors stranded. The captain of the Remove passed very lightly over the rescue of the baronet.

"Old Popper took a header without intending to," he explained. "I went in for him—it was nothing, really. I grabbed his nibs with one hand and steered for the bank with the other. But, of course, as he couldn't swim, he might have gone under and stayed there. He marched me off to Popper Court, Bunter tagging on behind. But Bunter seems to have vanished on the way."

"The fat chump!" exclaimed Nugent. "He came back and told us old Popper had got you, but never said anything about your going into the river—"

"If we'd known that we shouldn't have been so jolly anxious," said Bob. "Old Popper was bound to cool off after that."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I never expected it," he said. "He was as grim as a gargoyle, marching me into the house. I was pretty well knocked out, and didn't care much what happened just then. I only wanted to rest a bit. But when we got into Popper Court he handed me over to the butler, and I could see by that time that his bark was worse than his bite. I had a hot bath while my clothes were dried, and the butler found me a dressing-gown to wrap in while I had tea. And they brought me a topping tea—by Sir Hilton's orders, of course. I could hardly make it all out, but there it was! I suppose he thought it was up to him, after I'd fished him out."

"And then?" asked Nugent.

"After tea they brought back my clothes, nicely dried, and, I think, ironed, they looked so nice," grinned Wharton. "They don't look now as if they'd been in the water, do they? Then I was brought down to Sir Hilton, in the library. He snorted at me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I didn't mind his snorting," said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "He barked out at me that he was letting me off because I'd fished him out of the river—said it was plucky, and some stuff like that—and then went on to tell me what an impudent young scoundrel I was to have been on the island at all."

The juniors chuckled. They could picture the irate old gentleman, torn between the necessity of acknowledging a great service, and the desire to lay his stick round the shoulders of the cheeky trespasser.

"He gave me that tosh for a good ten minutes," said Wharton cheerfully. "I let him rip, of course. He worked himself into a passion, and I began to think

that he was going to lay into me with the tongs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he cooled off again when the butler put his head in to announce that the car was ready. It seems that he'd ordered the car to bring me back here. I was all right by that time, and could have walked; still, I was glad enough of a lift. He came out to see me into the car. He shook hands with me—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And while he was shaking hands, told me that if I ever set foot on the island again, he would take all the skin off my back."

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

"And so here I am," grinned Wharton. "It's turned out jolly well, only I'm awfully sorry about keeping the girls waiting at the priory, and you fellows."

"You couldn't help that," said Bob. "Thank goodness it's turned out all right. Old Popper won't be reporting you to the Head."

"Not this time! Next time!" said Wharton, with a grin. "But I'm jolly well going to give the island a wide berth after this!"

"Yes, rather! I'm fed-up with Popper and his island," said Bob. "As a matter of fact, old chap, we ought not to have arranged to picnic out of bounds. It's not really the thing."

"Right as rain!" agreed Wharton. "We've had rather a lesson about that."

"But where's the skiff?" asked Johnny Bull.

Wharton's brow darkened at that. "Hidden somewhere, or stolen," he said. "We've got to find out where it is, and who bagged it, if we can."

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh opened his lips, but closed them again. He realised that it would serve no useful purpose to

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utter the vague suspicions that were floating in his mind. He suspected Da Costa; but suspicion without a vestige of proof was better unspoken.

The door of Study No. 1 opened suddenly, without a tap. Billy Bunter rolled in. The fat Owl, grunting over his woes in Study No. 7, had learned at last of Wharton's return.

"I say, you fellows, is Wharton here? Oh, you've got back, Wharton!" said Bunter, blinking at him.

"Adsum!" said Harry cheerily.

"Well, I'm sorry you're going to be flogged, and all that, of course," said Bunter. "But the point is, I'm not going to be flogged, see?"

The juniors chuckled. Bunter's terrors were, after all, without foundation. As Sir Hilton did not intend to report Wharton to the headmaster, it was obvious that he would not report the junior who had been with Wharton; indeed, it was rather clear that he had forgotten the fat Owl entirely. Bunter, however, was still deeply concerned—for himself! He was never likely to be very deeply concerned for any other individual.

"I've been let down all round by fellows I've done a lot for," went on the Owl of the Remove. "I'm relying on you, Wharton. I expect you to tell the Head, in a frank and manly way, that I never was on the island at all. As you were there, of course, you can speak as an eye-witness."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Old Popper can say what he likes," said Bunter. "An unscrupulous man like that would say anything to get a fellow a flogging. I expect you to stand by me, Wharton, like a pal. Swear that I never was there, and the Head's bound to take your word, see? It's up to you!"

"Oh, kill him somebody!" said Harry. "Look here, you beast, if you think I'm going to be flogged to please you—"

"You fat rotter!" hooted Bob. "There's not going to be any flogging, or any report to the beak. Why didn't you tell us about Wharton pulling the old dodger out of the river?"

"Eh? I forgot."

"Forgot!" roared Bob.

"I've got rather more important things to think of than that," sniffed Bunter. "What did it matter?"

"That's why old Popper's let the matter drop, you burbling chump!"

"Oh, is it? Well, if he's let the matter drop, all right," said Bunter, in great relief. "I say, you fellows, the grub-basket was left on the island—"

"We've brought that home, fathead!" Bunter glared at Bob Cherry.

"You've brought the grub home! And you didn't tell me! You beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is it?" roared Bunter. "That's important!"

But William George Bunter did not learn where the grub was till supper-time, when what remained of the picnic supplies adorned the table in Study No. 1. And Bunter, as he disposed of the lion's share of the tuck, felt at long last that the day had been a success, after all, and that life really was worth living.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Card!

HARRY WHARTON received a message from the boatkeeper the following morning, and in morning break he went down to the boathouse. His skiff was there.

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It had been found hidden in the thickets by the towpath by Joyce, the keeper, and returned by Sir Hilton Popper's order. Wharton was glad enough to see his skiff again; but he was deeply perplexed and puzzled. In morning break the Famous Five discussed the matter, but they had to admit that there was no clue to the unknown hand that had taken the skiff from the island.

"It was some rotter who wanted to get you into a row," said Nugent. "We know that much. He was jolly deep about it, too. If he'd cut the skiff adrift, and let it go, it might have caught in the bank, as the keeper's boat did, as you've told us. He foresaw all that. You could have swum after it and got it back. He was a cunning rotter, whoever he was."

"But who would be awful rotter enough to play such a trick?" said Bob Cherry.

"Goodness knows! Not a Greyfriars chap, I hope."

Once more Hurree Jamset Ram Singh opened his lips, and closed them again without uttering his thoughts. But his glance rested for a moment on the lithe figure of Arthur da Costa, pacing thoughtfully and moodily under the elms. His suspicion had grown into almost a certainty, but it was too nebulous for discussion. His friends were not the fellows to take much heed of a suspicion that was unsupported by a particle of evidence. It was useless to speak; but it was useful to watch, and Captain Marker's emissary at Greyfriars had to reckon upon the unsleeping vigilance of a fellow to whom the craft and wiles of the East were an open book.

While the chums of the Remove were discussing the matter, Arthur da Costa was thinking, moodily and savagely. Somehow—he could not imagine how—his scheme had failed; all had gone well up to a point, and after that the whole thing had collapsed unaccountably. It was a blow to the schemer, and it was deeply irritating. Neither the Head nor Mr. Quelch had the slightest knowledge of the fact that Wharton had gone out of bounds at all that half-holiday. No word had come from Sir Hilton Popper. It was a baffling and impenetrable mystery to the Eurasian. But he made up his mind at last, and a few minutes before the bell rang for third lesson Da Costa went into the House and proceeded to Mr. Quelch's study.

The Remove master was there, preparing papers that were required for third lesson. He gave Da Costa an impatient glance.

"What is it, Da Costa? You are interrupting me."

"Yes, sir," said Da Costa. "I am sorry, sir, but I have something to say that I think you ought to know, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp look.

"Be brief!" he said.

"I think you ought to know, sir, that some Remove boys were on Popper's Island yesterday afternoon, sir."

"What?"

"Wharton, the head boy of the Form—"

"Indeed?" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"Yes, sir."

"And how do you know this, Da Costa?"

"I saw him there, sir."

"You saw my head boy, Wharton, on Popper's Island yesterday afternoon? Take care of what you say, Da Costa."

"Yes, sir. I saw him, and I will say so to the Head himself. Sir Hilton Popper saw him also."

"Sir Hilton Popper has made no such report here."

"I know, sir; but I do not know why. But if you should ask him, he will tell you so, for it is true."

Mr. Quelch, forgetful of the papers he was preparing for third lesson, sat with his eyes fixed on the Eurasian. There was a short silence.

"You are new here, Da Costa," said Mr. Quelch at last. "You are, perhaps, unaccustomed to our ways. You have much to learn. The first and most important lesson you can learn here, is that tale-bearing is not encouraged at Greyfriars; that it is, indeed, regarded as contemptible by masters and boys alike."

Da Costa's olive face flushed.

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Your statement may be true or false," said Mr. Quelch. "I am prevented from investigating it, by the way in which the statement reaches me. I cannot make use of information given me by a tale-bearer—a despicable informer."

"Oh, sir!"

"Never let this happen again, Da Costa. If you should come to me on another occasion to give me secret information gained by spying on your Form-fellows, it will be my duty to punish you severely. Such conduct is not allowed at Greyfriars."

Da Costa breathed hard.

"But there is one question I must put to you," added Mr. Quelch grimly. "You say you saw Wharton on the island in the river."

"Yes, sir."

"Where were you at the time? The island cannot be seen from any spot that is within school bounds. On your own confession, you were out of bounds yourself yesterday afternoon; you were guilty of the same infraction of rules of which you accuse a schoolfellow."

Da Costa was silent.

Mr. Quelch picked up his cane.

"I cannot use your information against another boy. That is impossible. But I am bound to take notice of your own confession regarding your own conduct. You transgressed school bounds yesterday afternoon."

Da Costa set his lips. Mr. Quelch rose and pointed to a chair with his cane.

"Bend over that chair, Da Costa!"

Swish! Swish!

"Now go!"

The Eurasian went.

He wriggled uncomfortably in his form when the Remove assembled for third lesson. But he noted that when Mr. Quelch came in his glance rested on Harry Wharton sharply, grimly, frowningly. Information received from a "sneak" Mr. Quelch could not act upon; nevertheless, it was in his mind, and he now knew.

Harry Wharton, quite unconscious of what was in Mr. Quelch's mind, was surprised and considerably irritated to find his Form-master very uncommonly sharp with him in third lesson.

His face was resentful when the Remove were dismissed, and the Remove master's eye followed him frowningly to the door.

The schemer had failed, but he had not wholly failed.

There was a cloud on Wharton's horizon—a cloud as yet no larger than a man's hand. Was it to grow, till it darkened all things for the unsuspecting junior? That remained to be seen.

THE END.

(Make sure you read the next story in this magnificent series, entitled: "THE SCHEMER OF THE REMOVE!" It is, without doubt, one of Frank Richards' greatest yarns, chums!)

WIND UP!—Not for fifty thousand pounds profit would Pal Jordan willingly enter the ring against Tiny Scannan, for Pal Jordan's got a yellow streak and he knows it. The thing is now for Jordan to dodge the fight. How's he going to do it?

THE MAN OF IRON!

By

WALTER EDWARDS.



A rousing story introducing "Tiny" Scannan, who turns the scale at eighteen stone.

Allen Gets Suspicious!

HOW do you feel, my dear fellow?"

"Fit to fight any three men in the world, of any size and any colour!"

It was Sir Aubrey Ailen who put the question, and the Man of Iron who answered it, and the latter certainly appeared to be in magnificent trim as he stood up and stretched his big-limbed frame.

"I feel good!" Tiny added, "chinning" an imaginary opponent with a lightning upper-cut.

They were staying in a quiet hotel just off the Strand, and it was Ailen's idea that Scannan should remain in their private sitting-room until about an hour before the boxing match was due to be staged at the Olympus. Two hours had passed since the uproarious scene upon the West London United ground, when the Man of Iron had been mobbed by the delighted footer fans, and in the interim he had taken a bath and a light meal. And now, as he had confessed to Ailen, he felt fit enough to fight any three men in the wide world.

"There's only one thing that's worrying me," he confessed, lowering his mighty, form into an old-fashioned horse-hair armchair.

An anxious light flashed into the baronet's dark eyes.

"What is it, my dear fellow?" inquired Ailen. "Anything really serious?"

"You bet it is!" growled the Man of Iron, bringing his thick brows together in an ugly scowl. "I came away without giving young Carson the bashing I promised him. And I'll tell the world that he asked for it, the brass-faced little rat!"

A look of relief passed across Sir Aubrey's bloated countenance.

"The bashing can wait, can't it?" he asked.

"Sure it can," agreed the big fellow; "but I should have felt more satisfied if I'd laid him out—accordin' to plans. Still, as you say, the bashing can wait. But he's going to get it—with interest!"

Sir Aubrey nodded and consulted his massive gold watch.

"Well, it's about time for me to be pushing on," he said, getting to his feet, "for anything can happen if you ain't there to keep a sharp eye on the pay-box. Never trust anyone in this world, Tiny, and you won't go far wrong!"

"That was my motto years ago!" growled the Man of Iron. "And that's why I keep an eye on you!"

Sir Aubrey went red about the ears and tried to look pained and indignant.

"I say, you know," he protested, "as between friends—"

"There ain't no friendship in business, old man!" grinned Tiny Scannan. "And you'll find me sitting right on your doorstep when that cheque for fifty thousand pounds changes hands. Don't have any fear about that, Ailen!"

"We're partners in this deal, my dear fellow," said the baronet, perching his

glossy silk hat at a rakish angle, "so you really don't imagine that I would do anything shady, do you?"

"Yes, I do," answered the Man of Iron bluntly. "But, at the same time, Ailen, I strongly advise you not to try any shady business, 'cause I'm liable to get touchy when it comes to money matters. I want twenty-five thousand pounds and forty per cent. of the takings at the Olympus, and if I don't get my full share—to the last farthing, mark you—there'll be a nasty sudden death in your family!"

"Come, come, my dear fellow!" begged the baronet. "You must have a touch of nerves, or you wouldn't talk in this ridiculous fashion! I'm an honest man, whose word is his bond, and—"

"Gee!" cut in the Man of Iron. "I guess it's you who has got the nerve, Ailen, standing there and telling me that you're an honest man! That's a good one, and no mistake!"

"Look here, Scannan," rasped Sir Aubrey, jamming his gold-rimmed monocle into position and trying to subdue his companion with a fierce stare, "this nonsense has gone quite far enough! I'm respected in business circles and amongst my own social set, so I refuse to put up with impertinence from a common prizefighter! Please let that be understood, once and for all!"

"Oh, ho! So I'm a common prize-fighter, am I?" cried the Man of Iron, twisting his battered countenance into an unlovely grin. He rose slowly and regarded the overdressed little figure with a mocking, contemptuous eye. "I don't take that sort of talk from anyone," he declared, "even from a man-size man; and if I was to hit you once you'd bang against the wall—and stick there!" His massive jaw jutted forward.

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INTRODUCTION.

In order to gain publicity for the forthcoming fight between Tiny Scannan, the Storrystene goalkeeper—a giant of a man, and Pal Jordan, a pugilist of repute from the United States, Sir Aubrey Ailen arranges a charity football match. Tiny acquits himself well between the "sticks," and his prodigious punching is cheered uproariously by every fan on the ground. In addition to this, the man of iron, in a melee with the rougher element, scares the life out of Pal Jordan and his manager who are watching the match, by striking five blows with lightning-like precision—each blow sending a hoodlum crashing to the ground, knocked-out.

"What an advertisement," says Sir Aubrey, after the match, "and all done in the sweet name of charity." (Now read on.)

ward in characteristic fashion. "Got anything to say to that?" he demanded.

Sir Aubrey made no reply as he turned his back upon the big fellow and adjusted his dress-tie before the mirror over the mantelpiece.

"Tongue-tied?" growled Scannan, looking ugly and threatening.

"Not at all, my dear fellow," answered the baronet, in suave tones. "As a matter of fact, I'm just wondering if you're any particular reason for picking this quarrel!"

"Reason!" snarled Scannan, gripping Ailen by the shoulder and swinging him round. "What reason should I have, you smooth-tongued little rat?"

"Really, I couldn't say, my dear fellow," returned Sir Aubrey, with a shrug; "but I warn you that you're not the only one who can turn nasty if there's any shady business to-night! I've often got the better of bigger men than you, and if it comes to a question of my brains against your brawn, I shall be inclined to back myself!" He looked straight into Tiny's blazing eyes. "That's all I have to say!" he announced, drawing on his gloves.

This was a new Sir Aubrey Ailen, a man dangerous and unafraid; and for the moment the wind was taken out of Tiny Scannan's sails.

The big fellow forced a grin.

"I'm afraid you're right when you say I've got a touch of nerves," he said, climbing down; "and as for wishing to pick a quarrel with you—well, forget it, Ailen!"

"And there's no question of double-dealing?" asked Sir Aubrey, giving Tiny a straight, penetrating glance.

"Not on your life!"

The baronet nodded and strolled towards the door.

"I'm glad to hear it," he said. "I must be going now, Scannan," he threw over his shoulder, "and I shall expect you at the Olympus on the stroke of nine o'clock. You don't know London very well, so I advise you to get a taxi from here and drive straight to the hall. And don't cut it too fine!" His beady eyes were dark with suspicion as he turned and looked across at the other man. "Is that understood?" he asked.

"Sure!" murmured the Man of Iron.

Giving a short nod, the baronet opened the door and passed out of the room, and the expression upon his bloated face was not good to see as he tucked his gold-mounted walking-stick under his arm and strode away towards the staircase.

"What's the dirty game?" he mused uneasily. "What's he up to?"

A Matter of Seconds!

IT was soon after eight o'clock when Tiny Scannan stirred restlessly in his armchair, and rose to his feet, and the black scowl that brought his brows together over his twisted nose made it quite clear that he was in anything but a sweet temper.

"The greasy little rat!" he mumbled, slipping into his overcoat. "And to think that I stood here like a big stiff, and took a lot of lip from him! Guess I'd better see a plumber, and have my brain seen to!" Pulling a roomy check cap on to his bullet-head, Scannan took a final glance into the looking-glass and strode across to the door. "That's two of 'em booked for a bashing—him and young Carson!"

Hunching his massive shoulders, the Man of Iron walked along the corridor and passed down the stairs, and, on reaching the dingy portico, he caught sight of a taxi that was crawling along on the far side of the road.

"Hi! You!" he shouted, waving his hand.

The driver touched his hat and swung the cab round, and the light of recognition dawned in his eyes as he looked up at the towering figure of the Man of Iron.

"Goin' to the fight, sir?" he grinned.

"You bet I am!" growled Scannan, swinging open the door with a vigour which almost wrenched it off its hinges. "Get along to the Olympus! And drive careful!"

"Right you are, sir!"

The Olympus, in Regent Street, lies at the west end of the Strand, yet the taxi, on reaching the main thoroughfare, swung across the road and turned due east. And Tiny Scannan, sitting back against the hard cushions, failed to notice that he was travelling towards the City.

But two other people did not fail to notice that something was wrong.

"Come on, Hefty!" said Terry Carson, emerging from the darkened doorway of a block of offices and striding across to the kerb. "We'll look into this!"

Hailing a passing taxi the youngster pointed ahead, and told the driver to follow the other cab.

"Don't lose sight of it, whatever you do!" he said. And he and Hefty leapt into the vehicle and slammed the door.

"There's certainly something jolly rummy about this business," growled the latter, as they passed down Fleet Street on their way to Ludgate Circus. "Dashed rummy!" he added, with solemn emphasis.

"You're right!" agreed Terry. And, by the time they reached Cornhill, he was fully convinced upon the point. "We'll soon be at Aldgate," he said, frowning in perplexity. "It strikes me that it's fishy as well as rummy, Hefty, and I think we ought to force the other cab to pull up and find out if everything's O.K."

"Wait a bit," consulted Hebble, with his usual caution. "It's no good rushing at this job and making fools of ourselves! The fight doesn't start until half-past nine, you know, and our tame Man of Iron may have a bit of private business to do in the East End."

"Then again," added the youngster, "he may not."

Passing Aldgate Pump the first taxi sped swiftly along the broad thoroughfare, and cut into Commercial Road, and a few minutes later it swerved across the tramlines, and disappeared up a narrow, ill-lit street that looked neither savoury nor inviting.

"Carry on!" shouted Terry Carson, rapping upon the glass partition as their driver glanced over his shoulder and slowed up. "There's nothing to worry about."

Mumbling sulkily into his straggling moustache, the man at the wheel obeyed orders with obvious reluctance, and followed the quarry into the dingy street; but he did not go more than about a dozen yards before he jammed on the brakes, and brought the cab to a standstill.

"What's up with you, man?" demanded Terry Carson, opening the door and leaping out. "Hang it all—"

"Don't like the neighbourhood,"

growled the driver, shooting a scared glance to right and left. "And there's a canal somewhere about 'ere."

"Well, what about it?" asked Terry, fuming with impatience.

"Lots o' funny things 'appen in this quarter," said the driver. "And I ain't 'aving any, for one! Pay me off," he added, "and I'll be 'opping it!" I tell you straight, sir, this is a 'ot shop, and I ain't goin' an inch farther!"

"But we are!" snapped the youngster. "And if you're not at the end of the street when we come back, you'll lose your fare! Come on, Hefty!" he said, swinging round and setting off at a steady trot.

"Don't make too much noise," cautioned Hebble, plodding along beside the youngster. "We don't know what's waiting for us, so it'll be as well if we don't advertise ourselves. Gee, what a place to live in!"

No more than a glimmer of light came from any of the squalid houses that huddled together in the murky shadows, and even the supply of lampposts gave out long before they reached the end of the winding street.

"Go easy, young 'un!" breathed Hefty, taking his companion's arm and slowing him down to walking pace. "I've got a feeling that we're nearing the canal the taxi fellow spoke about. He was probably talking through his — What's that, young 'un?" he broke off, coming to an abrupt standstill. "Did you hear anything?"

"Something's happening round the corner," whispered Terry excitedly, his keen young eyes peering through the sable gloom. "Looks as though there's a sort of towing-path straight ahead of us, so if we —"

"Come on, you snarling curs! I'm good enough for the lot of you! Come and — Ah-h-h!"

Plainly to their ears came the husky voice of Tiny Scannan, a husky voice that was stifled even as they dashed forward and reached the narrow wharf. It was a pitch black night, but they could see shadowy figures moving away to their right; then, faint and muffled, came the sounds of a scuffle, the low murmur of snarling voices.

"Perhaps the rotters are trying to heave old Scannan into the canal, Hefty!" breathed Terry Carson, looking agast; then, throwing all caution to the winds: "All together, my lads!" he shouted lustily. "At 'em, boys—at 'em! Tell the others to follow us up!"

The youngster had reached the fringe of the scrimmage by this time, and the first thing he did was to hit out at a complete stranger—a stocky little hooligan—and send the fellow reeling into the water. It was exactly a fraction of a second later when Mr. Hefty Hebble hurled himself into the fray, and so fierce was his two-handed hitting that he opened the proceedings by sending four of the enemy tottering like nine-pins, two of them joining Terry's victim in the icy waters of the canal.

And all the while Hefty and Terry kept up their wild shouting, calling upon imaginary "others" to hurry along and give a hand.

The scrap was short and sweet, as Hefty remarked later in the evening, for within less than two minutes the hooligans were making off into the shadows as fast as their damaged limbs would carry them.

(Don't miss the concluding chapters of this powerful serial which will appear in next week's bumper issue of the MAGNET. Order it early, chums!)

WALKING ON THE BED OF THE OCEAN!

As long as we have ships sailing the seas so we shall need divers. At Gillingham, Kent, there's a Royal Naval School of Divers, where recruits are trained. Periodically candidates descend into the depths of the sea to get the hang of things, and when their course of instruction has ended and they have passed the necessary tests, these men are sent back to their ships for duty as fully-fledged divers. Photo shows a pupil coming up for a rest after having had a squint at Father Neptune's territory.

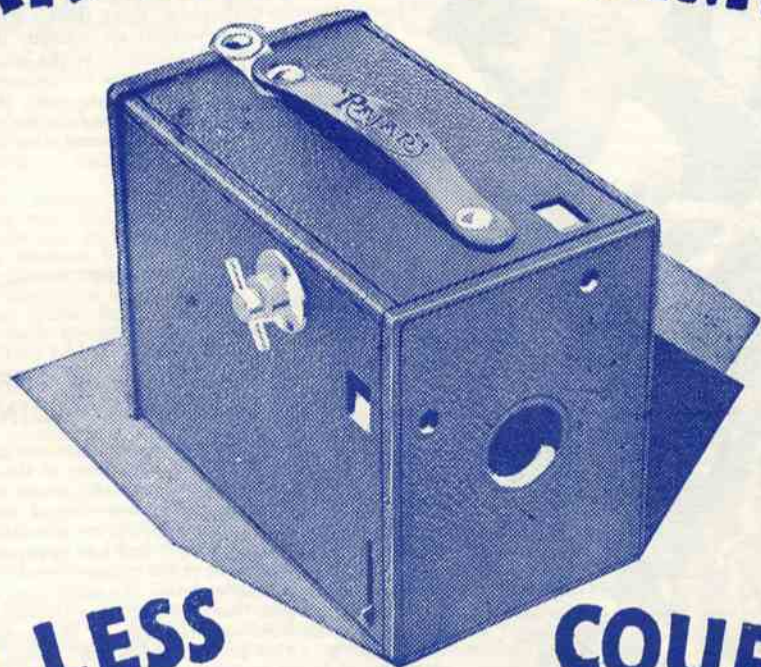


LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

Collisions on the river are painfully frequent, principally owing to the fact that the inexperienced oarsman cannot see where he is going. The experienced oarsman overcomes this difficulty by developing a certain river "sense." And now an inventor has come to the aid of the inexperienced. By means of a simple device the sculler can sit facing the direction in which he is travelling, while just handling his sculls in the normal manner. Our picture shows Mr. Barry, the world's champion sculler, trying out the bow-faced oar.



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