

HARRY WHARTON & Co. IN AMERICA!

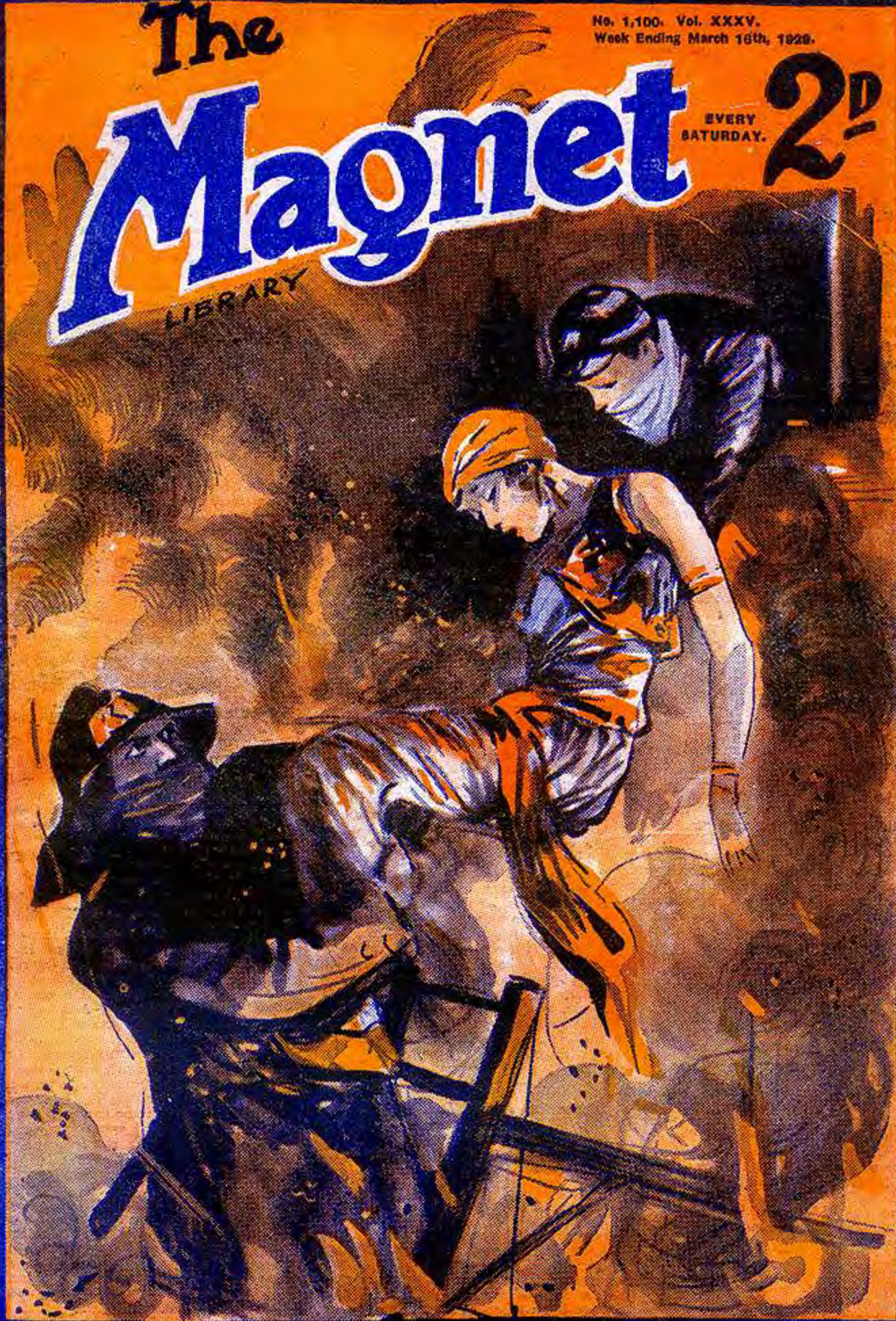
The Magnet

LIBRARY

No. 1,100. Vol. XXXV.
Week Ending March 16th, 1929.

EVERY
SATURDAY.

2^d



THE HERO OF HOLLYWOOD!

(A thrilling rescue incident from the grand long story of schoolboy adventure, featuring Harry Wharton & Co.—in this issue.)



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

(NOTE.—From now onwards, all Jokes and Limericks should be sent to: c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

HELLO, chums! This is your Editor calling! We are now going to give a "short story" by R. Kelly, 23, Cross Street, Eccles, near Manchester. For this story he has been awarded a special MAGNET penknife:

The old and fiery colonel was taking his evening stroll when he was suddenly accosted by a tramp.

"Don't refuse a trifle, zur!" said the man of the road. "I'm an old soldier, and—"

"An old soldier, eh?" bared the veteran. "Well, I'll just give you a test, and see. 'Shun! Eyes right! Eyes front! Now then, what comes next?"

"Present 'alms'!" retorted the tramp brightly.

FROM BONNY SCOTLAND!

Excuse my "wireless" method of beginning this "Chat," but it all comes of having read a letter from Joe Parsons, of Edinburgh:

"I get my MAGNET every Saturday, regularly, and sit down to read it at six o'clock. I read it through until I have finished, which is about half-past eight. I don't care what happens to be on the wireless. The MAGNET always comes first with me!"

Thanks for the compliment, Joe. You are certainly a quick reader, and I hope that when you've finished the MAGNET you go on to the "Gem," the "Popular," the "Modern Boy," and the "Nelson Lee," finishing up, perhaps, with a "Schoolboys' Own Library."

However, for the benefit of Joe and any other "Magnetite" who reads this journal in two hours and a half, I am going to give a "wireless programme" of next week's issue. Here it is:

FLEETWAY (CALL A1. 25 KRT.)

6 p.m.—"The Bootleggers' Revenge!" Comedy drama in fifteen episodes. Cast includes: Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Billy Bunter, Horace Coker, and others.

Episode one: Bunter Gets Left! Episode two: Coker on His Own! Episode three: Ructions on the Road! etc., etc. Produced by Frank Richards.

7.30.—Derek Moneriff in further thrilling War adventures of "The Black Hawk," relayed from the private residence of George E. Rochester.

7.55.—Dr. Birchmall, assisted by Jack Jolly, Merry, and Bright, the chums of St. Sam's, in "Dr. Birchmall's Bus!" by kind permission of Dicky Nugent.

8.10.—Talk by Your Editor. Jokes, limericks, replies to correspondents, etc.

8.20.—Short talk on the Boat Race, followed by advertisers' announcements, etc.

8.30.—Close down until next week.

Good-night, everybody! Good-night!

And you will have a good night, too, when you've finished reading next THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,100.

week's issue. There's one respect in which the MAGNET scores over the wireless. If you don't want to keep to the above programme you can vary the times to suit yourselves. And if you happen to be interrupted in the middle of one of the features—well, you can come back to it whenever you like, and you don't miss any of the programme. Now, let's get on with the washing!

Gosh! I don't seem to be able to do so! No sooner had I finished typing the above line than Frank Richards breezed into my den and asked me:

"CAN YOU DO THIS?"

He fished out a pile of six coins from his pocket.

"I take a head from the top of the pile and put it on the table first," he said. "Then I take a coin from the top of the pile and put it at the bottom. Then I put down a tail on the table, and another coin from the top to the bottom of the pile. Then a head on the table, and another coin at the bottom of the pile; then a tail on the table, and another coin at the bottom, and the two remaining coins go down on the table in their proper order of head and tail."

He gathered up the coins, handed them to me, and told me to get on with it. The result is that I've wasted a quarter of an hour of my valuable time trying to do it, and I might have been struggling with it still if he hadn't taken pity on me and shown me the trick. Of course, it all depends on how the coins are arranged in the pile to begin with, but it was a new one on me, and in case you don't know it I'll pass it on, so you can try it on your chums. This is how you arrange the coins in the pile: One head upward, then three tails, then two heads.

Try it with six coins first, and if your pals tumble to it you can elaborate the trick by doing it with twelve coins. The order, in this case, should be: Two heads, two tails, one head, three tails, two heads, one tail, and one head. You can do the trick with cards just as easily as with coins.

NAPOLEON'S WHEEZE!

Now let me get on with my letter-bag. The first query is about the Channel Tunnel.

Bert Greenfield, of Halifax, wants to know who started the idea of a Channel Tunnel. It was Napoleon's idea, originally, and he mooted it about 127 years ago. The tunnel was actually commenced some time later, and shafts were sunk both in England and France, but work on them was abandoned fifty years ago. You can still see the site of the English tunnel on the railway line between Folkestone and Dover, but a railway siding now runs over the top of the shaft that was sunk. The new tunnel which has been proposed would commence some distance inland, and the tunnel would be about thirty-five miles

in length, only twenty-one miles of which would actually run under the sea. In the event of the tunnel being built, Bert wants to know where the frontier between England and France would then be. Technically, it would be half-way between the two countries, but the actual frontier offices, for passports, customs, etc., would be at each end of the tunnel.

Incidentally, I have a photograph in my den, of a "Magnetite" taken on the Franco-Spanish frontier, with one leg in each country. This photograph was taken on a bridge which runs between the two countries, and a post in the middle has the arms of France on one side and the arms of Spain on the other.

A NAVIGATION QUERY!

"What exactly does a navigating officer aboard ship do when he looks through his sextant?" asks Fred Bennett, of Porthcawl. Actually, he takes the angle at his eye between the sun and the horizon. By means of certain corrections he obtains the angle at the centre of the earth between the equator or a meridian and the position of the ship, and this is the latitude or longitude, according to the time at which the sight was taken. It would be impossible, of course, to describe here the principles of navigation, which is a highly technical science, but it is all based upon the position of the sun in relation to the centre of the earth.

HOW'S THIS?

In the Sixth Form there's a chap named Loder, Who oft has a "something" and soda. He's not fond of jokes, But fond of his "smokes," And his study reeks with the odour!

A pocket-wallet has been awarded to: John S. Legon, 50, Kensington Avenue, Manor Park, E 12, for this clever Greyfriars Limerick. Now, you budding poets, what about having a shot? I've lots more leather wallets waiting to be won.

HOW A STEREOSCOPE WORKS!

Don Stewart, of Clydebank, has some of those cigarette-cards which are issued in pairs, and which stand out in relief when placed in a special instrument, known as a Stereoscope. He wants to know how they do so. Although the two cards look alike, Don will find, on close inspection, that they are slightly different, and the reason is that they are taken through separate lens, one of which sees the picture as the left eye sees it, while the other sees it as the right eye would. When the two pictures are placed in the special apparatus you see the left picture with the left eye and the right picture with the right eye. You are actually seeing two pictures, but your eyes focus them together, and make them appear as one. Thus, you see the scene exactly as you would if you were on the spot. Don asks if the same principle will ever be applied to the cinema. Experiments have been made for years, but, so far, nothing has transpired. But there is no telling what might happen in the future.

John Dawson, of Pontypool, sends in rather a peculiar query this week. I really thought he was trying to pull my (Continued on page 28.)



Another magnificent yarn of the rousing adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in America. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Does It!

"I beats me!" said Bob Cherry.
"Hollow!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"The beatfulness is hollow and terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Greyfriars party in Hollywood were puzzled.

They were not merely puzzled; they were quite mystified.

Bunter had done it!

Not only the party of Remove fellows who were now in the film city of California, but every other fellow at Greyfriars, regarded Billy Bunter—justly—as every known kind of an ass.

Other fellows might be asses, and silly asses, and frabjous asses; but in that line Bunter was second to none. In that line it was W. G. Bunter first, and the rest nowhere.

Yet Bunter had done it!

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, Coker & Co. of the Fifth, had been brought out to Hollywood to act in the school film at the Perfection studio. Bunter hadn't! Bunter had merely hooked on to the party. When it came to hooking on, a fish-hook had nothing on Bunter, as Fisher T. Fish expressed it.

In the Perfection studio Billy Bunter had been merely an unregarded looker-on, while the other fellows rehearsed their "movie" stunts. The unimportance of Bunter was infinite.

Still, Bunter had done it; and how he had done it perplexed the juniors, and got Fisher T. Fish's goat.

While the rest of the party practised standing up to the cameras, and rehearsed under the megaphone of Mr. Schootz or Mr. Van Duck, Billy Bunter had "brok'n into" the films. The other fellows had not yet got down to serious business. Bunter had! The other fellows were still in the embryo stage.

so to speak, and Billy Bunter had booked an engagement with Magic Films; and every day he rolled off cheerily from Long Beach Boarding-house to fulfil that engagement; every afternoon he rolled back with dollars in his pocket—real dollars!

That was satisfactory, so far as it went. With dollars of his own, Bunter ceased to raid the other fellows—he no longer sought to raise loans on the postal orders he was expecting to be sent on to Los Angeles. Lord Mauleverer, who generally had the privilege of being Bunter's banker, was given a much-needed rest.

Still, it was very perplexing.

On this especial morning, Harry Wharton & Co. had gone out into the

With all his slacking ways and air of languor Lord Mauleverer can be as active and as plucky in an emergency as the best of 'em. He certainly makes Hollywood, U.S.A., sit up this week!

sunny piazza after breakfast, not being due at Perfection Studio till ten. Billy Bunter rolled out after them—looking fatter and more self-satisfied than ever.

Bunter, of course, was enjoying the situation.

Of all the party, he alone had been able to break into the films by his own unaided efforts. He had booked a movie engagement, while the rest were simply under the process of coaching. In his own fat opinion, at least, Billy Bunter was the goods!

He grinned at the group of juniors in the piazza.

"I say, you fellows! Talking about me?" he chirruped. "Ho, ho, ho! Ain't you jealous? Ho, ho, ho!"

Nothing would persuade William George Bunter that the other fellows weren't jealous of his good fortune. He was convinced that they were as jealous of his film stunts as of his good looks and aristocratic manners.

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

"Sorry I can't stop to talk!" said Bunter airily. "I'm almost due at Magic Films. I can't afford to hang about wasting time like you fellows—my time's awfully valuable."

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull politely.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Ass!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"I guess I'd like to know how that fat guy worked the raffle!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say it's got me beat!"

Bunter chuckled.

He was not likely to confide to the other fellows how he had "worked the raffle," as Fishy expressed it.

That was Bunter's secret! Even the Owl of the Remove was not too proud of the methods he had used.

"How did you do it, Bunter?" asked Frank Nugent. "There's about ten thousand people in Hollywood who've come here specially to break into the films, and haven't an earthly. Every hotel and boarding-house is packed with them."

"Like a lot of jolly old Peris at the gate of Paradise!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "No admission for any of them!"

"And the silliest ass in the whole crowd isn't such an ass as Bunter!" remarked the Bounder. "And the ugliest of the lot is ever so much better-looking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Bunter's done it!" said Bob. "How did you do it, Bunter? Tell us how you got Mr. Honk to give you a show at Magic Films? You couldn't work it with Mr. Schootz at the Perfection."

"The Perfection's rather beneath my notice," explained Bunter. "Magic Films is a rather better show. As for how I did it, that's simple. I walked

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,100.

into the place, and immediately Mr. Honk saw me, he—"

"Fainted?" asked the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" roared Bunter. "Immediately he saw me he fairly shouted out: 'That's the man I want!' Just like that!"

"Is he doing a freak film?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Beast!"

"You've been before the cameras?"

"Lots of times!"

"And no accidents?"

"Of course not. Why should there be any accident?"

"I mean to the cameras! Your features, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's fat lip curled.

"Jealousy, as usual!" he sneered.

"Well, I'm accustomed to it! I got a lot of it at Greyfriars."

As a matter of fact, though the Famous Five and Lord Mauleverer were quite pleased, though surprised, to see Bunter apparently on the road to success, the Bounder was a little annoyed, and Fisher T. Fish distinctly irritated.

Certainly, Bunter did not bear his blushing honours thick upon him with anything like modesty. Bunter lived, and moved, and had his being, in swank. He had adopted a lofty and patronising manner towards the rest of the party, which rather amused Harry Wharton & Co., but had an irritating effect on the Bounder and Fishy.

"Jealousy all round!" said Bunter. "Well, it's no new thing. If we were at Greyfriars now, Wharton, you'd be keeping me out of the football."

"You bet!" agreed the captain of the Remove, laughing.

"But you can't keep a better man in the background here!" jeered Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"You fellows can fool around in Perfection, playing the giddy ox!" said Bunter. "What are you making out of

it? Nothing! I'm drawing a regular salary. If I were late at Magic Films this morning the whole place would be at sixes and sevens. You can't say the same—a lot they care at Perfection whether you duds turn up or not. If I hang about here much longer, Mr. Honk will be sending for me—the whole studio's waiting till I turn up."

"I don't think!" remarked the Bounder.

"I guess the size of it is that you've got a job as extra," grunted Fisher T. Fish. "Still, how you got that beats me. There's a thousand guys in Hollywood honing to be taken on as extras."

"Brains, you know," explained Bunter, "and looks!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You did it on your brains and good looks?"

"Exactly!"

And having imparted that information, Billy Bunter rolled down the steps into the garden, and rolled away towards the gate, his fat little nose high in the air, leaving the chums of the Remove chuckling.

How Bunter had got into the films was a mystery. But nobody was likely to believe that he had done it on his brains and his good looks! To ask any fellow to believe that was asking too much.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Kicked In!

COKER of the Fifth left off talking—for a moment.

He never left off talking for long. Coker of the Fifth prided himself on being one of those strong, silent characters. And his chin was generally in motion.

Potter and Greene, wondering what caused the lull, glanced round. It was Billy Bunter who caused the lull.

The three Fifth-Formers were strolling on Sunset Boulevard after breakfast.

Billy Bunter came in sight, on his way to Magic Films.

Coker had been giving his friends some tips about acting for the films. He was not satisfied with the way Potter and Greene played up in Perfection studio. The fact that Mr. Schootz and Mr. Van Duck were not satisfied with the way Coker played up was a trifle. Coker put that down to their ignorance.

Coker being the fellow who knew, and having a kind and generous heart, he placed the stores of his wisdom unreservedly at the service of his friends. Neither Potter nor Greene told Coker that he did not know what he was talking about. It saved trouble to let Horace Coker run on. He would have talked, anyway; and what he talked about really did not matter very much, as Potter and Greene did not listen.

Coker stared along the boulevard towards the fat figure that was rolling onward under the shade of the pepper trees.

Coker's brow was thoughtful.

In Perfection studio Coker was not treated with the respect and particular attention that were his due. His superior knowledge of the movie business was not recognised by either director or assistant director. Mr. Schootz had only glared at him when Coker had offered advice. Mr. Van Duck had actually told him to shut his head. It had occurred to Coker that it would show the Perfection people who was who, and what was what, if he turned his back on Perfection and bestowed his valuable presence on some other studio.

There were plenty of studios in Hollywood to choose from; the place was alive with them. Only, as Coker had found, it was practically impossible to get an interview with a film director. The usual fate of a film aspirant was to put down his name, address, and telephone number in the office and live in hopes of a telephone call that never came. There were people in Hollywood who had lived there for years in that delusive hope.

Yet Bunter—amazing to consider—had got in! Bunter, somehow, had penetrated the defences, strong as triple steel, that guarded an Olympian movie magnate from common mortals. If Bunter could do it, surely any fool could do it. Yet Coker couldn't, though, if it was a thing that any fool could do, Coker certainly was qualified.

Coker did not admit, even to himself, that he was thinking of making use of Bunter—in fact, of hooking on to Bunter to get in! Such a proceeding was too utterly undignified for a Fifth-Form man of Greyfriars to consider it! Coker would have scorned the thought of accepting such aid from a Lower Fourth fag. To ask favours of a junior was impossible for Coker of the Fifth. So—as that was exactly what he intended to do—Coker did it without admitting it to himself. Self-deception is generally easy, and Coker's intellect was peculiarly fitted for it. He was going to make use of Bunter, but he was going to do it in a lofty, high-handed way, ruthlessly suppressing anything like familiarity or cheek on the part of the fat junior.

"Hallo, there's that fat idiot!" remarked Potter. "Going down to Magic Films, as usual, I suppose."

"Blessed if I can make out what he does there," said Greene. "I thought it was all spoof, at first, but he goes there every morning and they pay him."

"Come on, Coker!" said Potter.

Horace Coker remained standing where he was.

Tales For All Tastes



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"You fellows walk on a bit," he said. "I'm going to speak to that kid."

"Oh, well wait, if you like," yawned Potter.

"You needn't. Just walk on," said Coker.

He did not want Potter and Greene to hear his talk with Bunter. They might have supposed that he was undignified enough to "get round" a mere fag for the sake of what was going.

"Right-ho!" said Potter cheerily. He was not sorry to get out of the range of Coker's voice for a while. Coker's voice was not musical, like the little brook; but otherwise it resembled the little brook in going on for ever.

Potter and Greene strolled on under the pepper trees, and Horace Coker waited for Bunter to come up. He beckoned to the Owl of the Remove to stop.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Sorry! Rather in a hurry," he said.

This, of course, was cheek! It was an honour to any Remove fag to be spoken to by Coker of the Fifth. But Coker, for once, swallowed a fag's cheek.

"Hold on a minute, kid!" he said amicably. "I suppose you're going along to Honk's place?"

"Yes; they're waiting for me."

"You're in a picture already?" asked Coker.

"Biggest thing they've done, so far," answered Bunter. "Featuring me, of course!" Bunter was not likely to tell Coker that he was engaged at Magic Films as an "extra" at seven dollars a day. At Long Beach Boarding-House Bunter had referred to three hundred dollars a week as the extent of his emoluments.

"I'll walk along with you," said Coker.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Bunter. "You can come as far as the gates, if you like, Coker."

Just as if it were an honour for Coker to walk with the fag, instead of vice versa! But Coker swallowed it once more. He walked along by Bunter's side, towering over the fat Owl—the long and the short of it, as Potter remarked to Greene at a distance.

"I can't let you come in with me, of course!" explained Bunter. "Outsiders aren't allowed in the studios."

"How did you butt in?" asked Coker casually.

Bunter grinned. He had guessed that that was coming.

"Oh, I just called on them, and the director saw my value at once," he explained. "His first words, when he saw me, were: 'Here's the sheikh I want!' His very words."

Coker looked down at the tubby figure rolling at his side and gasped.

"Of course, I wasn't eager to close," said Bunter. "Knowing my value, I took time to think it over. But Honk begged hard, and pointed out that he was getting out a Valentino part that would just suit me."

"Oh!" stuttered Coker.

"Bit rotten for you to be hanging about on the Perfection lot, like a sort of super, while I'm going ahead on the films," said Bunter sympathetically.

Coker breathed hard.

"But, after all, everybody can't get into the movies," said Bunter. "It needs brains, old chap. Not much chance for you. I'm afraid."

Still Coker did not slaughter him.

"I'll come in with you, Bunter," said Coker, as they neared the gates of the Magic Films lot. "I'm rather curious to see this man Honk, who's given you an engagement."

Bunter winked at the pepper trees. "Can't be done, old bean," he said. "It's easier to see the Governor of the

State than a film director. With all my influence in the studio, I could hardly get you an interview with Darius Honk."

Coker almost choked.

"I'll see what can be done later," said Bunter patronisingly. "If they want an extra, I'll mention that I know a fellow who might do."

On the verge of explosion, Coker barely restrained himself.

"Only you'd have to be careful, you know," said Bunter. "None of your swank, or Fifth-Form bounce, or anything of that sort. If I can manage to squeeze you into Magic Films as an extra, I'll see what I can do for you, Coker, but you must remember to keep your place. Know your place and keep it—that's a good maxim."

Bunter rolled in at the gate of the Magic Films lot. He paused in the gateway to wave a fat hand at Coker, and to give him a parting cheery word. Simmons, the doorkeeper, was there,

MAGNET READER WINS Useful Pocket-knife for the following Joke:

SCOTCH GRATITUDE!

A firm of matchmakers adopting a novel advertising scheme, sent out a man with authority to hand a guinea to any person he came across who produced a box of their matches. At Aberdeen he entered a restaurant, and approaching a stranger asked: "Could you oblige me with a match please?" "Certainly," replied the Aberdonian, handing over a box which happened to contain the make of match required. "Thank you very much," said the other. "I see you use our matches. My firm authorises me to hand a guinea to every man I meet who produces a box of their matches—so here's your guinea." He was turning to leave when the Aberdonian gripped him by the shoulder. "Hey! Stop, mon!" he cried. "I thoct there was a catch in it—you're awa' wi' me matches!"

A penknife has been awarded to: A. Warren, 7, Byron Road, Southwick, Sunderland.

Get busy with your "rib-ticklers," chums. There's more knives on offer!

and he gave Bunter a rather peculiar glance and, as Coker was walking in after the fat junior, he turned on Coker with a frown.

"Here, you, outside!" he said.

"Hook it, Coker!" said Bunter. "Sorry I can't take you in—but the rules don't allow it. I'll see you later, perhaps—though I've so many calls on my time now, that I can't promise. Anyhow, I'll bear you in mind, and I daresay I may be able to do something for you some time or other."

And Bunter, turning his back on Coker, started up the path.

Coker saw red.

The gatekeeper, obviously, did not intend to let him in. There was nothing doing. Coker had curbed his wrath and indignation—with no result but to be patronised by Bunter!

In the circumstances, it was a little unfortunate that Bunter turned his back on Coker at the very moment when

Coker's wrath, no longer to be suppressed, exploded like a volcanic eruption.

Coker made a stride after the fat junior.

His boot shot out.

Crash!

Coker's boot was one of the largest and heaviest at Greyfriars. Feet, as every schoolboy knows, contain twelve inches. But there were more than twelve inches to Coker's foot. How many pounds it weighed, cannot be said; to Bunter, at that moment, it seemed to weigh a ton. It crashed on Bunter's tight trousers like a battering-ram.

Bunter fairly flew.

"Yaroooh!"

One wild yell the Owl of the Remove gave as he flew, a yell that woke every echo of Magic Films studio.

Then he landed on the path, spluttering.

"Gee-whiz!" ejaculated Simmons.

He slammed the gate in Coker's face. Coker jumped back just in time to save his nose.

There was no admittance for Coker at Magic Films. But he was feeling a little solaced as he walked back along Sunset Boulevard to meet Potter and Greene. The wild howls that sounded over the shut gate were music to his ears as he went.

Coker of the Fifth turned up, as usual, that morning at Perfection Studio with Harry Wharton & Co. With what patience he could, he endured the oburgations of Mr. Rigg Schootz, and the gibes of Mr. Van Duck. He remembered with satisfaction how he had kicked Bunter into Magic Films. Probably, he would have been still more satisfied had he been aware that the kicking-in had been followed by a kicking-out.

For the glory of Billy Bunter—like so many of the glories of this world—was brief!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Kicked Out!

"YOW-ow-ow-owow!"

Thus William George Bunter.

Bunter was hurt!

Nobody could have captured Horace Coker's boot, with all Horace Coker's beef behind it, without getting hurt.

Bunter sat in the path and squeaked.

"Ow, ow, wow! Beast! Wow, wow!"

Simmons grinned.

He did not offer Bunter a hand up. He just stood and grinned at him, as if he found the scene amusing. No doubt he did. But this was a change from the respect with which the doorkeeper had treated Bunter hitherto, on his daily visits to Magic Films. Had Bunter been a little more observant, he would have discerned the change and gathered from it that something must have happened, and that he was no longer "persona grata" at Magic Films.

But Bunter was not observant, and he was thinking chiefly of the painful impact of Coker's hefty boot.

He scrambled up at last, and blinked at the doorkeeper.

"Is that beast gone?" he gasped.

"I guess he's sure beat it," said Simmons.

"I've a jolly good mind to go after him and mop up the boulevard with him!" gasped Bunter. "He's cleared off just in time."

Simmons laughed disrespectfully.

"Don't cackle at me, my man!" exclaimed Bunter wrathfully.

"Can it!" said Simmons.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,190.

"What?" ejaculated Bunter. Even Bunter observed now that there was a change in this hitherto respectful door-keeper.

"I guess I said can it!" drawled Simmons.

"Look here——"

"Oh, shucks!"

Simmons turned away.

But the next moment his manner became deeply respectful, as a young man came down the path from the entrance of the Magic Films studio.

It was Myron Polk, the Perfection star.

Bunter blinked at Polk.

"Oh, you!" said the star, with a grim smile.

Taking no further notice of Bunter, he walked on to the gate, which Simmons opened for him very respectfully. Myron Polk was a great man in Hollywood.

Bunter blinked after him, angry and astonished. Myron Polk had apparently just called on the Magic Films director, and was coming away from an interview with Mr. Honk. That was no reason why he should have ventured to treat Bunter in this off-hand manner.

"Cheek!" exclaimed Bunter.

The gate closed behind the film star's handsome figure. Bunter rolled on to the studio, Simmons grinning after him.

Bunter was puzzled and irritated. It was by means of his hold on the Perfection star, his knowledge of Polk's secret, that he had gained his footing in the film world—though he had been very careful not to breathe a word of it to the Greyfriars party. Ever since the night when he had discovered the "thug" Gomez in hiding at the star's bungalow on the hill, Bunter had regarded Myron Polk as being under his thumb. It was like Bunter not to realise that such a state of affairs was bound to come to an end—and an early end.

That Polk no longer feared the tattling of the fat junior would have been clear to any fellow but Bunter.

He resolved that, as soon as he left the studio, he would see the Perfection star and tell him what he thought of him. Myron Polk was to be made to understand that he could not cheek Bunter.

But that could wait till he was through at the studio. Bunter did not yet know how very brief was to be his stay in the Magic Films lot that morning.

He rolled in, and Mr. Wooster, the assistant-director, spotted him at once. Mr. Wooster grinned.

For several days he had endured the troublesome obtuseness of the Owl of the Remove with a very ill grace.

Such were the orders of Mr. Darius Honk, and in the Magic Films studio Mr. Honk's word was law.

Myron Polk—for reasons best known to Bunter—had pressed Mr. Honk to take Bunter on as an extra at Magic Films. Mr. Honk, anxious to oblige the famous star, had done so, to the extreme disgust of Mr. Wooster.

But Myron Polk's call at Magic Films that morning had made a lot of difference.

"Here, you Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Wooster.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Speaking to me?" he inquired haughtily.

"Yep!"

"Then I'll thank you to speak a little more civilly," said Bunter.

Mr. Wooster smiled.

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"You fat jay!" he said. "You dog-goned tub of oil, you beat it! Understand me? Beat it! Get out of this! Absquatulate! Git!"

Bunter stared at him blankly.

"Wha-a-at do you mean?" he gasped.

"Don't I speak plain United States?" demanded Mr. Wooster. "You're fired! See? Vamoose!"

"Fired!" stuttered Bunter. "Do you mean sacked?"

"I sure do!" assented Mr. Wooster.

"But—but——"

"Don't spill any more! Jest beat it! Go out and stay out!"

Bunter glared wrathfully.

"Shan't!" he roared.

"Eb?"

"Where's Mr. Honk? I certainly shan't go without seeing Mr. Honk," howled Bunter angrily.

"I guess Darius Honk's got no time to waste on you," grinned Mr. Wooster. "He's left you to me. You want to beat it quick! I've told Simmons to kick you out if you don't go mighty sudden!"

Bunter understood now why the door-keeper had lacked respect. Simmons knew that the Owl of Greyfriars was "fired."

"Look here——" hooted Bunter.

The door of Mr. Darius Honk's office opened, and the director of Magic Films came out. He glanced at Bunter.

"You here!" he said.

"Yes, I'm here," spluttered Bunter. "This fellow Wooster has been cheeky! Simmons has been cheeky! I can tell you that this isn't what my friend Myron Polk expected when he advised me to come here——"

"Cut it out!" said Mr. Honk. "I guess Polk's seen me this morning, and he's not me wise."

Bunter jumped.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Polk allows that he's through with you," said Mr. Honk. "He says he's found you out to be a sneaking, prying, spying young rascal, and he's through with you. You ain't any use here, and you ain't any ornament. I took you in to oblige Polk. Now he's through, I'm through. Savvy? Now beat it!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Honk walked away. He was a busy man, and had already wasted some seconds of his priceless time on Bunter. The Owl of the Remove blinked helplessly.

Myron Polk had turned him down! He resolved that he would make Myron Polk sorry for himself—as his knowledge of Polk's secret enabled him to do. But that could not help him here. He was "fired" from Magic Films, and his movie career had come to a sudden termination.

"Simmons!" called out Mr. Wooster.

"Sir!"

"Kick that fat guy out!"

"Sure!"

"And if you see him around the lot again, kick him again!"

"Yep!"

Simmons hore down on Billy Bunter. The next moment the Owl of Greyfriars was being hustled unceremoniously down the path to the gate. Simmons flung the gate open and swung Bunter into the middle of the gateway.

The fat junior realised what was coming. He made a wild leap to escape.

But fast as Bunter was, Simmons' boot was faster!

Crash!

"Yoooop!"

Billy Bunter was strewn along the boulevard.

The gate slammed once more.

Bunter sat up.

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Oh crikey!"

He had been kicked in, now he was

kicked out! His brief career on the films was over! Billy Bunter picked himself up and limped dismally away. Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, Billy Bunter had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Morning in the Studio!

MYRON POLK walked into Perfection Studio as if the Perfection lot belonged to him. "The 'sheikh' of Perfection Pictures was looking his handsome self. The last trace of the punching he had received from Coker of the Fifth had disappeared. There was no doubt at all that Myron Polk was an exceedingly handsome man; still less, if possible, that he was aware of it, and was greatly pleased with himself. Countless flappers would gaze spell-bound on his pictured features on the screen; in the streets and boulevards of Hollywood women glanced at him with admiration, men with envy. Perhaps it would have been difficult, in these circumstances, for Polk to have avoided conceit. Certainly he had not avoided it, for he was wrapped in it as in a garment.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the studio, waiting about for Mr. Van Duck, who was going to arrange a set for them. They carefully took no notice of the Perfection sheikh, excepting that Coker of the Fifth took occasion to indulge in a sniff. Coker saw no particular reason for concealing the contempt he felt for an effeminate dandy, as he regarded the film star; indeed, it was only by the exertion of Mr. Hiram K. Fish's authority that Coker was restrained from more emphatic proceeding than mere sniffing. He had confided to Potter and Greene that he never saw Polk's nose without wanting to punch it—a desire that was generally shared in the Greyfriars party.

Even Lord Maulverer, placable good-nature personified, had a mild dislike for the Perfection star.

Polk had made himself unpleasant enough to all the party—an easy matter, as he was the bright particular star of Perfection Pictures.

The Greyfriars party were wanted there for the school picture that was now under way, but Mr. Rigg Schootz would have parted with the lot of them rather than with Myron Polk. As in the case of the young lady in the song, Polk's face was his fortune, and it was a fortune also to the Perfection Picture Syndicate. Perfection had shelled out a stupendous sum in dollars to "snoop" Myron Polk away from the Pandora Co. They paid him huge sums for his services. It all came back on the films, with enormous profits, the Perfection "sheikh" being an immense draw. When Mr. Schootz or Mr. Fish writhed under the lofty airs and graces of the star, they remembered the dollars, and were patient. For they were true American business men, and dollars, of course, were the beginning and end of all things to them.

Polk's row with Coker had excited his rancour towards all the Greyfriars fellows. He disliked the whole party. Contempt, it is said, will pierce the shell of the tortoise; and Polk, like many conceited fellows, was thin-skinned and sensitive. Harry Wharton & Co. were anxious enough to avoid trouble in Mr. Schootz' studio, and they kept out of Polk's way as much as they could; but Polk did not keep out of their way, and if it takes two to make a quarrel, it also takes two to keep the

Banter paused in the gateway of Magic Films. "I'll see if I can manage to squeeze you into Magic Films, Coker, as an extra," he said. "But you must remember to keep your place. None of your swank, or Fifth-Form bounce, or anything of that sort, you know!" Coker gasped in speechless amazement. (See Chapter 2.)



peace. Polk divined, rather than saw, the feelings of the juniors towards him, and detested them accordingly.

All the juniors were convinced that Polk had sought revenge on Coker by hiring the ruffian Gomez to "beat him up," and they could not help despising a man who would resort to such methods. Coker might be a quarrelsome ass, much too ready to use his hefty fists, and a movie star could not afford to have his beauty spoiled; but there was a limit.

Myron Polk sauntered past the group of Greyfriars fellows, giving them a slight, supercilious glance as he passed.

Coker indulged in a second sniff, more pronounced than the first.

The Perfection star strolled round the studio, receiving respectful salutations on all sides, only the Greyfriars fellows ignoring his presence.

Mr. Van Duck, the assistant-director, was in Mr. Schootz' office, discussing some matter relating to the 'set' and the juniors had been waiting idly some time.

"Looks as if we shan't be wanted this morning," Bob Cherry remarked. "If we're not, we might as well get out."

"Better wait," said Harry.

"I'm not waiting much longer," grunted Coker. "I didn't come to Los Angeles to hang about with my hands in my pockets."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"I fancy Schootz is waiting till he's seen Polk, and Polk's rather late," he remarked. "We're small beer compared with Polk."

"The smallfulness of our esteemed beer is terrific," observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what is the esteemed oddfulness so long as the happiness is preposterous?"

"Great Scott!" growled Coker. "Aren't you ever going to learn to

speak English, kid? What did you come to Greyfriars for?"

"My esteemed fatheaded Coker——"

"Keep it up, Inky," chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "I guess that weird lingo will go down on the talkies, just a few. It will sure make the film fans sit up and take notice."

"The weirdfulness of my excellent lingo is not great, my esteemed Fishy," murmured the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Not much weirder than yours, Fish!" grunted Coker. "Blessed if I understand your American lingo sometimes."

"That don't surprise me a whole heap," retorted Fisher T. Fish, sarcastically. "Nobody expects you to understand anything, Coker."

"I don't want any cheek from a fag, Fish!" boomed Coker.

"Oh, can it," said Fisher T. Fish. "Can't you get it into your pesky cabeza that you ain't at Greyfriars now? Don't keep on telling the world that you're a mossheaded schoolboy."

"Look here——" roared Coker.

"Oh, cheese it," said Potter. "Don't row with these fags, Coker. I say, I'm getting rather fed up with hanging about."

Coker snorted.

"I'm going to speak to Schootz," he said. "If we ain't wanted, we may as well clear. I'm more than fed up."

"Better wait a bit," said Greene.

"Rot!"

And Coker, much annoyed, started for Schootz' office, to learn whether his valuable services were wanted that morning, or whether his valuable services were not wanted.

He tapped at the door of the great man's quarters, and opened it. As he did so, Myron Polk came up. He passed Coker in the doorway, and strolled into the office, greeted amiably by Mr. Schootz and Mr. Van Duck.

They had, in fact, been waiting for him.

They did not seem to notice that Coker was there. Coker was not the fellow to be passed unnoticed.

"Look here, Mr. Schootz——" he began.

Mr. Rigg Schootz, who was speaking to the Perfection star, turned to him irritably.

"What do you want? You should not come here unless you are sent for. Beat it."

"I want to know——"

"You'll be told anything you need to know," said Mr. Van Duck, and he closed the door of the office in Coker's face.

Coker, with feelings too deep for words, retired. The smile he caught on Myron Polk's face, as he was shut out, irritated him intensely.

"Well, what does Schootz say?" asked Potter, as the exasperated Horace rejoined the waiting party.

Coker breathed hard.

"Couldn't give me a word," he answered. "That popinjay Polk butted in. No time for anybody else when Polk's about."

"Well, he's rather a big gun here," remarked Frank Nugent. "Anyhow, we can wait."

Snort, from Coker.

A few minutes later Myron Polk came along, with Mr. Schootz and Mr. Van Duck walking on either side of him.

Van Duck called out orders to the men in overalls who were waiting for them, and the studio was immediately busy. A set was swiftly arranged, but it was not the set for which the Greyfriars fellows had been waiting. It was one of the scenes of 'Lord of the Desert,' in which Myron Polk was featured as the Sheikh Ahmed Din.

"We're put off again, for that popinjay," grunted Coker.

"When the great man condescends to come around, the small fry have to make themselves scarce," remarked the Boulder sarcastically.

Coker's eyes glinted. It was exactly as Smuthy said, but Coker did not like being classed as small fry. He marched resolutely up to Mr. Schootz.

"Shall we be wanted this morning, Mr. Schootz?" he asked.

"Eh! What? No!" said Mr. Schootz absently. He was deep in discussion of some detail with Myron Polk, and had no time or attention to give to Horace Coker.

"Then we may as well go!" exclaimed Coker.

"No! Stay where you are." Mr. Schootz turned to the Greyfriars group.

"You lads, watch this scene carefully—you can pick up a lot from watching Mr. Polk at work. Keep back and keep quiet."

He moved on with Myron Polk, leaving Coker of the Fifth in a simmering state.

"Stand about here—watching that popinjay!" breathed Coker. "Is that what we came to Hollywood for?"

"Schootz is boss here," said Greene mildly.

"Watching that—that masher!" said Coker. It was the most derogatory word that Coker could think of.

"Oh, have a little boss-sense," said Fisher T. Fish. "Do you figure that you're going to act for the films without learning anything?"

"That nincompoop!" breathed Coker.

"Blessed is I like hanging about watching Polk polking," yawned Bob Cherry.

"Well, let's be reasonable," said Harry. "Polk may be a conceited ass, but he's a finished film actor, and there's a lot to be learned from watching a first-class man at the game."

"Yes—I suppose Schootz is right," agreed Bob. "We're not all born geniuses like Coker; we've got to learn."

"Anyhow, we're here to obey instructions," said Johnny Bull, in his practical way, "so what's the good of grouching?"

And the Greyfriars party remained to watch, Coker still simmering.

"Look at that idiot!" muttered Coker. "Lighting a cigarette might set the whole place on fire. Just swank."

"No bizney of ours!" said Potter.

"Br-r-r-r!"

Myron Polk had taken a cigarette from his case, and was lighting a match. The rule against smoking in the studio was strict, the danger of fire from the inflammable films was plain to everybody. Mr. Van Duck generally had an unlighted cigar stuck in his mouth, but he was careful never to carry matches about him in the studio. As a matter of fact, in this instance it was not 'swank' that actuated Mr. Polk, he was not 'throwing his weight about' as usual. He was an inveterate cigarette smoker, and he had forgotten, for the moment, that he was in precincts where smoking was prohibited. 'Swank' to that extent would not have been allowed to the greatest star in the film firmament.

Mr. Schootz gave quite a jump as Polk blew out a little cloud of smoke.

He tapped Polk on the arm.

"Oh, I forgot," grunted Polk, and he dropped the cigarette and crushed it under his heel.

"You've forgotten before," said Mr. Schootz, rather sourly. "Better give me your matches till you quit."

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"Oh, that's all right."

Polk slipped his ruby-studded gold match-box back into his pocket. Coker was glad to see that, in this respect at least, even the Perfection star was called to order.

Myron Polk lounged away to a dressing-room—he had a magnificent dressing-room at Perfection Studio, with more dressers and assistants than he had fingers and toes.

Men in overalls were busy arranging the scenes. A scene was to be "shot," and the fact that Myron Polk was acting in it set the whole place in a fever of activity. Mr. Van Duck's voice was suddenly heard hooting.

"Here you are! You're late! You figure that you're going to keep the set waiting. I want to know."

The juniors glanced round to see who was getting the benefit of Mr. Van Duck's sharp tongue—very sharp, indeed, when the assistant-director was annoyed.

A girl had come hurrying in, and was heading for the staircase that led to the women's dressing-rooms.

Apparently it was one of the "extra girls," of whom a number were retained by the studio for extra work.

"You, Leonora!" hooted Mr. Van Duck, as the girl did not turn her head towards him. "You with the ginger! You!"

Leonora, whose hair was auburn, stopped, and turned towards the assistant-director. The juniors could guess that she had wanted to slip in quietly, as she was late, without attracting attention. But nothing on the Perfection "lot" ever escaped Mr. Van Duck's eagle eye.

To Harry Wharton & Co., Mr. Van Duck's method of addressing one of the gentler sex in that manner was rather shocking. But to Van Duck an extra girl was on the same footing as an extra piece of furniture in a set. Girls or boys, women or men, they were all the same to Van Duck—merely articles to be arranged in a set.

"Begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

His lordship frowned.

The airs and graces of Mr. Polk his lordship could tolerate with great equanimity, but Mr. Van Duck's style of addressing a female appeared to Mauly much too much of a good thing.

"Sorry I'm late, George!" answered Leonora. "I guess I'll be on hand when you want me."

The young lady was evidently quite self-possessed, and knew her way about Hollywood. She went up the staircase with a flash of silk stockings.

"You keep the set waiting, and you're fired!" hooted Mr. Van Duck. "You hear me, you Leonora!"

"Sure, old thing!" came the young lady's answer, floating down the stairs as she vanished.

The juniors smiled. Leonora appeared to be a lady who could keep her end up, even with the irascible Van Duck.

But Lord Mauleverer did not smile. He approached the assistant-director, and tapped him gently on the arm.

"Hallo, you!" said Van Duck, staring at him.

"Excuse my buttin' in!" said Lord Mauleverer gracefully. "Sorry, an' all that; but do you really think that's the way to speak to a lady, Mr. Van Duck?"

Van Duck blinked at him.

"Loco?" he gasped.

"Sorry I'm unacquainted with the meanin' of the word, sir," said Lord Mauleverer. "If you don't mind my mentionin' it, I hate to hear a man speakin' rudely to a lady."

"Dog gone my cats!" said Mr. Van Duck.

"It's not done, you know!" said Lord Mauleverer mildly.

"Search me!" said Mr. Van Duck. "Stand back and shut your head! Catch on to the meaning of that?"

"Yaas!"

"Do it, then!"

"Certainly, my dear man."

And Lord Mauleverer stepped back and shut his head, as requested. Mr. Van Duck gave him an angry stare, and then grinned, perhaps finding Lord Mauleverer amusing. But he had no time to waste even on a belted earl; the studio was in a fever of preparation for Myron Polk; and Mr. Van Duck hustled to and fro, hooting and snapping, handing out hard words to everybody excepting Mr. Schootz—who handed out a few to Mr. Van Duck himself, being the only man in the studio who could venture to do so. Harry Wharton & Co. kept out of the way and looked on—realising, as no doubt Mr. Polk meant them to realise, what exceedingly small beer they were in comparison with the Perfection star.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Heart Attack!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Lord Mauleverer jumped, as Bob Cherry clapped him suddenly on the back.

"Oh, gad!" he ejaculated.

Bob grinned. Lord Mauleverer was standing, leaning against a huge packing-case, his eyes fixed on the staircase that led to the dressing-rooms above, at a little distance. Mauly seemed deep in thought; and Bob accordingly woke him up.

"Gone to sleep standing up, like a horse?" inquired Bob.

"Yaas."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I mean, no."

Bob regarded his lordship curiously. It was not uncommon for Lord Mauleverer to be absent-minded; but he seemed rather unusually absent-minded now. There was quite a dreamy expression on Mauly's amiable face, and he appeared lost to his surroundings.

Some of the juniors followed the direction of Mauly's fixed grin. Only the untenanted staircase met their view—and they discerned nothing to draw Mauly's attention so deeply, and to plunge him into such abstraction.

"What's up, Mauly?" asked Bob.

"Up?" repeated Mauleverer, vaguely.

"Yes. What's the matter with you?"

"Matter?" repeated Mauly.

"My hat! Are you turning into a parrot?" demanded Bob.

"Parrot?"

"You burbling ass!" said Bob, shaking his lordship by the shoulder.

"What have you got on your mind?"

"Eh? Nothin'!"

Lord Mauleverer jerked his shoulder away, and leaned back against the packing-case. Obviously, some matter was in Mauly's mind, giving him deep thought; but what it was, Bob could not guess.

A number of "extra girls" came trooping down the stairs, to form up for the scene. They were in Arabian costume, dressed for the "Lord of the Desert" picture. The men in overalls were rapidly arranging a "set" of an Arab village, with a realistic well, palm-trees, and tents. From remarks made by Mr. Van Duck the juniors gathered that in this scene Zoe, the beautiful Arab girl, was to be seen

Carrying a pith helmet of water from the well on her head, meeting the view of the Sheikh Ahmed Din, who, struck by her beauty, carried her off on his Barbary steed—a high-handed proceeding, quite in accordance with a film-sheikh's character. The Arab maiden was to be played by Janet Jooce, known in Filmland as the World's Winsome Witch—second in importance only to the great Polk himself. The juniors had heard much of Janet Jooce; but they had not yet seen the World's Winsome Witch, and were accordingly interested.

There was quite a blaze of beauty as the girls came trooping on the scene—though how much of it belonged to them, and how much was borrowed from the beauty-parlour and the make-up man, no observer could have guessed—so liberally was the make-up. They were not, as the Bounder remarked, merely painted: they were plastered. But natural complexions, however vivid, were not much use under the blaze of the lights in a film studio.

Lord Mauleverer gave a sudden little start a few minutes after the Arab girls had come down, and Bob glanced in the direction in which his lordship was gazing—still at the staircase.

One late-comer was descending alone.

It was the girl Leonora, at whom Mr. Van Duck had stormed for coming into the studio late.

So far as Bob could see, Leonora was much of a muchness with the rest of the crowd. Any difference that might have existed was hidden from Bob's sight, at least, by the thick make-up.

He heard Mauleverer draw a deep breath.

"Stunnin'!" muttered Mauleverer.

"Eh! What?" asked Bob, glancing round, thinking that perhaps Polk or Janet Jooce had appeared.

"Isn't she rippin'?"

"Who?" asked Bob blankly.

"Miss Leonora."

"Is she?" said Bob.

Mauleverer looked at him.

"Can't you see she is?" he asked.

"Well, I'm blessed if I can see much what any of them are like!" confessed Bob. "They might as well be masked, with all that sticky stuff on their chivvies!"

"Leonora isn't like the rest."

"Well, her hair's rather brighter," said Bob. "Ginger, Van Duck called it!"

"Van Duck's a fool!"

"Eh?"

"A tasteless ass!"

"Oh!"

Bob stared at Mauleverer. It was quite unlike Mauly to deliver any strong opinion of any sort.

Lord Mauleverer, obviously, was not

in his usual placid mood. Bob wondered what had come over him.

His lordship's gaze followed Leonora, as she came down the stairs and joined the crowd of girls in the set.

"What are you looking at now specially?" asked Bob.

"Can't you see her?"

"Which?"

"Leonora, of course!" said Lord Mauleverer testily.

"Eh! Not among that crowd," answered the perplexed Bob. "Now she's mixed up with the rest she wants some picking out. They're all much alike."

"Fathead!"

"Well, except for her ginger hair," said Bob. "But one or two of the other girls have red hair."

"Did you say ginger?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes."

"Then you're a silly ass!"

rather languidly on the scene. Her manner indicated that she, like Myron Polk, knew the importance of a star of the first magnitude.

"Stunnin'!" murmured Lord Mauleverer; and Nugent, who was near him, glanced round.

"Think so?" he asked.

"Don't you?" asked Mauleverer.

"Oh, pretty, I've no doubt!" assented Frank. "Nice dark hair, anyhow."

"Dark?" said Mauleverer.

"Yes—jolly nearly black, I think."

Frank was looking at the World's Winsome Witch, whose hair was extremely dark.

"Blind?" asked Mauleverer.

Nugent stared at him.

"What do you mean, Mauly?"

"I mean that you must be a blind owl if you can't see from here that her hair's the richest auburn!" answered Mauleverer.

Nugent jumped.

"Those blessed Kleig lights have damaged your optics, Mauly," he said. "You want to see an oculist, if you think Miss Jooce's hair is auburn. It's nearly as black as ink."

"Miss Jooce?" repeated Mauleverer. "Who's talkin' about Miss Jooce, you ass?"

"Eh! Weren't you?"

Grunt from Mauleverer. Apparently the answer was in the negative.

"I can't see one with auburn hair," said Nugent, puzzled.

"Look at Leonora—she's leaning against a palm-tree and—"

"That girl with the red hair?" asked Nugent.

Lord Mauleverer did not answer that question. He gave Frank Nugent a look of scorn and

moved away. Nugent stared after him.

For the first time in Nugent's experience Mauly was angry. What he was angry about was a mystery.

"Something's up with Mauly, you men," said Frank, in a low voice. "He's ratty! Fancy old Mauly being ratty!"

"But what the thump—" said Bob.

There was a chuckle from the Bounder. Smithy, keener in observation than the other fellows, had spotted Mauleverer's little weakness.

"Spoons!" he said.

"What?"

"Which?"

"Mauly's struck with the ginger girl!" chuckled the Bounder. "It's a case of love at first sight."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Every fellow in the party turned his head to look at Lord Mauleverer. His

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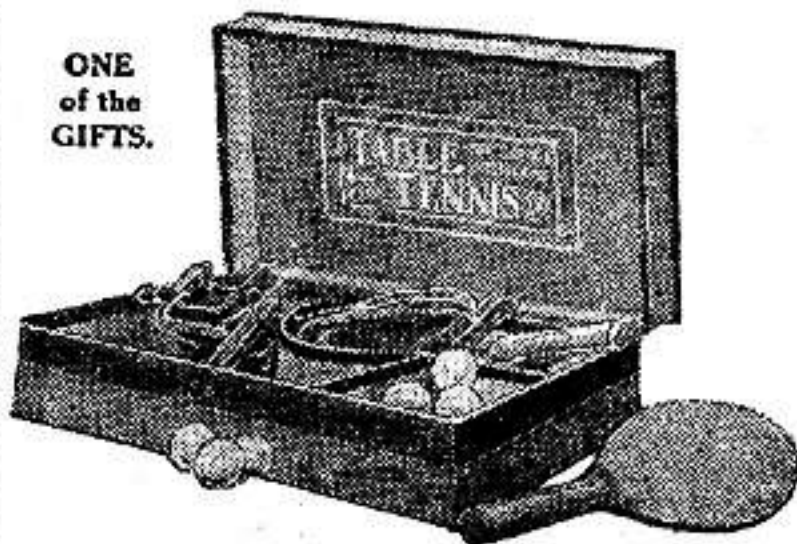
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Lord Mauleverer moved a little away. Bob stared after him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up, Mauly?" he exclaimed.

Mauleverer did not answer; he moved a little farther away, detaching himself from the Greyfriars group. Bob looked round at the other fellows in wonder.

"Anything wrong with Mauly, you men?" he asked. "What's up? Mauly never gets his back up; but he seems stuffy about something now."

"Anything up, Mauly?" asked Harry Wharton.

Lord Mauleverer did not answer or turn his head. He did not seem to hear. His eyes were glued on the group of Arab girls about the well—upon Leonora, if the juniors had noticed it. But Leonora did not specially catch their eyes in the crowd.

"Quit chewing the rag, you guys!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Here comes the big noise!"

The "big noise" was Janet Jooce. The World's Winsome Witch came

lordship was still gazing at Leonora; but he became aware of the general scrutiny, and a deep blush overspread his amiable face. He moved farther away, and a pile of packing-cases hid him from sight.

Harry Wharton & Co. laughed—they could not help it. The idea of Lord Mauleverer's susceptible heart "falling" for a cinema beauty was rather too much for their gravity.

Lord Mauleverer's ears burned as he heard that ripple of merriment from the other side of the pile of packing-cases. He moved away farther. But he did not move out of sight of the group by the well. All other eyes were fixed on the World's Winsome Witch; but Mauly's were fairly glued to Leonora. An attendant of the studio came by and stood near Mauly, looking on, and Mauleverer spoke to him.

"I suppose you know the name of most of the people?" he asked.

"Sure!" assented the man.

"What is the name of the beautiful girl with the auburn hair?"

The man stared at the group. He did not seem to be able to pick out readily the owner of that description.

"Mr. Van Duck calls her Leonora," added Mauleverer.

"Oh, that one!" said the man indifferently. "Her other name's La Riviere, on the films."

"What a lovely name!" said Mauleverer, half to himself. "Leonora la Riviere!"

The studio man grinned.

"You bet they all cinch a high-stepping name for the movies," he said.

"Her real name's Snookson!"

Lord Mauleverer jumped.

"I don't believe it!" he gasped.

The man looked at him.

"That's it—Snookson," he said. "No earthly good for the movies, so she goes down as La Riviere."

"What rot!"

The man looked at him harder, and moved away. He confided to another attendant that the titled guy old Fish had roped in was plumb loco.

His opinion mattered little to Lord Mauleverer. Nothing would have induced him to believe that the nymph he was gazing at was named Snookson, or anything so extremely unromantic. He continued to gaze, with a rapt gaze, at Leonora la Riviere, and dismissed all possibilities of Snookson from his mind.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Sudden Alarm!

"SEE the conquering hero comes!" murmured Bob Cherry. And the Greyfriars fellows smiled.

Myron Polk was coming in.

In his costume and make-up as Ahmed Din, Lord of the Desert, Myron Polk looked uncommonly handsome, and it was small wonder that romantic flappers all over the United States adored him. The juniors had heard that there was a society in Los Angeles called the "I.L.W.M.", which was short for "In Love With Myron." Numberless ecstatic young women belonged to the In Love With Myron Society. Perhaps Mr. Polk was to be excused for thinking so much of himself and touching the stars with his sublime head. So much adulation was likely to turn any head that was not very well-balanced.

But Harry Wharton & Co. forgot the insufferable conceit of the fortunate young man as they watched him acting before the cameras.

Myron Polk, with all his weaknesses, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,100.

was an accomplished actor. His goods were not all in the shop window, as one might have supposed from his looks and manners.

Once at work, Polk threw himself into his part, and displayed a skill and finish that the juniors could not but admire. They knew, too, that the lackadaisical young man must have put plenty of hard work into it at some time or other. Probably his usual manner of supercilious boredom was more a pose than anything else. With all allowance for looks and luck, no man could have attained his present position without putting his beef into it.

The "big noises" in this scene were Myron Polk and Janet Jooce, the Perfection star and the World's Winsome Witch. Certainly, they were both well worth watching. The rest of the set were merely make-weights. Nobody had eyes for them, excepting Lord Mauleverer, and he had eyes only for one of them. Excepting, of course, Mr. Rigg Schootz, who was there as producer, and who had eyes for everybody and everything, and a megaphone, through which to roar.

Janet Jooce tripped from the well with the pitcher balanced gracefully on her head an Arab maiden to the life; and Myron Polk played his part in the true style of the sheikh—that is to say, a film sheikh. A genuine inhabitant of the desert would probably not have recognised him as a sheikh; but the cinema, of course has its own traditions. A genuine desert sheikh is generally rather in want of soap, and often of Keatings. But Mr. Polk was a sheikh according to the best traditions of the movies. Undoubtedly, he was very much superior to the genuine article.

In the melodramatic style which is indispensable to the movies, his acting was quite superb.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched him, and for the first time felt some respect for him. They realised that their own efforts did not place them in the same street with Polk, and were never likely to. Even Horace Coker looked less contemptuous. He admitted to Potter and Greene that the popinjay could, after all, do something besides throw his weight about.

The blaring of Mr. Schootz' megaphone died away, and the cameras began to click.

The scene was being "shot," and it was interesting enough to the Greyfriars fellows to be looking on at the taking of a film that would be released later, to be shown in every country in the world. Myron Polk's handsome features and graceful figure would be displayed to admiring eyes from Stockholm to Sicily, from China to Peru.

The scene stopped at the point where the sheikh's Barbary horse was to be introduced. That, they gathered, would come later, when the company was "on location." When the film was shown, of course, it would follow instantly, but in the filming there might be an interval of weeks.

"Jolly good!" was Bob Cherry's comment, when the scene was over, and the set broke up, the cameras ceased to grind, and the blinding lights were turned off.

"The goodness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and preposterous Polk is not wholly a ludicrous ass!"

Coker & Co. left the studio at once, but the juniors looked round for Lord Mauleverer.

His lordship was not to be seen.

"Where's that duffer, Mauly?" asked the Bounder.

"I guess he's absquatulated," remarked Fisher T. Fish. And Fishy walked away. The other fellows followed him out of the studio.

As Mauly was not to be seen, they supposed that he had gone out, and expected to find him waiting for them on the "lot."

But on the trim green lawns that separated the Perfection studio from the boulevard, Mauleverer was not to be seen. Neither could he be discerned along Sunset Boulevard, or over the way, in the garden of Long Beach Boarding-House.

"Where the dickens is he?" asked Harry Wharton.

"The wherefulness is terrific!"

"Can't have come out, after all," said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I know what he's staying in there for."

"Looking for a chance to see the bootious Leonora, perhaps," said the Bounder, with a chuckle.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Mauly wouldn't be such an ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Mauly's ass enough for anything when he gets going!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I guess he's fallen for Leonora's ginger hair!" chortled Fisher T. Fish. "Great snakes! What a catch Mauly would be for a Los Angeles gold-digger!"

"A what?" exclaimed Bob.

"I guess Los Angeles is full of gold-diggers up to the roof," chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"I didn't know there were any gold-diggers round here," said Bob. "I've not seen any, so far."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fisher T. Fish, greatly tickled by that innocent remark. "Oh, that's the elephant's hind leg—that sure is! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you driving at, you ass?" asked Bob, rather gruffly. "What do you mean by a gold-digger?"

Fisher T. Fish wiped his eyes.

"Gold-diggin' in L. A. ain't done with a spade and pick," he explained. "A gold-digger is a movie girl who gets a holt on a jay—some all-fired simple Simon, like Mauly—and squeezes the dust out of him. I guess if Leonora was wise to it that he was struck on her she'd touch him for a diamond ring before lunch, and a pearl necklace before dinner, and an automobile before he goes to his little bunk in the boarding-house."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry uneasily. "There can't be many girls like that even in a movie town. Rubbish!"

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry.

"Rats!" said Nugent.

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"I guess Mauly is the prize jay, if a gold-digger gets a cinch on him," grinned Fisher T. Fish. "There's codles of 'em on the boulevards. Mauly is the man they want. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Bob Cherry. "I'll cut across the road and see whether Mauly has gone in, you men."

Bob Cherry ran across the Sunset Boulevard to Long Beach Boarding-House. "Colonel" Coot, the proprietor, was sunning himself on the piazza, and to Bob's question as to whether Mauleverer had come in he answered in the negative. Bob re-crossed the boulevard and joined the Greyfriars party on the Perfection lot, with that information.

It was clear that Mauleverer was still in the studio, and the juniors began to wonder whether the Bounder's surmise was well founded. They could not help grinning at the idea. At the same time, they did not want to see the amiable Mauly playing the "giddy ox." They waited on the lot for him to come out.

Billy Bunter made a wild leap to escape. But fast as the fat junior was, Simmons' boot was faster. Crash! The Owl of the Remove was strewn along the boulevard, and the door slammed behind him. "Ow! Wow! Beast!" wailed Bunter. "Oh, erikay!" (See Chapter 3.)



A troop of girls, most of them with a great deal of make-up on their faces, emerged and tripped away down the boulevard. Leonora la Riviere was not among them, as the juniors noticed, being interested in the auburn-haired Leonora now on Lord Mauleverer's account.

Apparently that young lady was as late to go as she had been to come. Unless, as the grinning Bunder suggested, Mauly had already scraped an acquaintance, and was "going it."

Fisher T. Fish left the party and crossed over to the boarding-house. But the other fellows continued to wait for Lord Mauleverer to come out of the studio.

They had the pleasure of seeing the leading lady, Janet Jooce, trip down to her automobile and drive away. The World's Winsome Witch disappeared along the boulevard. Myron Polk had not yet left—his highly-polished, purple auto was still waiting. It was getting near time for lunch at Long Beach Boarding-House, and at that establishment lunch, like time and tide, waited for no man. Johnny Bull suggested going back into the studio and rooting out Mauleverer. But Mauly might be anywhere in the vast building, and the juniors decided to wait for him at the entrance.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

There was a sudden sound of disturbance in the studio—a hurrying of feet, and startled cries. Two or three men and women bolted suddenly out of the door with scared, white faces. From a window, a wave of smoke suddenly shot.

"What——" ejaculated Wharton.

"Fire!"

That roar from the Perfection studio answered him.

"Fire, fire, fire!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fire!

"FIRE!"

Lord Mauleverer woke out of a day-dream.

The morning's business being over, most of the people in the studio had gone, but Mauleverer was

still there. His eyes were on the staircase down which the extra girls had trooped on their way out, but down which Leonora la Riviere—otherwise, perhaps, Snookson—had not yet appeared. Twenty or thirty Hollywood extras had trooped before Mauly's eyes, receiving only a glance from him—and that glance only to ascertain whether the auburn-haired young lady was among them.

She was not, so Mauly lingered.

Exactly why he lingered, Mauly could hardly have said. He wanted to see Leonora pass, no doubt—but certainly Mauly had not "check" enough to scrape an acquaintance, as the Bunder had suggested. An attempt to scrape an acquaintance Mauly would have deemed disrespectful, and respect for women was the chief article in Mauly's simple faith. In Mauly's mind, there was little distinction, if any, between a countess and a charlady, a millionairess and a movie extra. All were women, and to be treated with deference—a little lower than the angels, perhaps, but not much. To gaze at Miss La Riviere from afar with respectful admiration was the only thought in Mauly's mind, so far as he was thinking at all. But, to judge by the expression on his noble face, he was rather dreaming than thinking.

A footstep on the stairs from the dressing-rooms caught his ear, and he looked quickly.

But it was only Myron Polk.

"Only," the greatest star in the film firmament!

Polk came sauntering down the wide staircase, with a cigarette in his mouth, smoking. Again the movie star had forgotten the prohibition, and had struck a match in the studio.

Mauleverer did not even notice that—he did not notice Polk at all. He only noticed that it wasn't Leonora.

Above the staircase was a wide landing. In one direction a corridor led to the men's dressing-rooms; in the opposite direction, another led to the women's quarters and wardrobes. Those corridors were supposed to be kept clear of any lumber. As a matter of fact, Mr. Van Duck's eyes could not be everywhere, and it is well known what happens when the master's eye is withdrawn.

A third corridor led to the store-room, where rolls of film were stacked, and it was one of the strictest rules that film should not be left about the building. Nevertheless, frequently Mr. Van Duck was heard hooting at some man who had disregarded that rule or forgotten it, or who was too careless to comply with it.

Myron Polk, pausing on the landing to light his cigarette, in momentary forgetfulness, threw the match away as carelessly as if he had been walking on the open boulevard.

In nine cases out of ten it would have had no result, but it was the tenth case that happened. A roll of film had been carelessly left on the landing and the match, still burning, landed on it.

Polk strolled on, and down the stairs. He was thinking chiefly of himself, as usual, and of the scene he had recently acted in with Janet Jooce. He was quite unaware of a curl of smoke and a lick of flame behind him.

He strolled along the studio, at his ease, smoking, and, happening to see Lord Mauleverer leaning against the packing case glanced at him carelessly. Then he stopped at the spot where the last scene had been shot, and forgot Lord Mauleverer and everything else as he stood there, thinking out some detail of his art. Polk, with all his "buff," was a keen worker at his profession, and some minute improvement on the scene having come into his mind,

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he stood there, thinking it out carefully.

The shout of "fire!" startled him from his reflections, as it startled Lord Mauleverer, and the Greyfriars fellows on the lot outside.

Polk started, and stared round.

A man in overalls came running down the stairs, singed by the flames as he cut across the landing. A volume of smoke was rolling down after him.

The man was shouting "Fire!"

The few people who remained in the studio rushed for the doors.

The alarm of "Fire" in a cinema studio was not a light matter. If the stores of films should catch, the building would be promptly turned into a raging volcano.

Pattering feet passed Lord Mauleverer as he woke out of his day-dream and stared at the smoking staircase.

"Fire!"

It was a roar of voices, rising above the pattering of hurrying feet.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Mauleverer.

"Run for it, you boob!" shouted a man, passing him, astonished to see Lord Mauleverer making for the staircase.

"Is everybody out?" called out Polk.

"Nobody in the dressing-rooms?"

"No, sir—everybody's out!"

The man grasped Mauleverer by the shoulder and stopped him.

"You boob! That isn't the way out! Do you want to be burned alive?" he shouted.

"Let go, you fool!" roared Lord Mauleverer. "There's a woman upstairs now."

"They're all out—"

"I tell you—"

"Stop, you locoed boob!" shouted the man, as Lord Mauleverer wrenched himself away. "I tell you they're all gone—it's long past time—"

"Miss La Riviere hasn't gone!" panted Mauleverer.

"Must have gone!" The attendant, anxious for the safety of the schoolboy, grabbed him by the arm again. "They're all gone, I tell you!"

"Fire, fire, fire!" came in a roar from all quarters.

"Let go!" shrieked Mauleverer. "I tell you I've been waiting here, and Miss La Riviere hasn't come down!"

"Oh, guff! I tell you—"

The man evidently believed that all the extras were gone, as no doubt they should have been by that time, but Miss La Riviere seemed of rather unpunctual habits.

Mauleverer gave the man a violent shove and released himself. He ran towards the smoking staircase.

The attendant almost fell, but, recovering himself, ran for the exit. The studio was filling with smoke and, from above, came a roar of flames.

"Come back, you fool!" shouted Polk.

"Follow me!" panted Mauleverer. "I tell you there's a woman there—come and help me!"

As if to confirm Mauleverer's words, a sudden and terrified scream rang out above, beyond the barrier of smoke.

"Good heavens!" muttered Polk.

With the natural instinct of a man when a woman is in danger, the Perfection star ran towards the staircase.

"Come on!" panted Mauleverer. "Quick, quick! We can save her—quick! For Heaven's sake, quick!"

He ran up the stairs into the eddying smoke.

Myron Polk followed him—a few steps. Then he stopped. His handsome face was white as a sheet.

Smoke eddied and curled round him

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--and amid the smoke came a licking, curling tongue of flame.

Polk jumped back down the few steps he had mounted.

"This way!" shouted Mauleverer, from the smoke, as another terrified scream rang above.

But Myron Polk was not following him.

With a white face, the Perfection star was racing for the doorway on the "lot."

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

The alarm was general, on all sides, now. Mr. Schootz was raving for order, through his megaphone. Outside, a hose had already been turned on the smoking windows. An immense crowd was gathering on the lot and on the adjoining boulevard. Already firemen were on the scene and at work. As Polk, white as chalk, tore out of the great doorway, he crashed into the crowd of Greyfriars fellows.

"Here's Mauly!" panted Bob Cherry. "My hat—it's Polk—Mauly's still inside."

He grasped Polk by the arm.

"Did you see Mauleverer—where is he—quick?"

Polk shook off his hand and ran on.

"Come on!" panted Wharton.

The Famous Five rushed into the building. The Bouncer was close behind. But a volume of smoke, thick and black, rolled in their faces and drove them back. To seek Mauly in the midst of that thick blackness was impossible. And there were half a dozen doors by which he might have left. Choked and blinded, Harry Wharton & Co. retreated to the doorway and the fresh air. There they were hustled aside by the firemen who were pouring streams of water into the building.

"Mauly!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Mauly! Mauleverer!"

But if Mauly was outside, no answer came to the anxious calls of the juniors. But Lord Mauleverer was not outside—Lord Mauleverer was in the midst of the fire and the smoke, fighting for his life and the life of another.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Mauly, the Hero!

LORD MAULEVERER plunged through blinding smoke to the landing at the top of the staircase. A wild scream guided him—and he dashed along the corridor. Leonora la Riviere—last to leave—had been cut off by the fire. In the eddying smoke, Lord Mauleverer blundered against her before he saw her. He caught at a dim form.

"Miss la Riviere!" he panted.

"Save me!"

Mauleverer grasped her arm.

The girl, choked and blinded by smoke, was screaming wildly, only half conscious. Mauly felt his own brain reeling; but he set his teeth and kept his head.

The landing behind him was now a mass of flame, and it was impossible to return to the staircase.

Holding the girl by the arm, Mauleverer hurried her further up the corridor, hoping to find a window by which escape would be possible.

The terrified screaming suddenly ceased, and Mauleverer felt the weight of the girl fall upon him.

He caught Leonora in his arms.

Mauleverer was a sturdy fellow, in his way; but he was a boy, and he staggered under the weight of the movie girl.

He supported her manfully; but carrying her to safety was another matter.

"Help!" shouted Mauleverer, in the belief that Myron Polk was close behind. "Help! This way! Polk—this way! Lend a hand—help!"

But there was no answer save the roar of the fire.

"Polk!" shrieked Mauleverer.

But Polk, the only man who could have helped, was already far away.

Mauly shut his teeth. It did not occur to his generous mind that Polk had deserted him in that extremity; he took it for granted, without thinking, that the film star had been overcome by the smoke or driven back by the flames.

All that mattered was, that there was no help; and that he was alone to deal with the danger.

The movie girl was quite unconscious, partly from terror, partly from the suffocating smoke. Mauleverer made a desperate effort to carry her along the corridor.

Half-carrying, half-dragging, the unconscious girl, Mauleverer forced his way on, smoke thick about him, and tongues of flame licking at him from the vapour.

He could see nothing; but at length, when by desperate efforts he had reached the end of the long corridor, there was a glimmer of light through the smoke, and he knew that he was at a window.

Letting the unconscious girl sink to the floor, Mauleverer groped for the window, and flung open a casement wide.

The smoke poured out in a huge volume.

From below came a shout.

Mauleverer, exerting the last of his strength, lifted Leonora, and placed her head over the narrow sill outside, in the open air. Behind him rolled and eddied the smoke, and the heat was terrible, but he was, for the moment, out of reach of the fire.

"Help!" roared Mauleverer.

A roar below answered him. A hundred faces were turned up at the window, from which smoke was pouring in volumes.

Through the smoke came a jet of water, drenching Leonora and Mauleverer, and falling behind them in the blackened corridor.

"The ladder!" came a shout.

"It's Mauly!" Mauleverer recognised Harry Wharton's voice. "It's Mauly—at the window!"

"Help!"

"The ladder—quick!" roared Mr. Schootz.

The firemen were rushing the ladder to the window. A helmeted head rose through the eddying smoke to Mauleverer's view.

"Take her!" he panted.

The fireman seized the unconscious girl round the shoulders, and Mauleverer helped from within. Leonora, insensible to her surroundings, was lifted out, and the fireman descended with her to the ground.

Mauleverer clambered out of the window.

The fire was close behind him now; his clothes were singed, and burning in places, and he was dimly conscious of pain. With reeling brain, he clung to the ladder, and might have fallen, but for the fireman who rushed up and grasped him.

Half-conscious, Mauleverer was carried to the ground.

"Mauly!" panted Wharton.

"Mauly, old chap—"

Lord Mauleverer blinked. He was

supported in the arms of the juniors, blackened and panting and exhausted. "Is she safe?" he panted. "Yes, old chap—safe as houses!" "Good!" Hiram K. Fish came hurrying up. "Get that kid over to the house—I've phoned for a doctor," he snapped. "I'm all right," said Mauleverer faintly. "Don't bother about me." "Come on, you old ass!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll say you're some lad!" said Mr. Fish. "I'll sure say you're some lad! Get him away." "Look here, don't make a dashed fuss," gasped Mauleverer, as his chums supported him away. "I can walk all right—I'm not hurt—" "Fathead!" Mauleverer was led, half-carried, from the spot, through the buzzing crowd, to the boulevard. Word had passed round already that the "titled

guy" had saved one of the movie girls from the flames, and loud cheers accompanied him on his way. Harry Wharton & Co. bore him across the boulevard to Long Beach Boarding-House, in the midst of a cheering escort of two or three hundred people. After he had been conveyed into Long Beach Boarding-House, a crowd still lingered outside for a long time, cheering. In spite of his feeble protestations, Mauleverer was immediately bundled into bed, and left in the hands of the doctor, who had arrived promptly in response to Mr. Fish's phone call. Harry Wharton & Co. returned to the Perfection lot, to help, if they could, in subduing the fire. But the Hollywood fire-brigade had it well in hand now; the flames were already dying out, though black masses of smoke were pouring from all doors and windows.

Plenty of damage had been done, and a great deal of property destroyed; but the building was saved, much to the relief of Mr. Fish and Mr. Schootz. Water was still streaming on the building, and a crowd of men were busy carrying out property of all sorts and stacking it on the lawns. Myron Polk and his purple auto had disappeared; but Mr. Schootz and Mr. Van Duck were there, both in a towering rage. They wanted to know who had started carrying out property of all sorts and they wanted to know emphatically. But the man who could have told them was already at his bungalow on the hill, in a most unenviable frame of mind; and anxious, for the present, to keep out of the public gaze. For the first time since he had been featured on the films, the Perfection star shrank from publicity.

(Continued on page 16.)

WHAT THE "TESTS" HAVE TAUGHT US!

UMPIRE makes a brief but interesting survey of our Test match successes in Australia.



E. A. BECKETT, one of Australia's most promising "youngsters."

ENGLAND on top once more in the game of cricket; on top without the slightest shadow of doubt, and without anything in the nature of a fluke having put us there. That is the first obvious thought which comes to the mind as we reflect on the Test matches now drawing to an end in Australia.

The results of those games have been wonderful, from an England point of view, and ahead of the ideas of the most optimistic of us. Never before has a side which has gone from England to Australia won the first three Test matches of the five. This present England team has done more than win the first three; it has won the first four, and now stands with a chance of making a "slam." Five played, five won! That would be a wonderful finish, wouldn't it?

The Real Team Spirit!

There are many lessons to be learnt from the series of games now concluding in Australia; so many that I am a bit doubtful as to where to begin to draw them. Yet my mind inevitably goes back to a day in September last when I saw the England team—or, practically the whole of them—off to Australia at the same time.

I chatted with many of the players,

too. They were the happiest band I had ever seen off to play games anywhere. One by one I asked them what they thought about the prospects. They were all hopeful. The captain was the most hopeful of all. When I asked him his opinion of the probable outcome of the Tests he turned and bade me look at the men who were then going out. "How can a captain lose with a lot of lads like those?" he asked.

And when I talked to the players they just reversed the captain's idea. "How can we lose," they said, "with such a captain?" And therein you have what is perhaps the greatest lesson of all to be learnt from the present series; that to a side which possesses the real team spirit practically anything is possible.

I am not going to say—because I don't believe it—that in the purely cricket sense, Percy Chapman is the greatest captain who has ever had charge of an England team. But there never was a captain who stood in higher esteem among his fellow-men; for whom a set of players were prepared to do more. Cricket matches cannot be won without great players; that is a truism. But great players without the team spirit don't make a great team. Chapman's men have possessed the team spirit, and Chapman has got the best out of the players at his command. Further than that, no captain can hope to go.

Still they Come!

We have read, in the cables, of how "Farmer" White has bowled all the time at one end between lunch and tea. He has bowled, not to get wickets, but to keep the runs down and give the other bowlers a rest. We have read, too, how an England batsman who has been "set" has carefully guarded a new-comer from coming face to face with a bowler at the top of his form. Those are the things which have told. A team with a single purpose; each for all and all for the team. That is the spirit which wins.

We have learnt, surely, from those Test games, not to be so pessimistic, as a race. There are people who have told us, time after time in recent years, that we no longer produced the great cricketers as we used to produce them. These Tests have given the lie to that suggestion.

Some four years ago we sent out Herbert Sutcliffe with an England side,

He scored more runs than any other player has ever scored in one series of Test matches. This season we sent Wally Hammond. He has already broken the record set up by Herbert Sutcliffe, and a dozen other records as well. Hammond is only twenty-six years of age. Shall it be said, when we think of him, that England has ceased to produce great cricketers?

Again, when Strudwick retired from his wicket-keeping duties there were folk who despaired of us finding another Strudwick. But now all who have seen the Test matches in Australia are agreed that George Duckworth is "another Strudwick." Some even say he is a better keeper than Strudwick ever was.

Duckworth has kept wonderfully in spite of the fact that he has been the subject of a considerable amount of barracking consequent on what was called the Kippax incident in the second Test. The Australian spectators found it hard to forgive the little wicket-keeper, yet it seems that he was absolutely innocent and blameless in the matter. Perhaps here is a minor lesson of the Tests—a lesson for spectators—that things which happen on the field are not always quite what they seem when viewed from the "benches."

Young Blood!

Just as the success of England's young player has shown that there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, so it can be said that one of the lessons learnt by Australia is that youth will be served. At the start of the matches Australia relied almost entirely on what might be called the old brigade. Defeat and disaster came, and young players were introduced. These young players made good, so that the margin of victory for England became less and less as the series wore on. If young Bradman had not been run out in the second innings of the fourth Test, Australia would probably have won.

That lesson will not be lost on Australia. When they send a team here next time they will send us young blood. And it seems as though we shall have to find more young blood to face them. We shall find it. The youngsters are coming along in England, and the doings of the England players in the present series of matches will undoubtedly act as an inspiration.

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(Continued from page 13.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Worried!

BILLY BUNTER blinked dismally at the chums of the Remove at the lunch-table in Long Beach Boarding-House that day.

Bunter looked in the lowest of spirits. All the Greyfriars fellows were in a serious mood. Lord Mauleverer lay in bed, bandaged by the medical man, but well enough to sit up and take a light lunch there.

Mauly had been a great deal scorched and singed, and burned in two or three places; and for the present, much against his will, he was on the sick list. His placid good-humour was unaffected; but he was in pain, though he was determined not to show it. And naturally his friends felt concerned about him, and their usual high spirits were rather dashed.

The tables in the dining-room at Long Beach Boarding-House were in an animated buzz of discussion of what had happened at Perfection that morning. There were more than thirty guests in the establishment, many of them ambitious film aspirants who had come to Hollywood to break into the films; and all were deeply interested and excited by any unusual happening in the movie world—and the happening at Perfection was sensational.

The studio, one of the greatest in Los Angeles, had been in danger of destruction. The fire-brigade had saved it; but work in the studio was likely to be suspended for some time. Fortunately, no lives had been lost, the building having been almost empty at the time of the outbreak; poor Mauly, in fact, was the only person who had been really hurt.

All sorts of rumours flew over Hollywood, among others that Myron Polk had been burned to death in the fire—a rumour that was soon contradicted, and which, perhaps, originated with the star's publicity agent.

It brought Polk's name before the public prominently—and for a time Myron Polk put the fire itself into a secondary place as a topic. The early editions of the Los Angeles papers were full of Polk; one enterprising journalist even describing how he had narrowly escaped, carrying Janet Jocco, the World's Winsome Witch, to safety on his shoulders—this being as accurate a report of Mauly's rescue of Leonora as an American reporter could be expected to give at short notice.

But in Long Beach Boarding-House, at least, the facts were known, and there Mauleverer was the hero of the hour.

"Colonel" Coot was greatly delighted with the advertisement his establishment received from sheltering the hero—indeed, his plump countenance was wreathed in such smiles that one might have supposed that he was glad that the conflagration had occurred.

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How the fire had started was endlessly discussed. The Greyfriars juniors, who had noticed the incident of Polk's cigarette on one occasion, could guess that the star had transgressed a second time, with serious results.

Naturally, in so serious a matter, they did not feel disposed to state that opinion without any evidence, so they were silent on the subject.

Coker of the Fifth was not so particular. The great Horace could always be relied upon to speak before he thought—if indeed he ever thought at all, which was considered doubtful by his friends.

"It was that ass Polk!" Coker announced to all the dining-table. "Schootz stopped him from smoking in the studio once this morning—I'm jolly sure he started again and set the place alight. It's the sort of fool thing he would do."

"Cheese it, old chap!" whispered Potter.

"I say what I think!" retorted Coker loudly. "And I tell you I jolly well believe Polk was to blame for the fire."

Coker's theory was received with disapprobation on all sides in Long Beach Boarding-House. The Perfection star was too great a man to be criticised by Coker.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Coot.

Coker stared at him.

"What did you say?" he ejaculated.

"I sure said nonsense!" retorted the "colonel." "You blow off your mouth too much, young man!"

Coker snorted.

"I guess Polk wasn't there, anyhow," said Fisher T. Fish. "And you weren't on the spot, anyhow, Coker."

"You kids were there," said Coker, addressing the Famous Five. "You know whether Polk was there or not."

"He was there," said Harry Wharton. "He came running out after the alarm was given, while we were waiting for Mauly. He ran into us, in fact, at the doorway."

"Looking scared out of his wits, I've no doubt," said Coker.

Wharton made no reply to that. He quite remembered that Polk had rushed out white as chalk; but he was not disposed to stress that circumstance.

"He ran out!" grunted Coker. "Leaving a woman in a burning building! Pah!"

"I don't suppose he knew she was there," said Harry. "Nobody knew that any of the girls were still inside. I remember that Miss La Riviere hadn't come out with the others at the main entrance; but she might have left some other way, for all we knew—or anybody else. I don't believe for a minute that Polk would have left her in there if he'd known."

"Rot!" said Coker.

Most of the boarders were glaring at Coker, as if they would have liked to bite him instead of their lunch.

"The desertfulness of the esteemed miss would have been preposterously impossible," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us at least give the excellent and execrable Polk the benefit of ridiculous doubt."

"My!" said Mr. Coot, gazing at Hurree Singh, apparently carried away by admiration of that sample of the English language.

Coker grunted and was silent. His views were extremely unpopular in the boarding-house where Myron Polk was regarded with admiration as a bright particular star.

After lunch the chums of the Remove

went up to see Mauleverer. They found that cheery youth bandaged in bed, with a nurse installed, and were not allowed to stay long. In a very serious mood they went down to the garden. Mauleverer was not in any danger, but he was in a painful state, and was likely to be on the sick list for some little time. Proud of their comrade as they were, the juniors could not help feeling worried about him. Oddly enough, Billy Bunter's face was the longest of all. The Owl of the Remove seemed to be plunged in the depths of woe. Bunter had not spoken a word at lunch, which was very unusual; and when he joined the juniors in the garden, his fat face was lengthened to an extraordinary extent.

"I say, you fellows, it's rotten!" he said, or rather groaned.

"Rotten enough!" agreed Bob, rather surprised to see Bunter in such a state of concern. He supposed that it was on Mauleverer's account; and Bunter rose a little in his estimation. It was not customary for the Owl of the Remove to feel so deeply the troubles of others.

"The rottenfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Sickening, you know," said Bunter dismally.

And he sighed deeply.

"Well, it's not so bad as it might have been," said Frank Nugent comfortingly.

"Isn't it?" ejaculated Bunter. "I'd like to know how you make that out, you ass?"

"Well, it's jolly lucky Mauly got out alive!"

"Mauly! Who's talking about Mauly?"

"Eh? I thought you were."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "I've got something more important than that to think about."

"You silly owl!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, what's worrying you, old fat man?" asked Bob Cherry good-naturedly. "Anything gone wrong at Magic Films?"

Billy Bunter opened his lips—and closed them again. Ever since Simmons' boot had assisted his departure from Magic Films, the Owl of the Remove had been in a worried frame of mind. He was greatly in need of sympathy and advice, and longed to confide his woes to sympathetic hearers. On the other hand, he had a natural disinclination to owning up that his film engagement was a thing of the past—that the glory had departed from the house of Bunter, so to speak.

Between the desire to pour out his woes, and his desire to keep up his swank as the only Greyfriars fellow who had booked a movie post, Bunter was in a troubled frame of mind.

The juniors regarded him curiously. Bunter's engagement at Magic Films had surprised and mystified them. The ending of that engagement would not have surprised them.

"Order of the boot?" asked the Bounder, with a grin.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Is that it, old fat man?" asked Bob.

"Well, never mind. If you've been able to bag one engagement, you'll be able to bag another."

Bunter doubted that. He was not likely to have again at his command the peculiar means by which he had bagged that engagement at Magic Films.

"While there is preposterous life, there is ridiculous hope," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I'm not surprised it's over," remarked the Bounder. "What beats me is, how it started."

"Nothing of the kind," said Bunter hastily. That remark from Smithy settled the matter in his mind. He was not going to own up that he had been "fired" from Magic Films. "The—the fact is—"

"Well, what's the jolly old fact?" asked Bob. "It seems to be worrying you a lot, whatever it is."

"Oh, not at all!" exclaimed Bunter. "I—I—I'm feeling no end jolly. Awfully bucked, in fact."

"You look it!" commented the Bounder, with sarcasm.

Bunter curled a fat lip. "Jealousy, as usual," he sneered. "The fact is, I've been offered a long engagement—a specially good thing."

"That's why you're looking so joyful!" grinned the Bounder.

"Exactly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I think you might show a fellow a little sympathy, after all I've done for you."

"Sympathy, because you've been offered a specially good thing?" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes—I mean no—of—of course not! I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"No-n-nothing!"

"We'll hand out anything you like, old fat bean," said Bob. "But is it to be sympathy or congratulations? You've only to say which."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter; and, without saying which, he rolled away, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. staring.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

More Boos for Bunter!

MYRON POLK strolled restlessly about the orange-shaded, flower-scented gardens of his handsome bungalow on the hill above Hollywood.

His hands were driven deep into his pockets, and a dark frown knitted the brow of the Perfection star.

The handsomest man in Hollywood, generally so extremely well satisfied with himself, was in an unenviable frame of mind.

The scene in the studio haunted him.

Mauleverer—a mere schoolboy, and one of the party for whom he nourished a deep dislike—had rushed into smoke and flames, to rescue the movie girl; while Myron Polk, the dashing sheikh of the cinema, had fled like a poltroon. It was a memory that burned in his mind, and brought the hot flush of shame to his cheek when he thought of it, and he could not help thinking of it.

To do Polk justice, it was not base cowardice that had driven him to act as he had done. He probably had as much courage in the ordinary way as the average man. He told himself, again and again, that had he been an ordinary man, in ordinary circumstances, he would have dared the danger, as the schoolboy had done. It was, first and foremost, because he was the handsomest man in Hollywood, because his face was his fortune, that he had fled from the peril that a mere schoolboy had faced with intrepid resolution.

He could not afford to spoil his good looks. One lick of flame across his handsome face might have ruined him. He shuddered at the thought of what he might have looked like had he plunged into the fire as Mauleverer had done. He was shamed to the very

marrow of his bones by the memory of his conduct, yet he knew that, in similar circumstances, he would have acted in a similar manner. He told himself, and believed, that it was not fear—not common fear. But not to save all Los Angeles from a gulf of fire would he have marred the handsome face that was famous on the films. His motive was not so base as cowardice, but he could not help feeling himself that it was more ridiculous.

From self-contempt nothing could save him, and that was bitter enough to the conceited film star, and still more bitter was the knowledge that he might not be able to avoid the contempt of others. He had already learned by telephone that Mauleverer had escaped alive from the fire, after saving the movie girl. Mauleverer knew—could not fail to know—that Polk had deserted him in the hour of need. No doubt he had told his friends already—told everyone who would listen.

Polk writhed at the thought.

To be proclaimed a coward, a man who had fled and left a woman in deadly danger—it was overwhelming. It might mean his ruin on the films—

THE FOLLOWING LIMERICK EARNS FOR ITS AUTHOR A HANDY LEATHER POCKET-WALLET!

According to yarns spread about
A grizzled old sportsman is Prout.
But his famous repeater,
Like a leaky gas-meter,
Goes off without warning or shout.

A pocket wallet has been awarded
to: W. Davies, "Spring Cottage,"
Vicarage Hill, Johnstown, Wrexham.

Now, you budding poets,
what about it?

the dashing, gallant sheikh of the movies fleeing from danger that a schoolboy had faced. The "Lord of the Desert" was more likely to excite contempt than the usual admiration when the movie public knew what the "sheikh" had done in real life. And if his true motive—the terror of having his handsome face marred—should be penetrated, laughter would be added to scorn.

It did not occur to Polk that Mauleverer had uttered no word concerning him. He judged others by himself, and he knew how he would have acted in Mauleverer's place.

He strode restlessly about the bright gardens, the most miserable and tormented man in California.

In that hapless frame of mind he sighted a fat figure entering at his gate. His eyes gleamed at Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove spotted him in the distance, and rolled along a garden path towards him.

Bunter had made up his mind to call on Myron Polk, and call him to order. Polk had dared to turn him down, and it was Bunter's idea to force the Perfection star to take him up again. Bunter's obtuse mind did not realise that Polk would not have ventured to turn him down had not his hold over the star been broken. He had not even surmised that the "thug" Gomez was no

longer hidden at the bungalow on the hill, but had left for parts unknown.

"What do you want?"

Polk snarled out the words.

He was almost glad to see Bunter. He wanted some object upon which to wreak the bitter rage that consumed him.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"I've been chucked at Magic Films," he answered.

"Well?" snarled Polk.

"Well, it jolly well won't do!" said Bunter. "Old Honk gave me an engagement. It was scarcely worth my acceptance, but I accepted it. Now he's fired me, as he calls it. That means that you've turned me down. Well, I jolly well tell you that it won't do!"

Polk gazed at him.

"You've got that man Gomez hidden here," said Bunter. "No business of mine, so long as you do the decent thing. That hooligan is wanted by the police. You'd get into a jolly lot of trouble if they knew you were hiding him. I'm not the fellow to tell tales, of course. But one good turn deserves another."

Bunter wagged a fat finger at the Perfection star.

"Now what are you going to do?" he demanded. "Put it right with Honk, and you'll find me friendly. Otherwise—"

"Otherwise?" asked Polk grimly.

"Otherwise," said Bunter, "I shall have to consider whether it isn't my duty to give you away. Hiding a man who's wanted by the police is rather a serious thing, you know. I fancy you don't want all Hollywood to know that you hired that man Gomez to beat up Coker, and hid him in your house afterwards while the bobbies were hunting him."

"You fancy that Gomez is here?" asked Polk.

Bunter stared.

"Oh, chuck it!" he said. "I jolly well saw him here! And that's why you got Honk to take me on! What's the good of gammon?"

"You may go to the police at Los Angeles, and tell them your story," said Polk. "They are welcome to search my house and grounds, if they choose. And I will take the risk of their finding the thug from Spanish Town hiding here."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

The obtuse Owl of the Remove began to understand.

"He—he—he's gone?" he ejaculated. Polk smiled faintly.

"You—you sent him away before you turned on me!" exclaimed Bunter. "Well, of all the rotten tricks—"

"Have you finished?" asked Polk.

"I—I can jolly well tell them that he was here, anyhow!" exclaimed Bunter desperately.

"Do so," smiled Polk. "If you make any defamatory statements concerning me, I shall see that you are duly prosecuted."

"Oh!" stuttered Bunter.

It was borne in upon Bunter's fat mind at last that his hold on the Perfection star was entirely gone. His statement that he had seen the "thug" at the bungalow was not likely to be believed, when Polk was ready to welcome a search. He would have to explain why he had not made that statement earlier.

"Sold!" mumbled Bunter.

"Quite!" said Polk. "And now you can beat it! And I will help you, you unscrupulous young scoundrel!"

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"Here, I say, hands off!" yelled Bunter.

It was, however, a case of "hands on." Polk grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and swung him round.

Bunter yelled as the Perfection star's boot was planted on him. For the third time that day Billy Bunter flew before a hefty kick.

"Yaroooh!"

The fat junior fled for the gate. After him strode Polk, still kicking. Bunter was dribbled along the path to the gate, letting out a yell at every step.

"Yow! Ow! Wow! Wow! Help! Fire! Police! Yoooop!" roared Bunter.

Thud, thud, thud! came the crashing boot behind him.

A last hefty kick hurled him headlong through the gateway, and he rolled outside.

"Yow! Ow! Yooop! Oh, crikey! Ow!"

Bunter sat up quite dizzily.

Polk was striding out after him. Bunter did not wait. There were many occasions when the fat junior did not know that he had had enough. But this was not one of them. On this occasion Bunter realised with the utmost clearness that he had had enough.

He picked himself up, and fled down the hill at top speed. Panting and puffing and blowing, the fat junior vanished down the steep road. Polk scowling after him from the gate.

Billy Bunter had not got what he expected by that visit to the bungalow on the hill. But he had got what he deserved.

From that circumstance Bunter derived no consolation whatever. It was a doleful and dismal Bunter that rolled back to Long Beach Boarding-House.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

And More!

"HALLO! Hallo! Hallo!"

"Bunter—"

"What's the matter with

"Bunter—"

"Practising the Charleston for a movie stunt, perhaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A Story of Endless Thrills

appears in this week's issue of



Ask your newsagent for
No. 5 of The THRILLER
It will be 2d. well spent.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter as he came in at the gateway at Long Beach Boarding-House. Bunter wriggled rather than walked his way up the garden. Coker's kick, and Simmons' kick had been more pleasantries, compared with the kicking he had received from Myron Polk. Bunter was sore. He was feeling deeply hurt. He Charlestone up the garden path under the astonished eyes of the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yow! Ow-ow!" groaned Bunter.

"Whooh—oooh—oop!"

"Is that Esperanto or Dutch?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! I'm hurt!" groaned Bunter. "I've been kicked! I say, you fellows, that beast, Polk— Yow! Ow-ow!"

"You've been to see Polk?" asked Harry.

"Ow! Yes! Wow! He kicked me! Ow!"

"I dare say it served you right," said Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"But what is the esteemed whyfulness?" asked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "Why did the ridiculous Polk bestow the esteemed kickfulness upon your ludicrous self?"

"The awful cad!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, something ought to be done about that rotter. He's turned me down. I say, think it's any good going to the police now?"

"Assault and battery?" asked Harry, laughing. "Well, that depends. I don't think Mr. Fish would like you to bring an action against his pet star."

"Blow Mr. Fish! I don't mean that! I mean it's against the law for Polk to hide that man, Gomez, away from the police at his bungalow, ain't it?"

The Famous Five jumped.

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Harry. "If the man's there, it's proof enough that Polk set him on Coker. If that's true Polk will be made to answer for it. Fish or no Fish!"

"But is it true?" said the Bounder.

"The truthfulness of the esteemed Bunter is not generally terrific."

"I say, you fellows, I saw him there!" hooted Bunter.

"When?" demanded Wharton.

"Three or four days ago. The beast has got him away now, so there's no evidence," groaned Bunter. "That's why he kicked me out. I say, you fellows, do you think the police would take my word? Of course, that unscrupulous rotter would deny it. He's had all through."

"Let's have it clear," said Harry. "If you saw Gomez there three or four days ago, why didn't you mention it at the time?"

"Well, you—you—you see—" stammered Bunter.

"Gammon!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Well, explain yourself, you fat ass!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "If you spotted that villain hiding at Polk's bungalow, it was your duty to inform the police at once. Why didn't you?"

"Well, you see, I—I thought that one good turn deserved another," stammered Bunter. "I—I was willing to be friends with Polk."

"My hat! Mean to say you let him square you to keep it dark?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter hastily. "Nothing of the kind! I hope you fellows don't think I'd descend to that. I got into Magic Films purely on my merits. I've told you so."

"Magic Films!" repeated Harry. "Do you mean that it was through Polk that you got an engagement at Magic Films?"

"That was it!" roared the Bounder. "Polk worked it for him to keep his mouth shut while that hooligan was hiding at his place! Now the man's gone, Bunter's sacked and kicked out!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Tain't that!" howled Bunter. "Nothing of the kind! I—I let Polk off because—because—well, one good turn deserves another, you know!"

"And what good turn did Polk do you?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, nothing!"

"You fat prevaricator—"

"It's all clear now," said Wharton. "That's how Bunter got the job at Magic Films—Polk put in a word for him; a word from Polk would be enough. I suppose Gomez was really hidden there, and Bunter spied it out, and Polk wanted to keep him quiet. You fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Nobody will believe a word of it now," said Harry. "The word of a blackmailer isn't likely to be taken—and that's what it amounts to, though I suppose that fat idiot hasn't sense enough to understand it!"

"Nothing of the sort!" hooted Bunter. "I—I got the engagement at Magic Films on my merits. As soon as Honk saw me he fairly shouted out: 'Here's the sheikh I want! This is the man for my Valentino stunts! Just like that!'"

"You fat rascal, and why have you been kicked out of Magic Films?"

"I—I haven't!" gasped Bunter.

"Are you going there as usual to-morrow?" grinned the Bounder.

"I—I—" Bunter stuttered. The morrow morning would prove that his visits to Magic Films were at an end. "The—the fact is, I—I've given them the chuck. I don't like Honk's manners, and that man Wooster is a low sort of rotter. I've found that there really isn't scope at Magic Films for a fellow of my abilities. I—I've chucked them!"

"Pile it on!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, you fellows! I hope you can take my word."

"Great pip!"

"But that beast Polk ought to be punished, you know," said Bunter. "Turning a fellow down, when I trusted him! Of course, I thought Gomez was still there—I mean—"

"Of all the fat rascals—" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Look here, you fellows, that beast Polk has kicked me!" howled Bunter. "He ought to be arrested for hiding that ruffian Gomez. You fellows come with me to the police station. You can all swear that you were with me when I saw Gomez there—"

"What?" shrieked Wharton.

"See?" exclaimed Bunter eagerly. "That will be five witnesses—eye-witnesses, you know—"

"But we weren't with you, and never saw Gomez there!" roared Bob.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on wandering from the point!" said Bunter peevishly. "You fellows never can keep to the point!"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Wharton. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!"

said Bob Cherry. "Polk has kicked Bunter! I think something ought to be done—"

"That's it!" said Bunter.

"And what I think ought to be done

is this—that we ought to kick Bunter, too!" continued Bob.
"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter.
"Hear, hear!"
"The kickfulness is the proper caper!"
"Turn round, Bunter!"
"You silly chumps!" yelled Bunter.
"I tell you—Here, leggo! Keep off! Yarooogh! Oh, my hat! Help! Yooooop!"

William George Bunter made a rush to escape. The Famous Five made a rush after him. Whatever they might think of the Perfection Star and his shady proceedings, there was no doubt in their minds on one point—that Bunter had deserved the kicking he had received from Polk, and deserved to receive another from themselves.

It was often a matter of complaint with William George Bunter that he did not get his true deserts. On this occasion he got them; though he did not seem gratified thereby.

How many kicks he captured before he bolted into the house he did not stop to count. But the number was quite generous. In his fat career at Greyfriars Bunter had often been kicked—it was no novelty to him. But really he seemed to be bagging more kicks in one day at Hollywood than he was accustomed to bag in a whole term at Greyfriars.

He escaped at last into Long Beach Boarding-House, bolted up the stairs, and locked the door of his room.

Not till the key had turned in the lock did the Owl of the Remove sit down—breathless. And then he remained sitting down about a millionth part of a second, leaping to his feet again as if moved by a spring. It was quite a long time before Bunter was able to sit down with any comfort.



THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Polk Asks For It!

LORD MAULEVERER was on the sick list the following day—unwillingly remaining in bed under the doctor's orders.

He found a little entertainment in sitting up in bed and reading the Los Angeles papers, which were full of the fire on the Perfection lot, and the rescue of the movie girl by Mauly.

Such headings as "Perfection Peer's Romantic Rescue!" and "Daring Duke Defies Danger!" and "Viscount's Venturesome Valour!" brought a cheery grin to Mauly's bandaged face.

The reports were written up in quite the best style of American reporters, alliterative headings, startling details, and a happy disregard for anything like accuracy.

Mauleverer was assigned to nearly every grade in the peerage in the different papers; perhaps partly for the sake of alliteration, dear to the heart of the American newspaper-man. In one account he was a valorous viscount; in another a bold baron; in another a daring duke; in still another a courageous count. The newspaper-men, while at variance about his rank and title, agreed unanimously and alliteratively that he was the Hero of Hollywood!

The descriptions of the rescue varied. One account represented Mauleverer as bearing the movie girl from the flames on his shoulders; in another, he leaped from a window with Leonora in his arms; in a third, he bore her down a ladder; in a fourth, he descended by a rope from a roof. But all agreed that he was the Hero of Hollywood.

"You want to see an oculist, Mauly, if you think Miss Jooce's hair is auburn," said Nugent. "It's nearly as black as ink!" "Miss Jooce?" repeated Mauleverer. "Who's talking about Miss Jooce, you ass? I mean Leonora—the girl leaning against the palm tree over there!" (See Chapter 5.)

His age was variously given from fifteen to thirty-five; and one newspaper even announced a "Movie Romance"—nothing less than the engagement of the Daring Duke to the Lovely Leonora.

Harry Wharton & Co. perused these thrilling accounts with great entertainment. American journalism had surprised them when they first arrived in the United States; but they were growing used to it by this time. But they gasped a little when they read that the Duke of Mauleverer had long been secretly engaged to the Lovely Leonora, and, to elude the prohibition of his proud guardians had become a film actor at Hollywood, abandoning rank and title for a career on the movies. Details of his sporting career at Oxford were given, where, it appeared, he had made a century in a Rugby match, rowed in the Boat Race on the Cam, and scored a record in goals at several cricket matches.

In another paper, however, the reporter had evidently learned that Mauleverer was a schoolboy, and that his school was Greyfriars; for this journal gave a description of Greyfriars, where the boys were clad in the monkish garb of olden times—unchanged, as the reporter stated, since the reign of Henry the Tenth.

The juniors had plenty of time to

enjoy this thrilling literature, as there was no work to be done at Perfection that day.

Perfection was in the hands of workmen, repairing the damage done by the fire.

Probably the person who perused the newspapers most eagerly was Myron Polk, in his bungalow on the hill.

He was not interested in the Hero of Hollywood, he dreaded to find his own name there, as that of the man who had fled from danger.

But nothing of the kind met his eyes, Mauleverer, evidently, had said nothing so far of his inglorious part in the exciting episode.

Aware that Mauleverer had been injured, Polk concluded that he was not yet sufficiently recovered to speak; and so there was still time to save the situation if he could see Mauleverer and induce him to keep silent.

Early in the afternoon Harry Wharton & Co. were surprised to see the Perfection star's purple auto halt outside Long Beach Boarding-House.

The juniors were in the piazza after lunch when the auto came racing down Sunset Boulevard and jarred to a halt before the house.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's Polk!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

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"What the thump does he want here?" growled Coker.

The Perfection star came up the path to the house.

"I say, you fellows, you might clear off!" said Billy Bunter. "Polk's come to see me. Leave us alone here, will you?"

"Fathead!"

Billy Bunter blinked hopefully at the Perfection star as he came up. He was quite willing to forget and forgive the kicking if Myron Polk was going to be friendly.

But Myron Polk wasn't! He took no heed of the Owl of the Remove. Evidently he had not come to see Bunter.

"I've called to ask about Mauleverer," said Polk, addressing Harry Wharton. "I hear he's been injured."

"Oh!" said Harry, in surprise. "Yes, he was burned a little; but he's getting on pretty well. No danger."

"The painfulness is great, but the seriousness of the esteemed damage is not terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Polk stared at the nabob for a moment. Then he addressed the captain of the Remove again.

"I suppose I can see him?"

"I suppose so, if you want to," said Harry, quite astonished by the Perfection star's concern. "I'll ask him if you like."

"Thank you!"

Wharton went up to Mauleverer's room. His lordship gave him a cheery grin and laid down the "Los Angeles Film Ledger." In that paper was a photograph of the Lovely Leonora—in which Mauly had been much interested.

"Polk's called to inquire after you, Mauly," said Wharton.

"Begad! That's jolly decent of him!"

"He wants to see you."

"Does he? Well, there's no charge; let him trickle in."

So the Perfection star was conducted to Mauly's room, where Wharton left him with the noble invalid.

Polk glanced at the bandaged face of the schoolboy earl.

"Not badly burned, I hope?" he asked awkwardly.

"Not at all!" answered Mauleverer cheerfully. "The jolly old doc insists on my stayin' in bed—just an idea of his."

"Not a permanent disfigurement?" asked Polk. He was thinking of what might have happened to his own handsome face.

"Begad! I hope not," said Mauleverer. "Hadn't thought about that. Only a burn or two."

"I—I guess you've told your friends all about what happened in the studio yesterday?" said Polk, flushing.

"Yaas."

"Oh!" gasped Polk.

"There wasn't much to tell," said Mauleverer.

"Oh!" said Polk again. "I—I mean about—about me—"

"You?" said Mauleverer, in surprise.

Polk eyed him, puzzled and uneasy. He could not understand Mauleverer's amiable politeness towards the man who had fled and deserted him in the moment of peril.

"Look here," he said in a low voice, "if you haven't mentioned me—"

"I haven't, that I remember."

Polk drew a breath of relief. There was still time!

"Well, the least said the soonest mended," he muttered. "There's no need to talk about it. You get me?"

"Not quite!" said the astonished

Mauleverer. "What do you mean exactly, Mr. Polk?"

Polk made an impatient movement.

"I mean I'd rather the matter wasn't talked about. I'd have helped you if I could. Talk on the subject might do me a lot of harm. Look here, you know what my position is in the movie world. A word from me will make a man in the studios. You're a beginner here, and it will be useful to you to have a friend in the camp. Keep your mouth shut, and you can rely on me all along the line."

Mauleverer gazed at him.

"Keep my mouth shut?" he repeated.

"Yes!" snapped Polk. "I lost my head for the minute; any man might have done the same. That's all there is to it. But if it's talked about, there are people who would make a mountain out of a molehill. I haven't got to the top of the tree in the movies without making enemies. I want nothing said about it; and as you've said nothing so far, all you've got to do is to keep your mouth shut. And you can rely on my friendship—a useful thing in Hollywood, I can tell you."

"Oh gad!" said Mauleverer.

He understood now.

"Let's have this clear," he said very quietly. "You're afraid that somethin' may come out, Mr. Polk. I fancy I see what it is. You cleared off to save your skin, instead of helpin' me to get Miss La Riviere out of the fire."

Polk crimsoned.

"It—it might be put like that," he muttered. "I guess I'd rather there wasn't any talk on the subject."

"There won't be any talk on the subject from me," said Lord Mauleverer contemptuously. "I wouldn't soil my tongue by talkin' about a coward."

The Perfection star winced.

"I never even knew that you had funk'd it," went on Mauleverer.

"What?" gasped Polk.

"As you didn't back me up I supposed you hadn't been able to get through the smoke."

"Oh!" stammered Polk.

"I'd never have supposed that any man would have run away, leavin' a woman screamin' for help in a burnin' buildin'. Why, you rotter," exclaimed Mauleverer indignantly, "it was touch and go! Miss La Riviere might have been killed. I thought you'd tried to follow me and failed. Of course I thought so! I'd be ashamed to suspect a man of funk'in' at such a time. And you tell me—"

Polk could have bitten off his tongue—if that would have been of any use.

"You needn't be afraid that I shall say anythin'," said Lord Mauleverer. "Only please get out; you make me rather sick!"

The Perfection star clenched his hands hard. He gave Mauleverer a black, bitter look, and left the room without another word. Lord Mauleverer's assurance that he would say nothing was comforting so far as it went. But the knowledge that he had given himself away filled the Perfection star with bitter rage and chagrin.

His black looks as he strode back to his auto drew the glances of all the Greyfriars fellows on him.

"Polk doesn't seem pleased," remarked Bob Cherry.

"The pleasuredness does not seem to be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Polk has his excellent back up."

The Famous Five looked in at Mauleverer's room a little late. His lordship hastily closed the newspaper that contained the picture of the lovely Leonora.

"Had a nice little talk with Polk?" asked Bob.

"Oh! Yaas."

"He looked like a demon in a pantomime when he cleared," said Nugent.

"Did he?" murmured his lordship.

"It was rather decent of him to call and inquire after you, old bean," said Bob.

"Was it?"

"Well, yes, rather, as we're not on friendly terms with him," said Bob, in surprise. "Don't you think so, Mauly?"

His lordship made no reply.

"You seem to have offended his high mightiness, anyhow," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Yaas."

"You weren't uncivil to him, surely?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yaas."

"Well, my hat! What did you rag him for?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, nothin'."

Which was rather mysterious, but it was all that Lord Mauleverer had to say on the subject.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Another Hero of Hollywood!

"LOOK!" gasped Coker. Coker fairly jumped. Potter and Greene glanced round, apparently not so startled as Coker was.

The three Fifth-Formers of Greyfriars were strolling by a path over the Beverly Hills near Los Angeles.

Work at the Perfection Studio had ceased, for the time, as a result of the fire. Mr. Hiram K. Fish and Mr. Schootz were making arrangements for the company to go "on location" somewhere on the shore of the Pacific, and until these arrangements were concluded the Greyfriars fellows had time to kill.

Sauntering on the paths in the Beverly Hills under the bright sunshine of Southern California, Coker was laying down the law to his comrades in his usual style, and Potter and Greene were privately considering whether they could stand it till tea-time. They wanted to, because Coker, as usual, was going to stand the tea. But they were beginning to feel doubtful whether they could stand Coker.

Coker interrupted himself suddenly. He stood and stared at a startling scene in a meadow adjoining the road. From a grove of orange-trees a bungalow looked out—one of the innumerable fairy-like residences dotted on the hills round Hollywood. That that bungalow belonged to Mr. Schootz, director of Perfection, Coker of course did not know. A fellow could not know everything. What startled Coker was the sight of the three villainous-looking bandits emerging from the orange-trees, armed to the teeth.

That bandits had once roamed in the woods and hills round Los Angeles was well known. Many Mexicans had taken that method of retaliation on their conquerors, after the country was seized by the United States. But those days were long past—certainly the last of the bandits had disappeared long before Coker's time. So he was naturally surprised to see an armed gang in open daylight—Mexicans in gaudy sashes, and sombreros, with knives and pistols stuck in their sashes. But that was not the worst. From the bungalow garden a girl came running, with auburn hair wildly streaming, evidently fleeing to escape. Coker's amazed eyes recognised Leonora, the movie girl whom Mauleverer had saved from the fire. His eyes almost started from his head.

as he saw the three desperate-looking bandits rush on her and seize her.

The girl struggled wildly in their grasp. Her screams reached the three Fifth-Formers looking over the fence into the meadow.

"Come on!" panted Coker.

"Eh, what?" asked Greene.

"Come on! Back me up!" roared Coker, scrambling over the fence.

"Hold on!" yelled Potter.

"Funk!" hooted Coker. "Are you afraid of their knives? I'm jolly well not! Come on!"

"Stop, you dummy!" howled Greene.

Horace Coker was not likely to stop.

The sight of the girl struggling and screaming in the grasp of the desperadoes was more than enough for him. Coker might not have been generously treated by nature in the matter of brains, but no one had ever doubted his pluck. Potter and Greene might hang back if they liked from ruffians armed with knives and pistols; not so Coker. He rolled over the fence, pitched into the grass, picked himself up, and raced breathlessly for the scene of action.

Potter and Greene did not follow.

Whether it was from fear of the knives and pistols, or from some other motive, they remained where they were, staring after Coker.

"My hat!" said Potter.

"My dearest aunt!" said Greene.

And they stared.

Alone, but fearless, Horace Coker rushed into the fray. If he succeeded in rescuing the movie girl, he would be able to say, like Coriolanus, "Alone I did it!" There was no help for him.

From the orange-trees somebody shouted to Coker, as he rushed up, to "beat it." He did not heed; he hardly heard.

With a rush, he came on the spot where Leonora struggled and screamed in the grasp of the bandits. The three black-bearded, ferocious ruffians were dragging the screaming girl towards the grove, in spite of her wild cries and frantic resistance.

Leonora's resistance counted for nothing against the bandits, but Coker was a different proposition.

He hurled himself on the ruffians, reckless of deadly weapons and ferocious faces, with the courage of a lion.

Crash! Bump! Bump!

The attack seemed to take the bandits by surprise. Obviously, they had not expected interruption, although they were carrying out their lawless proceedings in full sight of roads and lanes and the windows of half a dozen scattered buildings. One bandit received Coker's right on the side of the jaw, and rolled over on the ground, roaring; another got his left in the eye, and collapsed in the grass as if a mule had kicked him. The third released Leonora and jumped away, but, to Coker's surprise, even at that thrilling moment, he did not draw a weapon. He dodged.

Leonora, suddenly released by the bandits, fell to the ground. She sat up and stared at Coker.

"You scoundrels!" roared Coker. "Villains! Come on! I'll smash you! My hat! Come on, you rotters!"

The bandits did not come on.

Armed to the teeth as they were, they seemed prepared to let their single

assailant get away with it, so to speak.

One sat on the grass nursing his jaw, another sat and clasped both hands over his eye, both groaning deeply. The third was backing away in great alarm, eyeing Coker as he might have eyed a wild bull or a dangerous lunatic.

Somebody in the orange-trees was yelling furiously—another of the desperate gang, Coker supposed.

Headless of odds as he was, Coker felt that there was no time to waste. He was ready to encounter all the bandits in California—if any—in defence of beauty in distress. But if he was to rescue the bandits' victim, it behoved him to get on with it before the gang could rally and surround him.

He rushed to the staring movie girl.

"Quick!" he panted.

"Gee!" said Leonora unexpectedly.

"Gee-whiz! What sort of a stunt do you call this, you boob?"

Coker almost staggered.

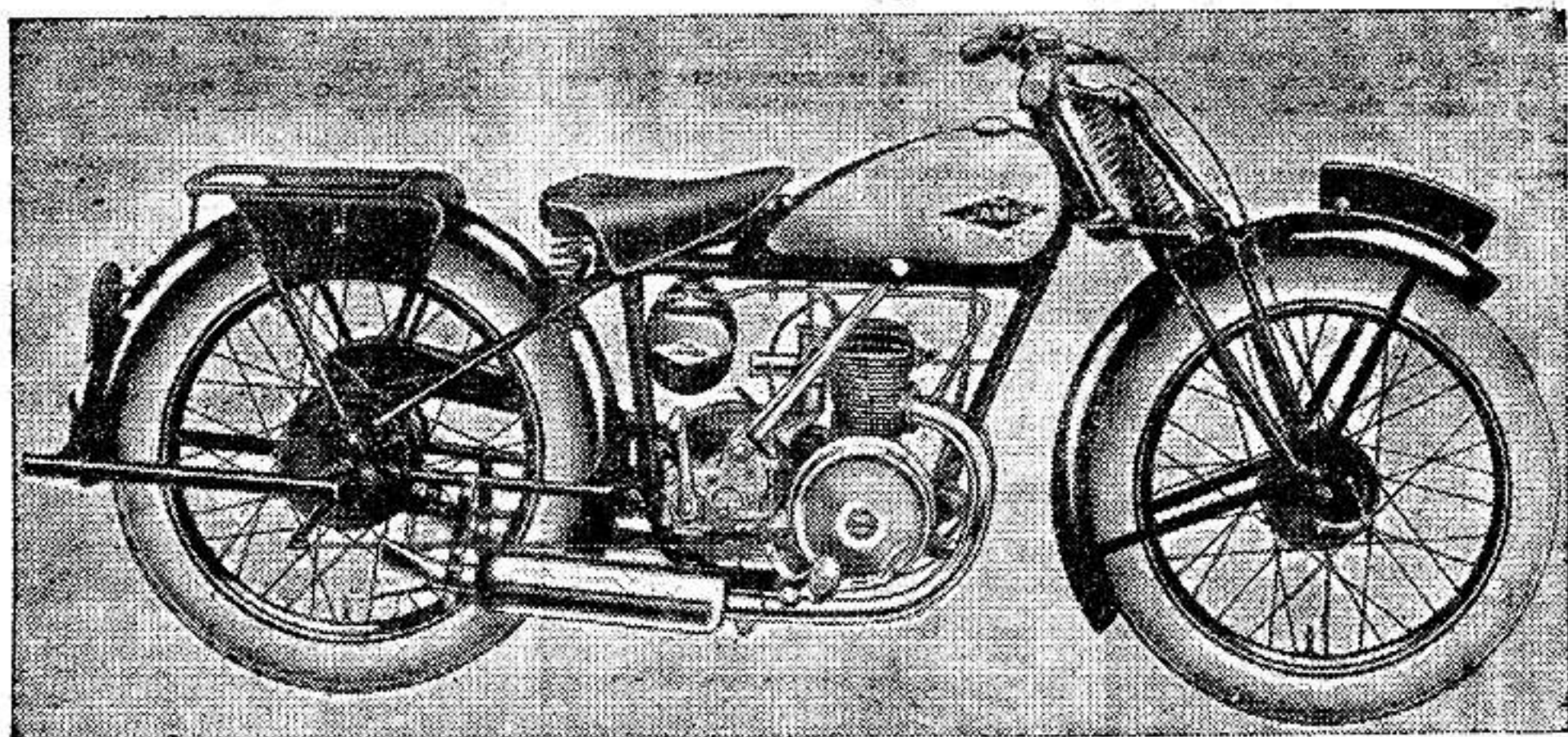
This was not the style of address that any fellow might have expected from the damsel he was rescuing from armed bandits. Coker could not doubt that terror had made the poor girl hysterical.

"Quick! They'll be round us in a tick!" gasped Coker, and as Leonora made no movement, he grasped her and lifted her from the ground.

In the fire at Perfection, Lord Mauleverer had been unable to lift Leonora, who was a healthily developed lady, and not a light weight. But it was a different matter with Coker of the Fifth. Nature, having denied Coker brains, had compensated him with brawn.

Coker swung the movie girl into his

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arms with comparative ease and started to run with her.

Leonora struggled, as frantically as she had struggled in the grasp of the Mexican bandits.

"Leggo!" she screamed. "Put me down, you big stiff! Beat it out of here, you locoed boob!"

Coker had no doubt that it was hysterics, due to terror. But it rather incommoded him in his flight. Leonora was actually pulling his hair, and wriggling in his powerful grasp like an eel.

"It's all right!" panted Coker. "I'm saving you—I'll get you away from those scoundrels! Keep calm!"

"You locoed gink!" shrieked Leonora.

Coker did not heed the movie-girl's hysterics.

Heavy footsteps sounded behind him. He had no time to soothe Leonora—no time to look round. With Leonora in his rescuing arms he could not give battle to the bandits. To reach the road, and rally Potter and Greene, and other help was Coker's idea. There was other help at hand—for two or three cars had stopped on the road, their occupants standing up and staring at Coker. A crowded motor-bus, coming back from Hollywood from the Los Angeles Speedway, by the road over the Beverley Hills, halted behind the cars. All the numerous passengers stared at Coker. Among them were a party of cheery youths, who recognised the startling figure that was tearing across the field with the movie girl. Harry Wharton & Co. had taken the motor-bus that afternoon to see the automobile races at the Speedway, but they had seen no race to equal this in interest.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Coker!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Coker!" gasped Wharton.

"The Cokerfulness is terrific."

"But what the thump—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker tore on to the fence, with the heavy footsteps behind him. He supposed that the desperate bandits were in close pursuit, and expected every moment the crack of a pistol or the slash of a knife.

Having, naturally, no eyes in the back of his head, Coker could not see behind him.

The fellows on the motor-bus had a better view of his pursuer—there was only one—and it was Mr. Rigg Schootz—raving with rage.

The three bandits remained where they were—two of them still nursing their injuries, the other staring after Coker like a man in a dream.

Coker, with desperate efforts, reached the fence, and lifted Leonora over it. Leonora dropped on the safe side, and Coker scrambled over after her.

"Back up, you funks!" he shouted to Potter and Greene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker waved a hand to the crowded motor-bus. There was plenty of help—and surely help could not be refused to a fellow facing single-handed a gang of bandits. For once Coker was glad to see the Famous Five.

"Back up, Greyfriars!" he yelled. "Come on—back me up, you kids! This way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five seemed to be in hysterics, too. Hysterics seemed to be the order of the day.

Coker turned to face his pursuer. Help or no help, Coker feared no foe. To his amazement, he discovered that his pursuer was Mr. Schootz—the ferocious bandits remaining at a distance.

Mr. Schootz stopped at the fence, spluttering. He was rather too plump to clamber over it, as Coker had done.

Coker stared at him blankly. He was greatly shocked to find that it was the Perfection director who had hired those bandits to abduct Leonora. He glared at him in scorn.

"You!" gasped Coker.

Mr. Schootz raved inarticulately.

"You old rascal!" roared Coker.

"Come on—bring on your whole gang if you like! Don't you be afraid, miss—I'll protect you!"

Leonora, when Coker dropped her over the fence, had bumped on the ground. She remained there in a dazed state for some seconds. Now she scrambled up. Even through her layers

of make-up it could be seen that her face was crimson with wrath.

"You—you—you!" she gasped.

Smack!

"Yarooooh!" roared Coker, as the movie girl, with all the strength of her arm—which was considerable—boxed his ears.

Taken by surprise, Coker sat down.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice for Coker!

"H A, ha, ha!" Harry Wharton & Co. roared. Potter and Greene were almost sobbing. Coker sat dazed.

"You boob!" shrieked the rescued movie girl. "You locoed rube! You want to horn in and spoil the scene! You big stiff!"

"Wha-a-a-t?" babbled Coker.

"You gink!" roared Mr. Schootz, gesticulating across the fence at Coker. "You dog-goned geck! Carry me home to die! I'd sure beat you to a frazzle if I could get over this pesky fence! Search me!"

Perhaps it was fortunate that the fence was between Coker and the film director, and that Mr. Schootz was too plump to negotiate it. Mr. Schootz looked in a homioidal frame of mind.

Coker blinked.

He realised that something was wrong somewhere.

Rescued maidens do not—or, at least, should not—box the ears of their gallant rescuers. Neither should spectators of a gallant rescue roar with laughter—and roars of laughter proceeded from the crowded motor-bus, from the halted cars, and even from Coker's own familiar friends. Even Coker realised that all this could not be hysteria. There was something wrong somewhere—though he did not know what it was.

Mr. Schootz raved at him, brandishing fat fists over the fence—and, still more dismaying, Leonora was shaking a fist at him—hardly a lady-like proceeding, perhaps, but excusable in the circumstances. Coker realised that a box on his other ear was coming, and he wriggled out of the way, scrambled up, and backed off.

"Boob!" shrieked the movie girl. "You big boob! What sort of a locoed rube do you call yourself, say?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "This is what Fishy would call the elephant's hind leg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Git, you pesky jay!" hooted Mr. Schootz. "Beat it, you gink! Get back to the scene, you Leonora!"

"Sure!" said Leonora.

Coker gazed on dazedly. His mighty brain was not quick on the uptake, and he simply could not understand. Leonora, obviously in no fear of either Mr. Schootz or the bandits, scrambled over the fence into the meadow. She paused for a moment, to stare back at Coker, and tell him once more that he was a boob, a gink, and a geck—what-ever those fearsome things might be—and then tripped off towards the bandits.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Coker. "What—what—what—"

"You gol-darned jay!" roared Mr. Schootz. "What you mean by butting in? What you mean by horning into a scene? Who told you to come along, say? Ain't you got sense enough to go in when it rains? What?"

"Scene!" babbled Coker.

The truth began to dawn upon him.

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Leonora's resistance counted for nothing against the bandits, but Coker was a different proposition. He hurled himself on the ruffians, reckless of deadly weapons and ferocious faces, with the courage of a lion. (See Chapter 13.)

He began to perceive what had been quite clear to everybody else from the start.

"Mum-mum-mean to say that was—was a movie scene?" stuttered Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Schootz stared at him blankly. He had had some experience of Coker at Perfection, but he had not had time yet to plumb the abysmal depths of Horace's obtuseness. He ceased to brandish his fat fist.

"Search me!" he gasped. "What did you think it was, you boob?"

"I—I thought—I—I mean—I—I supposed—I never knew it was a—a—a scene!" babbled Coker. "I—I thought those ruffians were—were— Oh crumbs!"

Coker had not yet taken part in any open-air filming.

He realised now that the 'bandits' were cinema bandits, and that the cameras had been under the orange trees, when he rushed to the rescue of Leonora—and ruined the film!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

"Great spotted snakes!" articulated Mr. Schootz. "You—you—you thought it was real! You thought that a gang of bandits was cavorting round the Beverly Hills, carrying off shrieking females! Oh, gee-whiz! Carry me home to die! Dog-gone my cats!" And then, the absurdity of it rushing upon Mr. Schootz mind, his wrath evaporated, and he burst into a yell of laughter, the tears running down his fat cheeks. "Ha, ha, ha! If you ain't the world's prize boob, and some more!"

"How was I to know?" gasped Coker.

Coker looked round him. His rugged face was crimson. There were howls of laughter on all sides.

"Good old Coker!" roared Bob Cherry. "Do it again, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" moaned Potter. "You'll be the death of me yet, Coker. I know you will! Oh, dear!"

"Mean to say you knew it was only a film stunt?" demanded Coker.

"Oh, dear! Of course—I saw the cameras!" moaned Potter. "Even if I hadn't—ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that cackling!" hooted Coker. "There's nothing to cackle at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker was alone in that opinion. The entertainment being over, the cars and the motor-bus rolled on their way, all their occupants cackling. Coker was glad to see them go, though he shook a fist after the Famous Five as they went. As a rule, Coker rather liked the limelight. But there was no doubt that it was possible to have too much of a good thing. Potter and Greene remained with Coker—still cackling. They seemed unable to help it. Coker's rush to the rescue of the movie girl who was being abducted by movie bandits was too much for them. They cackled helplessly.

"Will you shut up?" shrieked Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing funny in this—!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's long-tried patience gave way. He made a jump at Potter and Greene, clutched them, and brought their heads together with a resounding crack. They were reduced to instant gravity. They roared—but this time not with laughter.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

Coker glared at them ferociously, and stalked away. Potter and Greene

rubbed their heads, and stared after him.

"I say, Coker!" called out Potter, remembering that he had not yet had his tea.

"Coker, old chap—" called out Greene anxiously.

Coker did not heed. He strode away in lofty dudgeon, and disappeared. That afternoon, Potter and Greene went tea-less. But they agreed that the show had been worth it.

There were smiling faces at the dining-table at Long Beach Boarding-House that evening.

Coker could not help noticing it. He could not help guessing that he was the cause—he and his little mistake, a mistake that any fellow might have made! Coker's brow wore a frown.

Lord Mauleverer was down to dinner that evening—his bandages gone, a smile on his face in the place of them. The news that he was not the only hero of Hollywood seemed to have bucked his lordship. Even Billy Bunter's fat face wore a smile. All the boarders' faces wore smiles—Colonel Coot's was wreathed in them. Only Coker did not smile. With that solitary exception, the smilefulness, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh expressed it, was terrific.

THE END.

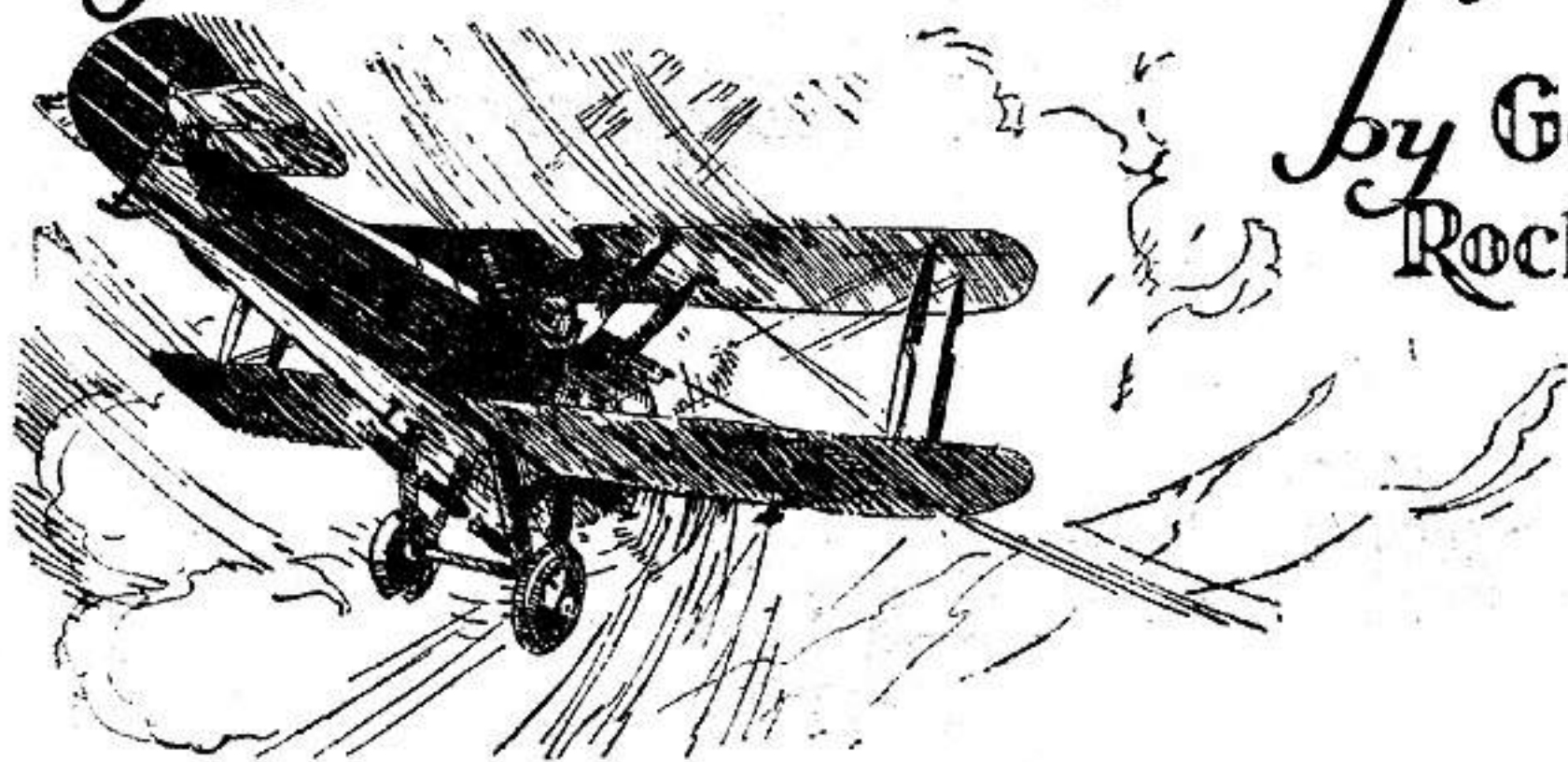
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YOU'VE NEVER READ A MORE POWERFUL WAR STORY THAN THIS, CHUMS!

The Black Hawk

by Geo. E.
Rochester



The Deserted House I

WITH the gun in his hand Darnley staggered to his feet. He stood a moment, listening intently. Then, taking from his pocket a length of fine rope, he dropped on his knees beside Oslo.

Working with deft rapidity in the darkness he turned the man over on his face, and bound his wrists and ankles. Then, ripping a length of cloth from Oslo's tattered blouse to serve as a makeshift gag, he rolled it up and thrust it into the man's mouth, keeping it in place by means of a tightly-tied handkerchief.

His prisoner thus securely gagged and trussed Darnley rose again to his feet, and inclined his head in listening attitude. Not a sound broke the intense stillness.

Stooping, he groped on the ground in the darkness, and retrieved the dropped torch. Slipping it into his pocket he moved towards the hangar. On the threshold he paused, peering with straining eyes into the inky, impenetrable blackness of the interior.

Nothing stirred; not a sound impinged on his hearing. With a cautious, backward glance into the darkness behind him Darnley moved stealthily forward, step by step, into the hangar. No voice challenged him, and suddenly his hand outstretched in front of him touched the fabric of an aeroplane wing.

From his pocket he drew the electric torch. His finger pressed on the switch, and, stepping back, he swept the interior of the hangar with the golden, probing ray. The place was void of any human occupant except himself.

With a puzzled frown he brought the beam of the torch to bear on the black, fighting scout in front of which he was standing.

A grim look crept into his eyes as he noted the bullet-riddled port and starboard planes, and he gave vent to a sharp exclamation as the moving beam fell full on the replica of a swooping

hawk painted on the torn and riven fuselage.

Next instant he was scrambling up into the cockpit. From the locker below the dashboard he snatched a black, folded tarpaulin of oiled silk. With this in his hand he dropped to the ground, and, laying the torch on the fuselage, rapidly laced the tarpaulin over the fabric so that it completely obscured the replica of the hawk.

That done he picked up his torch and went with quick stride towards the tunnel which led to where the petrol and ammunition for the Gotha had been stored in the cellars below the deserted house standing on the hillside behind the hangar.

Crouching, he traversed the length of the tunnel at a run and gained the main cellar. The wheeling beam of the torch

clad arm was outflung, his head resting face downwards on the other. Near him lay a black flying-helmet and black face-mask.

Two strides took Darnley to the side of the prostrate figure, and, dropping on one knee, he gently raised the boy, peering into his white and haggard face.

"Lad—lad!" he cried. "What has happened?"

Slowly the boy's eyes flickered open.

Supporting him with one arm, Darnley held the torch so that its ray fell full on his own features which had of a sudden become foolish, leering, grinning.

"Baier!" whispered the boy.

"Yes, Baier!" replied Darnley earnestly. "But listen, lad! I am not mad like they think I am. Look! Look at me! I am not mad! I am your friend.

I have come to help you. I am not mad! Do you understand? I want to help you. Tell me what has happened!"

Whilst he spoke Darnley allowed the foolish grin to die slowly on his slobbering lips, and they, in turn, became firm and set. His shoulders squared, and into his eyes crept sanity and solitude.

He moved the torch, the better to observe the effect of both words and metamorphosis on the boy. Amazed eyes were staring into his and into the lad's deathly, white face was creeping a faint tinge of colour.

"Baier, I do not understand." The voice, also, was stronger now, and a shaking hand gripped convulsively on Darnley's arm. "Why do you act like this? Who are you?"

For an instant Darnley hesitated. But the mask of imbecility was off now. "I am of the British Secret Service," he answered quietly. "My name is Darnley."

Silence followed, broken by a short, gasping laugh from the boy.

"You mean that?" he demanded, striving to sit erect without the aid of the supporting arm.

"Yes—yes!"

"And why do you wish to help me?"

**Hunted by German Fokkers
harried by Allied machines, Derek
Moncrieff, the boy without a country,
fights a lone battle. Sorely wounded,
he still carries on, for this is War . . .
War to the death!**

showed nothing there save the squat petrol-pump, which connected with the tank beneath the floor.

Crossing to a narrow flight of slimy stone steps which led upwards from the cellar, Darnley ascended them with anxious haste. At the top he was confronted by a door of heavy oak, black with age. It was ajar, and swung creakingly open beneath the pressure of his hand.

He passed through, kicking the door shut behind him. The beam of his torch swept the bare, dank walls and wooden flooring of what had once been a large, commodious kitchen, but which had now fallen into a melancholy state of disrepair.

Suddenly he stiffened, an exclamation of dismay on his lips.

On the floor, starkly silhouetted in a pool of golden light from the torch, lay a boy in black flying-kit. One leather-

"Because I know you are the Black Hawk," replied Darnley tersely. "The pilot who has been waging a merciless war on the German Fokkers, and on whose head there is a price. I have come to warn you. Soldiers are on their way here to arrest you, and—"

"Then you had better let them come," cut in the boy bitterly.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Darnley wonderingly.

"Listen! You say you are of the British Secret Service, and that you have come to warn me. Do you know who I am?"

"Your name, you mean? Your identity?"

"Yes."

Darnley shook his head.

"No, I do not know that," he replied.

The boy nodded, his livid lips twisting into a mirthless smile.

"No, I thought you did not," he said; and again his voice was bitter, "otherwise you would not have come like this to warn me. I am Derek Moncrieff, the British pilot who escaped from Le Courban after sentence of death had been passed on me for betraying my country to the enemy."

A Friend in Need!

"CAPTAIN DEREK MONCRIEFF?" echoed Darnley incredulously. "The British War ace?"

"No, Derek Moncrieff—renegade and traitor."

"I have heard nothing of this," said Darnley sharply. "There must be a terrible mistake somewhere—"

"Oh, no. The evidence was sifted very thoroughly, I assure you." Derek's weak voice was jeering. "Shall I give you a resume of the case? It will entertain you until these soldiers, of whom you spoke, arrive."

"So," remarked Darnley quietly, "you prefer to go out that way? Facing a German firing squad."

"I prefer it to facing a British. And there is one waiting for me on the other side of the line."

Darnley made a quick, impatient movement of his head.

"Do not talk like that, boy!" he rapped. "I am not going to insult you by asking you if the allegations which appear to have been made against you are true. All I know about you—all I want to know at the moment—is that as the Black Hawk you are doing invaluable work for the Allies and you must not remain here to be trapped."

"But—"

"Listen to me," went on Darnley urgently. "Do you think you will be able to pull yourself together sufficiently to fly your machine? Because, if not, you'll have to take to the woods. What's wrong with you? Have you been hit in a scrap?"

"Yes," nodded the boy. "I got mixed up with a bunch of Fokkers over Mannheim this morning. There's nothing seriously wrong with me—a bullet through the left shoulder. It was loss of blood, I think, which caused me to collapse when I got back here to-night. I—I'm feeling better now, and—"

"You haven't had your wound dressed?"

"No. If you'll—"

"Yes," Darnley rose to his feet. "I'll dress it for you and fix you up. But there's a man—a German spy—lying tied up outside the hangar. I will bring him in first. It's safer. You'll be all right till I return?"

"Yes."

"Righto! We haven't any time to lose."

Darnley departed, running down the cellar steps. When his footsteps had died away, Derek rose shakily to his feet and crossed wearily to the window. Pulling the rusty-hinged and protesting shutters into place across the dirt-encrusted panes, he struck a match and lighted a stump of candle which, held by its melted wax, stood on an upturned box.

By the wan illumination, he filled a battered tin kettle from a bucket of water and placed it on a small spirit stove to which he applied another match. He was working mechanically, oblivious to the pain of his wounded shoulder.

He had always been kind to Baier; had, in fact, given him the run of the hangar. More than once he had wakened before the dawn to find Baier curled up asleep below the lower plane of the Stahlschuss scout. He had never made any effort to hide from Baier the fact that he was the Black Hawk, and time and again those vacant eyes had seen the black silk tarpaulin laced into place over the replica of the swooping hawk on the fuselage.

For how, he had thought, could the crazed mind of Baier understand or appreciate such things? And now had come this astounding declaration from the lips of Baier. He was no idiot, but Darnley of the British Secret Service. And he had divulged his identity in order to warn Derek that the soldiers were coming for him.

That the soldiers were coming for him. Ah, well, Derek was not surprised. What was the saying? You can hoodwink somebody all the time, and you can hoodwink everybody some of the time, but you can't hoodwink everybody all the time.

His story that he was engaged on observation work for the Ordnance Department had never been questioned by the villagers. Why should it? What did they know of this Black Hawk of the Western Front save wild, incredible rumour? The Gotha was a black machine, wasn't it? Well, so was the machine which this young pilot used. There was nothing suspicious about this machine being black.

Then again, if rumour was correct, this mysterious Black Hawk had the picture of a swooping hawk painted on his machine. Not so the young pilot at the hangar. They had never suspected, those villagers, when they had seen the black machine winging its way northwards with the dawn

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

As a result of a dastardly plot against him, young Derek Moncrieff, a fearless British pilot, is accused of treachery, court-martialled and sentenced to be shot! Determined to clear his dishonoured name, however, Derek makes a daring escape by changing identities with Captain Von Arn, a dead German airman who carries a despatch ordering Lieutenant Zweig, the Gotha Commander at Abergau to vacate the secret hangar there. The young pilot goes to Abergau in Von Arn's stead and, suspecting nothing, Zweig and his men leave the hangar in the giant Gotha bombing machine. During the days that follow, the name of the Black Hawk, a mysterious airman flying a black machine with the replica of a swooping hawk on its fuselage, becomes known on both sides of the trenches. Again and again this unknown daredevil has come to the aid of Allied machines when hopelessly outnumbered by the enemy, and the German High Command has placed a price of 100,000 marks on his head. One day a hunchbacked pedlar arrives in Abergau. It is Otto, the super German spy, who is on the trail of both the Black Hawk and Captain Darnley, a British Secret Service agent. Otto discovers that the secret hangar at Abergau is being used by a mysterious airman whom he believes to be the Black Hawk, but while reconnoitring he is attacked and stunned by Baier, a seemingly harmless idiot who is none other than Captain Darnley!

(Now read on.)

that, when height had been gained and Abergau lay far behind, a black tarpaulin of oiled silk would be whisked from the fuselage, disclosing the dreaded symbol of the swooping hawk. So closely, indeed, did this tarpaulin fit that it was almost imperceptible against the fabric of the fuselage at a distance of feet only.

And if he returned before darkness had fallen then the tarpaulin would be in place again, tightly laced over the fuselage. Where had he landed in order to refix it? A question, this, which had often puzzled Darnley.

But, in spite of his precautions, Derek had known that the day must come when the eyrie of the Black Hawk would be discovered. Well, whatever happened now, it was very evident that for the last time the Black Hawk had come home with the dusk to roost in the underground hangar of Abergau.

"Moncrieff!"

Darnley's voice came softly from the foot of the cellar steps.

"Yes."

"Can you come down here?"

So Much for Otto!

IN order fully to appreciate the events of that fateful night let us return for awhile to the village. To no less a spot, in fact, than the abode of old Otto.

Otto shared a cottage with his brother—a disagreeable and straggly-whiskered old man, with whom he dwelt in a state of perpetual animosity. They did for themselves. That is, they looked after themselves, doing their own cooking and cleaning. With the result that the cottage looked more like an elaborate pigsty than anything else.

Having waded grumblingly through a dish of cold sauerkraut, Otto rose to his feet and took down an ancient blunderbuss type of gun from its pegs over the doorway.

"What are you going to do with that thing at this time of night?" demanded his brother querulously.

"Load it," replied Otto succinctly.

"Load it?" echoed his brother. "For why? Have you gone wrong in the head, then, like Baier, you stupid pig, that you load guns instead of seeking your bed?"

Otto wagged his head knowingly.

"It is you who are the stupid pig," he remarked. "I load the gun because I do not want my throat cut whilst I sleep."

"Hoh!"

"Yes, I see you jump with alarm in your chair," went on Otto, squinting along the rusted and battered barrel. "It is well for you that you have me here this night to protect you."

"Pah! You have been drinking at the inn."

"Yes, I have," admitted Otto, with engaging candour. "And that is how I know."

"Know what, you aggravating pig?" snarled his brother.

Otto turned and fixed him with impressive, if watery, gaze.

"That there is a thief in the village. A bad one, who is here for no good purpose!" he stated.

"How do you know he is a thief?"

"Because," said Otto darkly, "although night has fallen he remains here in the village, sitting along there outside the inn. He is waiting until we are all abed, then he is going to break in and rob—"

"Where—here?" out in his brother, in shrill alarm.

"He may choose here," said Otto. "That is why I prepare to protect you."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,100.

"I will blow his head off if he comes here!"

"You will more likely blow your own off," was the snivelling and ungrateful response. "You do not really know that this one of whom you speak is a thief."

"I know he is a hunchback in rags, with a pocketful of money, which I swear was not come by honestly!" quavered Otto, with heat. "Me, an honest man, has not five pfennigs. He, a rogue, has plenty! I saw them. Pooh! I am not a fool; I know! He is a thief!"

"And you are a stupid pig, as I have said!" snapped his brother, rising. "I am going to bed."

"You can go and rot, for all I care!" snarled Otto.

With which pleasant exchange of compliments they parted to seek those respective portions of their piggery which served them as bed-rooms.

Propping the loaded blunderbuss so that it would be nice and handy beside his bed, old Otto proceeded to disrobe. But scarce had he commenced than he was at the window with inquiring head thrust far out. And for why?

Because two motor-cars, filled with soldiers of the Fatherland, had roared past on the road below, and even now were pulling up in front of the inn with much grinding of brakes.

Now what was astir? What were these soldiers going into the inn for? Otto decided, without any hesitation, that there was only one thing for it, and that was to find out. Strange times these. Perhaps they had come to conscript the fat innkeeper for service with the colours. There seemed rather a lot of them for that, though. Still, he would take a bit of fetching. Anyway, best get to the inn without delay and ascertain just what was what.

So, snatching the blunderbuss, Otto went down the rickety staircase with rapid, crab-like gait. Unbolting the front door with eager, trembling fingers, he passed out into the night, and hastened away up the road towards the inn.

He arrived there, full of bustle and inquisitiveness. A German sergeant, square-jawed and brutal, and with a loaded revolver holster on his belt, was engaged in a harsh interrogation of the innkeeper. Lounging expectantly by were twelve grey-clad soldiers, wearing the cap button of the Army of Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, and with rifles slung outside their greatcoats.

Into the midst of the scene, through the doorway of the inn, came the thrusting Otto, clutching his blunderbuss.

"What is the matter?" he demanded, in a shrill treble. "What has happened?"

The soldiers stared at him in bovine silence.

"Come, now," went on Otto, with testy impatience. "Something is happening. What is it? Tell me!"

The sergeant wheeled, glaring.

"Get out!" he barked.

"Oh, now—"

"Get out!"

Otto quailed. But he did so want to know about things.

"Oh, sergeant—" he began whiningly.

The sergeant jerked a dirty thumb towards him.

"Throw the old fool outside!" he rapped.

A soldier grabbed Otto and ran him to the door. Otto, struggling, dropped the blunderbuss. Next moment a hefty boot

literally kicked him out into the night. The blunderbuss followed, hurtling after him.

Bang!

It exploded deafeningly as it struck the ground. The roar travelled far on the still night air. As far as the hangar, one kilometre distant.

The Black Hawk Will Carry On!

AND it was of that far-sounding report that Darnley spoke as Derek came unsteadily down the cellar steps to join him.

"They're stirring in the village," he said. "I don't know what on earth they are up to, but it sounded as though someone had set a miniature cannon off. I heard the report as I was bringing this fellow in."

He indicated the bound, and now conscious Oslo, whom he had deposited on the floor of the cellar.

"Anyway," he went on, quickly, "whatever it was, it seems to indicate that we can expect a visit from the soldiers, or somebody, almost at any time now. So we'd better stay down here whilst I dress your wound. We stand a better chance of hearing anyone enter the hangar than we would do up there in the kitchen. How are you feeling now?"

"Oh, heaps better!" replied Derek. "I was an awful ass to go under like I did."

"Rubbish, old chap!" cut in Darnley. "Loss of blood, and strain, are bound, eventually to knock anybody out for a bit. I'm jolly glad it's nothing worse."

Five minutes later Derek's wound was bathed and dressed, and he was drinking a cup of steaming hot coffee brewed from the water which he had set to boil on the spirit stove in the kitchen.

In short, concise sentences Darnley had told him how he knew of the forthcoming raid.

"I recognised Oslo, the moment I saw him, by his deformity," he explained. "I was lurking by the door of the inn when he told the innkeeper he was going to the hangar, and told him to tell the soldiers to wait until he returned, if they arrived in his absence. It didn't take much intelligence to put two and two together. I followed him, and—well, here I am. And now, what do you intend to do?"

"You say this fellow"—Derek indicated the gagged and glaring Oslo—"told the innkeeper to tell the soldiers to wait at the inn until he returned. That may give us a respite."

"It may," admitted Darnley. "But we dare not stake on that. Whoever's in charge of them might ignore the order and come straight on here."

"Yes," nodded Derek, "and that would be awkward."

"Awkward?" repeated Darnley sharply. "It would be fatal, man. You must get off at once. Have you anywhere you can go?"

Derek looked at him steadily.

"You realise, of course," he said quietly, "that Derek Monorieff will be shot if he is found on the British side of the lines, and that the Black Hawk will be shot if he is found on this side of the lines. It seems to matter very little where I go."

With a groan, Darnley took a turn up the floor, hands clasped behind his back. Where could the boy go, now

that this hangar no longer spelt sanctuary for him? It had been a perilous sanctuary at best, but still it had served its purpose for a time.

Darnley knew full well that once Derek had been adjudged a traitor by court martial the sentence of death must stand, no matter what the boy had done since then. Only one thing could bring about a quashing of the sentence and an annulling of the verdict, and that was proof of Derek's innocence of the charges which had been brought against him.

Darnley found himself, in that moment, asking himself why it was that he, personally, had such implicit faith in the boy, and why he was so convinced that a terrible mistake had been made. Oh, dash it, to know the boy was sufficient to know that he was incapable of such vile treachery as that of which, apparently, he had been accused.

"Isn't it possible"—Darnley swung suddenly on Derek—"for you to go back behind the British lines and somehow or other prove your innocence?"

"It is useless!" cut in Derek. "The evidence against me was overwhelming."

"You were the victim of a conspiracy?"

"Yes."

If Darnley had needed any convincing, that quiet monosyllable would have satisfied him, once and for all, that Derek was guiltless.

But this was ghastly. There was such a lot to say, such a lot to discuss, yet every moment was precious. Even now the soldiers might be closing in on the hangar.

"Monorieff, you must go!" he cried hoarsely. "I cannot advise you. The decision as to where you go and what you do must be left in your own hands. But rest assured that if ever I get out of this country I will see that this matter is taken up again. But you must leave here at once."

Derek stopped forward and laid his hand on Darnley's shoulder.

"You've done a lot for me to-night," he said, earnestly, "but what I thank you for most is your faith in me."

He wheeled, and pointed to Oslo.

"What papers does that spy carry?" he demanded quickly.

In an instant Darnley was bent over the writhing prisoner. When he straightened up he held in his hand the metallic, disc-like badge of the German Secret Service and a thin sheet of folded grey paper, which bore the official stamp and heading of the German Intelligence Bureau.

It was the usual introductory letter carried by all German Secret Service agents whose work lay within the borders of the Fatherland, and was as follows:

"To All Whom It May Concern.

"The bearer—Oslo Ultz, No. 17, is engaged on Intelligence work of the most urgent and extreme importance. You are hereby instructed to afford him any such assistance as he may require of you.

"(Signed) ZANDERBERG."

Derek took badge and paper and slipped them into the inside pocket of his tunic—the tunic which had once been Von Arn's.

"Now, Darnley," he said, "I am going. Nobody knows or suspects—"



Darnley suddenly stiffened as the rays from his torch fell upon a boy in black flying-kit lying on the floor, one leather-clad arm outflung, and his head resting downwards on the other. Near the prostrate figure was a flying helmet and black face-mask. (See page 24.)

except this spy, of course—that you are other than Baier, the idiot?”

“No.”

“And as I intend to use both his secret service badge and papers,” went on Derek, “it is essential that we get rid of him once and for all.”

“That is impossible.”

“No,” replied Derek grimly; “for I will drop him behind the British lines before dawn. So, if you will bring him along and shove him in the cockpit, I’ll push off.”

“But, Moncrieff, you talk of using his badge and papers. Are you going to remain in Germany?”

“Yes, Darnley, I am,” replied the boy. “For I am convinced that somewhere in Germany are the men who plotted against me. And I swear that if I live, I will find them!”

He moved towards the tunnel which led to the hangar.

Stooping, Darnley lifted the writhing Oslo. Slinging him across his shoulders he followed in the wake of Derek.

And within one hundred paces of the mouth of the hangar, advancing stealthily, came the German soldiers. The sergeant had seen fit to ignore the orders left by Oslo at the inn. His orders had been given him by the Governor of the Garrison of Zarn. He was to arrest the pilot who was using the hangar at Abergau, and convey him to the air headquarters at Frankfurt. Good! He would at once proceed to the hangar, instead of cooling his heels at the inn until this secret service man returned.

So here he was, revolver in hand, and at his elbow the terrified innkeeper on whom had fallen the frightful duty of guide.

Quietly they crept forward, the

wheezy innkeeper holding his breath at the low-toned, snarling request of the sergeant. Fifty paces, thirty paces, and the end of the bushes which flanked the road.

“Where is the place?” muttered the sergeant.

“There—straight ahead!” came the husky and quivering response.

Ten paces from the hangar entrance the sergeant halted.

“Quiet now,” he whispered. “I’ll have the man flogged that makes a sound.”

On again, step by step, rifles at the ready. Across the threshold now, peering ahead into the impenetrable darkness. Something was moving in there. Came a metallic clink.

Then, reverberating, deafening, a thunderous inferno of sound, came the sudden shattering roar of a high-powered aero engine. The earthen walls of the hangar picked up the noise, and hurled it back in nerve-shattering, thought-deadening crescendo.

“Fire, you cursed fools!” screamed the sergeant; and his revolver spat lurid flame.

His voice was lost in that thunderous tumult of re-echoing, roaring sound, and out of the darkness, like some dread night-flying monster leaving its lair, came swaying the Stahlschuss scout. As though by some invisible talon the sergeant was hurled aside, killed instantaneously by whirling propeller-blade.

The leading edge of lower planes and thundering propeller cleaved a way through the shouting, utterly demoralised soldiers. Rough hands gripped at wings and fuselage, but the throttle was open at full, and, followed by a ragged, frenzied volley, the scout shot forward from the hangar with rapidly-increas-

ing impetus to take the air in a steep upward climb.

Banking, it roared low over the hangar of Abergau, then swung north-westwards towards the line.

The Black Hawk had gone.

By the aid of an electric torch the hangar switch was at length located, and the cavern illuminated by its solitary bulb suspended from the rocky ceiling. To the shaken soldiers came waddling a fat and apprehensive form, flabby face, deathly white. It was that of the innkeeper.

“Oh dear!” he moaned. “The sergeant—have you seen him? I have—I am going to be sick.”

The soldiers ignored him. They were staring at one who came ambling into the hangar, slobbering of mouth, foolish of grin—one who had passed out of the hangar at a crouching run behind the under-carriage of the Stahlschuss scout.

A soldier grabbed the shaking innkeeper roughly by the shoulder.

“Who is this, you fat fool?” he demanded.

Mine host turned his head. Surveyed the leering, slobbering figure.

“That?” he quavered. “Oh, that is only Baier—a poor idiot!”

“What does he want here?”

“Oh, nothing! He will have heard the noise. He sleeps in the fields. Nobody minds Baier. Let me be, I tell you. I have seen the dead sergeant. Oh, what times these are!”

(Derek has escaped by the skin of his teeth, but his adventures are not over yet by any means! Be sure you read the continuation of this story in next week's MAGNET.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,100.

Come Into the Office, Boys!

(Continued from page 2.)

leg when I read it, considering the peculiar way he had spelled some of the words. Here it is:

"How many feathers on a frash's front?"

Anyway, so as not to disappoint John, who has been a reader of the MAGNET for some considerable time, I thought I'd rack my brains for a reply. How's this for an answer?

"Firty-free-fousand, free hundred and firty-free!"

THE BOAT RACE!

No doubt thousands of "Magnetites" will be lining the towpath on the 23rd of this month to cheer their favourites on to victory in the four and a quarter miles' gruelling race on the Thames from Putney to Mortlake, between the crews representing the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. This will be the hundredth time the rival "Blues" have met, the first race having been rowed in 1829. The first University Boat Race was held at Henley, and the Oxford boat which took part in it is still preserved. She is 45 ft. 4 ins. long, with a beam of 4 ft. 4 ins., and a depth (forward) of 2 ft. 5½ ins. It is beyond me, I'm afraid, to prophesy the winner of this year's contest, as both crews seem to be doing good work in their training. I'm a staunch supporter of Oxford, really, but if I give them the benefit of the doubt, I may upset many Cambridge supporters. I will say this, though, that it is about time Oxford did

pull themselves out of the rut. Anyway, may the best crew win!

A CUTE READER!

having sought me out in my office the other day, asked me if I could tell him what a net was. I gave my chum a lengthy explanation, but it didn't seem to satisfy him somehow. But when I asked him what his own definition was, he replied: "A number of holes tied together." He was a bit of a humorist, what?

ANOTHER AMUSING INCIDENT

related to me the other day was that a certain young brother of a "Magnetite," living in Devon, was sent by his mother to the local hatter's to purchase a cap for himself. The youngster got the cap, but when he returned home with it, his mother told him it was far too small. Returning the headgear to the shop, she inquired of the shopkeeper the size, and was told "six seven-eighths!" "Well, please exchange it for a seven eight-ninths," she requested the astonished salesman.

THE FIRST HOLIDAY

of the year is coming along soon. It's only three weeks to Easter Monday, and Reg Murray doesn't intend to be caught napping. He asks me if I can give him any advice concerning a Continental holiday. As Reg lives in Streatham, he should have no difficulty in picking a nice Continental resort which will suit

him. Fares are cheap at Easter-time, and the railway companies run specially extended week-end trips. Reg doesn't speak any foreign languages, and he wants to know if this will be a drawback.

Any "Magnetite" who wants to go abroad should never let the language question baffle him. He'll find English spoken almost everywhere. And a Continental holiday isn't much more expensive than one at home, because hotels and boarding-houses are much cheaper, and what you save on them you can afford to spend in fares. Why not try Ostend, Reg? You'll be able to get a cheap ticket from London, and you'll find Belgium a cheap place for food and amusement. If you're very ambitious you could go to Paris. There are any amount of cheap hotels just outside the principal stations there. Ask at your local station for particulars of their cheap Easter trips. I'm sure they'll have something in their programme which will fit in with your pocket.

And—

This Applies to ALL "Magnetites"

—if you run across any unusual experiences, let me know when you next write to me, won't you? Perhaps other "Magnetites" might be interested to hear of them. Don't forget this is your page as much as mine, and I want you all to help me to make it as bright and interesting as you can. Perhaps, when the holidays get into full swing, I'll be able to give prizes for accounts of the best holiday experiences.

MORE USEFUL PRIZES TO BE WON!

Don't forget to send in your jokes and Limericks; those pocket-knives and leather wallets are worth having. Cheerio, chums!

Your Editor.

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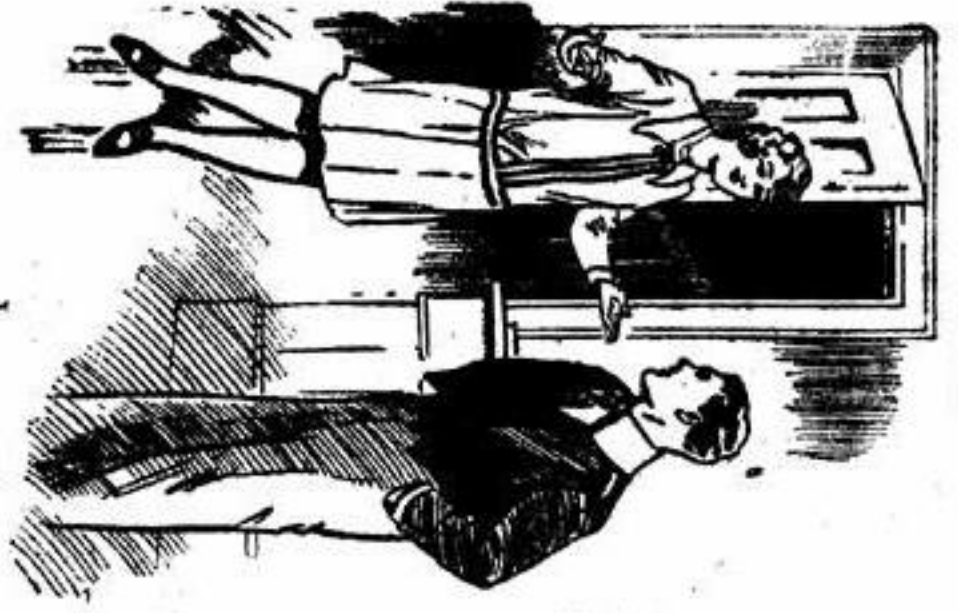
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FRANK FEARLESS' REFORMATION



Frank Fearless, the bold, bad blade, becomes as clay in the hands of the potter when winsome Molly Birchmell points out to him the error of his ways.

But only for a mere fraction of time, for there was something in the tone of that yell that made our hero's hair stand up-right with horror.

It was not the coarse, ruff yell of a junior. It was the high-pitched, musical yell of a young lady!

Frank Fearless had succeeded in hitting Molly Birchmell, the Head's daughter, right on her dainty little snub nose!

"Oh, crickey!" gasped Fearless, in an agony of mind. "It's Miss Molly!"

He rushed forward to render first-aid. Fortunately, however, Miss Molly was not seriously injured and, although she was rubbing her nose rather ruefully, she managed to bestow a winsome smile on the horrified junior.

"Don't worry! I'm used to taking a few hard nos in hockey," she smiled, in reply to Frank's anxious inquiries. "I suppose you thought I was one of your boy friends?"

"Eggsactly!" gasped Frank Fearless. "I naturally didn't expect to see a young lady walk into the Form-room."

Molly Birchmell's face became serious again, and she glared severely at Frank Fearless.

"You are detained," she said akusingly. "That is so, Miss Molly," admitted Fearless, turning as red as a pony.

"I am sorry," said the Head's daughter in a low, trembling voice. "I expected better of you."

Her face clouded as she spoke, and her eyes regarded the junior through a mist of tears.

Frank Fearless began to feel ashamed of himself.

"It wasn't eggsactly my fault, Miss Molly," he began.

But Miss Molly cut him short.

hands of this charming specimen of the female sex, he was as clay in the hands of the potter.

In five minutes, Molly Birchmell knew everything about that visit to the Jolly Salter, which had ended so disastrously—how Frank had set out to warn Bounder of the Sixth, and how Bounder had basely betrayed him and escaped scot-free himself.

There was a packet of annoyance on the girl's brow as she listened.

"Bounder is a wicked boy!" she twittered, her dimpled cheeks pink with anger. "I shall tell pop all about it, and ask him to eggspell the horrid fellow!"

"Good heavens! You mustn't do that!" cried Frank Fearless, again. "The fellows would never forgive me for sneaking!"

"Then I shall see Bounder, and compel him to confess the truth to pop!" said the girl. "Don't argue, for I shall insist!"

"Oh, very well, then, Miss Molly," said Fearless, with a hopeless gesture. Molly Birchmell flung him a coy glance before she sailed out of the Form-room.

"Now, you must promise me that when justice has been done you will reform," she said appealingly. "I want to see you made it up with your old friends, Jack Jolly and the rest, and become a leading light in the Lower School again."

"I will do anything you ask," Miss Molly said Frank Fearless, his eyes dwelling admiringly on the girlish finger before him.

His answer drew a dazzling smile from the Head's daughter.

"And now to interview Bounder!" eggsclained Molly Birchmell. "Good-buy for the present, Frank Fearless!"

With that she tripped daintily out of the Form-room, leaving Frank Fearless with a warty expression on his face.

"By Jove!" he muttered to himself, as he returned to his desk. "She's a peach, and no mistake!"

After leaving Fearless, Molly Birchmell went straight to the Sixth-Form green, where she found Bounder of the Sixth enjoying a pronounced in the spring sunshine. In a few well-chosen sentences, the girl fairly lashed the Sixth-Former with her tongue, until Bounder almost squealed for mercy, and begged to be allowed to go to the Head and confess the truth.

jumped to his feet, the culler serging into his face. Leaping over the desks, he sprinted out of the Form-room and raced to the Head's study.

"Yot in, fathead!" yelled the deep, awe-inspiring voice of Dr. Birchmell, in response to his tap on the door.

Fearless kicked open the door and entered, to find the Head beaming graciously at him, and Molly Birchmell all smiling her most winsome smile of welcome.

"You sent for me, sir?" murmured Fearless respectfully.

"Eggsactly! Fearless, my boy," said the Head gravely. "Some time ago I punished you severely for pub-hawking. Bounder of the Sixth has now confessed that he is the giddy culprit, and that he deliberately pushed you into my hands so that you would get the blame."

"I am glad you have found out the truth, sir," said Frank Fearless, grinning all over his face.

"You are no more glad than I am, Fearless!" said the Head. "I can assure you I feel like kicking myself all round the room, now. In fact, I'm dashed if I don't do it!"

So saying, the Head took half-a-dozen running kicks at himself, and Fearless jeenerously assisted by landing a couple himself.

"Of course, you did wrong in breaking bounds to warn Bounder," remarked Dr. Birchmell reprovingly, when he had finished this little manoeuvre.

"However, you have received more punishment than you really deserve, and I therefore propose to make some sort of compensation."

"The only thing I can think of, Fearless, is to make you a cash payment," he said. "Let me relieve my conscience by completing the transaction here and now."

"But, sir—"

"Put that!" interrupted the Head of St. Sam's. "I persist, Fearless. As headmaster of this great establishment it is my bounden duty to recompense you in the only way possible for the grave injustices you have suffered. Had I only thought for a moment before condemning you, this would not have happened."

Frank Fearless could hardly refrain from grinning.

"Even the best of us are liable to make mistakes," he said. "Of course, with you, sir, it may be a complaint. But—"

"Fearless!" Dr. Birchmell's face turned the color of a pop.

"Do you mean to insinuate—that a man in my position is constantly making mistakes?"

"I didn't eggsactly mean that, sir," said Fearless, unable to chequer the broad grin which was creeping over his face.

"Never mind what you mean. This is not a time to bandy words with your headmaster."

"I'm sorry, sir! If I've offended you except my sincere apologies. It was a slip of the tongue on my part. I'm so eggsactly to know, sir, that I'm not really a bold, bad blade."

Dr. Birchmell became calm, with an effort.

"No, Fearless," he said. "I am pleased to say that I was entirely wrong in judging you as such. Your action in shielding Bounder was no doubt due to your thoughtlessness. Be that as it may, however, it will give me the greatest of pleasure to compensate you with a substantial cash payment."

As he spoke, Dr. Birchmell dived his hand into his trousers pocket, and with a flourish handed the ill-used junior a penny.

Frank Fearless gazed at the coin, more in sorrow than in anger, then handed it back.

"Frankly, sir, I don't feel justified in keeping such a sum," he said, shaking his head. "Please give it to charity."

"An eggscellent idea! I will give it to the Distressed Headmasters' Association, of which I am treasurer!" cried the Head, chuckling in his beard.

"And now, Fearless, you may depart in peace, without a stain on your fingers—I mean, your carrierker. Good-buy, my boy!"

Dr. Birchmell shook hands hastily with the grinning junior.

"By the way, sir, what's happening to Bounder?" asked Frank Fearless, jeenerously thinking, as usual, of the welfare of others. "I hope you are not sacking him?"

Dr. Birchmell shook his head.

"Bounder will be proceeding to Ox-bridge in dew core, Fearless, and I cannot bring myself to wreck his career," he said. "I shall merely birch him black and blue and give him two or three hundred thousand lines to write out. Needless to say, I shall also vindicate you publicly before the whole school to-morrow."

"Oh, good!" eggsclained Frank Fearless. "Well, good-buy, sir! And good-buy, Miss Molly!"

"Good-buy!" chirruped Molly Birchmell coyly.

Outside the Head's study, Frank Fearless danced a Charleston in his glee. Thanks to Molly Birchmell all his troubles had vanished now. There and then he made up his mind that for the future he would abandon the life of a gay dog and a bold, bad blade, and return to the good, old, happy days.

The following day there was a General Assembly in the Grate Hall of St. Sam's, and from the lips of the Head the school heard the true story of Bounder's treachery and the Fourth-Former's innocence. Needless to say, everybody was awfully upset to hear of the grave injustices which had been done to Fearless. St. Sam's fairly echoed with the cheers they gave the hero of the Fourth, and loud were the hisses that greeted the trembling Bounder as he was led to the platform to receive his richly-deserved flogging.

"Frank, old chap, forgive us!" said Jack Jolly afterwards. "You ought to have eggsplained, you know."

"I'm afraid I was too proud. But



it's all over now. Jolly forgot it, and berry the hatchet in the backshop."

"Hear, hear!" yelled a score of juniors, and over foaming glasses of ginger-pop the hatchet was solemnly berried.

Frank Fearless soon got back into the old life again, and just to show that he had completely abandoned his gay ways he called Buff and Blagger, his pals for a brief fortnight, and hooked their silly heads together. And that was the last he had to do with the black sheep of the Fourth!

On the following Saturday, Fearless turned out for the Fourth against their old rivals from St. Bill's to alone for his miserable show against St. Alf's.

And stone for it, he did!

Within a minute of the kick-off, he had scored a goal. In the next five minutes, he added a couple more.

Not content with merely scoring goals, Fearless also assisted the defence when occasion arose. Whenever the St. Sam's sidelet was threatened, he would rush up the field, scatter the St. Bill's men in all directions, and return triumphantly with the ball to score another goal.

Cheer after cheer went up from the crowd round the field, and the applause rang like merrick in the ears of Frank Fearless. For weeks he had been an outcast, scorned and despised by all. But now he had come back with a vengeance, and he enjoyed every bit of his triumph.

The game ended at last, and St. Sam's ran out winners by 33-0. Frank Fearless having scored every goal. The cheers were simply deafening; everybody was making a hero of the one-time blade of the Fourth. But above all the rest of the applause, Frank's ears listened raptly to the new-sound tones of the only feminine spectator present—Molly Birchmell, whose tender ingenuity had caused the dark clouds to roll away, and everything to be merry and bright again!

THE END.

(You look out for the first of a grand new series of St. Sam's yarns, entitled: "DR. BIRCHMELL'S BUMPS" which will appear in next week's bumper issue of the MACKER. You'll laugh, till your sides ache when you read it, chums!)
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