

SPECIAL "EASTER HOLIDAY" ADVENTURE STORY INSIDE!

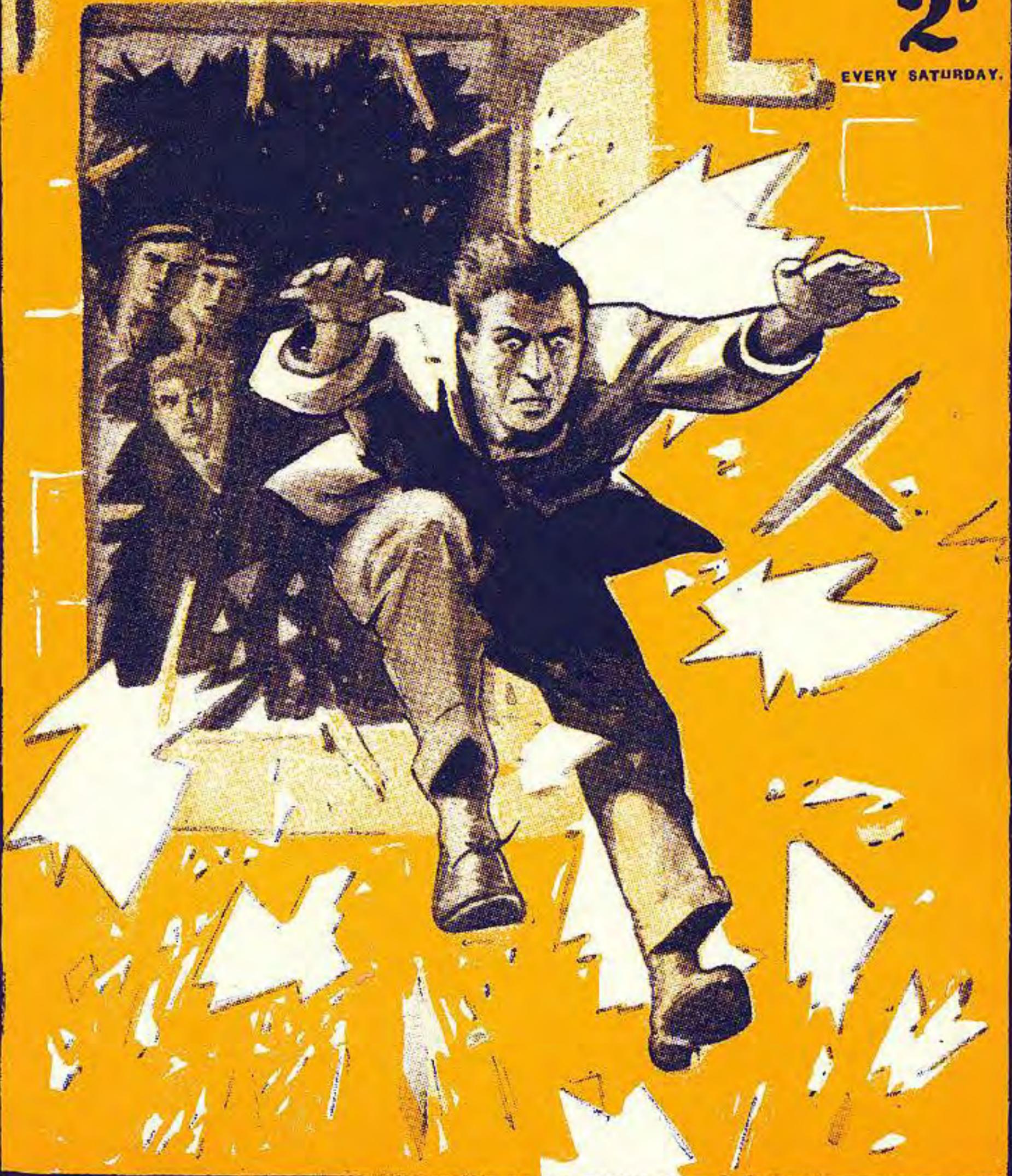
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Week Ending April 26th, 1930

The MAGNET

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EVERY SATURDAY.



THE GET-AWAY!

(Read the sensational adventure story featuring Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, 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.

APRIL seems to be a particularly warlike month, as far as I can gather—and this particular week seems to be the most warlike of the lot! For nearly all the interesting anniversaries which take place this month are connected with war!

It is true that this Monday has nothing much to do with war, but that may be because people generally feel pleased with themselves on a bank holiday, and their minds are on anything but war. But next Tuesday is a particularly obnoxious day, for it marks the anniversary of the first time that poison gas was used in warfare. That was in 1915, when the Germans sent over

THE FIRST GAS ATTACK.

Our fellows weren't used to such tactics, and the poor chaps suffered badly. But Germany got more than she bargained for in the long run!

Wednesday is the anniversary of a glorious British Naval epic—the attack on Zeebrugge, in 1918. I dare say you've all heard the story so often—how a portion of the Mole was blown away to prevent German reinforcements getting on to it; how ships ran alongside the Mole, and our fellows landed and launched an attack right in the enemies' teeth; and how, while this was going on, our blockships were blocking up the entrance to the harbour, to bottle up the German submarines for good and all!

You remember the poem about "Even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer?" Well, even the Germans could not help but admire the plucky British sailors who took part in that deadly but glorious enterprise!

If any of you fellows are lucky enough to be spending your Easter holidays in Belgium this year, you should visit Zeebrugge, where you'll find a museum devoted to relics of that great attack.

Practically every day of next week saw some great happening during the Great War. Thursday, for instance, was the day when the Canadians launched their attack on the Germans at Ypres in 1915, and in 1916, on the same day the Dublin rebellion broke out.

One day after the Canadians had covered themselves with glory—fifteen years ago this Friday—it was the turn of the Australians to shine in the famous landing at Anzac beach in the Dardanelles. While next Saturday is the thirteenth anniversary of the German naval "cut-and-run" raid on Ramsgate, when the defenceless town was bombarded from the sea, and the German cruisers, after doing great damage, cleared off before our cruisers could get on their track.

And that's the "war record" of this particular week!

INCIDENTALLY, however, next Wednesday is St. George's Day, and also was Shakespeare's birthday, so its associations are not entirely confined to war.

The first question I have picked up this week concerns

THE GUILLOTINE.

which, you will remember, figured frequently in the last French revolution story which we had. Jack Norris, of Lowestoft, has been told that the inventor of the guillotine died by his own invention, and wants to know if that is true. It is one of those fallacies which many people believe, but it is not true!

It is not even certain that Doctor Guillotine actually invented the instrument, and it is said that he only thought of the idea. But other people had also thought of it, and it might easily have been invented by a Scotsman, because a guillotine, which was called "The Maiden and the Widow," was at one time in use in that country. It was also used in England, at Halifax; to execute criminals convicted of stealing anything of more value than one shilling and three-half-pence, and it continued in use there until the year 1650. I wonder how many of my Halifax readers knew that?

Another type of guillotine, called a Mannaia, was used in Italy, so France has no monopoly of this particular instrument of decapitation.

After that rather gruesome paragraph, I think we ought to have a smile. Here is a yarn which well deserves the penknife which has been sent to R. Boothman, of 9, Priory Avenue, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester.

Editor (to budding author): "You should write so that the most ignorant fellow can follow what you mean."
Budding Author: "Well, what part of my story don't you understand?"

Reverting to readers' queries, I wonder how many of you know

WHO WAS TORQUEMADA ?

Ben Forster, of Walthamstow, wants to know. Torquemada was something of a "lad" in his day! He was, in fact, the inquisitor-general of the Spanish Inquisition, which had a little way of its own in dealing with people whom it disliked. In his first year of office, Torquemada had 3,000 people burned to death, and 17,000

other people suffered torture. That seemed to whet his appetite, and he went on with his jolly game, until nearly everyone in Spain was scared stiff by the fear of what might happen if they offended anyone who happened to be connected with the Inquisition.

The Inquisition lasted long after Torquemada was dead, and his successors carried on the business so successfully that it is estimated that about 32,000 people were put to death in Spain during the existence of the Inquisition, while 291,000 were subjected to other punishments, which included the most terrible tortures. Spain was not a

very happy place to live in, in those days, I should imagine!

Here is

A QUESTION FOR LONDON READERS !

Tom Hall, of Penge, wants to know if Gog and Magog really existed, and, if so, who they were. There is no evidence at all that they existed, although their names are always associated with London. In the Guildhall are to be found the figures which bear these names, and they are supposed to represent a Saxon and an ancient Briton.

Talking about giant figures which are associated with towns reminds me that they have two in Antwerp—figures of a giant and his wife. These are kept in a museum, and are hundreds of years old. But,

AT CARNIVAL TIME,

they are taken out of the museum, dressed up, and paraded through the streets. They are so big, however, that the tram standards and wires have to be taken down before the figures can be driven through the streets.

I THINK I have space for just one limerick, which has been sent in by Ronald Riley, of 38, Lime Grove Didsbury, Manchester, who earns a pocket wallet for his fine effort.

Young Nugent rites stories, I see,
And sum day, an orther may be.
But it's eazy to tell
That—untill he kan spell,
He won't be suxcessful—not he !

Now, as they say in the picture palaces, the MAGNET will present

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS !

All next week there will be a first-rate Frank Richards' yarn, entitled :

" BUNTER, THE PRIZE HUNTER ! "

and I wish I could show you some "snaps" from it, as they do at the cinemas. Anyway, it will present Harry Wharton with the Famous Five in one of the snappiest and most laughable smile-raisers you have ever read. William George Bunter, the prize ass of the Remove, takes the leading role.

Supporting this first-rate attraction, will be another instalment of our serial: "For the Glory of France," and a special "Hal Smiles" yarn, entitled: "The One-Man Cricket Team!" A poem by the Greyfriars' Rhymester, and another topical chat by your Editor, completes a programme that will take some beating.

YOUR EDITOR.

Send along your Joke or your Greyfriars Limerick—or both—and win our useful prizes of leather pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives. All efforts to be sent to: c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Helping Bunter!

“O H, my hat!” murmured Bob Cherry. Harry Wharton glanced round.

“What—”
“Look at that merchant coming up the drive! Don't you know him?”

The Famous Five of Greyfriars were loafing on the terrace at Wharton Lodge.

They did not want to loaf about that bright and sunny April morning. A car was waiting on the drive to take them on a joy-ride among the Surrey hills. But they were waiting for Bunter.

It was only ten in the morning, so, naturally, Billy Bunter was not down yet.

At Greyfriars School, the inexorable rising-bell compelled Bunter to turn out much earlier than that. But in vacation it was quite a different matter. A holiday at Easter was not much good, in Bunter's opinion, if a fellow couldn't stop in bed as long as he liked.

Bunter had consented, at nine o'clock, to sit up in bed and breakfast. After which he required another little snooze. Probably he did not find it easy to weigh anchor with the cargo he had taken on board. It was Bunter's way to load above the Plimsoll line.

So the chums of the Greyfriars Remove waited—not very patiently. While they were waiting, Bob Cherry's glance turned on a man who was coming up the drive towards the house, and he gave a start of surprised recognition.

“Oh, my hat!” echoed Frank Nugent.

Five pairs of eyes were fixed on the man on the drive.

He was a young man of about thirty, with a smooth, clean-shaven face, keen brown eyes, and a cast in the left one.

“Seen that merchant before?” grinned Bob.

“Yes, rather!”

“The ratherfulness is terrific!” murmured Hurreo Janset Ram Singh. “It is the esteemed and disgusting Sugden, the valet who was given the ridiculous boot by Sir Hilton Popper.”

“What the thump can he want here?”

ejaculated Harry Wharton, in astonishment. “I thought he was in chokey at Courtfield.”

The smooth-faced young man gave a careless glance at the schoolboys on the terrace, as he went towards the door of Wharton Lodge.

They watched him with keen curiosity.

It was some weeks since they had seen the man, but they knew him again at once. They had seen him run down by Sir Hilton Popper and his keepers near the school, and the last they had heard of him, he had been charged with theft, and remanded in custody.

What he could want at Wharton Lodge was a mystery to them. The juniors had never expected to see him again, and had, in fact, forgotten his existence.

The recognition was not mutual. On that occasion, when Sir Hilton Popper's discharged valet had been collared by the baronet and his keepers, Sugden had had no attention to spare for the group

beats me! My hat! When is that fat ass Bunter coming?”

There was no sign of William George Bunter so far. The Owl of the Remove was taking his time.

“Let's go without him!” suggested Johnny Bull.

“Let's!” agreed Bob.

“The loss of the esteemed Bunter's ridiculous company would not be a terrific disaster!” remarked Hurreo Janset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton hesitated.

“Of course, Bunter's superfluous,” he agreed. “But—”

“The superfluousness is preposterous!”

“But I'd rather wait for him, if you fellows don't mind. He did me a good turn the day I came back from Greyfriars, and—and I'd like to give him a good time here, so far as I can.”

“Oh, let's wait!” said Johnny Bull resignedly. “It's only ten. Bunter may turn out before eleven.”

“I'll go and call him again,” said Bob Cherry. “He may have dropped off to sleep. I'll wake him.”

Bob went into the house. He ascended the stairs, and as he drew near Bunter's room he was greeted by

a sound that was familiar in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars.

Snore!

Bob grinned, and opened the door of Billy Bunter's apartment.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” he roared.

Snore!

Bunter was up and dressed. But he had sat down in the armchair before the fire, no doubt feeling the need of a rest after his gargantuan breakfast. His fat chin had fallen on his podgy chest, and he was snoring contentedly and un- musically.

“Bunter!” roared Bob.

Snore!

Nothing short of a thunderclap was likely to awaken William George Bunter when he was once safe in the arms of Morpheus.

Bob Cherry stepped behind the arm- chair. He grasped it with both hands, and tilted it forward.

Crash!

Bunter landed in a sprawling heap on

Join up with the Famous Five of Greyfriars for the Easter holidays, boys! They're having a rare old time!

of schoolboys who had been looking on from a distance. So the glance he gave them was careless and uninterested, as he passed on to the door.

The juniors, on the other hand, fol- lowed him with their eyes, with the keenest interest.

Apparently the suspected man had been let out of custody. But what he was doing here was perplexing.

He was admitted to the house, and passed out of the view of Harry Wharton & Co.

“Well, that beats it!” said Johnny Bull. “I never thought we should see that sportsman again. What on earth has he come here for?”

“Goodness knows!” said Harry Whar- ton. “He must have called to see my uncle, I suppose. I can't imagine why.”

Bob Cherry chuckled.

“If your uncle's engaging a valet, old bean, I wouldn't recommend that one! He won't get a good character from his last place.”

“Can't be that!” said Harry. “It

the floor. There was a yell that awoke most of the echoes of Wharton Lodge.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Bob's method of awakening the sleeping beauty had been as effective as a thunderclap! Bunter was wide awake now.

"Woo-hoo-hoo-hoo!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey! Wha-a-a-at was that? Oh crumbs!"

"Awake, old bean?" asked Bob cheerily.

Bunter sat up and blinked at him. He grabbed at his spectacles, set them straight on his fat little nose, and blinked again. His fat face was crimson with wrath.

"Beast!" he roared.

"We're waiting for you, old fat man!" said Bob.

"Beast!"

"Is that the way you thank a fellow for waking you up?" demanded Bob indignantly. "You're missing a lovely morning, trowsting here."

"Beast!" said Bunter, for the third time.

"Well, are you ready, fathead?"

"No!" hooted Bunter. "I'll come down when I'm ready. Tell Wharton to wait! After all I've done for him——"

"Like me to help you down to the car?" suggested Bob.

"No!" hooted Bunter.

"Never mind. I'll help you, all the same."

"Yaroooh! Leggo!" yelled Bunter, as Bob Cherry grasped him by the collar, and hooked him to his feet.

"This way——"

"Whoooooop!"

Billy Bunter roared as he was run out of the room. He roared again as he was run down the staircase. But though he roared, he ran—there was no help for it, with Bob Cherry's energetic grasp on his collar. He reached the hall in a breathless state, spluttering.

"Here's your hat!"

"Beast!"

"Here's your coat!"

"Beast!"

"Come on!"

"Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, you men!" bawled Bob Cherry, as he ran Bunter out. "Here we are—all ready!"

"Leggo!" roared Bunter. "I'm not ready!"

"Yes, you are, old bean! Open the door of the car, Franky, old chap, and I'll help Bunter in."

"Beast! I don't want to be helped!" roared Bunter. "I'm not ready—I'll be ready in about an hour. I—Yaroooh!"

Bump!

Bunter went into the car. Harry Wharton & Co., grinning, followed him in. By the time Billy Bunter regained the perpendicular, the car was buzzing away down the drive. Five cheery faces, and one wrathful and indignant countenance, filled the car. It turned from the gates, and hummed down the road.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life, old fat bean?"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I've left my toffee indoors!"

"Goodness gracious me!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, as if quite overcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've left my bag of tarts!"

"Horrible!"

"Beast! I've left my box of chocolates!"

"Frightful!"

"The frightfulness is terrific."

"Look here, Wharton, if this is the way you're going to treat a guest, I

can jolly well tell you I shall clear!" roared Bunter. "This isn't the way I treat a guest at Bunter Court. I've a jolly good mind to go straight to the station and take my ticket home."

"Mercy!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Unsay those cruel words!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we're passing the station," said Harry Wharton mildly. "If you'd really like to stop and get out there, Bunter——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Just say the word when we get to the station."

A few minutes later the car passed the local railway station. But Billy Bunter did not say the word.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mr. Brown Asks For It!

COLONEL WHARTON rose to his feet, glanced at the card in his hand, and then glanced at the visitor, who had been shown into the library. The card bore the name "Mr. John Brown." The visitor was the smooth-faced young man whom the juniors had seen coming up the drive of Wharton Lodge. Harry Wharton & Co. had been surprised to see Sugden, the discharged and suspected valet of Sir Hilton Popper, at the Lodge; and they would have been still more surprised had they been aware that he had presented himself under the ancient and respectable name of Brown.

"Mr. Brown?" said the colonel inquiringly.

His keen eyes, under his rather shaggy grey brows, scrutinised the visitor, and he frowned slightly. The smooth, deferential manner of Mr. "Brown" did not seem to please the old warrior.

"That is my name, sir," said the visitor. "I must apologise for taking up your time."

"You sent word by my butler that you had important business here," said Colonel Wharton. "I cannot guess what it is, as you are a stranger to me. Kindly state it briefly."

The colonel's manner was not encouraging. Possibly he suspected Mr. Brown of being one of those enterprising young men who sell encyclopedias to unwary householders.

"The business concerns your nephew, sir," said Mr. Brown, coming to the point at once. "May I see him?"

"My nephew Harry has, I believe, gone out for the day in the car," answered Colonel Wharton. "But in any case you could not see him without first stating your business to me."

"I am prepared to do that, sir; but it would save time if I saw the boy in your presence now."

"You may state your business, Mr. Brown; and I ask you again to be brief!" rapped out Harry Wharton's uncle. "I cannot imagine what business you can possibly have with my nephew."

"Probably he has told you nothing of the matter, sir—indeed, I am sure that he has not," said Mr. Brown, "for I am certain that you, sir, would never uphold him in the line he has taken."

The colonel's brows knitted.

"Explain yourself at once!" he snapped.

"Very well, sir! A few weeks ago, I was in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars School—spending a day in the country. The weather, uncommonly warm for the time of year, tempted me to take a dip in the river. Meeting your nephew by chance near the river,

and having no doubt that a Greyfriars boy could be trusted, I asked him to take care of a certain article for me, while I was having my bathe."

"Begad!" ejaculated the colonel.

His eyes glinted.

Mr. Brown could see that this was no new story to Colonel Wharton. Evidently he had heard of the matter before.

"Master Wharton consented to take charge of the article, a small silver box!" continued Mr. Brown. "I left it in his possession. After I had my bathe, I returned to the spot where I had met him, but he was gone. That was of little consequence, as I knew his name and school, and fancied that I had only to apply to him for the box to be returned to me."

Grunt, from the colonel. But he did not interrupt Mr. Brown. Only his eyes glinted at that gentleman, under knitted brows.

"It so happened," continued Mr. Brown smoothly, "that I was called back to London—an affair of a sick relative. In the circumstances, I was unable to go down to Courtfield again; but a friend of mine offered to call at the school and reclaim the silver box. To his surprise—and to my surprise when I heard of it later—your nephew refused to give up the box."

Grunt!

"His reason for so refusing, I cannot imagine," went on Mr. Brown. "The box is of silver, but it is of little value. I need not enter into that, however, as I am assured that a gentleman in your position, Colonel Wharton, will never uphold such conduct. I have every confidence that you will order the boy to hand over my property."

"Is that all?"

"That is all, sir!"

"Very well! Now listen to me!" said Colonel Wharton. "My nephew has acquainted me with the whole affair."

"Then you are aware that the silver box is in his possession, sir?"

"I am aware, sir, that the silver box, if it has any existence at all, is not in his possession!" grunted the colonel. "A man named Judson called at Greyfriars for the box, and was assured by my nephew that it was not in his possession, and that he had never even heard of it."

"He made that statement to my friend Judson, certainly," assented Mr. Brown. "But——"

"After that," went on the colonel, in a deep voice, "my nephew was seized one day outside the school, by Judson and another rascal, and searched for the box."

"I believe so!" assented Mr. Brown.

"And that is not all!" The colonel's voice was deepening to a tone like thunder. "On the day my nephew came home for the Easter holidays he was met at the station by a man with a car—a pretended taxi-driver—who tricked him, sir, into the car, and drove him to a lonely cottage, where he was seized and bound—kidnapped, sir——"

"I am afraid my friend Judson, knowing how anxious I was to recover my property, may have been guilty of somewhat drastic proceedings, sir," said Mr. Brown apologetically.

"Your friend Judson, sir, will be charged with assault and kidnapping, and sent to gaol if the police can lay their hands on him!" boomed the colonel. "My nephew was made a prisoner, and left tied up like a turkey, sir, in a lonely cottage, and would

have spent the night in that state, had he not been found, by pure chance, by a schoolfellow—a lad named Bunter. I may tell you, sir, that that cottage was watched the next day, by the police, on my instructions, and that had your friend Judson returned to it he would have been taken into custody. Apparently he took the alarm, as he has not been seen near the place since."

"I was quite ignorant of this, sir!" murmured Mr. Brown placatingly. "I asked my friend Judson to recover the box for me, but certainly should never have countenanced any such measures—"

Grunt!
"Until very recently, sir, I have been detained at the bedside of a sick relative," said Mr. Brown. "Only very lately have I been at liberty to give my attention to the matter. My first step is to call upon you, and to ask you to order my property to be returned to me. Surely, sir, that is a reasonable request?"

"Certainly, if you had stated the facts!" snapped Colonel Wharton. "But my nephew denies that any silver box, or any box of any description, was placed in his hands, by you or by anyone else. That, sir, closes the matter. I am not likely to doubt my nephew's word."

"I am bound to tell you, sir, that in this case your nephew has not spoken the truth."

"Sir!" boomed the colonel.

"If you will let me see him, sir, in your presence, I feel assured that he will not have the audacity to deny what I state!" said Mr. Brown.

"I shall certainly not allow my nephew to see you, Mr. Brown," said the colonel. "The man Judson, and his associates, who kidnapped my nephew, are criminals—nothing more or less. As you state that they are your friends, I can consider you as nothing better. You will oblige me by leaving this house at once."

Mr. Brown's smooth face hardened, and a glitter came into his eyes.

"You refuse to order my property to be returned to me, Colonel Wharton?"

"I tell you, sir, that my nephew knows nothing of your property. He has told me the whole story; and if your statement concerning the silver box is true, it was to some other person you confided it."

"The boy in question was a Greyfriars boy wearing a Greyfriars cap, sir. I asked him his name, and he gave it as Harry Wharton."

"If that statement is correct, it would appear that some other boy used my nephew's name," said the colonel.

Mr. Brown's up curved sarcastically.

"I can imagine no reason why another boy should do so, sir!" he answered.

"Neither can I," said Colonel Wharton. "But I have said, if your statement is correct! I have no faith in your statements, sir. On your own showing your action was extraordinary—very extraordinary. You trusted an article which you appear to value, in the hands of a perfect stranger, while you swam in the river. You might as safely have left it in your pockets on the bank. The story is altogether too extraordinary for me to credit it."

"Yet it is the fact, sir, that I entrusted my silver box in the hands of your nephew—"

"It is not a fact, because my nephew denies it."

"He speaks falsely in denying it, sir."

"I tell you—" he shouted. Colonel Wharton strode towards him. "Leave this house!" he rapped. "Not without my property! Not without the box that I trusted in the hands of a young rascal—"

Mr. Brown got no further. The next moment he was writhing in the grasp of Colonel Wharton.

The colonel was not a young man, but his muscles were like steel. Mr. Brown seemed an infant in his powerful grasp.

He went swinging out into the hall, gasping and panting. Wells, with a horrified face at such an extraordinary scene, followed.



"Hands off!" shrieked Mr. Brown. "Hands off, you old fool! I—" With a swing of his sinewy arms, Colonel Wharton sent Mr. Brown through the doorway.

and I demand to see him, and ask him personally to return my property."

Colonel Wharton touched the bell.

The door opened, and Wells, the butler, appeared.

"Show this man out, Wells," said Colonel Wharton. "Do not admit him if he should call again."

"Very good sir!"

Mr. Brown drew a deep, hard breath. His eyes glittered at the grim face of the old colonel.

"You have not heard the last of me, sir!" he said between his teeth. "I shall take measures—"

"Show him out, Wells!"

"This way, sir, please!" murmured Wells.

Mr. Brown pushed him roughly and savagely aside. He faced the colonel, his eyes burning with rage. The smooth, silky politeness had dropped from him like a cloak.

"Hands off!" shrieked Mr. Brown. "Hands off, you old fool! I—"

"Open the door, Wells!"

"Oh!" gasped Wells. "Yes, sir!"

He opened the front door.

With a swing of his sinewy arms, Colonel Wharton sent Mr. Brown spitting out of the doorway.

There was a yell as he landed on the steps.

Colonel Wharton, breathing a little hard, glanced at him as he sprawled and gasped.

"Now take yourself off, you rascal!" he said.

Brown staggered to his feet. His eyes were blazing, his face crimson and convulsed with fury. A torrent of abuse poured from his lips.

"By gad!" ejaculated the colonel. "Wells, get my riding-whip!"

"Certainly, sir."

But Mr. Brown did not wait for the butler to get the riding-whip. He turned and scudded down the drive. At the gate he stopped for a moment to shake his fist at the house, and then he disappeared.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Just Like Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Brr-r-r!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Yes, Bunter, what is it?"

asked Harry Wharton, with polite resignation.

The situation was a little difficult.

There was no doubt that William George Bunter had done Wharton a good turn—a very useful turn—on the day he came home for the Easter holidays.

Wharton did not want to minimise it, and certainly Bunter did not. By this time, indeed, Billy Bunter seemed to be possessed with the idea that he had saved Wharton's life at the risk of his own.

Harry hardly knew how that strange adventure would have ended, had not Bunter butted in.

J. Judson, the friend of the mysterious Mr. Brown, in search of the mysterious silver box, had left him tied hand and foot in the lonely cottage, with dire threats of what was to happen to him on the morrow if the box was not produced. Had not Bunter, by sheer chance, butted in and found him, Wharton could not say what might have happened to him in the hands of the gang of crooks; but it certainly would have been something unpleasant.

So he was indubitably under a deep obligation to Bunter.

Bunter was not a pleasant fellow to

whom to be obliged. He was landed at Wharton Lodge for Easter, which would not have mattered very much, but for Bunter's manners and customs. Bunter, as a guest, was neither grateful nor comforting.

But, in view of that deep obligation, Wharton felt that it was up to him to tolerate the fat Owl with patience. If he could not, as the old text enjoins, suffer fools gladly, at least he suffered Bunter as cheerfully as he could.

His friends quite understood. Nevertheless, Bunter palled on them very quickly. Wharton felt that it was hardly fair on them, yet obviously he could not give Bunter the boot he deserved.

Bunter was the fellow to take full advantage of his unique position. A hearty welcome was not essential, from Bunter's point of view. So long as he was not kicked out, he could get along quite comfortably.

"Look here, where are we going?" demanded Bunter.

"Anywhere you like, old man, so long as we get back by six," said Harry. "You fellows don't mind where we go, do you?" he added, with a rather appealing glance at the Co.

"Oh, not at all!" said Bob.

"Not a bit!" said Frank Nugent.

"The not-a-bitfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

And Johnny Bull contributed a grunt.

"Well, I don't see getting back by six," said Bunter. "We're out for a joy-ride, aren't we? What do you want to get back by six for?"

"My uncle's going up to London this evening," said Harry.

"What about that?"

"He will be away from home for a few days."

"Oh, good!"

Harry Wharton opened his lips as Bunter made that remark. He closed them again. Just at present he did not care to tell William George Bunter what he thought of him.

"The goodfulness is not terrific, my esteemed Bunter," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We shall miss the excellent and absurd colonel."

"What rot!" said Bunter.

"Jolly scenery about here," said Bob Cherry, by way of turning the conversation. "Look at that—"

"I wish you wouldn't keep on interrupting me, Bob Cherry. A fellow can hardly get a word in edgeways," said Bunter irritably. "Talk about a sheep's head! You're like it—all jaw!"

"You fat frump—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Is Bunter going to give us a jaw-bone solo all the way?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Shut up a bit, old fat man," said Nugent.

"I'm speaking to Wharton. I wish you'd shut up, Nugent. Look here, Wharton, I don't see getting back early. What difference does it make, your uncle going up to London?"

"Well, I want to say good-bye to him."

"What for?"

Wharton did not answer that question.

"I should think you'd be glad to get shut of the old josser for a bit," said Bunter argumentatively. "I know I jolly well should, if he were my uncle."

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Grumpy old bulldog if you ask me," said Bunter. "Looks at a fellow as if he wasn't there! I can't say I like your uncle, Wharton."

Wharton was silent.

"In fact, if he wasn't going away for a bit, I shouldn't care to stop with you for the Easter vac," said Bunter. "Look here, you don't want to see him before he goes."

"But I do," said Harry.

"That's utter rot! Do you mean that you're going to get a tip out of him, though?" asked Bunter, as if he had suddenly thought of a possible explanation of Wharton's extraordinary desire to say good-bye to his uncle before he left.

"No, fathead."

"Then what do you want to see him for?"

"Well, I told him I should be back before he started," said Harry.

"Rot! Now, I've got an idea," said Bunter. "This isn't a bad car—not like our Rolls at home, of course, but not a bad car. My idea is to get as far as Brighton—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And dine there at some decent show," said Bunter. "Then we can roll round the town a bit, and get home late. Nothing to get in early for, you know—we haven't got to get up in the morning. You fellows needn't worry about the exes—I'll stand the dinner."

"Who's going to lend Bunter the tin to stand us a dinner at Brighton?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast! If Wharton lends me a pound or two, until I get a remittance from Bunter Court, it's not a lot, after I saved his life—"

"You whatted his whatter?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Well, practically saved his life—"

"Oh, only practically?" grinned Bob.

"There's such a thing as gratitude," said Bunter. "A thankless serpent is sharper than a child's tooth, as Shakespeare says—"



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"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Look here, Wharton, is it a go? When a fellow's risked his life to rescue you—"

"But you didn't quite, old bean," said Wharton mildly. "Judson and the other man were gone before you butted in. Still, you got me out of a jolly unpleasant fix, I admit that."

"I'm glad you admit that much," said Bunter sarcastically. "Then it's a go? We'll make for Brighton, and have an evening out."

"You see—"
 "Don't be selfish, you know," urged Bunter. "If there's one thing I can't stand, it's selfishness."

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bob. Harry Wharton was silent. On that sunny April day the joy-ride ought to have been joyful; but there was no doubt that Billy Bunter's fascinating company detracted from the joyfulness.

The party had stopped for lunch at an inn; after which they had waited an hour or two for Bunter, who declared that he did not believe in rushing about after a meal.

Now they were going again, Bunter propounded his idea of a dinner and an evening at Brighton. It was not, perhaps, essential to return to Wharton Lodge before the colonel left; but the chums of the Remove had arranged to do so, and Wharton, though he never said a word on the subject, had a deep attachment to the uncle who had been like a father to him, and disliked the idea of anything that even looked like negligence or disrespect. He was, in fact, quite determined to return to the Lodge before his uncle left for London; but at the same time there was Bunter! Bunter had hooked him out of the hands of J. Judson, and he did not want to be ungrateful.

"You haven't told the chauffeur, old chap!" said Bunter, who apparently regarded the matter as settled.

"You see—" murmured Wharton. "For goodness' sake, shut up, Bunter!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "We're going back at six. Now dry up."

"If you want me to stay with you, Wharton, all through Easter, I think Bull will have to go!" said Bunter. "I really can't stand his manners. At Greyfriars a fellow has to stand him, but it's really too thick on a holiday. You see that?"

"My esteemed Bunter—"
 "Shut up, Inky. Look here, Wharton, I'll tell you what—you get home by train; we can drop you at a railway station. No need for you to come on if you lend me some money before you go back."

"Oh!" said Wharton. "That's rather a good idea," said Bunter. "Lend me five pounds—"
 "Oh, my hat! I've only got ten shillings."

"Well, look here, it's just as well for you to see your uncle before he bunks. Make the old bean shell out, see? My uncles stand me no end of tips in the hols."

"You fat blighter!"
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "I—I mean—look here, you men may as well go on, and I'll cut back by train as Bunter suggests," said Harry. "I really want to see my uncle before he leaves. But you may as well have a longer run."

Four mouths were opened—and closed again. The Co. appreciated the troublesome position of their leader, under an obligation to a fellow like Bunter. So they nodded instead of speaking.

Wharton spoke to the chauffeur, and the car headed for the nearest main-line station. There it halted.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove stepped out. He had plenty of time to get home by train before six; and though he did not want to leave his friends, it was rather a relief to leave Bunter.

"What about the cash?" asked Bunter. Bunter had a frightfully bad memory, but there were some things he never forgot.

"Well, I shall want it for my fare home," said Harry. "One of you fellows lend Bunter some tin, and I'll settle for him."

"No need for you to settle for me," said Bunter with dignity. "I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Leave Bunter to me," said Bob

WELSH READER SCORES!

George Barratt, Derwen Cottage, Mold Road, Gwersyllt, near Wrexham, N. Wales, wins one of this week's MAGNET penknives with the following humorous joke:



THE ABSOLUTE LIMIT!

"Mrs. Jones," said the annoyed woman to her neighbour, "I make no complaint about your Alf copying my Percy's sums at school; but I do think it's time to say something when your boy starts 'itting my boy when the answers ain't right!"

Jokes are still wanted, chums. Send yours along without delay. It may mean a useful penknife!

Cherry. "He can draw on me for my last penny."

"Right-ho, then."
 And Wharton waved his hand to his friends, and walked into the railway station, and the car ran on southward for Brighton.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Famine!

BILLY BUNTER smiled serenely. Four faces in the car were not smiling. But that did not matter to Bunter. In fact, he did not observe it. So long as Bunter was satisfied, everything was satisfactory, or ought to have been.

"Bit more room now," said Bunter, spreading himself in his corner seat. "This car isn't really big enough for six. For a trip like this we want my pater's big Rolls. That's a car, if you like."

He blinked round at the four. "You fellows got any toffee?"
 "No."
 "Any chocs?"

"No."
 "Nothing to eat at all!"
 "No."
 "I should have brought something in the car, if you hadn't hurried me as you did, Bob. You always were a fool, weren't you, old chap?"

"Thanks!"
 "Still, we shall get a decent dinner at Brighton," said Bunter. "We'll run round the country a bit, you know, and get there at seven. We'll dine at the Magnificent. I've fed there with my uncle, and it's a jolly good place. You can get a topping feed there, if you pay for it. Then we'll go to the pictures. Make an evening of it, see? As a matter of fact, we shan't miss Wharton. Rather a wet blanket, don't you think?"

"Fathead!"
 "Oh, really, Nugent—"
 Billy Bunter yawned. His lunch had been a substantial one, and though he had had a nap after it, he was feeling drowsy.

"I say, you fellows, I'm going to have a snooze," he said. "Don't shift about, or talk."

"Anything else?" asked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"No; only wake me up when we get to Brighton."

Bunter closed his eyes behind his spectacles, and slid into balmy slumber. In a few minutes, his hefty snore rumbled through the car, a musical accompaniment to the buzzing of the engine.

The four juniors talked, in spite of Bunter's injunction; but they might have shouted, without any danger of awakening the fat Owl of the Remove.

The car ran on, eating up the miles, taking a roundabout course for the seaside town. Bunter had given directions for the car to arrive at the Magnificent Hotel, Brighton, at seven; but the Co. saw no necessity for carrying out Bunter's instructions. Wharton was under an obligation to the fat Owl; but the Co. weren't. So they joy-rode for quite a considerable time while the sun sank over the downs, and William George Bunter snored.

Night had fallen, and Brighton was gleaming with lights, when they ran into the town at last, and pulled up opposite the Hotel Magnificent.

Bob Cherry shook the fat Owl by the shoulder.

Bunter's eyes opened. He blinked round at the lighted street, and at the illuminated facade of the Hotel Magnificent.

"Why, what's the time?" he ejaculated.

"Eight!" said Bob cheerily.

"I said seven!" hooted Bunter.

"Dear me!" answered Bob.

"We shall be jolly late for dinner!" growled Bunter. "I'm frightfully hungry. Why didn't you wake me up before?"

"You're much nicer asleep, old fat man. Even your snoring is better than your conversation."

"Beast! I'm simply famished! Let's get into the hotel!" snapped Bunter. And he rose from his seat.

"Hold on a minute—"

"Shan't!"

"What about the cash?" asked Bob.

"Oh, I'm standing the dinner!" said Bunter. "Lend me five pounds!"

"Not five hundred pounds?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, the least we can do it on is a couple of pounds. You arranged with Wharton to lend me the money!" exclaimed Bunter. "I'm relying on you."

"That's all right," said Bob. "I

told Wharton you could draw on me to my last penny. I'm a man of my word."

"Well, shell out, then!" granted Bunter.

Bob Cherry groped in his pocket, drew a penny therefrom, and placed it in Billy Bunter's outstretched fat palm. Bunter blinked at it blankly.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"My last penny!" answered Bob affably.

"Look here, don't be a silly ass! Mean to say you haven't any currency notes?" demanded Bunter.

"I never said anything about currency notes. I said you could draw on me to my last penny. There it is!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the penny, and blinked at Bob Cherry. He blinked round at grinning faces.

"You—you—you silly ass!" he gasped. "Is that what you call a joke?"

"Just that!" agreed Bob.

"The jokefulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurrec Janset Ram Singh.

"If you're not going to lend me anything, Bob Cherry—"

"I've lent you my last penny."

William George Bunter breathed hard and deep.

"Are you going to lend me anything else?"

"Not to-day, thank you!"

"Beast!"

Bunter blinked round again.

"You're not such a mean beast as Cherry, Nugent! Lend me—"

"But I am!" said Frank cheerfully.

"In fact, a meaner beast!"

"Inky, old chap—"

"The meanfulness of my esteemed self is preposterous, my esteemed Bunter," answered the nabob of Bhanipur, shaking his dusky head.

"Bull, old man—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Four grinning faces regarded Bunter. Evidently, no member of the Co. was going to lend Bunter any money. And Bunter was frightfully hungry. The Co. were hungry themselves, for that matter, by this time. But that was immaterial.

"Look here, what's going to be done?" demanded Bunter warmly. "I came to Wharton's place in rather a hurry, and left my money at home. I'm stony! Absolutely stony! Look here, if you're not going to lend me any money—"

"You've got it," agreed Bob.

"Well, I shan't be able to stand the dinner, then. You fellows will have to stand it!" said Bunter.

"Dear man!" said Bob. "We can't afford to stand feeds at the Hotel Magnificent. Too steep for us."

"Of course, I'll settle when I get my postal-order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here we've got to have some dinner, I suppose!" roared Bunter. "If you can't afford a feed at the Magnificent, we'll go to some cheaper place. Where shall we go?"

"There'll be supper at Wharton Lodge!" suggested Nugent.

"You silly ass!"

"And I think we'd better start for home," remarked Johnny Bull. "I'm getting rather peckish."

"I could peck a bit!" agreed Bob. "Are you hungry, Bunter?"

"Am I hungry?" gasped Bunter.

"I'm famished! Starving! Collapsing!"

"Then we'd better start back."

"The backfulness is the proper caper."

"You—you—you— Look here, I'd rather go to a fried-fish shop, than

nothing," wailed Bunter. "I'm as empty as a drum."

"You can go to a fried-fish shop if you like. We'll wait for you."

"I can't get anything for a penny, you silly idiot!"

"Dear me!"

"Lend me five bob—"

"Nice evening, ain't it?" said Bob.

"Brighton looks quite nice!"

"Lend me half-a-crown—"

"Look at the lights on the pier—"

"Beast!"

Bunter sat down again. He glared at the smiling quartette, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"I suppose this is what you call a jape!" he hissed.

"You've guessed it!" agreed Bob.

"I wish Wharton hadn't gone now!" groaned Bunter. "Selfish beast, leaving a fellow in the lurch like this."

"Well, what about starting back?" asked Bob. "It's a jolly long run, and I shall be ready for supper when we get in. The chauffeur must be getting peckish, too."

"Blow the chauffeur! I say, you fellows—"

"Well, say when!" yawned Bob.

"We don't mind waiting a bit longer for Bunter, do we, you men?"

"Not at all!"

"The waitfulness will be an esteemed pleasure."

Billy Bunter gave a deep groan.

He blinked at the brilliant facade of the Hotel Magnificent, where a fellow could get such a jolly good feed if he could pay for it. But the humblest place of refreshment in Brighton was beyond the means of a fellow whose resources were limited to Bob Cherry's last penny.

"Let's get home!" groaned Bunter.

"Sure you're ready to start?" asked Bob considerately.

"Beast! Tell the chauffeur to buck up."

"Right-ho!"

"This is the last time you fellows will find me in your company!" said Bunter.

"I'm fed-up with you. Understand that!"

"Bravo!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

The chauffeur was instructed to drive home to Wharton Lodge. The car left the lights of Brighton behind once more.

The Co. seemed cheery enough on the way home, though they certainly were hungry. But the cheerfulness of William George Bunter was gone. The glory had departed from the House of Israel, so to speak. He did not sleep on the way home; he groaned. And fast as the car covered the ground, to Bunter it seemed to crawl. Once more the Owl of the Remove was finding the way of the transgressor hard.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Enemy's Hands!

HARRY WHARTON stepped from the train at the little village station of Wharton Magnus. He had had to wait

at Wimford for the local train, and it was close on six when he came out into the village and started to walk to the Lodge. But there were footpaths through the fields that reduced the distance home to a quarter of a mile, and Wharton knew every lane and path in that part of Surrey. He walked out of the village, crossed two or three fields, and then followed a track through a hilly woodland. Not a thought of possible danger crossed his mind as he walked on rapidly.

The police had been looking for the gang of rascals who had kidnapped him on the day he came back from school, and no doubt was entertained that they had cleared out of that part of the country. Wharton, indeed, would have forgotten the episode but for Billy Bunter's continual reminders. He was thinking of anything but J. Judson and his associates, when there was a sudden rush of footsteps in the underwoods beside the footpath, and two men leaped into sight.

"Nail 'im!"

Wharton sprang back at the sight of the shiny, pimply face of J. Judson. But the two men were on him in a twinkling.

"Hands off, you rotters!" panted Wharton.

"Git him down, Bill!"

The schoolboy went sprawling to the ground, with the two ruffians grasping him. He struggled fiercely.

The pimply face of J. Judson grinned down at him.

"I been looking for you," he said. "I been looking for a chance like this a long time. Couldn't believe in my luck when I saw you coming across the fields, young 'un. I got you this time."

"We've got him a fair treat!" grinned Bill.

"Help!" shouted Wharton.

The next moment a rough hand was clapped over his mouth.

"Stow that!" growled J. Judson savagely. "Get out his handkerchief, Bill, and shove it into his tater-trap."

Bill plucked out the junior's handkerchief and jammed it into his mouth.

Wharton was still resisting; but Bill's powerful grasp held him, while J. Judson uncoiled a cord he took from his pocket, and proceeded to bind the junior's wrists together.

"Old him!" said J. Judson.

He stood in the middle of the footpath, looking anxiously up and down the path. But no one was in sight, and Wharton's cry evidently had reached no ears but those of the kidnappers.

"Get him into the wood," said J. Judson. "We got to wait for dark afore we get him away. It won't be safe in daylight."

Wharton was dragged to his feet, and, with the two ruffians holding his arms, he was forcibly walked off the path into the wood.

In a few minutes they were in the depths of the woodland, far from a path or track, and there the kidnappers halted.

J. Judson tied a loose end of the cord to a low bough, to make doubly sure of his prisoner.

Then he sat down on a tree-stump, filled a pipe, jammed the tobacco home with a dirty thumb, and lighted it. He grinned cheerfully at the schoolboy's angry, flushed face. J. Judson was evidently satisfied with his success.

"You 'op it, Bill!" he said. "You get the cart round to the lane soon arter dark, and we'll get this covey away. We'll 'ave him all ready for the Dandy to see to-night."

"I'm off!" answered Bill.

And he tramped away in the woodland and disappeared.

Harry Wharton was left alone with J. Judson, who sat and smoked contentedly.

Fortune had favoured the pimply gentleman at last. Wharton could guess now that J. Judson had been hanging about the neighbourhood, out of sight, watching for a chance to collar the schoolboy who had escaped him once, owing to the intervention of Billy Bunter. This time it was Bunter who had caused the captain of the Remove to fall into the hands of his mysterious

enemies; but for the fat and fatuous Owl, Wharton would have come home in the car with his friends. He would have given a great deal to kick Bunter just then.

The minutes passed slowly, while the shadows of the spring evening deepened in the woods, and the song of the wild birds died away. Wharton could not speak, but his thoughts were busy and very disagreeable. By this time his uncle would have left and taken his train to London. He was gone, after all, without Wharton seeing him. That was disagreeable enough; but Harry was thinking more of his Aunt Amy, the colonel's sister, who would be

"My aunt will be anxious if I don't get in," said Wharton, in a low voice.

"I dessay!"

"I'd tell you where to find the box if I could, but I know nothing about it."

"Gammon!" said J. Judson. "Keep it up, if you like. You wait till the Dandy gets 'old of you! He won't be an easy cove to deal with, I'm warning you. You'll find him a 'ard man to fool."

"Who is he?" asked Wharton. "I've never heard of him, that I know of. What does he want with me?"

J. Judson grinned.

"You know him all right," he answered. "His name was Brown when

you do take the cake!" commented J. Judson. "If you get 'urt over this business you've oniy got yourself to blame. Nobody wants to 'urt you; but the Dandy wants his box, and ain't it natural he should? You offered to mind it for 'im—"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped Wharton irritably. "It must have been some other fellow, if it happened at all."

"Feller same name as you?" sneered J. Judson. "And it ain't a common name, neither."

"I can't understand it at all," said Harry. "But I know that I've never seen the man you call Brown, and



J. Judson sat down on a tree-stump and grinned cheertully at Harry Wharton's angry, flushed face. He was evidently satisfied with his success!

alarmed when his friends returned in the car without him. He made several efforts to eject the gag from his mouth, but failed. But presently J. Judson knocked out his pipe, stooped over the junior, and took the handkerchief from his mouth.

"Don't you yelp!" said J. Judson. "I'd wring your blessed neck as soon as look at you! Fust yelp you give, you look out, that's all!"

"Will you let me loose?" said Harry, in a choking voice. "I've told you before, and I tell you again, that I know nothing about the silver box."

"You can tell me till you're black in the face, and I ain't going to believe you," answered J. Judson. "If you want to save trouble, put a bloke on to where he can find the box. I'm giving you a chance to speak. Well, own up, blow you!"

you met him that day by the river, near your school."

"Brown?" repeated Wharton.

"Jest that. He's the covey that gave you the silver box to mind, what you stuck to afterwards."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"You get me?" grinned Judson. "Well, the Dandy had his reasons for trusting a stranger with that box. Never mind what they was: they was good reasons. Not that he fancied the boy would stick to it afterwards. Why should he? Who'd take you for a young thief, looking at you? It beats me 'ollow why you don't 'and over that box. What you think is inside that box?" added Judson, bending a sudden, threatening look on the Grevfriers junior.

"I've never seen the box."

"Well, when it comes to 'ard lying

never heard of the silver box until you asked me for it."

"If you've only got lies to tell you may as well stow it!" said J. Judson, as he jammed the handkerchief into the schoolboy's mouth again.

Wharton lay silent in the grass, while the shadows deepened, J. Judson smoked his pipe, and waited for dark, his eyes on the junior. There was barely a glimmer of daylight left, when a whistle sounded in the wood, and J. Judson jumped to his feet.

He whistled in return; and a shadowy form came through the underwoods.

"That you, Bill?" J. Judson peered at him.

"Wot to! The cart's ready."

"Lend a hand with this 'ere young rogue."

Wharton was released from the bough, but his hands were still tied, the gag in his mouth, as the two ruffians took his arms, and walked him away through the shadowy woodland. In ten minutes or so they came out of the wood on a dusky, narrow lane, where a covered cart was waiting. The schoolboy was lifted into the cart, and J. Judson sat beside him, Bill taking the reins.

Through the shadows of the April evening the cart rattled away. In what direction they travelled Wharton had no idea; he could see nothing of his surroundings; and once, when he tried to raise his head from the bottom of the cart, J. Judson jammed it down again with a heavy, brutal hand. He lay in discomfort, jolting in the cart, for several miles at least. Then J. Judson dismounted and opened a gate; the cart drove through and stopped. They had reached their destination—wherever that might be. J. Judson bent over the junior, and folded a muffler round his face to blindfold him. Then he was lifted out, and walked into a building. He heard a door close.

"Safe as 'ouses!" said J. Judson cheerily. "Now we'll lock 'im up in a room till the Dandy blows in."

The muffler was taken away; but Wharton could only see a shadowy passage. He was taken along it, and the door of an empty, totally unfurnished room was opened, and he was pushed in roughly. He stumbled forward and fell on the bare boards of the floor.

The door closed behind him, and the key turned on the outside. Harry Wharton was left alone, to wait for the arrival of the mysterious individual whom J. Judson spoke of as the Dandy—evidently the leader of this mysterious gang of crooks.

But the pimply man's last words had given Wharton hope. If the Dandy was in reality the man Brown, the original owner of the silver box, who had entrusted it to a schoolboy on the banks of the Sark near Greyfriars, surely when he saw the prisoner he would know that Wharton was not the schoolboy in question. Whoever that schoolboy was, he had obviously used Wharton's name; why, Harry could not imagine. But Mr. Brown, surely, must remember his looks, and know that he was not Wharton!

That hope was Harry Wharton's only comfort, as he sat on the bare boards, leaning against the wall, in dismal darkness and solitude, while the weary minutes crawled by.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Awful for Bunter!

GROAN!
"Shut up, Bunter!"
Groan!
"Ring off!"

Groan!

Billy Bunter did not shut up or ring off. Billy Bunter was suffering. When Bunter was suffering he was disposed to tell the world. He groaned dismally.

It seemed to Bunter that he had never been so hungry before. Often and often he had been hungry. In fact, he generally was more or less hungry. Even after a meal, his thoughts dwelt with pleasant anticipation on the next meal. But now he

was ravenously hungry—frightfully hungry. He understood how shipwrecked mariners in an open boat at sea must feel. But no shipwrecked mariner felt as Bunter felt now. Bunter felt that he had reached the limit of human endurance. It was nine hours since he had had a meal. It seemed like nine years, or nineteen years. Slumped in a corner of the car, in an attitude of utter dejection, Bunter groaned.

"How long is it now, you fellows?" he asked in a faint voice.

Bob Cherry grinned heartlessly. The car, just then, was within sight of the gates of Wharton Lodge; but Bunter was too far gone to blink from the window.

"How long?" said Bob thoughtfully. "Well, it can't be more than twenty miles more; I'm sure of that."

Groan!

"Rather less than that, I think," grinned Nugent.

Groan!

"We shall be home before midnight, Bunter," said Johnny Bull encouragingly.

Groan!

"The groanfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "My esteemed and absurd Bunter, would you like a chunk of toffee?"

Bunter showed signs of returning animation at once; he sat up and took notice.

"Yes, rather!" he gasped, holding out a fat hand. "Quick!"

"You are sure you would like some esteemed toffee, Bunter?"

"Yes, yes, yes! Hand it over!"

"Then the regretfulness is terrific that I have none to offer you, my absurd Bunter!"

"Why, you—you beast——" gasped Bunter.

He sank back into his corner, groaning.

The car turned in at the gateway and glided up the drive to the house. It halted, and Bunter stirred.

"Oh dear! That brute of a chauffeur has stopped!" he moaned. "What is he stopping for?"

"I wonder if it's engine trouble?" said Bob Cherry gravely.

Bunter wailed.

"Oh dear! Oh crikey! Tell him to go on quick!"

"I'll see what's the matter," said Bob. "We mayn't have to stop more than an hour or so——"

Groan!

"You see, this isn't like your pater's Rolls," said Bob. "Now, if we were in your pater's Rolls——"

"Make him go on!" murmured Bunter, in an expiring voice.

The chauffeur opened the door. The Co. stepped cheerily out, one after the other, and went up the steps to the house. But Bunter, in a state of complete collapse now, did not even turn his head. He had no idea that the car had arrived at Wharton Lodge, which Bob had told him—quite truthfully—was less than twenty miles away. He lay slumping in his corner, moaning.

Colonel Wharton's chauffeur looked in at him, no doubt surprised that Bunter remained in the car, after the others had got out. He was waiting to take the car round to the garage.

"Aren't you getting out, sir?" he asked at last.

"No!" groaned Bunter.

"But you're not stopping in the car, sir?" ejaculated the astonished chauffeur.

"Yes, I am, you beast!"

"Eh?"

"Drive on!" snarled Bunter. "What do you mean by stopping when I'm perishing with hunger? Don't you know how to handle a car? Can't you do running repairs? Are you a blinking idiot?"

"But——"

"Get this car going!" hissed Bunter. "I'll complain to Colonel Wharton about this! I'll get you sacked, you beast!"

"But what are you stopping in the car for, sir?" gasped the bewildered chauffeur. "The other gentlemen have got out."

"I'm too hungry to move! What's the good of getting out? Think I'm going to help you tinker with the engine?" snarled Bunter. "Can't you get it going, you fathead?"

"The engine's all right, sir——"

"Then get the car going, you dummy!" snarled Bunter.

"Get it going, sir?"

"Yes, you dummy!"

"Well, my word!" said the chauffeur, in utter amazement. "I'll do as you wish, sir, of course; but——"

"Do it, and don't jaw!"

"But ain't you getting out——"

"No!" howled Bunter. "Never mind the others—if they choose to get out of the car it's their look-out. Get on with it!"

"Very well, sir," said the bewildered chauffeur.

If Bunter wanted to remain in the car while it was driven round to the garage the chauffeur had no objection; but he did not even begin to understand.

He shut the door and went back to his own seat and tooled the car away. Bunter groaned; but not quite so dismally as before. The car was going on again, at any rate. The other fellows, who had got out, were apparently being left behind, but that was a trifle light as air. Bunter did not give them a thought. Let them be left behind, the beasts! Serve them jolly well right, too, after starving him like this! Slumped in his corner, without even a blink out of the window, Bunter mumbled and groaned as the car moved on.

It ran into a yard and stopped again. A light gleamed from somewhere. Bunter sat up with a howl of rage. The beast was stopping again. For what reason, unless it was to torture Bunter, the Owl of the Remove could not guess. He hurled open the door of the car.

"Why ain't you going on?" he yelled.

The chauffeur had dismounted. He looked round at Bunter, more amazed than ever. It seemed to him that this fat young gentleman was not quite in his right mind.

"Can't go any farther, sir," he said.

"Why can't you?" shrieked Bunter.

"Well, I don't want to run through a brick wall, sir," said the chauffeur. "I'm going to back into the garage."

"Eh? Have you stopped at a garage?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean? Run out of petrol, or what?"

"Eh? No."

"Then what are you stopping at a garage for?" shrieked Bunter.

"Only to put the car up, sir," answered the chauffeur.

"To—to—to p-p-put the car up?" gasped Bunter.

"That's it, sir."

"Have you gone dotty?" yelled Bunter.

(Continued on page 12.)

INSIDE INFORMATION



By
The "OLD
REF."

"Old Ref" winds up his interesting series of footer talks with the part the referee has to play in the Cup Final, and hopes that among his large following there is more than one budding referee to whom will be given this arduous, though much coveted, task.

IT is the ambition of every first-class footballer to appear in a Cup Final. Indeed, it is not going too far to say that the gold medals which are given to the winners of Final ties are the most valued of all the prizes open to English footballers. They are more valued even than International caps.

It is a moot point whether some footballers prefer to have been to the Cup Final and lost, rather than not to have been there at all. However, to have taken part in a final tie is an interesting experience, and, as you may know, the losers as well as the winners of the Cup get a medal each. But the medal is different, and is not shown to friends with the same glee that a winners' medal is shown around.

Just as the Cup Final is the ambition of every player, so it is the ambition of every first-class referee to be placed in charge of one of these affairs.

It is considered that no greater compliment can be paid to a referee than to give him a Final tie. It is the big plum of the refereeing world, and the one they all desire to taste.

Of course, it follows that the Cup Final is only given to referees of considerable experience, and who have earned the reputation of being more than ordinarily capable. But it should be added that in this matter the Football Association officials, who select the referees, are great believers in allowing the honour to go round. They don't appoint the same man twice.

Obviously, too, the appointment of the referee for any particular Cup Final must be determined, to a certain extent, by the geographical positions of the clubs which get to the Final. If a London team is in the last round, by way of example, then a London referee is not chosen to take control of the game. The referee selected must be above suspicion so far as bias towards either of the competing clubs is concerned.

I once had the honour of refereeing a Cup Final. I mustn't tell you which one it was, because if I did so my identity would be revealed, and up to now I have managed to hide my secret pretty well. But I can assure my readers that to "take" a Cup Final is no light job. We often hear about the players suffering from nerves on this big occasion: suffering so much that they very seldom give of their best on Cup Final day.

Let me confess quite candidly that I got an attack of nerves when the moment came for me to step on to the field to referee a Final, but thank goodness when the ball was kicked off, I forgot all about the importance of the occasion, and I hope that I succeeded in getting through the match with the minimum number of mistakes.

Consider the responsibility which rests on the shoulders of the referee. He has to control twenty-two players much more excited than they are in ordinary games. Then the crowd is much bigger than ordinarily, and they are excited, too.

On one good or bad decision by the referee the result of the game may depend.

and that fact in itself is apt to make the man with the whistle a bit nervous, and tempt him to make mistakes.

There are referees who have come out of Cup Finals with real credit to themselves, but there are others who have not

given satisfaction. Many years ago the referee of a Cup Final was afterwards drawn over the coals by the Football Association authorities because he had failed to keep a grip on the players, and had allowed them to do things which they should not have done.

Then there have been Cup Final decisions which have been severely criticised. On the occasion when Huddersfield Town—again Finalists this season—won the Cup in 1922, they did so as the result of a much-disputed goal.

The end of ordinary time was drawing to a close in the 1922 match—the last one which was played at Stamford Bridge—and neither Huddersfield nor Preston North End had scored a goal. A North End full-back went to tackle Smith, the Huddersfield outside-left. The tackle was not a fair one: there is no doubt upon that point. But the referee astounded many of the people present by awarding a penalty, because, in the opinion of thousands of watchers—and in my own opinion, too—the offence was committed outside the penalty area. Indeed, there was a mark left on the turf which suggested that the tackle made by the full-back was some inches outside the penalty line. However, a penalty kick was awarded, and from this Huddersfield scored the goal by which the Cup was won.

The referee of a Cup Final has a task which few people know about.

It is his duty, prior to the start of the game, to choose the ball which shall be used in the match.

When I had a Final tie about eight different makes of balls were waiting for me when I arrived in my dressing-room to prepare for the Final.

I had to measure them to see that they conformed with the regulations. That done, I had to make a careful selection as to which I considered the best. But there is one good thing about this responsibility of choosing the ball: the referee is not worried by the reputation of the makers, as the name is not allowed to be put on the ball before it is chosen.

The financial reward to the referee for taking a Cup Final is not a great one. He gets six guineas only in cash, plus a medal which is at least as valuable as that given to the players, and just as much appreciated.

IHAVE some queries to run off by way of a wind up, regarding the disposal of gate-money taken at big football matches. In League games, the visiting side takes twenty per cent, one per cent goes to the Football League, and the rest to the home team.

In Cup-ties, other than replays, the money is divided fifty-fifty, after expenses have been paid.

Of replayed Cup-ties, the F.A. takes five per cent, and the rest is divided between the clubs.

The semi-final gates are pooled. The F.A. takes a third, and the remainder is divided among the four clubs, with expenses for the club on whose ground the match is played.

Of the Final tie, the F.A. takes a third, and the competing clubs a third each, less an agreed amount paid to the Stadium authorities.

THE MISSING MOONSTONE!

(Continued from page 10.)

"I haven't, sir," answered the chauffeur, with a stress on the personal pronoun. It was evidently his opinion that Bunter had!

"Then what do you mean? How am I to get home if you put the car up? How far is it to Wharton Lodge?" raved Bunter.

The chauffeur jumped.

"Wharton Lodge?" he babbled.

"Yes, you fathead!"

"About thirty yards, sir!" gasped the chauffeur.

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"D-d-d-didn't you know we'd got to the Lodge, sir?" stuttered the chauffeur. "Oh, my word! But the other young gentlemen got out—"

"We—we—we got to Wharton Lodge!" babbled Bunter. "Was that where we stopped? Was that why you stopped? Oh, you beast!"

Bunter rolled out of the car. Now that he gave attention to his surroundings, he recognised the garage belonging to Wharton Lodge. He almost forgot he was hungry in his fury.

"Those beasts!" he gasped. "They never told me we'd got home. That beast said it wasn't more than twenty miles. Oh, the rotter! And—and—"

Bunter did not stop to finish. He remembered that he was hungry and darted away towards the house.

The chauffeur stared after him and touched his forehead with a significant finger.

"Balmy!" he murmured. "Absolutely-lootly balmy!"

Billy Bunter tore on to the Lodge. The door was wide open now, and the light streaming out into the dusk of the April night. Four grinning juniors were in the hall, and there was a chuckle as Bunter barged breathlessly in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why didn't you get out, old fat bean?" asked Nugent. "Funny idea to go round to the garage in the car."

"Beast!"

"What was the big idea, Bunter?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"Supper is served, young gentlemen," murmured Wells. "It has been waiting for a considerable time."

"So has Bunter!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter made a rush for the dining-room. Wells, instead of closing the door, looked out into the starry night, and then looked inquiringly at the juniors.

"Is not Master Harry with you?" he asked.

"Eh? No. Isn't Wharton in?" exclaimed Bob.

"No, sir."

"What? But he must have got back before this! He came back by train—he was to have been in before six."

"He has not come in, sir."

"Oh, my hat! Is Colonel Wharton gone?"

"Yes, sir. The master went up to London by the six-thirty from Wimpford," answered Wells.

"And—and Harry hasn't come in?" exclaimed Nugent.

Wells shook his puzzled head.

"No, sir!"

At the supper-table Billy Bunter was

already busy, travelling through pro-vender at express speed. But the Co., hungry as they were, had forgotten supper now as they looked at one another with startled glances.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mistaken Identity!

HARRY WHARTON started and listened. From somewhere in the night the buzzing of a car came to his ears.

The hour was late; how late he did not know. The weary hours that he had spent in the dark, dismal room seemed countless. He moved about the room restlessly, or stood leaning on the wall, in the darkness, while the hours slowly passed. Never had the time seemed to him to pass so slowly.

From other rooms in the house he could hear occasional sounds of movements and voices. J. Judson and the ruffian Bill were apparently there, waiting, like Wharton, for the arrival of the man whom Judson had called the Dandy. Judson had taken the gag from his mouth before leaving him; but the kidnapped schoolboy did not think of shouting for help. A shout could only have brought the two ruffians back to the room. For a long time he had wrestled with the cord on his wrists. With his hands free he might have had a chance of escape. But J. Judson had tied him too securely, and he gave it up at last.

The sound of a car approaching the lonely house was more than welcome to his ears. He heard the car stop, the buzzing of the engine dying away quite near at hand. There was a sound of trampling footsteps in a bare, uncarpeted passage, and of a door opening, and then a murmur of voices. Someone had arrived, and the junior wondered if it was the Dandy, alias Mr. Brown.

Footsteps came along the passage towards the door of the room where Wharton was locked in. Through that door he heard the oily voice of J. Judson.

"We got him all right; and you can lay to that."

"But how—"

It was a smooth, quiet, rather cultivated voice that rejoined. It seemed not wholly unfamiliar to Wharton's ears. He was almost sure that he had heard that quiet voice before somewhere.

"It was jest luck this time, Dandy. The young covey fair walked into our 'ands," chuckled J. Judson. "We been 'anging about looking for a chance all this time, and never finding one; and then the young covey comes walking right into our 'ands."

"It will save a lot of trouble if you've got the right man!" said the quiet voice.

"We got the covey you told me about at Courtfield—Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars School."

"That's the boy!"

"He got away last time," said J. Judson. "But he ain't got away this 'ere time, and you can lay to that. We got 'im safe and sound."

"Good!"

"And he keeps on making out that he don't know nothing about the silver box. But we'll make him squeal, I fancy."

"I fancy so!" said the quiet voice, with a tone in it that made Wharton shiver a little as he heard. "Unlock the door and let me see him."

"There ain't a light—"

"No need. I have my electric torch."

Wharton heard a key inserted in the lock.

"'Ere you are!" said the oily voice of J. Judson.

The door was unlocked and thrown open.

Harry Wharton stood facing it in the darkness. The window of the room was shuttered, and not a gleam of light came from the stars without, and the passage, where the two men stood, was unlighted. He did not see them, but he heard one of them step into the doorway.

"You are there?" said the quiet voice of the Dandy.

"I am here!" answered Wharton.

"What? Who are you? That doesn't sound like the voice—"

"I am Harry Wharton!"

"You forget his voice, Dandy!" came the oily tones of J. Judson, from the darkness. "It's Wharton right enough."

"I never forget a voice," answered the Dandy. "That does not sound like the voice of the boy I spoke to in Popper Court Woods. If you've made some fool mistake, Judson—"

"I keep on telling you that's Wharton!" grunted Judson. "Look at the covey, and you'll see."

A sudden beam of light flashed out of the darkness. It came from an electric torch in the hand of the unseen Dandy.

It flickered round for a moment, and then came to rest on Harry Wharton's face, almost blinding him with its sudden brilliance.

Wharton heard an angry oath.

"That's not the boy!"

"Wot?" ejaculated Judson.

"You fool!"

"I tell you—"

"That's not the boy!" said the Dandy, between his teeth. "That boy is a stranger to me!"

The light was shut off.

"Well, blow me!" said J. Judson, in amazement. "Mean to tell me that that ain't Wharton?"

"You dot! It is not Wharton," snarled the Dandy.

"But he calls himself Wharton," gasped J. Judson. "I tell you I 'eard his friends calling him Wharton! There was his initials H. W. on his blooming luggage when I saw it. Why, I took a letter from his pocket addressed to H. Wharton. You're making a mistake, Dandy! That's the covey you want!"

"Fool!"

J. Judson swore sottly. Wharton heard the other man approach nearer to him, and in the darkness he made out a vague, shadowy form. He caught a glitter of threatening eyes.

"Who are you, boy?" came the quiet voice, with a deadly tone of menace in it.

"I've told you," answered Harry.

"I am Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars."

"That is false—it must be false! There are not two Harry Whartons at Greyfriars School."

"No!"

"He's the covey!" came Judson's voice. "I tell you, Dandy, that covey is Harry Wharton all right. If he ain't the cove you gave the box to, then you've got the names wrong, that's all. This 'ere young gent has been saying all along that he don't know nothing about the silver box, and I thought he was lying, of course."

The Dandy was silent for a few moments.

"I don't understand this," he said, at last. "Why should that fat fool have given me a false name?"

"You sure this ain't the feller—"

"Fool! The boy to whom I gave the box was about the same age, but he was inches shorter, fat, and flabby, and wore spectacles."

Harry Wharton gave a sudden start.

That description called a well-known figure to his mind.

"He was a Greyfriars boy—he wore a Greyfriars cap!" went on the Dandy. "That he belonged to Greyfriars School was certain, but if this boy is Harry Wharton, the other must have given me a false name."

Wharton breathed hard.

He had little doubt, now, to whom the silver box had been entrusted by "Mr. Brown." He remembered that Billy Bunter had been in the woods by the Sark on the half-holiday when "Mr. Brown" had handed the mysterious box to a schoolboy for safe keeping. Evidently Bunter, for some unknown reason, had

given Wharton's name instead of his own. Much that had perplexed Wharton became clear now.

There could hardly be any doubt, after the Dandy's description. That fitted no Greyfriars fellow except Billy Bunter.

But he said nothing.

"I don't get it!" grunted J. Judson. "Mean to say that a bloke give you another bloke's name!"

"He must have done so, if this boy is Wharton."

"This covey is Wharton all right!"

The Dandy gritted his teeth.

"This boy knows nothing about the silver box—he is a stranger to me. You've been after the wrong man all the time."

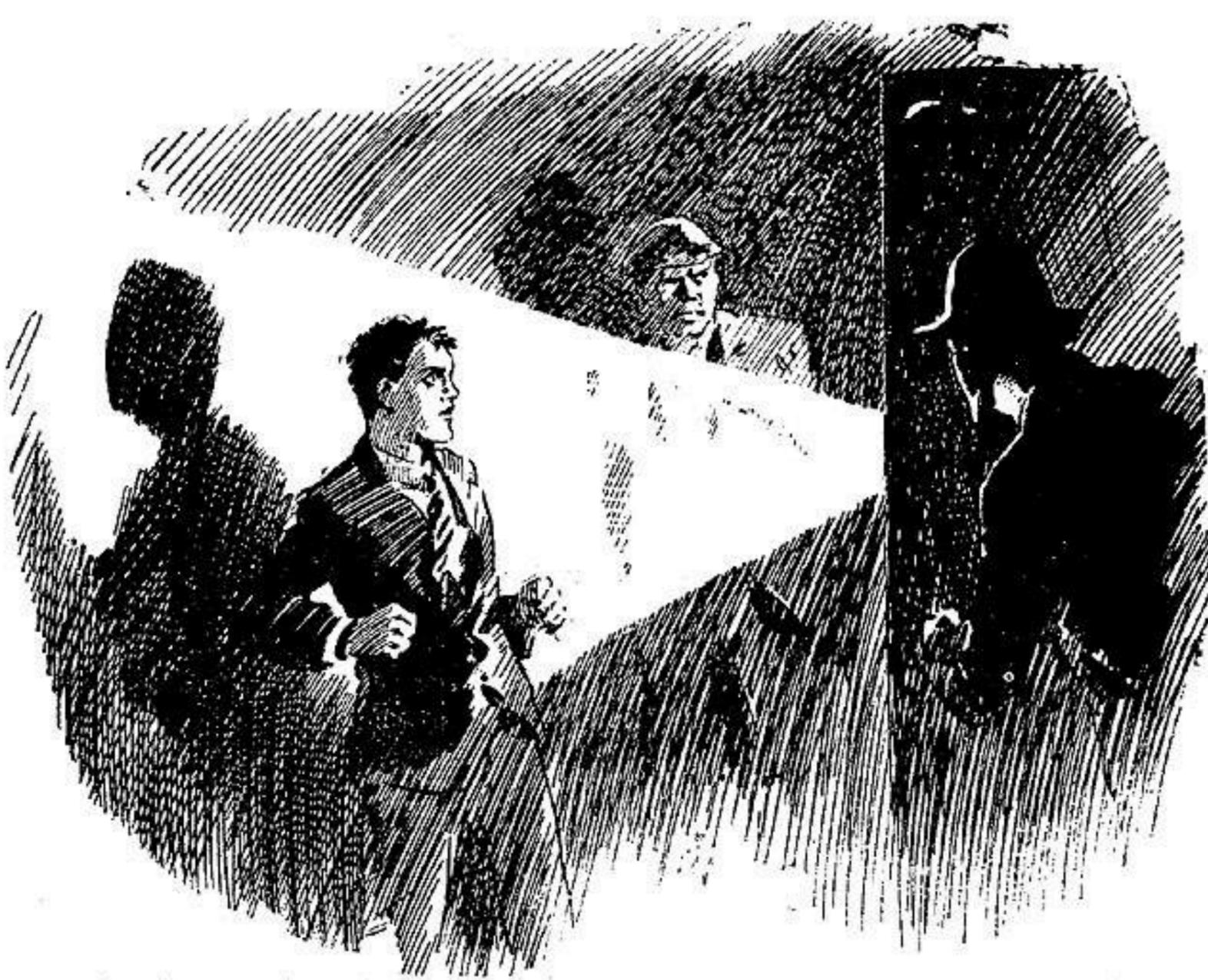
"I got after the feller whose name you give me," answered J. Judson sullenly. "You said Harry Wharton of Greyfriars School, and this 'ere covey is Harry Wharton of Greyfriars School."

"Yes, yes, I'm not blaming you. It was that fat fool lying to me about his name that's caused all the trouble. Why he should have given a false name I can't understand. But we're on the wrong track, and you've been wasting time. If I hadn't been kept at Court-field, this would not have happened. But it can't be helped now. We've wasted time—and we've got to begin again."

"My eye!" grunted J. Judson.

The Dandy's eyes glittered at Wharton in the darkness. He was evidently savagely angry and disappointed.

"You can hardly blame me," said Harry quietly. "I never dreamed that my name had been used, and I have told this man all along that I never heard of the silver box till he asked me for it. I have never seen it, and know nothing whatever about it."



A sudden beam of light flashed out of the darkness, to come to rest on Harry Wharton's face. Wharton heard an angry oath. "That's not the boy, you fool!"

"I s'pose that's true—now!" growled Judson.

"It's true enough," muttered the Dandy. "This boy knows nothing of it. He is of no use to us. But—" He paused. "He can assist us. He belongs to the same school—most likely he knows the fellow—"

Wharton smiled faintly in the darkness. He had little doubt that he knew the "fellow" to whom the Dandy alluded.

"Listen to me, boy!" The Dandy's voice was smooth and civil. "We've made a mistake, you can see that!"

"I see that, of course," said Harry.

"We were misled—I mean, my friend here was misled—by your name being given. We supposed that you had the box—my property—and refused to give it up. You can hardly blame us for taking drastic measures to get it back, as it is of some value."

"I understand that," said Wharton. "But if you had come to me, instead of sending this man, you would have seen at once—"

"I was unable to come—I was unavoidably kept away until quite recently. You see, now, that my silver box is in the hands of some Greyfriars boy—a schoolfellow of yours."

"It looks like it," said Harry.

"Probably you know him by my description—there cannot be many boys at Greyfriars who are fat, flabby, unwieldy, and wearing glasses."

"Only two!" said Harry.

"About your own age?"

"One of them—the other is his younger brother."

"Then it is the elder I want. His name?"

Wharton paused a moment.

"You need make no difficulty about telling me," said the Dandy softly.

"A Greyfriars boy, I suppose, is honest. He would give up an article that was

entrusted to his keeping, if asked for it?"

"Certainly," said Harry.

"Then I need only see him and ask him?"

"I suppose so!"

"I could not understand why you refused to part with the box, believing that you had it. It perplexed me. It is clear now, of course, you never had it. But the other boy has it, and you would surely not be a party to his keeping what did not belong to him, even if he wanted to?"

"Certainly not!"

"You think he would return it to me if I asked him?"

"I am sure of it."

"You know the boy well?"

"Quite well."

"He is honest?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, give me his name, and I will call on him and ask him for the box. You can see no objection to that?"

Wharton reflected for a few moments.

"No I don't see any objection to that," he answered. "If you're the man who handed him the box, it stands to reason that he will hand it back if you ask him."

"He will know me at once, when he sees me."

"Well, then, you can ask him for it," said Harry. "I can't imagine why the fat idiot gave you my name instead of his own, but I'm absolutely certain he would never dream of keeping the box away from its owner."

He heard a breath of relief, in the darkness.

"His name, then?"

"Bunter—Billy Bunter."

"Where does he live?"

"Bunter Villa, a few miles out of

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

Reigate," said Harry. "But he's not there now—"

"You know where he is to be found?"

"Well, rather; he's staying with me for Easter."

"At Wharton Lodge?" exclaimed the Dandy.

"Yes."

"My eye!" ejaculated J. Judson.

"Why, I've seed the bloke, then—that must be the fat bloke in specs, that I've seed two or three times when I was 'anging about looking for a chance at this young gent."

"Very likely, said Harry; "he has been at the Lodge ever since the school broke up for Easter."

"If I'd knowed—" muttered Judson.

Wharton heard the Dandy draw a deep breath of satisfaction.

"All is clear now," he said. "Master Wharton, I'm sorry you've been roughly handled, but you can see for yourself that the blame is on the boy who used your name—"

"I can see that, of course," said Harry.

"We believed that you had the box, and were deliberately keeping it back from us. You cannot blame us for taking measures to get back our own property."

"Well, no, I suppose not," said Harry. "Now I know how the matter stands, I'll—"

"Your people will probably be anxious about you, if you do not return home to-night—"

"My uncle is away," said Harry. "He was going up to London this evening, and I suppose he's gone. But I'm afraid that my aunt will be terribly anxious. Now you know that it was Bunter—"

"Exactly; I have no use for you here, and no desire to keep you. You can forgive a mistake—let the whole matter drop. It was all a mistake—you are not concerned in the matter at all, as it turns out."

"I quite see that," answered Harry. "But if I am not home before midnight Miss Wharton is certain to communicate with the police, and then—"

"They wouldn't find 'im 'ere!" grunted J. Judson.

"Fool!" said the Dandy.

Wharton grinned. Whoever and whatever the Dandy was, it was easy to guess that he did not want to have the attention of the police specially drawn to him, if he could help it. Wharton was not the Greyfriars fellow he wanted, and he had no use for him.

"I don't want to make trouble," said Harry. "It's all the fault of that fat fool for using my name. So long as I get home before my aunt phones the police station, it will be all right. You can see Bunter any time you like by coming to the Lodge."

"Then that is settled!" said the Dandy, in his quiet voice. "I say again I'm sorry you've been roughly used, but you must lay the blame where it is deserved."

"I shall jolly well kick that fat dummy, if that is what you mean."

J. Judson was heard to chuckle. The

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Dandy left the room, and in a minute or two, Wharton heard the car starting up. He was blindfolded again and led from the house. He was lifted into the car, and one of the men—he did not know which—sat by his side, while the other took the wheel. The car hummed away in the night.

Whether it went direct, or by a round-about route to delude him, he could not guess. But it was half an hour later that it halted and he was lifted out, his hands unbound, and the folded cloth taken from his eyes.

He blinked round him dazedly, in the gloom.

He was standing within a few yards of the gates of Wharton Lodge, and in the distance, the red rear-light of the car was disappearing into the night.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Not Alarmed!

"WHERE the thump is Wharton?"

"Goodness knows!"

Bob Cherry & Co. stared at one another, and stared at Wells.

They were utterly nonplussed by the discovery that Harry Wharton had not yet returned to the Lodge.

"But—he was to be in by six!" said Frank Nugent. "It's past ten now. What the thump—"

"You're sure he's not been back, Wells?"

"Quite sure, sir," said the butler. There was a faint expression of disapproval on Wells' impassive visage.

"Miss Wharton, sir, has been very anxious about all of you, fearing that there might have been some accident to the car—"

"We thought Wharton would have told her we should be late, of course," said Bob. "He ought to have been in by six. He came back by train."

"The lateness of the esteemed trains—"

"That wouldn't account for it. It's past ten now. Losing any number of trains wouldn't make him four hours late."

"Then what the dickens—"

The juniors were feeling a little alarmed. It was evident that something must have happened, and they remembered what Wharton had told them of the happenings on the first day of the Easter vacation. Back into their minds came the shiny, pimply face of J. Judson.

"That scoundrel, Judson—" muttered Johnny Bull, voicing the thought that was in every mind.

"I—I suppose it's possible—" muttered Bob.

"Looks like it."

"The lookfulness is terrific!"

"Where's Miss Wharton, Wells?"

"Miss Wharton is in the drawing-room, sir. It is past the mistress' bedtime!" added Wells, with grave disapproval. "But she has been anxious as you did not return—"

"I—I suppose she'd better be told," muttered Bob uneasily. "If—if Harry doesn't come in, the police will have to be rung up. But—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"For goodness' sake, shut up, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Dry up, you fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"What's up?" demanded Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove had taken the keen edge off his ravenous appetite. A cold chicken had disappeared as if by

magic. That made Bunter feel better. He was not finished his supper, of course. He had a long way to go yet. He came out of the dining-room with a sandwich in each hand. His mouth was full, and he kept it full. Bunter was not the fellow to waste time in these important matters. But he had become aware that something was up, and he wanted to know what it was.

"I say, you fellows, what's up?" repeated the fat junior, as nobody took the trouble to answer. "Where's Wharton? Gone to bed?"

"He's not come in, fathead!" growled Johnny Bull.

Bunter took a bite at a sandwich; half of it disappeared at one fell swoop! He choked a little, and got going again.

"Hasn't he come in? Well, what about it?"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! Is that what you're looking like a lot of moulting owls about?" asked Bunter.

"Will you shut up?"

"No. Don't you fellows want any supper?" asked Bunter, in surprise. "I should have thought you were hungry. I'm famished! It's rather a decent supper—"

"Go and guzzle, then, and ring off!"

"What on earth's become of Wharton?" growled Bob Cherry. "We don't want to alarm Miss Wharton if we can help it. But—"

"Oh, Wharton's all right," said Bunter cheerfully. "I dare say he's lost his train—"

"Ass!"

"May have lost a lot of trains, one after another, you know. You know what a fool he is!" argued Bunter.

"You benighted idiot—"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I don't see anything to worry about," said Bunter. He engulfed the second half of the sandwich. "I can jolly well tell you that I'm not going to worry."

"Cheese it!"

"I fancy I can guess what's delayed him."

"Well, what?" asked Bob.

"I dare say he's stopped to have a feed somewhere."

"What?"

"That's what I should have done in his place," said Bunter. "Any sensible fellow would, you know. Ten to one that's it."

"You burbling chump!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" Bunter took another gargantuan bite at the second sandwich. "I shouldn't worry if I were you. Nothing to worry about. Wharton's all right."

"Idiot!"

"Well, you can call a fellow names, if you like," said Bunter. "But my opinion is that Wharton's all right, and you're a lot of silly asses. While you're cackling like a lot of hens, you'll hear him knock at the door any minute."

Miss Amy Wharton came into the hall. Apparently she had become aware that the joy-riders had returned.

"My dear boys, I have been quite alarmed about you," she said. "Has there been any accident?"

"N-n-no," stammered Bob.

"Where is Harry?"

"He—he hasn't come in yet."

"Has not Harry returned with you?" exclaimed Miss Wharton.

"N-n-no."

"But what—"

"He left us to come home by train," said Bob. "We went for a long drive, and Harry came back to see his uncle before he left. He—he was to have got in by six."

Miss Wharton became very pale.

"But—but it is past ten now," she faltered. "If Harry was to be here by six, why is he not here?"

The juniors looked worried and uncomfortable. They did not wish to alarm the old lady by the mention of Mr. Judson, if it could be helped.

Billy Bunter scoffed what was left of his second sandwich, and, his mouth being full, he was ready to speak. So he weighed in, while the Co. hesitated.

"It's all right, Miss Wharton," he said cheerily.

Aunt Amy glanced at him.

"Don't you worry," said Bunter reassuringly. "I'm not worrying, and I'm Harry's best pal, you know. These fellows are nervous about nothing. They're always like that. Rather funky, you know."

"You fat porker——" began Johnny Bull sulphurously.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Don't forget your manners, Bull!" he said reprovingly. "You're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now, you know. And don't interrupt me. You fellows never give a fellow a chance to speak. Harry's all right, Miss Wharton," went on the Owl of the Remove. "Don't let those funky asses make you nervous. You may hear him knock at the door any minute."

"Oh dear! What can have happened?"

"Nothing's happened," said Bunter cheerily.

"Will you dry up?" breathed Bob Cherry.

"No, I won't! I'm jolly well ashamed of you cackling like a lot of frightened chickens about nothing," said Bunter. "Be men, like me."

"You—you——"

"Wells," said Miss Wharton faintly, "perhaps you had better telephone to the railway station, and ascertain whether there has been any accident on the line."

"Yes, madam."

Wells disappeared into the telephone cabinet. Miss Wharton sank down on a settee, looking very pale and alarmed. Billy Bunter executed a retreat into the dining-room for a fresh supply of provender. In his role of consoler and comforter to a distressed old lady, he had not forgotten more important matters. From the dining-room came a steady sound of champing jaws. Bunter was getting on with it.

There was silence in the hall till Wells came back from the telephone. Miss Wharton looked at him.

"Nothing is known of any accident, madam."

"Then what——" murmured Miss Wharton.

The juniors exchanged unquiet glances. If Harry Wharton had fallen into the hands of J. Judson and his associates, it was a matter for the police. But they hesitated to increase the old lady's alarm by telling her what they suspected. Billy Bunter rolled out of the dining-room again. His capacious mouth was loaded to capacity, and he had a large wedge of cake in a fat hand.

"I say, you fellows——" Bunter's voice came a little muffled through a mouthful of cake.

"Do be quiet, Bunter!"

"Rot!" said Bunter. "You're alarming Miss Wharton with your silly long faces. Don't you take any notice of them, ma'am. I tell you Harry's all right—right as rain. Ten to one he's stopped for a feed somewhere. May have spent his money on it, and had to walk, instead of taking a train. That's happened to me more than once."

"You frightful idiot!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "Here you are, looking like a lot of scared sheep and frightening Miss Wharton, instead of listening to a fellow talking horse sense. Any minute you may hear Wharton knock at the door——"

Knock!

There was a general jump as a knock came at the door, as if to realise Bunter's prediction.

Wells, forgetting his sedate gravity, fairly jumped to the door and hurled it open.

"Harry!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton stood in the doorway.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, what did I tell you? He, he, he!"

"Harry, my dear boy!" exclaimed Miss Wharton. "Where have you been? I have been so alarmed——"

Harry Wharton ran to his aunt and put his arm round her and kissed her affectionately.

"I'm so sorry, dear," he said. "I couldn't help it. I was kept away. But it's all right. Here I am, safe and sound."

"My dear boy, it is all right now that I see you safe. You must be wanting your supper," said Aunt Amy.

"Yes, rather!" said Wharton. "I'm as hungry as a hunter, or a Bunter."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Your supper is ready, my dear," said Miss Wharton, quite bright and cheerful again now. "You shall tell me in the morning what delayed you. Good-night, my dear boy!"

"Good-night, aunt!"

Miss Wharton, relieved in her mind, went to bed, while Harry Wharton & Co. went in to supper.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I told you so, you know."

"Yes, shut up!"

"But I told you so——"

Bob Cherry picked up a pepper castor.

"You told us so, you fat image, and if you tell us again that you told us so you get the pepper. Now shut up!"

"Beast!"

And Billy Bunter shut up, and devoted his attention to supper.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Thinks It Funny!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. finished their supper. Wells, hovering in the background, allowed his impassive visage to express faintly his conviction that it was high time for schoolboys to be in bed. Bunter, however, was not finished. He had started first. But on such occasions as this Bunter was accustomed to being first in and not out. The Famous Five rose from the table, leaving William George Bunter still going strong.

"Look into my room before you go to bed, Bunter!" said Harry.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm rather sleepy," he remarked.

"I've something to say to you before you go to bed."

"Oh, keep it till the morning!" answered Bunter. "Never saw such a fellow for jawing."

The Famous Five went upstairs and gathered in Wharton's den. Billy Bunter was left to exhaust the food supplies and the patience of Wells. Wharton throw a log on the fire. All the Famous Co. were tired and rather sleepy, but the Co. wanted to hear what had happened to Wharton before they separated for the night.

"And now—what was the jolly old trouble?" asked Bob Cherry. "That brute Judson turned up again, of course?"

"That's it," said Harry.

"And you got away," said Frank Nugent. "Cough it up, old man—we want to know, you know."

Harry Wharton gave a succinct account of what had happened. There were general exclamations from the Co. when they learned that the mysterious silver box was in the hands of William George Bunter.

"Well, my only hat!" said Bob. "The fat idiot! It must have been Bunter, from the description of him—if it was a Greyfriars man at all."

"Must have been," said Frank.

"But why did the fat ass give Brown your name?" asked Bob.

"Can't imagine; but I suppose the fat chump will tell us. Anyhow, it's pretty certain that it was Bunter who had the box, and he seems to have used my name. I suppose I can't blame those blighters very much for getting after me. I've told the man he can ask Bunter for it; and Bunter will hand it over, of course; and I shall be jolly glad to hear the end of it."

There was a grunt from Johnny Bull.

"Bunter's got it all right," he said. "But I don't feel certain that he ought to hand it over."

"Well, he's bound to," said Bob, with a stare. "It was given to him to mind; he can't keep it."

"I know that, ass! But the whole thing is fishy," said Johnny. "That gang, Judson and the man you call the Dandy, and the rest are a gang of crooks. That's perfectly plain."

"Even if they are, they're entitled to their own property," said Harry. "If Brown asks Bunter for the box, he must have it."

"How do you know it's his own property?" said Johnny, shaking his head. "It's jolly queer, trusting a stranger with valuable property. 'It's not a thing anybody would do.'"

"But he did it, fathead," said Bob.

"Looks to me as if it was something the fellow had stolen, and wanted to get rid of it in a hurry," answered Johnny Bull. "They're a gang of crooks, with their kidnapping stunts and so on; and

(Continued on next page.)

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if they're crooks, and so jolly anxious about the silver box, it looks——"

"The lookfulness is terrific," agreed Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "But——"

"But Bunter can't keep the man's box," said Harry.

"He could take it to the police, and ask them whether anybody's missed such an article," said Johnny.

"Oh!"

The juniors looked at one another.

"Well, I suppose that gang are open to suspicion, from the way they've carried on to get the box back," said Wharton slowly.

"I jolly well think so," said Johnny Bull emphatically.

"Still——" said Wharton dubiously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Bunter!"

Footsteps and a fat grunt were heard passing the door. Bunter was on his way to his room.

Harry Wharton stepped out into the corridor.

"Bunter!"

"Good-night, old chap!"

"I want to speak to you!"

"Leave it till to-morrow!"

"Look here——"

"I'm sleepy. Good-night!"

Billy Bunter rolled on his way.

Wharton was not disposed to leave the troublesome matter of the silver box till the morrow. He stepped after Bunter, and caught him by a fat shoulder.

"Come here, you fathead!"

"Leggo, you beast!"

Wharton did not let go. He walked the grunting and grumbling Owl into his room and shut the door. Billy Bunter blinked at him wrathfully. Now that he had fed, the Owl of the Remove naturally wanted to sleep. Wharton pushed him into an armchair.

"Now, Bunter——"

"I'm sleepy!"

"Where's that silver box?"

Bunter jumped.

"Eh? What?"

"The silver box!" said Harry.

Bunter blinked at him.

"What do you know about a silver box?" he demanded. "Look here, if you've been looking into a fellow's pockets——"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Listen to me, you frump," said Harry. "I've been collared to-day by a gang of fellows who thought I had the silver box."

"Oh crikey!"

"You remember I was collared by them the day I came home for the holidays, when you butted in——"

"When I risked my life to save you, do you mean?" asked Bunter.

"Put it like that if you like, fatty. Well, they collared me because they fancied I had the silver box."

Billy Bunter stared at the captain of the Remove.

"D-d-did they?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, ass!"

"You never told me!"

"I never knew you had it, you fat frump! I've only found out to-day that it was you that the man Brown gave it to."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you image?"

Bunter chortled.

"He, he, he! Mean to say that they were after that silly silver box? He, he, he! But, I say that box belongs to a man named Brown. You told me it was somebody called Judson who bagged you and shut you up in that cottage, where I saved your life——"

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"Judson was a friend of Brown's, fat-head! If the man had come after the box himself, he'd have seen that I wasn't the right man."

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter wiped his eyes. Apparently he saw something comic in the troubles and dangers he had brought on Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, isn't it funny?" he said. "Fancy them bagging Wharton when I've got the box all the time! He, he, he! I'd have given it to them if they'd asked me for it! He, he, he!"

"What did you use my name for?" demanded Wharton. "Of course, that man Judson thought I had it, when Brown told him that he'd handed it to a Greyfriars man named Harry Wharton."

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, kick him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You fat frump!" roared Wharton. "Why did you give the man my name instead of your own? That's caused all the trouble."

"I jolly well wasn't going to give him my own!" grinned Bunter. "You see, when he came on me in Popper Court Woods, I thought he was most

POCKET WALLET FOR NOTTS CHUM!

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likely somebody belonging to Popper Court. Well, I wasn't going to have Sir Hilton Popper reporting me to the Head for trespassing in his beastly woods. See? So when he asked my name, I told him the first name that came into my head—except my own, of course. Rather neat, what?"

The Co. gazed at Bunter.

"You fat villain! And if he'd belonged to Popper Court, as you thought, he'd have reported me for trespassing!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Well, you could have proved that you were somewhere else, see? I couldn't, as I was there!" explained Bunter. "I just happened to use your name. I might have used Cherry's if I'd thought of it——"

"Mine!" hooted Bob.

"Yes, old chap; or Nugent's, or Bull's, or anybody's," said Bunter cheerfully. "Anybody's but my own! Of course, I had to keep my own dark, as I was trespassing you know. You see that?"

"So that's how it was!" said Harry.

"Yes, that's how it was," agreed Bunter. "But it turned out that he didn't belong to Popper Court; he was a stranger, he said afterwards, going to have a dip in the river, and he asked me to mind the box for him. He said he could see by my face that I could be trusted——"

"Some eyesight!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"And you've still got the box?" asked Harry.

"Yes. Fishy wouldn't buy it from me."

"Oh crumbs!"

"You see, as the man never claimed it, I thought he'd forgotten all about it," explained Bunter, "and it's not worth anything, you know, as it won't open. And as I had been disappointed about a postal-order, I thought I'd sell it to Fishy. He offered me a bob for it, and then he backed out, making out that he didn't believe it was mine. You know what a suspicious beast Fishy is."

"It wasn't yours!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! As the man never claimed it, I suppose he couldn't expect me to carry it about for ever!"

"You fat chump!" exclaimed Wharton. "How could he claim it when you gave him my name instead of your own?"

Bunter started a little. Apparently that consideration had not occurred to his fat intellect.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "I—I suppose that's why Brown hasn't been after it! He, he, he!"

"But he has been after it, you chump, and he's been after me, as he fancied I had the box!"

"He, he, he!"

Bunter almost wept with mirth. The Famous Five looked at him as if they could have eaten him.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that's too jolly funny! He, he, he!"

"If you don't stop cackling," said Bob Cherry sulphurously, "I'll jolly well take the poker to you!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You benighted chump!" said Harry. "Goodness knows what those ruffians would have done to me if Brown himself hadn't turned up and found that I wasn't the man they wanted!"

"He, he, he!"

"When he described the fellow he'd given the box to, of course, I knew who it must have been——"

"I see," assented Bunter. "He told you he had given it to a good-looking fellow of distinguished appearance, or something of that sort, and so you knew it was me"

"Oh crumbs! He told me he had given it to a fat, flabby fellow in specs, and——"

"Eh?"

"And so I knew it was you at once!"

"Look here, you cheeky beast——"

"Well, he's coming along to-morrow to ask you for the box," said Harry. "So that will be the end of it!"

"Blessed if I know what they're making such a fuss about!" said Bunter. "The thing isn't worth anything. It's made of silver, but there isn't much of it, and it won't even open. Of course, there might be something inside it. I've tried to open it a lot of times, but it won't come open. Look at it."

Bunter fumbled in his pocket, and produced the silver box. And the chums of the Remove examined it with great interest and curiosity.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Silver Box!

"So that's it!" said Harry Wharton.

"That's it!" said Bunter. The Famous Five gathered round, and the box passed from hand to hand.

There was nothing in its outward aspect to account for the keen anxiety of Mr. Brown and J. Judson to regain possession of it. It was small—hardly larger than half-a-crown in circumference, oval in shape, and its thickness was about half an inch. The outside was rather curiously chased; but the article was obviously of no great value. There was no sign of an opening of any sort.

"That's what that gang are taking all that trouble about!" said Johnny Bull, with a grunt. "There must be something jolly valuable inside it, that's all. And I'll bet it never belonged to Brown, whatever it is. Ten to one somebody was after him when he parted with that box to get shut of it!"

"What rot!" said Bunter. "He left

mind, and, on the face of it, Bunter ought to give it back to him when he asks for it."

He rubbed his nose thoughtfully. "If my uncle was here, we could leave it to him. But he won't be back till the end of the week."

"Keep it till then!" said Johnny Bull. "I fancy Brown's coming in the morning for it. If the box isn't given up, that gang will be after Bunter, as they were after me!"

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter. He blinked at the Famous Five in great alarm. Wharton's trials and tribulations on account of that box had struck Bunter as extremely funny. But the same trials and tribulations visited upon himself seemed to have a serious aspect in Bunter's eyes.

back his silly box. It won't fetch anything. Fishy refused to give me a bob for it—"

"Well, do as you like, you fat chump!" grunted Johnny Bull. "After all, it's your business. Go and eat coke!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled to the door. His fat mind was made up. After what had happened to Wharton on account of the mysterious silver box, the Owl of the Remove was only too anxious to get rid of it. Certainly he did not want to become the object of the attentions of J. Judson and his friends.

Bunter rolled out of the room, and along to his own. In a very short time his musical snore was to be heard, and

"Don't you take any notice of these chaps, ma'am," said Bunter airily. "Harry's all right—right as rain."



it with me because he was going to have a swim in the river—"

"He told you so, fathead!"

"He looked respectable enough," said Bunter. "I fancy he was all right. He was very civil."

"He would be if he wanted you to mind something he had pinched, while he got away."

"Oh, rot! You're suspicious!" said Bunter. "I shouldn't be suspicious, Bull! It's rather low."

"You burbling idiot—"

"Oh, really, Bull! I say, you fellows, see if you can get it open. I've tried a lot of times."

"We've no right to open Brown's box!" said Harry.

"Rubbish, old chap! I'd jolly well like to know what's inside it, if there's anything! Must be something jolly small!"

"That box ought to be taken to the police-station to-morrow," said Johnny Bull, sententiously. "They can see what's inside it, and give it back to Brown, if it belongs to him."

"Blessed if I know what ought to be done with it," said Harry, in perplexity. "Brown gave it to Bunter to

"I—I say, I'm not going to have that gang after me!" he exclaimed. "I'm jolly well going to give Brown his box as soon as he asks for it. I'm bound to, as an honourable fellow."

"When did you begin being an honourable fellow?" inquired Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Beast! Gimme that box!"

Harry Wharton passed the silver box back to Bunter. The matter was a perplexing one; but it was, after all, up to Bunter. The silver box was in his keeping.

Bunter jammed the box into his pocket.

"If you've got the sense of a bunny rabbit, Bunter, you'll take that box to the police station to-morrow," said Johnny Bull.

"And have that gang after me?" jeered Bunter. "Think I'm going to have them collaring me like they did Wharton? No fear!"

"I tell you—"

"Rot!" said Bunter. "Brown trusted the box in my hands—he said I looked a fellow he could trust. That shows he's all right. I'm not going to keep

he had forgotten the silver box, and everything else, in balmy slumber.

It was not so easy for Harry Wharton & Co. to dismiss the matter from their minds. Johnny Bull's suggestion that the box, or what it contained, had been "pinched" by the mysterious Mr. Brown, was rather disturbing. The lawless proceedings of J. Judson and his associates seemed to bear out that suggestion. On the other hand, there was no proof of it; and, without something more than a vague suspicion to go upon, it seemed scarcely possible to intervene to the extent of preventing the silver box being given back to the man who had trusted it to Bunter.

"Anyhow, it's up to Bunter," said Harry Wharton at last. "I don't see how he can keep the thing back from the man who asked him to mind it. And he means to give it to Brown when he calls for it."

"What sort of a merchant is this Brown man?" asked Bob.

"Blessed if I know! I saw him in the dark—that is, I didn't see him at all. I thought I knew his voice. I'm

sure I've heard it before. That's all that I know about him."

"The whole lot of them are crooks of some sort!" said Johnny Bull.

"Looks like it, from the way they carry on. I wish my uncle were at home, so that I could ask him. But he—"

Wharton shook his head.

"Blessed if I know what to think about it. Anyhow, let's get off to bed now; it's past eleven."

"The bedfulness is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

And the Famous Five dispersed to their rooms.

Billy Bunter was still snoring when the chums of the Remove went down in the morning. He was still snoring when they breakfasted.

After breakfast, Wells came to inform Harry Wharton that he was wanted on the telephone. As soon as Wharton took up the receiver he heard the quiet, smooth voice that he remembered well.

"Is that Master Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Mr. Brown speaking."

"I know your voice," said Harry.

"What is it?"

"You reached home quite safely last night, I hope?"

"Quite, thanks."

"No trouble of any sort?" asked Mr. Brown, alias the Dandy.

Wharton grinned over the telephone. No doubt Mr. Brown wished to ascertain that the coast was clear before he called for his silver box.

"Not at all," answered Wharton.

"Master Bunter is still with you?"

"Yes."

"No doubt you have mentioned to him—"

"I have asked him about the silver box, and he has it, and has shown it to me," answered Harry.

"Good! When can I call to see him?"

"He's not down yet. He's never down before ten."

"If I call at half-past ten, can I see him?"

"I suppose so. I'll tell him you're coming, anyhow."

"Then I will run along in the car at half-past ten," said the quiet voice. "I am very much obliged to you, Master Wharton; and once more I apologise for the trouble my friends gave you, under a mistake."

"That's all right," said Harry.

"Good-bye!"

Mr. Brown rang off.

Harry Wharton went up to Bunter's room. The Owl of the Remove was awake now, and had rung for his breakfast. He blinked at Wharton.

"Brown's coming at half-past ten for his blessed box, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "You can settle for yourself what you're going to do about it."

"I've settled that," answered Bunter. "He can have his silly box. But I say, old chap, hold on a minute!"

"Well, what?"

Bunter blinked at him seriously.

"I've had a lot of trouble minding that box," he said. "At least, you've had a lot of trouble, which comes to the same thing. A man can't expect his things to be minded for nothing, can he?"

"What?"

"I mean, the labourer's worthy of his hire, and all that, you know," said Bunter argumentatively. "Judging by the fuss they've made, that's a valuable box, though I can't see it myself. Well, if I mind a man's valuables for him, and keep them safe, and all that, I think he ought to shell out something. What do you think?"

"I think you're a fat, piffing porker!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! One good turn deserves another, you know," argued Bunter. "What about a fiver?"

"Fathead!"

"Well, I shall put it to Brown," said Bunter. "I'm a generous chap—generosity has always been my weakness, you know. But fair's fair. I think a pound at least—"

Slam!

Harry Wharton departed.

"Beast!"

Bunter sat up in bed to breakfast. While he devoured it, he gave considerable thought to that new idea that had come into his fat mind. Brown, he felt, ought to shell out something. Bunter had no doubt about that. His only doubt was about the amount for which he would be able to "touch" the owner of the silver box; he did not want to risk asking too much, and still more he did not want to risk asking too little. It was quite a problem for the fat intellect of William George Bunter.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Brown Arrives!

BANG! Billy Bunter started out of a delightful nap.

Bang!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

After breakfast in bed, the Owl of the Remove had stretched himself luxuriously for a nap.

Early rising never had appealed to Bunter. Breakfast in bed about half-past nine, then a little nap, and then a lazy crawl out of bed about eleven, and a snack to keep him going till lunch—that was what Bunter regarded as something like comfort. At Groyfriars it was never possible to carry out that delightful programme. Neither was it possible at Bunter Villa. But at Wharton Lodge it was possible—and it was Bunter's fixed programme. If it caused inconvenience in the household, that did not matter to Bunter; the troubles of others never made any great impression on Bunter's fat mind. He was jolly well going to make himself comfortable, he knew that. In the circumstances, considering that Wharton was under an obligation to him, he couldn't be kicked out. And so long as he couldn't be kicked out, Bunter was satisfied.

So he was naturally indignant when a terrific banging at his door awakened him from his after-breakfast nap.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's woke him up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"Stop that row!" yelled Bunter. "You awful rotter, I was just dreaming about that picnic in Popper Court Woods—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door was hurled open. Bob Cherry grinned into the room, with four smiling faces behind him. He had a fives bat in his hand, apparently the instrument with which he had banged on the door.

Bunter grabbed his spectacles, jammed them on his fat little nose, and glared at the chums of the Remove with a withering glare.

"You beasts! Wharrer you waking me up for?"

"Nearly half-past ten!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"What about it, fathead?"

"Brown's coming at half-past ten!"

"Blow Brown!" roared Bunter.

"I told him—"

"Blow what you told him!"

"Turn out, fatty!" said Bob.

"Shan't!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Brown can wait!" said Bunter.

"You fellows clear off. I'm tired. I had a rotten time yesterday. You don't treat guests as we treat them at Bunter Court, Wharton."

"My esteemed Bunter—"

OH, BOY!

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The Famous School Story-Paper

Every Wednesday



"Shut up, luky! Look here, I'm not getting up for half an hour yet," said Bunter. "Blow Brown! He can wait, I suppose."

"But I told him on the phone—" "You should have told him half-past eleven. When he comes, tell him to wait. Now shut up and let a fellow sleep!"

Billy Bunter laid his head on the pillow again.

"Look here, you duffer—" began Wharton.

Snore!

"Bunter, you fat chump—" Snore!

"He's gone to sleep again!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Are you asleep, Bunter?"

Snore!

"I'll wake him with this fives bat!" said Bob. "He will wake up all right when I give him a crack on the napper—"

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter awoke without waiting for the crack on the napper. Apparently he had not been very fast asleep.

"Keep off, you beast!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me! He's awake, after all," said Bob. "Don't you feel inclined to get up yet, Bunter?"

"No, you beast!"

"Perhaps you'll feel more inclined to turn out if I hook off your bed-clothes—"

"Keep off, you beast!"

"Like that—"

"Beast!" roared Bunter, as his bed-clothes disappeared at one fell swoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Getting up now?" asked Bob.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"I'll help you, old fat bean."

"Yow-ow-wooop!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry helped him out of bed.

He rolled off the bed, and landed with a bump.

"Now we'll roll him along to the bath-room, like a barrel," said Bob.

"You take his ears, Franky, and I'll take his hoofs."

"Beast! I'm not going to bathe this morning! I don't need so much washing as you fellows! Gerrout!"

Billy Bunter began to dress. His after-breakfast nap was hopelessly spoiled now. The juniors left him to it, and went downstairs. The half-hour chimed out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, half-past ten!" said Bob. "It's time for the Brown bird to blow in."

He glanced from the staircase window, which gave a view of the drive in front of the house. A car was coming up the drive, with a single occupant, who was driving.

"I suppose that's Brown," said Bob.

"He could you he would run over in his car. Why—what— Great pip!"

"What—"

"It's not the Brown bird! It's that man Sugden again."

"Sugden!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather; the man who bumped in yesterday morning just before we went out—old Popper's booted valet."

The Famous Five gathered at the window, and looked down at the man driving the car.

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton.

"What the thump can that fellow want here again?"

The juniors stared blankly at Sugden. They knew at once the smooth face, the cast in the eye, of the booted valet of Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court.

He must have called to see your uncle yesterday," said Nugent. "Now

he's here again, he can't know the colonel's away, I suppose."

"But he can't have any business with my uncle," said Harry, knitting his brows in perplexity. "That's the man Sir Hilton Popper accused of stealing his family diamond—the Moonstone."

"And he was remanded in custody," said Bob. "But they must have let him go at Courtfield, or he wouldn't be trotting about openly like this."

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Our special rhymester is still going great guns! This week his scarifying pen passes swiftly but comprehensively over the character of Harold Skinner, the cad of the Remove



WHEN is it when the school's asleep,
Will softly sneak from bed,
And from the dormitory creep,

His steps, by habit, led
To dingy inns where rogues discuss
A game called "spot the winner"?
The answer's plain to all of us;
It's shady Harold Skinner!

Trouble would be in store for him
If "blagging" he were caught,
And Skinner shakes in every limb
At that disturbing thought.
For this unpleasant "merry blade"
Is not the least bit plucky,
When daring seems in him displayed
It's just that Skinner's lucky!

To Skinner, he who runs away
When faced by something frightening,
Will live to fight another day;
So Skinner runs like lightning!
A lot of fellows even doubt—
Good judges, so they're reckoned!—
If Skinner's blows could flatten out
A youngster from the Second!

On footer he was never keen
Nor any decent pastime;
At cricket he is rarely seen—
I can't recall the last time!
At any hour, this foolish chap—
It's fairly safe to bet on!—
Would sooner play a game of nap,
Or put a cigarette on

When Smithy trod the primrose way
He e'er relied on Skinner
To help him in his projects gay,
And be his fellow-sinner.
For quite a time, our merry blade
Was like a pig in clover;
But Smith reformed, and I'm afraid
Those rorty days are over!

The Famous Five and many more
Find Skinner at the present
A lad whose habits make them sore;
They're always so unpleasant!
But charitable chaps still say
That by the aid of various
Stern lessons, even S. ne day
Will end his ways nefarious!

"I suppose it couldn't be proved against him," said Harry. "The diamond wasn't found on him; and they were very close after him when he cleared out of Popper Court. Old Popper thought he had chucked it away in the woods, to prevent it being found on him; but—"

"They'd have found it before this, if he had," said Bob. "You can depend on it that they combed that wood with a small comb, looking for it."

"I suppose he may have been innocent," said Harry. "We know old Popper is rather an ass! But—"

He shook his head. He remembered the scene on the bank of the Sark, when Sir Hilton and his keepers had collared Sugden. Sir Hilton, at least, had been convinced that the discharged valet had left Popper Court with the famous Popper diamond in his possession. Still, as Sugden had evidently been released from custody, it was clear that the Courtfield police had been unable to hold him on the baronet's charge.

"But what beats me is, what he's doing here," said Harry. "Let's go down—I had better see him, as my uncle's away. I don't want my aunt to be bothered by a fellow like that."

In a state of great astonishment, Harry Wharton went down the lower staircase, and his friends followed him. But a greater surprise was awaiting him. By that time, the car had stopped outside and Sugden had stepped down, and rung. Wells was opening the door, as the juniors reached the bottom of the staircase.

"You again!" said Wells severely. His portly form blocked the entrance of Sir Hilton Popper's late valet.

"Quite so!" came a smooth, quiet voice; at the sound of which, Harry Wharton felt as if his head was turning round, in his amazement.

For he knew that voice. It was the voice of the unseen Dandy who had spoken to him, in the darkness of the room where he had been imprisoned the previous night.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. He knew now why the Dandy's voice had been familiar to him. He had heard Sugden speaking, on that occasion near Greyfriars when the baronet and his keepers had seized the man on the towpath. The Dandy, and the valet Sugden, and the mysterious Mr. Brown, were one and the same person.

"Oh!" repeated Wharton blankly. Bunter, evidently, had not been the only person, at that interview in Popper Court Woods, who had given a false name. The Mr. Brown who had confided the silver box to his keeping, was the valet Sugden.

Wharton stood rooted to the stairs, in his astonishment. He heard Wells answering the man at the door.

"The master gave instructions that you were not to be admitted if you called again, sir!"

"I am not here to see Colonel Wharton!" came the quiet, smooth voice, "I have called to see a young gentleman of the name of Bunter."

"The master's orders were not to admit you!" said Wells.

The butler made a movement to close the door. But a foot was already inserted in the way of it.

"Quite so!" said Sugden. "But if you will call Master Harry Wharton, he will explain—"

"You're on in this scene, old scout!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton pulled himself together. His brain was almost in a whirl; but through the startled confusion of his mind, a clear idea was forming. The Mr. Brown who had given

Bunter the silver box, was Sugden, the valet, who was accused of stealing the Moonstone, the famous Popper diamond. What, then, was likely to be hidden inside that mysterious box? It seemed to Wharton that there was only one possible answer to that question.

He made a sign to his friends to keep back, and they remained on the staircase. Harry Wharton went to the door.

"This man, sir," said Wells, "this—this person called yesterday morning, sir, and he was impudent to the master, who ejected him, sir, and gave me instructions never to admit him if he called again."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"If you will remove your foot, my man," said Wells severely to the man on the doorstep, "I will close the door."

Sugden, unheeding the butler, raised his hat civilly to Wharton.

"You understand why I have called, sir," he said. "My name is Brown—"

"Brown!" stammered Wharton.

Sugden smiled faintly.

"You met me last evening, sir—"

"I did not see you then," said Harry.

"If I'd seen you—" He broke off.

"Let him come in, Wells."

"But the master's orders, sir—" murmured Wells.

"I will take the responsibility," said Harry quietly. "This—this gentleman has business with a fellow who's staying here. Show him into the library."

"Very well, sir!" said Wells resignedly.

"Bunter is not down yet, Mr.—Mr. Brown," said Harry.

"I will wait!" said Sugden.

"Please follow me, sir!" said Wells, and he led the visitor to the library, with respectful disapproval strongly marked on his face.

Sugden glanced at Harry.

"You will tell Master Bunter I am here, and waiting for him," he said, "I have rather urgent business—"

"Certainly!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Sugden was shown into the library. Harry Wharton saw the door closed on him, and hurried back breathlessly to his friends.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Moonstone!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. gathered in the gallery above the staircase. Wharton's face was pale and tense with excitement.

His comrades were equally excited. They had seen Sugden crossing the hall, as Wells showed him in; and they had heard him give the name of Brown. The discovery that Bunter's Mr. Brown was the suspected valet, whom Sir Hilton accused of purloining the famous Popper diamond, was a staggering surprise to the Greyfriars fellows.

They looked at one another in silence for some moments. This amazing state of affairs put them at a loss.

"So—so—so that's Brown!" said Bob Cherry, at last. "He called himself Brown when he saw Bunter that time—"

"He's Sugden," said Johnny Bull. "He doesn't know we know him; but we jolly well do know him. He's old Popper's man who pinched the Moonstone from Popper Court."

"The knowfulness is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "and the suspectfulness of the esteemed rascal is preposterous!"

"What are we going to do about it?" said Harry, in a low voice. "That's what we've got to settle. Sugden, or

Brown, is safe enough for a while. He's waiting for Bunter to come down, and he hasn't any idea that we know who he is. We've got to decide—"

Grunt from Johnny Bull.

"I should think that's decided already. It turns out to be Sugden who gave Bunter that box, and it could only have been a little while before we saw old Popper and his keepers collar the man. They marched him off to the police station to be searched for the diamond. They were after him, rooting through the wood for him, when he got rid of the plunder by planting it on Bunter. Old Popper's diamond is in that silver box. That's why that gang of thieves want it so bad."

"It looks like it," said Harry. "Now we know that Brown is Sugden, it seems to me jolly likely."

"The likeliness is preposterous," said Hurree Singh.

"Can't you see?" grunted Johnny Bull. "That's why Judson was sent after the silver box. We know that Sugden was detained by the police at Courtfield—remanded in custody. He got a word with Judson, and sent him after the box. Of course, he was jolly anxious about the diamond. I suppose they must have been fairly on his heels when he got rid of it by landing it on that fool Bunter. That was why he looked so jolly cool when we saw old Popper bagging him on the towpath."

"I bet he was glad they walked him off, leaving Bunter time to clear with the stolen diamond in his pocket. All he had to do was to get word to a friend to get the box off Bunter at the school. And if that fat idiot hadn't used your name instead of his own, it would have worked like a charm. They'd have had the big diamond to cut up and whack out when Sugden was discharged through lack of evidence."

The juniors nodded.

It all seemed clear enough now.

"If—if that's how it is, old Popper's diamond is in that silver box in Bunter's pocket," said Nugent. "It's worth thousands of pounds, so they say."

"And that fat idiot tried to sell it to Fishy for a bob!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Now that we know that Brown is Sugden, we can't let him have the box, of course," said Wharton. "Not without knowing what is in it, anyhow. We've got to know."

"Yes, rather!"

"Come up and see Bunter."

The juniors went up the second staircase. Billy Bunter had finished dressing by this time. He was seated on the edge of his bed, travelling slowly and methodically through a cake which he had thoughtfully brought up to his room overnight.

He blinked at the Famous Five as he munched.

"I say, you fellows, has that man Brown come?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Well, he can wait a bit. I'll finish this cake. I'm a bit uncertain about the matter," said Bunter, blinking seriously at the chums of the Remove. "Of course, I shall give the man his box. The question is, how much I'm entitled to for minding it all this time. Do you fellows think I could stick him for a five?"

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, they seem to think the box is valuable, somehow," argued Bunter. "They wouldn't make all this fuss about it if they didn't want it bad. I've taken care of it all this time, of course. I'm entitled—"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I've no doubt Brown would give you

a hundred pounds for it, if he's got the money," he said. "It's worth more than that to him."

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Oh, my hat! Then I'll jolly well—"

"Give me the box, Bunter," said Harry.

"No jolly fear! If there's anything going to be made out of that box, I'm jolly well going to make it!" said Bunter emphatically.

"You fat chump—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We think there's a stolen diamond in the box," said Harry. "We've got to find out."

"Oh, rot!" said Bunter.

"Hand it over, you fat ass. There's no time to waste. The man's waiting downstairs."

"Well, I'll go down and see him," said Bunter, rising from the bed. "I'll use my own judgment about this, of course. You fellows needn't worry about the matter at all."

"You frabjous chump, give me that box!"

"Shan't!"

Billy Bunter rolled to the door. Bob Cherry caught him by the collar, twirled him round, and sat him down in the middle of the room.

Bump!

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Look here, you beasts—"

"Take him by his hoofs and shake the box out of his pockets," said Johnny Bull.

"Good!"

"Ow! Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "Beasts! Leggo! I don't mind giving you the box. Wow! Here it is, you rotters!"

Bunter handed over the silver box. The juniors gathered round it cagerly. But it was useless to attempt to open it. The fastening, whatever it might be, was too carefully concealed. No doubt it worked by some sort of a spring; but it seemed impossible to find the spring.

"We've got to see what's inside!" said Nugent.

"I'll get my tool-box," said Harry.

"I say, you fellows, if you damage that box—"

"Can't be helped," said Harry. "If there's nothing in it, we'll pay for the damage. But we've got to get it open."

In a pair of pliers, the silver box cracked open like a nut. Wharton drew the two halves apart, and the contents of the box dropped into his palm—a small object wrapped in paper.

The captain of the Remove unfolded the paper, and there was a general exclamation from the juniors as a blaze of glittering brilliance caught the sunlight.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Great Scott!"

"It's the jolly old diamond!"

In Harry Wharton's palm, blazing in the light, lay an enormous diamond.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last of Mr. Brown!

"GREAT pip!"

"The Popper diamond!"

"The jolly old Moonstone!" Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the dazzling gem breathlessly. They had been certain it was there, and yet the discovery startled them. The juniors had heard much of Sir Hilton Popper's famous diamond, but they had never seen it before; but there could not, of course, be any doubt that this was it. In Wharton's palm lay a stone

"If—if there's going to be a shindy——" said Bunter nervously. "More likely than not!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Don't go away, Bunter—we want you to help!"



that was said to be worth several thousands of pounds. It was a diamond of unusual size, of the purest water, and its brilliance in the sunshine was dazzling to the eye.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter, blinking at it. "Oh scissors! And—and I've had that in my pocket all this time! And—and Fishy wouldn't give me a bob for it! Oh crikey!"

"It's Sir Hilton Popper's diamond!" said Harry Wharton. "No wonder they didn't find it on Sugden, or in the wood, when that fat chump had it in his pocket at Greyfriars! And—and that scoundrel's waiting downstairs for us to let him have it!"

"The waitfulness will be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I fancy that sportsman is going to be disappointed!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The next item in the programme is to telephone for the police."

"We'll put this diamond in a safe place first," said Harry. "I'll lock it up, and it can be handed over to the police when they come."

"I'll mind it," said Bunter.

"You jolly well won't!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Bunter was gazing ecstatically at the diamond. Possibly he was thinking of the immense amount of tuck that its value represented.

Harry Wharton, with the diamond tightly held in his hand, went along to his own room, where he locked the precious Moonstone in his desk.

Then he returned to his comrades. "What about Sugden?" asked Bob. Wharton smiled.

"The silver box belongs to him. He can have it! But he can't have old Popper's diamond. Let's go down."

"I say, you fellows——"

The juniors left Bunter unheeded.

They went down to the hall, and Harry Wharton hurried to the telephone.

He called up Wimford police-station, and when he had made his statement, he heard a gasp at the other end of the wire.

"Well?" said Bob, when Wharton came away from the telephone.

"They've sending a fast car, and they've asked me to detain the man if possible till they get here," said Harry.

"We can detain him all right!" grinned Bob.

"The detainfulness will be terrific."

"He's waiting for Bunter!" murmured Nugent. "Let him wait! He will see a bobby instead of Bunter, if he waits long enough."

There was a chuckle.

"The police will be here in a quarter of an hour, or less," said Harry. "If Sugden waits that time they can walk in and bag him."

"I say, you fellows——" Bunter rolled down the stairs.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

Harry Wharton picked a golf-club from the colonel's bag in the hall. His comrades followed his example. It was unlikely that Sugden would wait for a quarter of an hour, patiently, and the juniors realised that they might have a desperate man to deal with. Billy Bunter blinked at those preparations in alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows, what are you up to?" he asked. "If—if there's going to be a shindy——"

"More likely than not!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Don't go away, Bunter—we want you to help."

"I—I've forgotten my—my hanky!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'll be back in a minute, old chap."

Bunter retreated promptly up the stairs. A key was heard to turn in a

lock above. William George Bunter was not back in a minute. He was not back at all.

The juniors waited in a tense group, their eyes fixed on the door of the library across the hall. On the other side of that door Sugden was waiting—waiting for Bunter to come with the silver box that contained the stolen diamond. So far, there was no sound from him.

Wells came along with his quiet tread, his face betraying as much surprise as his careful training allowed.

"It's all right, Wells," said Harry, "we're waiting for Mr. Brown. The police are coming for him, and we've got to detain him."

"Dear me!" said Wells.

"Where's my aunt?" asked Harry.

"In the rose garden, sir."

"Well, see that she doesn't come on the scene for a quarter of an hour, Wells, there's a good chap; it would give her a shock if we had to handle that merchant."

"Very good, sir."

Wells glided away.

The juniors waited. There was a sound of a movement beyond the library door. Sugden was no doubt growing impatient.

The juniors felt their hearts beat as the library door was opened from within. Sugden, alias Brown, looked out into the hall.

Across the wide hall the Famous Five met his eyes. A startled look flashed over Sugden's smooth face, and his eyes glittered. The sight of the five fellows with excited faces and golf clubs in their grasp warned him of danger on the instant.

He stepped out into the hall.

"I have waited some time, Master

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Wharton," he said, "I must really see Master Bunter at once, and go. I have urgent business—"

"With a jeweller?" asked Bob Cherry blandly.

Sugden started violently.

"No, sir, not with a jeweller," he answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I thought you might want to have a diamond cut up, or something of that sort!" exclaimed Bob.

Sugden drew a quick, hissing breath.

His eyes glinted dangerously at the juniors. They stood in a group between him and the outer door, and he guessed what that meant. But he was still cool.

"I cannot wait longer," he said.

"Tell me at once, Master Wharton, whether the silver box is to be handed to me."

"Certainly," answered Harry.

"Oh! Then—"

"It is your property, I believe," said Wharton. "Nobody here wants to detain your property, Mr. Sugden."

"My name is Brown!"

"Possibly, but it was Sugden when you were Sir Hilton Popper's valet," answered Wharton. "Anyhow, here's your box. Catch!"

He tossed the silver box across the hall to Sugden. The man caught it as it dropped.

The next moment he uttered a yell of rage.

"This box has been opened. It has been forced open."

"You've hit it," agreed Bob Cherry.

"What was in that box doesn't belong to you, Mr. Sugden," said Harry Wharton, "and it is locked up safely to be returned to the owner."

Sugden stood with the silver box in his hand, trembling with rage. His eyes glinted from a white face. For some moments he could not speak.

Then he hurled the silver box, with a crash, to the floor.

"You—you have found the diamond?" he panted.

"Exactly."

"Where is it?"

"Out of reach of a thief's hands," answered Wharton. "Your game's up, Mr. Sugden; you'll never see the Moonstone again."

"The neverfulness is terrific, my esteemed and absurd Sugden," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "You should learn, my ludicrous friend, to keep your hands from the pickfulness and the stealfulness. Honesty is the bird in hand that saves the cracked pitcher from going longest to the well, as the English proverb says."

Sugden glared furiously at the juniors. He realised that the game was up; that now the Moonstone had been discovered in the silver box, it had passed out of his reach for ever.

Harry Wharton glanced at the clock. Ten minutes had passed since he had telephoned to Wimford; in five minutes more the police would arrive. The juniors were listening anxiously for the sound of a car.

Sugden followed his glance. Probably he guessed for what the juniors were waiting. His teeth came hard together, and his eyes burned at the Greyfriars fellows. The stolen diamond was lost to him, irrevocably; he knew that. All that remained to him was to save his skin—if he could!

He made a sudden bound towards the door.

"Stop!" rapped out Wharton.

The juniors closed up in his path. Sugden's hand had gone to his hip pocket, and it flashed out again, and there was a gleam of metal.

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"Stand back!" he panted hoarsely.

"Stand aside, or—"

Crash!

The revolver went spinning from the desperate man's hand, as Bob Cherry smote suddenly with his golf club.

The next moment the Greyfriars fellows closed on him. Sugden made a desperate plunge after the revolver, and Harry Wharton kicked it out of the way. Two or three pairs of hands were on the rascal; but he tore himself loose, and leaped to the hall window.

"After him!" panted Bob.

Crash!

There was a terrific crash as Sugden drove his shoulder through the window. The next moment he had plunged headlong through, and dropped gasping outside.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Nugent.

"After him!" roared Bob.

Harry Wharton rushed to the door and tore it open. The Famous Five dashed out of the house.

But Sugden was already in the car, and starting up. They ran down the steps as the car moved. Sugden, hatless, with a streak of crimson on his white, desperate face, drove frantically down the drive. Bob Cherry made a wild

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leap after the car, just missed it, and dropped on the gravel.

The juniors ran breathlessly down the drive. But the gate was open and Sugden drove out recklessly into the road.

By the time the Greyfriars fellows reached the gateway he was fifty yards away. They halted, panting, and watched the car disappear in the distance.

"Gone!" panted Bob Cherry.

"The gonefulness is terrific!"

"Well, he's saved his bacon," gasped Wharton. "But we've got old Popper's diamond; that's the chief thing, after all!"

"And here come the jolly old bobbies!" said Johnny Bull, as a car came in sight from the direction of Wimford.

Wharton glanced down the road again. Sugden's car had vanished in a cloud of dust. The man who had stolen the Moonstone was gone. But the Moonstone remained; and that, after all, was the chief thing.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

All's Well That Ends Well!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Has he gone?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was half an hour later, but Billy Bunter's door was still locked. It was from the safe side of the locked door that he hailed the juniors as he heard them in the corridor outside his room.

"I say, old chaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Bunter's still locked in! Come out, Bunter!"

"I say, has he gone?"

"Don't you want to help collar him?" demanded Bob.

"I—I can't find the key. It—it's lost, or something. Of course, I'd come and help like a shot if—I could find the key!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I—I can't think what's become of that key—"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's gone, fathead!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Beast! Why didn't you come up and tell me?"

"Forgot all about you, old fat bean."

"Yah!"

"Anyhow, you can't get out of that room if you can't find the key," chuckled Bob.

Apparently Bunter succeeded in finding the key now that he was assured that Sugden, alias Brown, was gone. His door opened and the Owl of the Remove rolled out.

"I say, you fellows, you—you're sure he's gone?"

"He went on his top gear!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "He's half across the next county by this time, with the bobbies after him."

"Oh, good! I mean you were rather duffers to let him get away," said Bunter. "He wouldn't have got away if I'd been on the spot. But I suppose you were funky."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, about that diamond—" said Bunter, blinking at the grinning juniors.

"What about the diamond?" asked Harry, laughing.

"I'm going to take charge of it," said Bunter. "See? I'm going to stick old Popper for something decent for getting his diamond back for him. I shall want the car to-day, Wharton. I'm going to run across Kent and take the diamond back to old Popper. He can't stand me less than a fiver, at least, when I tell him how I got it away from the thief, after a desperate struggle and—"

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

"Look here, you beasts, where's that diamond?" hooted Bunter.

"The diamond has been handed over to the police-inspector from Wimford, you fat ass!" said Harry. "And you've got to make a statement. And when old Popper hears how you helped the thief to get away with it I'm sure he will be glad to see you. But look out for his boot!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't think I want to see old Popper, on second thoughts. I—I shan't want the car."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE mystery of the Silver Box was a mystery no longer; and Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, was surprised and delighted by the return of his famous Moonstone, which he had almost given up hope of ever seeing again.

Messrs. Brown, alias Sugden, J. Judson, and their associates, vanished into space, and Harry Wharton & Co. were glad enough to have heard the last of them.

Their satisfaction, indeed, would have been complete had Billy Bunter vanished into space also. But Bunter was a stickler; and he stuck.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "BUNTER, THE PRIZE HUNTER!" As it's one of the most laughable and snappiest yarns Frank Richards has written, you should make a point of ordering your copy in good time.)

For the Glory of France!

by Geo. E. Rochester



(Introduction on page 26.)

Guy Warren Atones!

BUT how can I get him out?" wailed Fraser. "What about you? Why can't you do it?" "Because I won't be here," responded Warren. He pressed Fraser's arm. "Good-bye, old man—and I know you'll do your best!"

With that he sprang to his feet and ran out of the tent, leaving Fraser gaping after him in blank astonishment. Meanwhile, Paul had been taken once more before Ali bu Sadi.

"Well," demanded the Chosen One truculently, his eyes on the boy, "have you hearkened to the words of your kinsman?"

"I have," answered Paul quietly. "And are you now persuaded to speak?"

"No, I'm not!" Slowly Ali bu Sadi nodded his great head.

"It is as I thought," he said, an under-current of passion in his voice. "You are all the same, you stubborn English dogs!"

Leaning forward, he wagged a fat finger at Paul.

"I want to know the strength of your company at Zukra," he said harshly, "and if they are expecting reinforcements. Also, I wish to know where you were going when you were captured in that Arab garb you are wearing. Do you answer?"

"No." "You mean that? This is your last chance."

"I will answer no questions," returned Paul steadily.

With blazing eyes, which told of the fury he was keeping in check, Ali bu Sadi turned to the negroes who were holding the boy.

"Cut out his tongue!" he snarled. Helpless in the vice-like grip of crushing arms, Paul's jaws were remorselessly forced apart by black fingers, in which lay strength of steel. He felt his tongue seized; had a hideous vision of gleaming steel before his eyes, then—

"Stop, you devils!" Faint and remote, impinging on his reeling senses, Paul heard those words and thought they were but part of this nightmarish horror.

But they were shouted by Guy Warren, who, swaying on his feet and with squat automatic in his hand, had appeared in the entrance of the tent.

"Ali bu Sadi"—his voice was but a croak and he was like a drunken man

Fiendish torture 'neath the pitiless sun of the desert awaits Paul Blake at the coming of the dawn unless

"call off your men, and leave the boy alone!"

The Chosen One surveyed him with a leer.

"Get back to your tent, Guy Warren," he said tolerantly. "He has had his chance, the dog!"

"I warn you!" Warren's voice rose shrill and hysterical. "Call off your men, or it will be the worse for you!"

With contemptuous shrug of his fat shoulders, Ali bu Sadi turned again to his negroes who were holding Paul.

"Get on!" he commanded. Warren raised his gun.

Bang! Simultaneously with the reverberating echo of the shot, Ali bu Sadi leapt to his feet with a shriek. Squealing

like a stuck pig, with fat little arms clasped about his paunch, he ran blindly around in a circle.

"Shot me—a thousand devils—a-ah—I feel the blood—"

The man's fright was pitiable. On the same high squealing note he mouthed threats, curses, orders; and through his silken robes seeped warm, red blood, which oozed between his clasping fingers.

Guy Warren made no effort to run in that moment which remained to him of life. He had no chance to fire a second shot, for the negroes, leaping at him with slashing knives upraised, were between him and the Chosen One.

But this he knew; he had done all that lay in his power—had given life itself—to save Paul Blake.

And he had paid all along the line, for his mad folly at Greystones. From the night Paul had left the school, there had always been with Warren the haunting dread that some day the truth would come out. It had hung over his head, driving him to seek temporary forgetfulness and courage in the hopeless mire of dissipation.

Then had come that vile compact with Bolke—a compact made when Warren's nerves were at the breaking point and when the fumes of liquor were in his brain.

This is no attempt to justify him or plead for him. He was a wrong 'un from the first. But once on the downward path, the rest was pitifully easy for one such as he.

But to-night—as he had said to Fraser—he had suddenly seen himself for what he was. The latent spark of goodness that was in him had flared into life.

His better self had come to the surface at last, and without the slightest hesitation he had given his all to save Paul Blake.

And Warren died, hewn down by the vengeful knives of the Chosen One's bodyguard.

Fraser's Bluff!

TO say that Fraser was astounded by the death of Guy Warren is to underrate that languid individual's emotions. He was at first speechless with incredulous horror, then came fear—fear for his own safety.

Deathly pale, he listened to the scarcely coherent words of the Arab servant who brought the news to his tent.

"He shot the Chosen One—shot him!" babbled the servant, "so that the dog of a Legionnaire might be saved from the torture."

"And is Ali bu Sadi dead?" demanded Fraser hoarsely.

"No, he lives, by the mercy of Allah—"

"And the Legionnaire?" cut in Fraser.

"Lies under guard," replied the man.

"He is to die by the springing trees at dawn."

The springing trees!

Fraser knew full well what that particular torture was. At dawn, bound hand and foot, Paul Blake would be laid on the ground between two adjacent palm trees. A rope would be tied to the top of each tree and the trees drawn downwards. The rope of one tree, held by strong hands, would be attached round his neck. The rope of the other tree, around his ankles. Then the signal would be given and the taut trees allowed to spring back, tearing his head from his body.

Earlier in the evening, before death had come to him, Guy Warren had stood face to face with realities. And thus stood Fraser now.

He had been Guy Warren's friend in London, and had followed wheresoever Warren had led. This siding with Ali bu Sadi against the French had appeared to the shallow and none too soundly-principled mind of Fraser as something in the nature of an adventurous rag.

Warren had professed to see nothing wrong in it. And blindly, Fraser had accepted that dictum, not troubling himself at all with either the ethics or the rights and wrongs of the thing. And, anyway, any faint scruples which he might have had had been swept away by Warren's glib and golden phrase:

"The desert belongs to the Arabs, and we are aiding them in expelling an invader."

But now Fraser's eyes were open, and stark understanding had come. He, a white man, had deliberately allied himself with black. And not to overthrow a tyrannical oppressor as Warren had averred, but to engage in a murderous campaign of terror and carnage.

What a blind and criminal fool he had been!

He shuddered and turned away from the Arab servant.

"Leave me now," he said dully.

Obediently the man withdrew, leaving Fraser alone.

What matters it how, alone in his tent, Fraser spent the next hour? At the best he was far from being a courageous soul, nor was he of the stuff of which heroes are made.

He himself had done nothing to incur the enmity of Ali bu Sadi. By remaining passive, and by deploring the crazed attempt on the life of the Chosen One, he might still be permitted to sojourn as an honoured guest in the Arab encampment.

He thought of that. But, seated on

his low camp bed, with his ashen face cupped in shaking hands, he put temptation from him and chose the harder part. He would, no matter what the cost to him, endeavour to get Paul Blake out of the camp before dawn.

Rising at length to his feet with mind made up, he poured himself out a stiff peg of whisky and gulped it down.

"Pot-valiant only, curse you!" he blazed in sudden self-contempt, and hurled the empty glass to the floor.

He knew his own limitations; knew that only the courage lent him by the raw spirit would see him through in the role he meant to play.

Quitting the tent, he made his way to that in which Ali bu Sadi now lay. He begged permission to see the Chosen One, and, after some delay, permission was accorded him.

Ali bu Sadi was lying on a divan in the darkened tent, his gross unhealthy bulk propped up by cushions. At Fraser's entry he raised himself on his elbow, scowling at the fair-haired English youth.

"So," he said croakingly, "you come to me, do you?"

"I come," replied Fraser quickly, "to assure you that I had no knowledge of this madness which prompted my companion to attempt your life. Had I done, I would have warned you without delay."

Ali bu Sadi laughed—a mirthless cackle.

"So you say!" he snarled. "But how am I to believe you?"

Fraser's voice was entirely steady as he answered:

"You have but to seek the motive of Warren's attempt on your life to know that I was no party to it."

"How so?"

"He did it. I understand," replied Fraser, "to save the Legionnaire who is of his blood. The Legionnaire is not of my blood. I do not know him. I have never seen him. He is nothing to me—"

"Yet Warren may have persuaded you to join him in this foul and treacherous effort to save the Legionnaire," cut in Ali bu Sadi. "You were his friend."

Fraser laughed, and none will ever know the effort it cost him. For he

INTRODUCTION.

To save his rascally cousin, Guy Warren, from expulsion on a charge of theft, Paul Blake, Fifth-Former of Greystones, takes the blame on his own shoulders by running away from school. Fired by his promise of adventure, Paul joins the Foreign Legion of France, and is sent to the desert station of Sidi-bel-Abbes, in North Africa. There he forms friendships with Lemarne, a hard-bitten Legionnaire, Esterharn, a former officer in the French Army, and Desmond, once captain of Greystones. When, a few weeks later, a strong force of the Legion is sent into the desert to quell an Arab rising, these four go with it. After a terrible hand-to-hand fight with the fanatical tribesmen, Sergeant-Major Bolke learns that a party of British tourists, including Guy Warren, who has now succeeded to the title and fortune of his father, and his sister June, have fallen into the hands of Ali bu Sadi, the leader of the great revolt. Nothing can be done to help them, until the depleted force of the Legion has been reinforced, and Bolke sends Lemarne and Blake on a perilous journey to the garrison at Kesh-el-Kabar. Fate is against the two daring Legionnaires, for they are captured by a band of Touaregs. Lemarne escapes, but Blake is brought before Ali bu Sadi, the merciless, and sentenced to death. Guy Warren, who, with a friend named Fraser, is in league with the rebel chief, is aghast at his cousin's plight. Becoming penitent, he pleads with Fraser to rescue Paul before he is put to death.

(Now read on.)

realised to the full the deadly peril he was in.

"If I had been with Warren in this attack on you," he said coolly, "I would not have been in my tent when it occurred. That much must surely be evident to you!"

Ali bu Sadi glared at him with little evil eyes.

"By the bones of Allah!" he swore gratingly. "If I had really thought you to be concerned in this with that treacherous viper, Warren, you would have been dead ere now."

With a groan of pain he sagged back on his cushions.

"But I do not think it," he went on throatily. "Warren acted alone. Any fool could see that. I hold you guiltless."

Fraser stifled a sigh of relief. Then his suddenly went cold again. For with a leer twisted by the pain of his wound, Ali bu Sadi said:

"And yet I think I will kill you, my friend."

Fraser wetted his lips with the tip of his tongue.

"Kill me?" he repeated hoarsely. "For why?"

Again Ali bu Sadi raised himself on his elbow, his malignant little eyes on the other's face.

"Because," he answered, "you are white and I am black. That is why. Oil and water can never mix, nor can white man and black. That cursed dog, Warren, proved as much to me to-night!"

He relapsed then into a violent and blasphemous tirade against Warren, cursing his soul, his body, his bones, with voice which rose to shrill and horrible falsetto. His squat, ugly features, warped by pain and convulsed by fury, were those of a fiend.

"Master, master," a servant pressed forward, "bethink thee of thy wound!"

"Allah rot your eyes!" screamed the Chosen One. "Get out of my sight! Leave me alone! Lay one finger on me and I'll tear your heart from out your cursed body!"

He was mad—mad with the frenzy to which he had whipped himself. Little flocks of foam appeared at the corners of his repulsive, slobbering mouth, and his eyes blazed with a glare which was wholly bestial.

And Fraser, holding the clearer vision which had come to him that night, stood silent and appalled—appalled not by fear, but by the thought that it was with animal such as this that he and Warren had thrown in their lot.

Ali bu Sadi's vile invective was terminated suddenly by a choking gurgle in his throat. The flocks of foam on his ponderous lips became tinged with blood, token of the hemorrhage he had brought on.

Falling limply back on the cushions, he dabbed at his mouth with a silken handkerchief, breathing stertorously like some great grampus. And his little pig-like eyes were shot with blood.

The spasm passed and he stretched out a fat and shaking hand to clutch the wine beaker by his side.

"You'll drink!" he gasped. "You'll drink with me, you cursed Englishman. You'll toast your own death, and a merry journey!"

Fraser bowed. He was a doomed man, and he knew it. And with the knowledge there had come to him a sort of desperate courage, born in a

passionate desire to show this monster how an Englishman could die.

So, accompanying his bow with a short laugh, he said:

"I'll not refuse a drink. For it will be something to boast of down in purgatory that I have drunk here on earth with Satan's own blood brother!"

Slowly the Chosen One digested to the full the insult which lay in the words. Then came a snarl:

"Dost want to lose thy tongue, thou dog?"

"I should prefer it to losing my life," responded Fraser, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Ali bu Sadi stared up at him steadily.

"By Allah," he said gratingly, "but I think you will die harder than I thought! You do not lack for nerve."

Again Fraser bowed, but a close observer would have noticed how forced was the smile on his lips.

Turning from him, Ali bu Sadi ordered a servant to take the wine-beaker and fill two goblets, one of which was proffered to Fraser.

The latter took it with hand which, to his intense inward gratification, was not trembling. Then calmly he seated himself by the side of the divan on which the Chosen One was lying.

"Who gave you leave to sit?" demanded the obese hulk on the divan querulously.

"None," responded Fraser pleasantly. "But it is a courtesy which, in your munificence, you will hardly refuse a man who is to die."

Devil's laughter showed for a moment in the eyes of the Chosen One.

"By my fathers!" he swore. "But you amaze me, Fraser. Always I have thought you craven—"

He broke off, gulping down his wine and draining the big goblet at a draught.

"Fill!" he ordered, thrusting out the goblet to the servant to be replenished, yet never once did his eyes stray from Fraser's face.

"And what is it like to feel Death at your elbow, Fraser?" he demanded leeringly. "Do you think of the past, or are your thoughts on the future?"

"Neither!" retorted Fraser. "They're on the infernal bad quality of your wine."

Ghostly mirth choked the Chosen One. "What a jester!" he gurgled. "Carion blood! But this is a new Fraser to see!"

He drained and refilled the goblet, and, raising himself on his elbow, peered at the Englishman.

"Are you not afraid of the death I have in store for you?" he demanded.

"Yes," answered Fraser quietly, "very much afraid."

"You do not show it!"

"Then I am fortunate," said Fraser.

A third goblet the Chosen One



Lurid flame spouted up from the spirit-soaked tent, and Fraser leaped to his feet and dashed for the cover of the palms!

His fingers touched the arm of the Chosen One.

"And if I lived, Ali bu Sadi," he said softly, "do you think I would use the information? Do you think I would be forgetful of those rich trade charters which were to be mine and Warren's when we had aided you in driving the French out of the Sabara? Do you think I would betray you?"

Ali bu Sadi stared at him through screwed-up eyes, as though he were endeavouring to focus his vision. He was swaying a little, for that fourth goblet had brought him to the verge of almost complete drunkenness.

"I scarce know what to think," he mumbled, in maudlin voice. "I trusted Warren, and he tried to kill me. I thought him my friend, and he attempted my life. And I was always a good friend to him."

His voice took on a whining note.

"You know I was, Fraser. I treated him like a brother, and—and he tried to slay me." A tear of self-pity rolled slowly down his cheek. "And now I am to kill you, for I can trust you no more. You are like him. You hold the creed he held. You are capable of the same act as he. I must look to my own safety—"

"Which is ever my concern," cut in Fraser, gazing fascinatedly and with wildly-beating heart at the now tear-stained face of this strange, brutish enigma, this Chosen One of Allah. "Your safety means everything to me—wealth, power, riches. For if harm comes to you, then my dreams of rich trade charters must vanish. Do you not see, man, how wrong you are to accuse me of the same treacherous thoughts as Warren? And if you kill me you prove yourself a coward, for you are killing me to end a menace which exists only in your imagination. You are fleeing from what is not even a shadow."

The Chosen One regarded him with drunken solemnity.

"Fraser," he said thickly, "on your sacred oath, are you loyal to me in your heart?"

"If you doubt it, then pluck that knife from your belt and drive it through my heart," answered Fraser quietly.

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drained, and Fraser, watching him from under lowered lids, saw that the wine was beginning to take effect.

"I must kill you"—Ali bu Sadi's voice was thickening—"because I can no longer trust you. I trusted Warren, and you saw how he turned on me. Ah, what a viper to nourish in one's bosom. But I do not want to kill you."

"Then why do so?"

"I have told you why. You may some day feel like Warren, and may shoot with better aim. What University were you at in England, Fraser?"

Fraser told him.

"Yes," nodded the Chosen One heavily, "the same one at which I was once a student. But that is many years ago, long before I heard, in the wind of the desert, the voice of Allah bidding me unite the tribes and sweep the French usurpers into the sea. It is a great mission, Fraser."

His speech was, for the moment, that of an educated white man.

"A great mission," he repeated, "and one in which I shall triumph. Listen, Fraser, and I will tell you something. They've taken Zukra from me, those cursed soldiers of the Legion. But tomorrow at dawn I am dispatching two thousand fighting Arabs with orders to retake Zukra, and to make such an example of all prisoners that the tale of it will ring throughout the world."

His eyes glinted and his thick lips drew back from his teeth in a snarl:

"By Allah," he swore, with drunken frenzy, "I will show these curs of Legionnaires what war against the Arab is!"

Then reaction had him in its grip again, and, weak and panting, he sought for strength in a fourth goblet.

"I tell you about Zukra," he said, wiping his wet lips with the back of his podgy hand, "because you will never live to use the information."

Fraser leaned forward in his chair.

FOR THE GLORY OF FRANCE!

(Continued from previous page.)

For a long moment there was a silence. Black man and white stared into each other's eyes. Then with a horrible crooning noise, Ali bu Sadi stretched out his hand and stroked the sleeve of Fraser's white tunic.

"Forgive me, Fraser," he said, "for I was over hasty. The attack on me to-night warped my judgment. You are my friend. I know that now. You shall live Fraser. You shall not die!"

At the Dead of Night!

It was some twenty minutes later that Fraser returned to his tent. Closing the flap, he lighted the crude oil lamp and seated himself on his low camp bed.

He had won the first round in the perilous game he was playing, but his drawn and haggard face gave token of what the strain had been. Before the dawn the game would be over. He would either have lost or won. But this he knew; no matter what the end might be, he was regaining that night the manhood which he had all but lost in so blindly following the lead of Warren.

To get Paul Blake out of the Arab encampment before dawn. That was the task he had to accomplish. It was more than ever essential now, for there was news of the threatened attack on Zukra to be carried to the garrison of that ill-fated desert village.

Glancing at his wrist-watch, Fraser saw that the hour was almost midnight. He must act, and act at once.

Springing to his feet, he commenced to pace the floor of the tent, hands thrust in pockets and head bent in thought. Suddenly he halted and drew from his pocket a crumpled piece of

paper. It was the paper which Warren had asked him to give to Paul Blake.

Fraser did not know the contents of that folded note. He stood turning it over in his hand, strongly tempted to read what Guy Warren had written.

But no. There might be something there which was meant for no one's eyes but Blake's. So, with a wry smile at the stirrings of his newly-found manliness, Fraser stuffed the note back into his pocket and resumed his pacing.

Then again he halted, this time with eyes aglint.

"By Jove!" he breathed. "It's a chance!"

Wheeling, he crossed with rapid stride to where his camp-kit lay neatly folded at the foot of the bed. Rummaging through it, he brought to light a small foolproof spirit lamp.

Emptying his pocket-flask, he filled it with the highly inflammable spirit from the lamp, and, re-stoppering it, slipped it into his pocket.

That done, he looked carefully to his automatic. Then, blowing out the light, he threw himself fully dressed on the camp bed. Every minute he knew was precious, but he must have his plan of campaign worked out in every detail. He had only to make one false move, and he and Paul Blake and the garrison at Zukra would perish.

Quietly, at length, he rose to his feet. Crossing to the tent flap he drew it aside, peering out into the starry night. All was still and hushed. But within the hour those who were to march at dawn for Zukra would be stirring.

With a voiceless prayer in his heart for the success of his mission, Fraser slipped from the tent, merged with the shadows, and was gone.

On all fours, he gained the shelter of the palms which grew clustered in the rear of the great tent of Ali bu Sadi. Tensed, he listened with bated breath. Nothing broke the deathly stillness

which brooded over the sleeping encampment save an occasional distant metallic clink from the sentry lines, or the restless movement of some heavy body in the camel enclosure near by.

Then cautiously, inch by inch, foot by foot, Fraser wriggled forward on his stomach towards the rear of the great tent in which the Chosen One of Allah lay tossing in restless slumber, guarded by his wakeful negroes.

Reaching the tent, Fraser lay full length on the sand, groping for his pocket-flask. Unstopping it with his teeth, he raised it, and with elaborate care, poured out the inflammable spirit against the fabric of the tent.

Returning the empty flask to his pocket, he produced a small silver petrol lighter which had been a gift from Warren. There came a click, and the tiny flare of the burning wick was shielded by his cupped hands and held steadily against the spirit-soaked tent fabric.

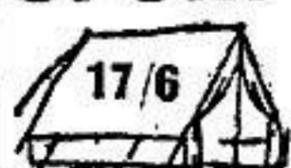
As though by magic, lurid flame sprouted up. In the glare, Fraser leaped to his feet and, crouching, turned and dashed for the cover of the palms. Breathless he stood there, watching the writhing flames enveloping the sun-scarched fabric of the tent with menacing, mounting roar.

Then from towards the sentry lines came a hoarse shout, followed by the sharp report of a musket. It was the alarm. Running, shouting men, silhouetted in the leaping flames, converged on the blazing tent, and within a few seconds of the alarm being sounded the camp was in an uproar.

Breaking from cover, unnoticed and ignored in the pandemonium, Fraser ran towards the tent in which Paul Blake lay bound.

(It's a bold step to take, isn't it, chums? But it's a task Fraser's determined to accomplish. Be sure you read how he fares in next week's thrilling instalment—it will grip you no end!)

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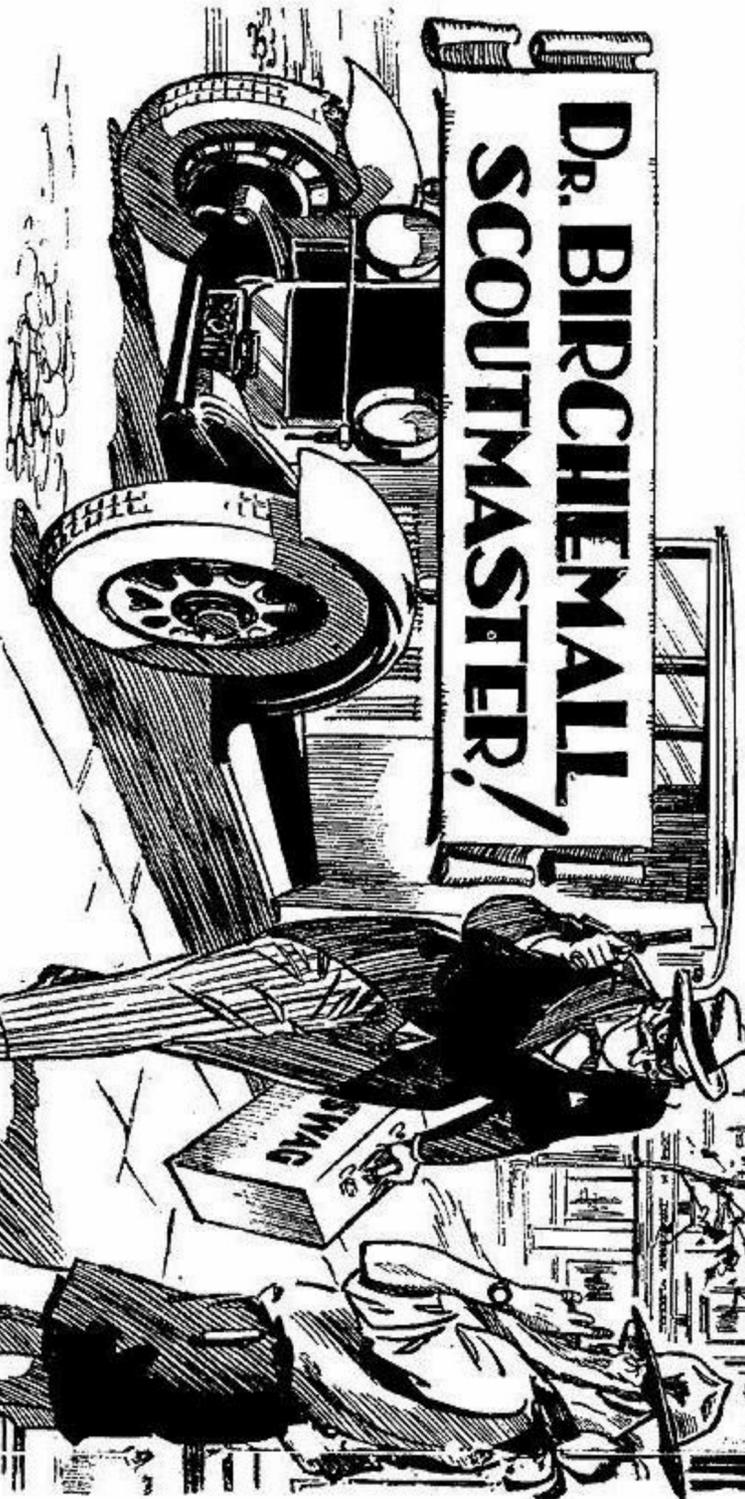
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Scoutmaster Birchmell's first "good" deed is to assist a bandit to rob a bank! But Jack Jolly & Co. put paid both to the bandit and Birchmell as a Scoutmaster!



DR. BIRCHEMELL'S SCOUTMASTER!

I.

Q UICK march!" The defiant order rang out across the old quad at St. Sam's.

The St. Sam's Boy Scouts, under the leadership of Jack Jolly of the Fourth, were enjoying a spot of drill before dinner. And a very smart lot they looked, in their karrakee shirts and neat, if somewhat grimy, shorts.

"Halt!"

The order left Jack Jolly's lips like a boomerang from a gun.

"Dis—"

As enlightened readers will perceive, the hero of the Fourth was just about to say "Dismiss!" But before his lips could frame the second syllable of that word there came an unexpected interruption.

A weird, lanky figger, with a long white beard trailing down his chest came sprinting across from the School House.

It was the Head himself.

Of course, the St. Sam's Scouts were not a bit surprised to see the Head, Dr. Birchmell, was always showing his nose in where he wasn't wanted, and it would have been surprising if he had left the Scouts alone for long.

What surprised them was the eggstra-ordinary change in his appearance since breakfast-time.

As a rule, the Head wore an academick gown and cap; these garments, set off against his stringy beard, long red nose, and cunning little beady eyes, made him a figger of majestic dignity.

But now, the somber, dignified cap and gown had gone, and in their place were—really, the Scouts couldn't help rubbing their eyes—the shorts and broad-trimmed hat of a Boy Scout!

It was absurd, of course—irreconcilable! But, nevertheless, it was true. Dr. Birchmell had turned up in the full rig-out of a Boy Scout!

The Head marched through the The Macker Library—No. 1, 1568.

curious crowd of sightseers, grinning all over his face with evident satisfaction.

"Good-morning, boys!" he bawled. "And now, if you don't mind, a Troop salute for your new Scoutmaster!"

The St. Sam's Scouts jumped.

"Our new what?" gasped Jack Jolly.

"Your new Scoutmaster! I didn't mention it before, thinking to keep it as a pleasant surprise for you. Now I'll tell you. Just to encourage the cause of the Boy Scouts at St. Sam's I have decided to appoint myself Scoutmaster. I've now turned up to take over the Troop."

"But—you can't, sir!" cried Jack Jolly.

The new Scoutmaster's grin vanished.

"Oh, can't I?" he asked; and now there was an unpleasant ring in his voice. "Well, that merely goes to show that you still have a lot to learn, Jolly. I expected gratitude; but, gratitude or not, I'm not going to turn back now! Fall in with the rest!"

"But I'm a patrol-leader!" objected Jack Jolly.

"You mean you WERE a patrol-leader?" corrected the Head bluntly. "Now that I am in charge of the Troop all distinctions are going to be abolished. I myself shall be Scoutmaster, patrol-leader, second and High Commissioner all rolled into one! Fall in!"

"But we were just going to dis—"

"Fall in, Jolly, or you and I will fall out!" thundered the Head. "And now, boys, I am going to drill you for an hour."

"Oh, erikay! What about dinner?" yelled out Tubby Barrell indignantly.

"The new Scoutmaster grinned.

"I've had my dinner, thanks, so it doesn't matter at all! Now then—Troop, 'shun!"

There was nothing else for it but to obey the order, so the indignant Boy Scouts slumped. They could, of course,

Burleigh's eyes strayed over the Head's unusual uniform.

"Well, what else do you expect a man to think, sir, when you turn out in this weed clobber?" he demanded.

Dr. Birchmell smiled.

"You are singularly dense, Burleigh, for the kaplin of a grade public school," he remarked. "Do you not recognize that the 'weed clobber' I am wearing is the uniform of the Boy Scouts?"

"Why, so it is, sir! Then—then that means—"

"It means, Burleigh, that I have become Scoutmaster of the St. Sam's Boy Scouts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Burleigh.

"My dear Burleigh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Burleigh. "Fancy an old villain like you joining the Boy Scouts!"

Dr. Birchmell frowned.

"You insinuate that I am a villain, Burleigh! That base insinuation I hurl back in your teeth with scorn. But even if I am a villain, I don't see that that stops me joining the Boy Scouts."

"Well, it jolly well does, anyway!" said Burleigh, wiping the tears of indignation from his eyes. "Unless you do one good turn a day it's simply impossible for you to be a Scoutmaster. And you don't do a good turn once a year, if you can help it!"

"Is this honor bright, Burleigh? Am I really expected to do one good turn a day while I'm in the Scouts?"

"Honest Injun, sir! That's right— isn't it, you kids?"

"Yes, rather!" shouted Jack Jolly and his chums.

For a moment the Head was non-plussed. Then he smiled again.

"Oh, well, after all, that can easily be managed," he said. "Good turns, I must admit, are hardly in my line, but if it is really necessary I suppose I can do one. I'll trot off now and see what I can do."

"Can we have our dinner, sir?" asked Tubby Barrell.

And, much to the relief of the Scouts, the Head answered:

"Yes."

"But mind you parade here again at 2:30 this afternoon!" he added. "I intend to carry out some maneuvers, and all Scouts will be expected to turn up or be bierched black and blue."

With that the Head marched off, and the hungry Boy Scouts streamed in to consume what few crumbs remained in the dining-hall.

Our heroes were beginning to wonder whether the new St. Sam's Scoutmaster intended carrying on for the rest of the day when Burleigh of the Sixth, the rugged kaplin of the Skool, came tramping out of the House.

Burleigh stared in surprise at the unexpected sight presented by the Head. Then, after pausing for several seconds, he strode over.

"Excuse me, sir—," he began, with a slight cough.

Scoutmaster Birchmell turned round with a start.

"Ah, Burleigh! Come to join the Scouts?" he asked, jentally.

The kaplin of St. Sam's halted.

"Not exactly, sir! I came to find out why these juniors hadn't turned up for dinner."

"The explanation is obvious now, Burleigh?"

"Oh, quite," said Burleigh. "Apparently you are suffering from one of your periodical attacks of insanity, and these boys are your victims!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Jolly and his Scouts.

The Head blushed scarlet.

"Silence! Burleigh, what ever gives you to suppose that I am potty? Pre- sumably that is what you mean."

II.

D ONE that good turn yet, sir?" asked Jack Jolly, as the Head centered on the scene promptly at 2:30.

Dr. Birchmell shook his head vigorously.

"I am sorry to inform you, Jolly, that the deed has not yet been done."

"Then, in that case, sir, I'm afraid the authorities won't rekermise you as a Scoutmaster," chuckled the kaplin of the Fourth. "May we dismiss now, and carry on without you?"

"No, Jolly, you may not!" thundered the Head, his beard fairly bristling with indignation. "By far means or fowl, I intend to do a good turn to somebody to-day. As nobody at St. Sam's seems to want any help, I propose to go to Muggleton and find somebody in need of a good turn there. Quick march!"

And with a look of steely determination in his skollery die, Dr. Birchmell fell in at the head of his Troop and led the way down to the gates.

The St. Sam's Boy Scouts felt themselves go hot and cold by turns on the march to Muggleton. They were very proud of their smart appearance, and to be disgraced by the presence of a weed-looking freak like Dr. Birchmell was no joke.

Muggleton was reached at last, and the Head set about finding someone to whom he could do a good turn.

"Stay here, all of you, while I proceed to do my good turn for the day," he instructed, before he left the Troop. Dr. Birchmell waved his bony hand in a feeble attempt at a salute and marched off on his own.

"Well, of all the idiots!" eggshelmed Merry disgustedly, as he watched the retreating figger of the Head.

"What about a rebellion?" suggested Bright, a deaprit light in his eyes.

But Jack Jolly shook his head.

"No need for that yet, old chap. Let's stand by for a while. I believe that if we give the old jossor rope enuff, he'll hang himself!"

And as events turned out, Jack Jolly was right.

After leaving the St. Sam's Scouts, Dr. Birchmell walked to the other side of the old High Street of Muggleton and stopped before a prosperous-looking gentleman who was airing himself in the spring sunshine.

"Can I do you a good turn, sir?" he asked affably.

The gentleman looked round and frowned.

"Not to-day, my man. I don't en- chridge tramps. Hook it!"

"But—"

"Hook it before I call a perticennan!" said the gentleman menacingly.

And the Head, on second-thoughts, decided to hook it, after all. He halted near a motor-car which had just pulled up outside the local bank. A sinister-looking figger was just getting out. The gentleman in question wore a black mask and carried a revolver in one hand and a bag marked "SWAG" in the other.

Most educated people would have rekermised him at once as a bank- robber. But the Head was inclined to be a little hazy over worldly affairs and he suspected nothing.

"Eggshelme me, sir, but can I do you a good turn?" he asked saluting.

The masked bandit started, then his lips twisted into an evil smile.

"Oh, rather!" he said. "Can you drive a car?"

"Like a crack racing driver!" replied the Head modestly.

"Then wait outside this bank in my car, ready to drive off the instant I return."

"With pleasure!" assented the Head, delighted to find someone at last to whom he could do a good turn. "You will not be long, I trusted?"

"Just long enuff to enable me to collect some money!" grinned the gentleman in the mask. "Don't forget to drive like the very dickens when I jump in!"

"I won't!" promised the Head, as he climbed into the driver's seat.

And he waited severely till the bank- robber came out again.

A few minutes later there was a fearful rumpus in the Bank.

"Crash! Bang! Wallop!"

"Help! Yaroo! Yaroo! Yaroo! Police!"

And so on and so forth.

Soon after that, a smoking revolver came rushing out, a smoking sack in the in one hand and a banging sack in the other.

"Now?" he yelled, leaping into the car.

Immediately the car was leaping for-

ward down the High Street, jurelging perilously from one side of the street to the other under the control of the Head's skilled hand.

By the look of things, the bandit had an eggcellent chance of getting well away with his haul. The local police, being all asleep just then, were powerless to interfere.

But the thief, who was already rubbing his hands in gleeful triumph, had reckoned without the St. Sam's Boy Scouts.

Immediately he saw that masked figger leaping into the car, Jack Jolly calised what was the matter.

"A bank robbery!" he eggshelmed. "And the Head is assisting! Scouts! Are we all prepared?"

And the answer was unanimous.

"Yes, rather!"

As the car came whizzing by they fairly flung themselves at it, regardless of personal danger.

The astonished bank-robber suddenly found flying figgers alighting on his car from all directions. Muttering leecre curses, he raised his ortomatlock.

Pang, bang, bang!

Three deadly boolets found billets in Jolly and Merry and Bright respect- ively.

Were our heroes dismayed? Not a bit of it! After contemptuously eggstrack- ing the boolets from the founnams and chest where they lay barried, Jack Jolly & Co. flung themselves into the fray with renewed viggor. Booleet wounds were like a tonic to them on occasions like this.

In less than a minute the thief was lying at the bottom of the car, trussed up like a fowl, while the Scouts cheered like anything.

The sound of the cheering made the Head look round, and the old fogey nearly jumped out of the car as he saw Jack Jolly & Co.

"What the merry dickens have you done to my friend from the bank?" he demanded.

"He's lying here, trussed up like a fowl!" was Jack Jolly's answer, and then the kaplin of the Fourth eggshelmed.

At the thought that he had been help- ing a bank-robber the Head's face turned gasly white.

"Do—do you think they'll charge me with complicity?" he asked fearfully.

"Shouldn't be surprised!" answered Jack.

"But I'm innocent—honest Injun! I was only trying to do a good turn!"

"Better not tell that to the police!" lurched Jack Jolly. "If you take my advice, sir, you'll hop it and change into other clobber before you're cydentified!"

"My hat! I'll certainly buzz off at once and do as you suggest!" gasped the Head. And he did so.

Jack Jolly drove the car back to Muggleton in triumph; and the Scouts, of course, were overwhelmed with congrat- ulations.

The thief was sentenced to forty years' hard labour, and the general opinion was that he had got off lightly.

As for the Head, his first task on arriving back at St. Sam's was to burn his Scout kit.

The ruin of Dr. Birchmell as Scout- master had ended, and for Jack Jolly & Co. the sun shone once more!

(Next week's Macker will contain another torying "Hot Sotter" yarn by Bob Cherry. Note the title, ehmar: "THE OY-MA-CHICKEN WEA-M!" and prepare yourself for a real good trest.)