

Thrilling Complete Story of Schoolboy Rebellion... **“THE SECRET of the OLD OAK!” Inside!**

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**A
SPOT OF BOTHER
FOR BUNTER!**



THE SECRET OF THE OLD OAK!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

To Go or Not to Go!

"COAST'S clear!" said Bob Cherry.

"The clearfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton did not speak. Standing on the landing-place of Popper's Island, in the River Sark, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove looked up and down the stream and across at the bank. His look was watchful and wary, and a little worried.

On that sunny July morning the Greyfriars Remove, by rights, ought to have been in the Form-room, absorbing valuable knowledge from their Form-master, Mr. Quelch. Instead of which, the whole Form was on Popper's Island—which most of them agreed was rather more agreeable than the Form-room, velch, and Latin!

The boat rocked in the water, under

the shade of the island trees. Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Herbert Vernon-Smith were in it—Bob holding on the branch of a willow.

They were ready to start, up the river to Courtfield, and Smithy was looking impatient. But the other fellows waited patiently for the captain of the Remove to give the word.

Wharton did not seem easy in his mind.

He scanned the river and the bank with anxious eyes. Except for the crowd of schoolboys on the island, the Sark seemed deserted. The coast was clear, as Bob declared. At all events, it looked clear.

"Oh, let's get off!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, impatiently. "We're wasting time! What's the good of footlin' about?"

"Shut up, Smithy!" said Bob, cheerfully.

"Oh, rats!" grunted the Bounder. "There's nobody in sight! Does Wharton think the Head is hiding behind a tree in Popper Court Woods, keeping an eye on us?"

There was a laugh from some of the Removites.

Anxious as the Head of Greyfriars was to deal with the rebel Form who had marched out of school and camped on the island in the river, it was extremely unlikely that the majestic old gentleman was scouting in the woods, and keeping his venerable eye on them.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled down the path from the camp in the centre of Popper's Island, and blinked at the fellows on the landing-place through his big spectacles. "I say, why ain't you gone? You won't be back in time for dinner at this rate."

"Which would be awful!" said Johnny Bull with deep sarcasm.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The awfulness would be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gravely. "If the esteemed and execrable Bunter is kept short of ridiculous grub,

it will be time for the absurd skies to fall."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

"Shan't!" hooted Bunter. "We've got to get in the grub, haven't we? If the grub's all right, everything's all right! But if we run out of grub, what are we going to do?"

"Without!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"You silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "You—you footling fathead! You blithering idiot!" Evidently the idea of doing without grub did not seem a practical proposition to the fat Owl of the Remove.

Harry Wharton was still scanning Popper Court Woods, thick and dark along the towpath on the bank of the Sark, with uneasy eyes. The Bounder, standing in the boat, gave him a sarcastic look.

"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anybody comin'?" he called out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton frowned.

"Don't be an ass, Smithy!" he snapped. "We've got to be careful. Ever since the day we went over to Highcliffe to play cricket, they've been keeping a watch on us. Plenty of cover in those woods for a prefect, or a dozen prefects—"

"Oh, rats! The prefects are in the Sixth Form Room at this time in the morning, grinding Greek with the Head."

"I hope so! But—"

"Anyhow we've got to chance it," said the Bounder, impatiently. "We haven't left the island since the day of the Highcliffe match. The grub's runnin' out. We've got to get in supplies."

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "Look here, Wharton—"

"Shut up, you fat ass!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton scanned the wooded bank again. He was uneasy, and some

—IN ANOTHER EXCITING ADVENTURE ON POPPER'S ISLAND!

of the other rebels shared his uneasiness.

But, as the Bounder declared, they had to take a chance.

The Remove rebellion was as strong as ever. Several attempts had been made to capture the schoolboys' island, and the rebels of Greyfriars had put "paid" to every one of them.

Bunter, sacked by the Head, was still there! His Form-fellows were sticking to him, backing him up, determined to save him from the drastic sentence pronounced by his headmaster. So far they had been successful, and they were confident that they could hold Popper's Island against all comers.

But, as the great Napoleon declared, an army marches on its stomach! The most determined garrison could not hold out without provisions. Supplies had to be got in.

The rebels had found that fairly easy at first. They had a boat, borrowed from Coker of the Fifth. In that boat they had made many trips up the river to Courtfield Bridge, where they could land and do shopping in the adjoining High Street.

But their headmaster was "wise" to that now. Dr. Locke seemed unable to deal with the rebellion. But no doubt he was aware that if food ran out, on Popper's Island, the rebellion was very likely to run out also!

Even Billy Bunter, under sentence of the sack, would probably have preferred the sack to a shortage of grub!

The other fellows were not so tremendously keen on "grub" as William George Bunter! Still, they could not live on air.

Very frequently, a Sixth Form prefect was spotted on the towpath, giving the island a look-in.

If the boat was seen to leave, it was fairly certain that measures would be taken to prevent its return.

Then the game would be up!

That was what was worrying the captain of the Remove now. For a good many days the rebels had kept to the island, and the supply of provisions was running low. Thirty fellows, with healthy youthful appetites, required some feeding!

"Look here, are we going, or aren't we?" demanded the Bounder, at last. "What's the good of hanging about?"

"After all, we've got to chance it some time," said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, let's get going!" grunted Vernon-Smith.

"I say, you fellows, mind you don't forget the cake—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"You can't see anybody, Wharton?" asked Bob.

"No, but Fishy thinks he saw a straw hat in the wood some time ago," said the captain of the Remove uneasily.

"Fishy's a fool!" snapped the Bounder.

"I sure did!" declared Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say I spotted a straw hat, and it surely was on some guy's cabeza."

"Oh, rats!"

Harry Wharton gave a last, long look at the wooded bank of the Sark. Not a sign of life was to be seen in the woods, save the birds twittering in the branches. He made up his mind at last.

"Get going," he said. "We've got to chance it!"

"For this relief, much thanks!" grunted the Bounder. And he pushed off.

The four fellows in the boat pulled up the river, and in a few minutes were out of sight beyond the bend of the Sark.

"All serene, old thing!" remarked Lord Mauleverer, as the captain of the Remove continued to scan the bank with anxious eyes.

"The serenity is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Right as rain!" said Squiff.

"I hope so! But—" Harry Wharton broke off, sharply. "Oh, my hat! Look!"

A Greyfriars senior, in a straw hat, stepped out of the wood on the towpath. It was Loder of the Sixth.

"Oh gad!" breathed Lord Mauleverer.

"Loder!" muttered Squiff blankly. "And he's seen—"

"I guess he's spotted the boat going!" said Fisher T. Fish.

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. It was clear now that Loder of the Sixth had been watching from the cover of the wood, and had seen the boat leave the island.

Wharton cast a hasty glance up the river. But the boat was out of sight. It was too late to recall it. Loder had taken care of that before he revealed himself. And the bully of the Sixth stood staring across at the juniors on the island with a grin of triumph on his face.

Several attempts have been made to capture the schoolboy stronghold on Popper's Island, but Harry Wharton & Co., the rebels of the Greyfriars Remove, have put "paid" to every one of them. In the stillness of the night, however, comes a desperate man—a bank bandit, who will not hesitate to shoot when cornered!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Rebel-Hunters!

MR. QUELCH! The Remove master started.

In every Form-room at Greyfriars, excepting one, morning classes were going on. The Remove room was empty and silent.

Mr. Quelch, having nothing to do in a deserted Form-room, was in his study.

The master without a Form was rather at a loose end these days! The task of handling the Greyfriars Remove was no sinecure. But Henry Samuel Quelch preferred the hardest work to idleness.

He was sitting at his typewriter, intending to fill in the idle hours with tapping out some of his celebrated "History of Greyfriars"—a great work, to which he had been accustomed to devote his scanty leisure hours. But now that his leisure was too ample he did not seem to have the heart for it. The keys were not clicking.

Quelch was regarding the machine before him with a thoughtful, troubled gaze, when there was a tap on his study door, and it opened.

The Form-master started to his feet in surprise at the sight of the Head of Greyfriars School.

Dr. Locke just then should have been busy with the Sixth Form. Evidently something had caused him to give the Sixth a rest.

"If you are not busy, Mr. Quelch—" said the Head, with a faint inflection of sarcasm in his voice.

Mr. Quelch coloured. He was far from busy!

"I am entirely at your service, sir!" he said coldly.

"I desire you to deal, sir, with the boys of your Form, who are now in rebellion against authority!" said the Head. "You will, I think, agree with me that it is time that this shocking state of affairs was brought to an end."

"Most certainly, sir! But—"

Mr. Quelch paused, waiting for instructions. He was quite ready to deal with the rebel Form if there was any possibility of doing so. But he did not see what was to be done.

Thirty rebellious fellows had fortified themselves on the island in the river. The Sixth Form prefects, in a body, had tackled them, and had been defeated and driven off. The Head could hardly expect a middle-aged Form-master to carry the island by assault!

Quelch waited, with a slightly bitter expression on his face, to hear what he did expect.

Relations were rather strained these days between the Head and the master who had been the most trusted member of his staff. The Head expected, rather naturally, that a Form-master should keep his Form in control.

Mr. Quelch, on the other hand, was convinced that his chief had made a mistake in sacking Bunter, and at the bottom of his heart he could hardly blame the fellows for standing by a Greyfriars man whom they believed to have been unjustly expelled. So there was a rift in the lute, and a rather rigid coldness on both sides.

"For some days," said the Head, in an icy voice, "watch has been kept on the island in the Sark, Mr. Quelch. The Remove boys have a boat, which they appear to have taken from Coker of the Fifth Form, and in this boat they have been accustomed to obtaining supplies from the town."

"I am aware of it, sir!"

"I have now received news," said the Head, "that the boat has left the island, with four juniors in it, going up the river."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Loder and Walker of the Sixth Form have been keeping watch this morning," continued the headmaster. "I gave them leave from classes for the purpose. As you have been unable to deal with your Form, Mr. Quelch, I have been compelled to take the matter in hand myself."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard.

"Walker has now brought me this news," said Dr. Locke. "Loder is remaining on the spot, to keep watch on the island. Now, sir, there is no doubt that the boys have gone up to Courtfield to obtain supplies, as I have learned that they have done many times before."

"No doubt, sir!"

"You will proceed immediately to Courtfield, Mr. Quelch. You will take two of the prefects with you—Wingate and Gwynne. You will take possession of the boat, and take into custody the four juniors. It is most important to obtain possession of the boat. I have no doubt that this rebellion will come to a speedy end when the boys are no longer able to obtain supplies of food."

"Very probably, sir!"

"I have ordered my car for you, in order to lose no time," said the Head. "Wingate and Gwynne are ready! Please go at once!"

"Very good, sir!"

Dr. Locke left the Remove master's study. He returned to the Sixth Form room, leaving the matter in the hands of the master most concerned.

Mr. Quelch did not look happy at the prospect. However, he had his duty to do, and he proceeded at once to change his scholastic gown for hat and coat. He was leaving the House when a portly voice boomed in his ear:

"My dear Quelch!"

He glanced round at the pompous countenance and portly figure of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

"I am somewhat in haste, Mr. Prout," he said.

"Quite so, quite so!" boomed Prout. "But if you desire it, my dear Quelch, I will accompany you. My assistance—"

"I require no assistance, sir!" said Mr. Quelch icily. "And I imagine that your Form require your presence."

"I will leave my Form, Quelch, to render you assistance," said the Fifth Form master. "I have, in fact, requested Blundell to take charge during my absence—"

"I repeat, sir, that I require no assistance," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "I am quite able, sir, to deal with matters affecting my Form!"

"Indeed!" boomed Prout. "It would hardly appear so, sir, when your Form is now in a state of rebellion against their headmaster—"

"I do not desire to discuss that with you, Mr. Prout!"

"Possibly not, sir—possibly not!" hooted Mr. Prout. "But you will remember, sir, that I am directly concerned in this matter, as the member of Dr. Locke's staff, sir, who was attacked—smothered with ink, sir—by a boy of your Form, who has very properly been expelled for such an act, and who—"

Prout paused. He found that he was addressing space.

Mr. Quelch had walked out of the House, leaving the portly Fifth Form beak in the full tide of eloquence.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout.

His portly face became purple.

"Upon my word!" repeated Prout. And he whisked away in great wrath and indignation to the Fifth Form Room.

Much to their disappointment, the Fifth did not get out of the lesson with Prout!

Mr. Quelch, with a grim face, walked to the Head's car, which was waiting. Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth were standing by it, ready.

The Remove master stepped into the car without a word. The two prefects followed him in in silence. The chauffeur drove off, and the car turned out of the gates, and headed for Courtfield by the road across the common.

It was not till the car was among the traffic in the High Street, which led up to the bridge, that Mr. Quelch broke his icy silence.

He signed to the chauffeur to stop, and alighted, followed by the two Sixth Formers. The car backed into a side street, to wait there, at a gesture from the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch shot a keen glance up and down the High Street, in which there were a good many people about. But no Greyfriars faces were to be spotted among them.

"Wingate!"

"Yes, sir!" said the Greyfriars captain.

"It is probable that the boat has arrived by this time. Where do you suppose the boys will land?"

"There's only one place, sir—the steps by the bridge."

"Very well! You and Gwynne will go there and take possession of the boat. I shall keep watch here for the boys."

"Yes, sir!" said Gwynne.

The two prefects went on towards the

bridge. As soon as they were out of Mr. Quelch's purview they exchanged a grin and a wink.

"The old bean's rather in a bait!" murmured Gwynne.

"Just a few!" agreed Wingate. "The fact is, it's pretty well known that he doesn't believe that that fat idiot, Bunter, was the man who inked Prout. He doesn't want him sacked."

"That's for the Big Beak to decide!"

"Oh, yes; but it's rather rough on Quelch. Anyhow, the sooner those cheeky young scoundrels are rounded up and marched back to the school, the better. If we get their boat away from them, they're done for. Come on!"

Mr. Quelch watched the two prefects out of sight. Then he crossed the street and mounted the granite steps of the Courtfield and County Bank. From that coign of vantage he was able to survey almost the whole of the High Street. He had no doubt that if any of the rebels were in Courtfield that morning he would not be long in spotting them. And, as a matter of fact, he had not long to wait.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton Drops In!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But, I say—"

"Shut up!" roared a dozen voices.

The rebel Removites were crowded at the landing-place on Popper's Island. Every man in the Remove had gathered there excepting Bob Cherry, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and the Bounder, who had gone up the river in the boat. There was dismay in every face.

Harry Wharton's eyes were on Loder of the Sixth. Loder was walking up the towpath, in the direction of Courtfield. But they had had a glimpse of Walker of the Sixth, and heard Loder call to him. They hardly needed telling that Walker had hurried back to the school with news. Already, probably, the Head of Greyfriars knew how matters stood. It was fairly certain that immediate measures would be taken to "bag" the fellows who had gone up in the boat. That was why watch was kept on the rebels' island. On the bank, where Loder had stood a few minutes ago, were two burly figures—Joyce and Wilson, two of the Popper Court keepers. The two men in velveteens and gaiters were watching the schoolboy rebels with grins on their faces. They grinned more broadly as fists were shaken at them.

Harry Wharton's face was set, his brows knitted.

"It's the giddy kybosh!" said Squiff.

"The kyboshfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dolorously.

"I guess this is the bee's knee!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say this lets us out, you guys!"

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Billy Bunter. "If they don't get back with the grub we—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"We're done for!" growled Bolsover major. "Look here, what are we going to do, Wharton? You're leader—well, lead!"

Wharton made no reply to that. He was trying to think out the difficult problem and find a solution. He scanned the river in eager quest of some craft coming up from Friardale or Pegg. But there was no craft in sight on the shining Sark.

"If we could get word to the fellows in Courtfield before they're bagged—" muttered Peter Todd.

"How?" asked Harry.

Peter could not answer that question. There was no "how." Now that word had been sent to the school it was certain that prefects, or masters, or both, would be dispatched at once to Courtfield to seize the boat and the boat's crew. A lift on some swift craft on the river might have saved the situation. But nothing else could. The rebels had no other boat. It was possible to swim across the arm of the Sark to the towpath. But Joyce and Wilson, the keepers, were waiting and watching there, ready to collar any adventurous swimmer. And Loder was ahead, on the towpath, on the way to the town.

"We've got to do something!" growled Bolsover major. "We may as well give in at once if they bag the boat. That's what they're after."

"We shan't give in!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Whatever happens, we're not going to give in!"

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Brown. "Never say die!"

There was a howl from Billy Bunter. "You silly ass! What are we going to do without grub?"

"Kick him!"

"Yaroooh!"

"It's up to Wharton," said Skinner, with a malicious grin. "Wharton's our jolly old commander-in-chief. What are you going to do, Wharton?"

"Leaders are supposed to lead," remarked Snoop.

"I guess that's a cinch!" said Fisher T. Fish.

Chug, chug, chug, chug!

The sound of a motor, coming up the river, made Harry Wharton start, and he stared down the Sark.

Far away down the river, coming up from Friardale, was a small motor-boat. The chugging of the engine was borne on the wind from the sea.

Harry Wharton's face brightened.

He had been thinking of a swim across, dodging the two keepers, and attempting to pass Loder of the Sixth, at a run, on the towpath. That was rather a desperate idea, with all the chances against success.

But the sight of the motor-boat coming up the Sark changed the current of his thoughts. His eyes fixed on it eagerly.

"By gad! If a fellow could get a lift on that—" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer.

"Just what I was thinking!" said Harry. "That's old Benson's motor-boat, that he hires out to trippers at Pegg. He must be going up to Courtfield in it. If he would give me a lift—"

He paused. There was a doubt—a big doubt!

"Bet you he wouldn't!" said Skinner. "He won't get mixed up in our row with the Head!"

"I guess not!" said Fisher T. Fish. Wharton set his lips.

"He might refuse—" he said.

"Jolly certain to!" said Squiff.

"Well, I'm not going to give him the chance. I'm going—"

"But what—"

"How—"

"My esteemed Wharton—"

Harry Wharton ran to a big beech-tree, that grew close to the shore of the island. Two or three of the extreme branches jutted out over the river, half-way to the bank.

Swiftly the captain of the Remove clambered into the beech.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Squiff.

The Removites watched him breathlessly.

In a few moments Wharton was climbing out along the thickest and

longest branch of the beech, over the water.

"Wharton, you ass!" gasped Hazeldene. "It's too risky."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Wharton—"

The captain of the *Remove* did not heed. It was a chance too good to be lost, and he was going to take it. Old Benson, the boatkeeper of Friardale, was always ready to hire out that boat, in ordinary circumstances. The present circumstances were rather extraordinary, and it was likely—more than likely—that he would decline to stop if hailed from the island, where a party of schoolboys were entrenched in defiance of their headmaster. Dropping into the boat as he passed was the easiest way of settling that point. Old Benson had to pass under the long

Chug, chug, chug!

"By gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, staring from the island. "That's not old Benson drivin' the boat!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Peter Todd. "He's hired it out to somebody, and Wharton's going to give some jolly old tripper a surprise!"

Wharton, from above, had not made the same discovery. He could see little of the man in the motor-boat but a hat. Possibly he would have hesitated to board the craft in so unceremonious a manner had he been aware that it was not the boatkeeper, with whom he had had many dealings, but a stranger, who was driving it. As it was, he did not hesitate.

Whether the man in the motor-boat observed the junior on the extending

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Just in Time!

BLUE blazes!" That startled exclamation came from the man in the motor-boat. He stared—or, rather, glared—at the Greyfriars junior, though without checking the speed of the boat for a second. The man who expressed his surprise so elegantly was apparently in a hurry.

"You—What—" he hooted.

Wharton scrambled to his feet.

"Sorry to startle you, Mr. Benson!" he gasped. "I—Oh, my hat!" He stared blankly at the man.

Mr. Benson, the boatkeeper, was a rather plump man with a red beard and whiskers. The man in the boat was a



Chug, chug, chug, chug! The motor-boat was coming up fast. Harry Wharton watched it keenly, and as it passed under the long branch of the tree, he let go his hold and shot downwards. "Blue blazes!" roared the slim, dark, bearded boatman. "You young idiot! Where did you come from?" "Dropped from the tree!" gasped Wharton. "I want a lift to Courtfield!"

branch of the beech on which Harry Wharton now sat astride.

The two keepers stared at him from the bank. They did not seem to have guessed the intention with which the junior had climbed out on the branch. They only stared at him curiously, as if wondering what the game was.

Chug, chug, chug, chug!

The motor-boat was coming up fast. Harry Wharton watched it keenly and took a grip on the branch with both hands and swung down.

Under his weight the long branch sagged considerably. That lessened the extent of the drop.

If Wharton missed he was booked for a deep plunge in the Sark, but that mattered little to the best junior swimmer at Greyfriars. But he did not intend to miss. He was perfectly cool, watching and waiting.

branch over the river was not evident. At all events, he took no notice of him.

Chug, chug, chug!

Leaving a long wake behind it, the motor-boat shot into the channel between Popper's Island and the bank, keeping to the centre of the fairway.

Wharton had calculated well, and he acted swiftly as the swift craft glided below him.

"Oh, my hat!" came in a gasp from the island.

"He's going—"

"He's gone—"

"The gonefulness is terrific."

The beech branch, relieved of the schoolboy's weight, shot up. Harry Wharton shot down and landed fairly in the boat. Rocking under the sudden impact, but without losing speed, the motor-boat shot on up the Sark, carrying an extra and unexpected passenger.

slim, dark fellow with a black moustache and black pointed beard, which gave him a French appearance. But there was no French accent in his voice.

Wharton flushed crimson.

The slim, dark, bearded man was evidently angry—in fact, his eyes, narrow and shifty, gleamed with rage at the schoolboy. It was not his anger that troubled the captain of the *Remove*, however; it was the circumstance that he had taken such a liberty with an absolute stranger. Old Benson, though he might have refused to get "mixed up" in a Greyfriars row, would have taken the matter good-humouredly. But this man who had hired his boat was evidently anything but good-humoured.

Still, it was too late for anything to be done now. The island was already vanishing astern. The boat chugged on.

rapidly, the dark man alternately looking where he was going and glaring at Wharton.

"You young idiot!" he roared.

"Where did you come from?"

"Dropped from a tree—"

"You mad little fool!"

"Sorry!" gasped Wharton. "I—I supposed it was Mr. Benson in his boat, or I shouldn't—"

"You cheeky young rascal!"

"You see, I was badly in need of a lift to Courtfield," explained Harry breathlessly. "I'm sorry, as it turns out—but if you'll drop me at Courtfield I'd be no end obliged."

"Confound you!"

"Hem!"

"If I were stopping this side of Courtfield I'd sling you out neck and crop!" growled the man in the motor-boat.

"I'm really sorry—"

"Oh, hold your tongue!"

Wharton held his tongue. The man had cause to be surprised and angry, and he admitted it. Still, he did not quite see what reason there was for such an outbreak of savage temper. The man with the black beard was not, apparently, a good-tempered man.

However, it was clear that he did not want to stop and land his unwelcome passenger on the bank—for which the captain of the *Remove* was duly thankful. He was, at least, getting the lift he needed.

Chug, chug, chug!

Wharton glimpsed Loder of the Sixth walking up the towpath. He passed the prefect half-way to Courtfield.

He saw Loder start and stare at him and then break into a run. Wharton laughed. Loder was not much of a sprinter, but the best sprinter at Grey-

friars would have had no chance of keeping up with the motor-boat. In a couple of minutes Loder was out of sight behind.

Wharton glanced at the man with the black beard. The more he saw of that individual's face the less he liked it. The brows were knitted in a dark frown under the brim of the bowler hat. The mouth was hard and sharp and had a cruel curve. Wharton could not help wondering who and what the fellow was. Certainly he did not look like one of the seaside "trippers" who came down to Pegg in the summer months, and to whom old Benson generally let out that boat. There was not the remotest suggestion of a holiday-maker about him. Judging him on his looks, the junior would have set him down as a "bad hat" of some sort, and he did not need telling that the man had an evil temper. But, whatever the man was, he was taking no further notice of the Greyfriars junior, and did not seem to care a straw whether he was in the boat or not.

Wharton did not speak to him again. He was glad enough to be disregarded.

The boat shot on up the river.

Courtfield bridge came in sight. The motor-boat slowed down at the steps below the bridge.

There was already a boat tied up there. It was the rebels' boat—or, rather, Coker's boat. Johnny Bull was seated in it. The other three fellows clearly had landed and gone shopping.

Bull glanced round as the motor-boat chugged up and stared blankly at the captain of the *Remove* on board.

Wharton waved a hand to him.

The black-bearded man shut off the engine at the steps, then he took note of Wharton's existence again.

"Get out!" he snarled.

Wharton promptly got out.

Taking no further notice of him, the man tied up at the steps, picked up a black leather bag, and jumped out.

He tramped away up the steps and disappeared.

Harry Wharton gave him no thought. He was glad to have done with him. He ran to the Greyfriars boat.

"Johnny, old bean—"

"What the thump—" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Where are the other fellows?" exclaimed Wharton breathlessly.

"Gone up to the shops."

"How long ago?"

"About a quarter of an hour. What the—"

"Loder was watching; he saw the boat get off from the island," said the captain of the *Remove* tersely. "I got a lift here to warn you. Thank goodness I had the chance! Loder's coming up by the towpath now—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"They've got word at the school long before this; they'll be in Courtfield! I'll cut along to tip the fellows; you get the boat back safe. Don't lose a second!"

"But you—" gasped Johnny Bull.

"We'll get back somehow. It's the boat we've got to take care of. Get it back to the island. Sharp's the word!"

Wharton untied the painter while he was speaking. Johnny Bull nodded and picked up an oar to shove off.

It was fortunate that he did not hesitate, for at that moment two athletic figures appeared at the top of the steps. Wingate and Gwynne glanced down, and then came running down.

"Stop!" roared Wingate.

Harry Wharton gave the boat a desperate shove, and Johnny Bull fended off with the oar at the same moment. It rocked away from the steps. Wingate and Gwynne tore down to the lowest step, in the hope of grabbing it before it was out of reach. For the moment they did not heed Wharton, and he made the best use of that moment. As the two prefects grabbed after the receding boat Wharton dashed up the steps and ran.

"Bull, you young rascal, stop!" panted Gwynne.

Johnny Bull was not likely to stop. Wingate's hurried clutch missed the boat by a foot or more, and the Greyfriars captain had a narrow escape of pitching into the river. Gwynne grabbed him by the shoulder and dragged him back. The boat rocked farther out.

"Come back!" roared Wingate.

Johnny Bull grinned.

"I'll watch it!" he answered cheerily.

And he sat at the oars and pulled away into the Sark. Standing on the lowest step, the two Sixth Formers glared after him. Glares, however, had no effect on Johnny Bull. He pulled away steadily, and the boat glided off down the current. The fellows in Courtfield had to take their chance. It was Johnny Bull's business to save the boat from capture—and that he did.

"The cheeky young spalpeen!" growled Gwynne. "Just a minute too late, old man."

"That young villain Wharton's here—" Wingate stared round. But the "young villain" had vanished.

"Oh, come on!" growled Gwynne. "We've lost the boat—but we'll get that young sweep Wharton, and the other young rascals! Come on!"

And the two prefects hurried up the steps again, after Wharton.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry, coming out of the Courtfield bun-shop, with an enormous bundle under one arm, almost ran into the captain of the Remove.

He stopped in surprise, and stared at him.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Wharton, greatly relieved.

This was rather luck, to meet so soon one of the fellows he had come to warn. Wharton had run up the High Street from the bridge; but he had no doubt that Wingate and Gwynne were not far behind him.

"How the thump did you get here?" exclaimed Bob. "And why—"

"Danger!" said Wharton tersely. "No time to talk—they're after us—prefects—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Where's Nugent and Smithy?"

"Nugent's at Chunkley's, and Smithy's gone to the bank to get some money. We were going to meet at the boat—"

"The boat's gone back to the island—just in time to save it!" Wharton glanced round anxiously in the busy High Street. Wingate and Gwynne were not to be seen for the moment. "We can't get back by the boat! We've got to get out of Courtfield, quick!"

"Where?"

"Meet at the old oak in Oak Lane, near Popper Court gate," said Wharton. "You scud along to Chunkley's and tip Nugent. I'll cut across to the bank and tell Smithy! So long as we get clear, we can get back to the island somehow later. Getting clear now's the thing."

"Right-ho!" said Bob, and he turned and trotted up the High Street, with his bundle.

A minute later he disappeared in the vast doorway of Chunkley's Universal Stores.

Harry Wharton ran across the street, dodging the traffic.

Smithy had gone to the bank for money, and there was only one bank at Courtfield—the Courtfield and County—whose stone facade and granite steps faced the bunshop, across the High Street.

That the Remove master of Greyfriars had taken up his position on those granite steps, to watch, half hidden by one of the stone pillars there, Wharton, of course, did not know.

Anyhow, he would have had to chance it, as the Bounder was, in those very moments, in the bank building. Smithy, the son of a millionaire, was one of the very few fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who could go to the bank for money when he needed it. Times were changed since Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith had kept his hopeful son short of cash for his own good. Smithy was in high favour with the City gentleman now, which was rather fortunate for him, considering that he was now in rebellion against his headmaster, and in danger of getting "bunked"—a danger that he shared with the other ringleaders of the Remove rebellion.

Wharton dodged a car, scudded round a lorry, and whipped behind a farm wagon, getting across the busy High Street. He was not losing a moment—hot haste was necessary, with Wingate and Gwynne somewhere in the offing. Two or three other people were crossing, and the junior, though his mind was concentrated on his own affairs, noticed the man of the motor-boat. His hard face and black beard and moustache were rather noticeable. With the black bag in his hand, the slim man was cross-

ing the High Street, apparently heading for the same building as Wharton.

He did not look at the Greyfriars junior. And Wharton gave him no heed, beyond observing that he was there.

They reached the pavement outside the bank almost at the same moment. They crossed it together, towards the granite steps, which were flanked by stone pillars. Between the pillars was the entrance, with the swing doors, and the man with the black bag hurried on straight for the doors, pushed them open, and passed into the bank.

Wharton would have done the same in

GREYFRIARS CARTOONS

By HAROLD SKINNER.

No. 8.—HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH, M.A.

(Master of the Remove Form.)

Although Mr. Quelch has been forsaken by his unruly Form, he has not been forgotten, as witness this week's clever cartoon by our lightning artist.



When Quelch points and glares at you,
His finger seems so long and wide,
His gimlet eyes bore through and through
Your figure to the other side.

You shake and shiver as in pain,
And all your bones are double-jointed;
You think you're bound to get the cane
(And are not often disappointed!)

another moment; but in that moment a hand fell on his shoulder.

He gave a gasp, and stared round. He jerked instinctively to get away; but the grasp on his shoulder closed like a vice.

"Oh, my hat! Quelch!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

It was Mr. Quelch who had grasped him.

The Remove master, watching the street for stray rebels, had seen his head boy crossing; he had not had long to wait. Seeing that Wharton was coming across to the bank, Mr. Quelch quietly waited for him to arrive, and stepped out from the pillar and grasped his shoulder just as he was about to go in at the door. It was quite an easy capture.

"I have found you, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Quelch's face was severe; but it did not look angry. He was doing his duty as a Form-master, and carrying out the instructions of his chief. But, in his heart of hearts, Quelch did not condemn his Form for standing by a fellow they believed to be innocent, and whose guilt Quelch himself very strongly doubted. But, though he was not angry, Mr. Quelch was quite determined, and his grasp on his head boy's shoulder was not to be denied.

"Let me go, sir!" panted Wharton.

"You are aware, Wharton, that I can do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "I am here to take you back to Greyfriars."

Wharton breathed hard.

"I can't go, sir!"

"You will certainly come with me, Wharton! I trust," said Mr. Quelch icily, "that you are not thinking of resisting your Form-master?"

Wharton was not thinking of that. He was in rebellion. He had handled Sixth Form prefects freely enough. But raising his hand against his Form-master was hardly to be thought of. At the same time, he was quite resolved not to be marched back to the school.

"Where are the others, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch. "I understand that a number of you came up from the island this morning."

Wharton did not answer.

He had little doubt that Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent would get clear. But Smithy was actually in the bank—might be coming out at any moment. If he came out while Quelch was there—

"Will you answer me, Wharton?"

"I can't tell you anything, sir," said Harry, "and I can't go back to Greyfriars with you."

"You will have no choice about that, Wharton. No doubt Wingate and Gwynne will find the others. I shall take you to the car, and leave you in charge of the chauffeur for the present. Come!"

Wharton set his teeth. Mr. Quelch was pulling at his shoulder. He could have struck his hand away, and made a run for it; but that was unthinkable.

"Look here, sir!" he panted. "Let me go! If it was a prefect collared me, I'd make a fight for it, as you know, sir—"

Mr. Quelch smiled faintly.

"I am glad to see, Wharton, that you have not lost all respect for your Form-master," he said.

"We all respect you as much as ever, sir, and the Head, too!" said Harry. "But we think we're bound to stand by Bunter. We believe that you think the same as we do, sir—it was some other fellow who chucked the ink over Prout, though nobody knows who it was. It's because we knew you believed that Bunter never did it, that we made up our minds to stand by him."

Mr. Quelch coloured a little.

"You are making me a party to your rebellion by that statement, Wharton!" he said sternly.

"I can't help it, sir! You're our Form-master, and what you believe is good enough for us!" said the captain of the Remove.

The Remove master bit his lip with vexation.

"I cannot discuss this with you, Wharton! Come with me at once!" he rapped. "You will surely not compel me to use force here, in public?"

Before Wharton could answer, the swing doors of the bank opened, and the Bounder came out. Herbert Vernon-Smith stared in utter astonishment at

the sight of his Form-master grasping Wharton by the shoulder on the bank steps.

"Hook it, Smithy!" shouted Wharton, as he sighted the Bounder. "Cut!"

"Vernon-Smith—stop!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

He drew Wharton after him, as he stepped towards the Bounder, his left hand outstretched to grasp him.

Vernon-Smith did not "hook" it. He jumped back away from the Form-master's grasp, but did not cut.

"Hook it!" repeated Wharton. "He's got me! Hook it, you fool!"

"No fear! We'll handle him together!" answered Smithy coolly.

"Let him go, sir—let him go at once! We're not standin' for this!"

"Vernon-Smith, if you dare——"

"Let him go!" shouted the Bounder, clenching his hands, his eyes blazing.

"Smithy, you mad idiot!" panted Wharton. "Get away! If you dare lift your hand to Mr. Quelch I'll knock you spinning!"

"You fool!"

"Cut, I tell you!" roared Wharton.

What would have followed can never be said. For at that moment there came, from the interior of the bank, a sudden report of a firearm.

Bang!

From the silence of the building the report rang like a clap of thunder. It was followed by a loud and terrible cry.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Hold-Up at Courtfield!

BANG!

It was a second shot!

Loud cries, shouts, howls of startled amazement came from the interior of the building, and a scurrying of footsteps.

"What the thump——" yelled Smithy.

"What——" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Quelch swung round towards the bank doorway, releasing Wharton's shoulder without even noticing what he was doing. Two crashing pistol-shots in the bank and cries of alarm told of tragedy.

"Goodness gracious!" stuttered the Remove master. "What—what—what is happening?"

Wharton, released, could have darted away. But he did not stir. His eyes were on the swing doors of the bank.

"It's a hold-up!" he panted.

"By gad! A bank hold-up!" yelled the Bounder. "By gad! Oh, look out!"

The doors flew open, and a man darted out.

It was the black-bearded man of the motor-boat.

Wharton stared at him, spellbound, as he came.

The face had seemed to him hard and evil before. Now it looked almost like the face of a wild animal.

The brow was knitted, the shifty eyes glittering, the hard mouth set in a tight line, the upper lip drawn back, showing the teeth in a snarl.

The black bag was clutched in the man's left hand. In his right was an automatic pistol. The trio on the steps did not need telling who was the man who had fired the two shots in the bank. This was the man!

He came out like a flash; but Mr. Quelch, grasping the situation, made a grab at him. The barrel of the pistol struck his arm aside, and the Remove master staggered back, with a cry of pain.

The man leaped down the steps.

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From the bank came shouts, yells, cries. The building was in a wild uproar behind the escaping thief.

With a single leap, the slim man cleared the steps and landed on the pavement. There he thrust the pistol out of sight into a pocket. Another instant, and he would have been running.

In that instant the Bounder leaped.

Smithy was the man to act swiftly, and fear had been entirely left out of the Bounder's composition. If the rascal had noticed the schoolboys at all, he had not apprehended danger from them. But it was from them the danger came. The Bounder, leaping, crashed into his back, and sent him staggering across the pavement to the very edge.

The shock of the collision sent Smithy reeling over. The black-bearded man, staggering on the edge of the pavement, made frantic efforts to recover his balance, but failed. He stumbled over and fell into the road.

Harry Wharton raced down the steps. Mr. Quelch, clasping a bruised right arm with his left hand, stared after him, almost dazed.

Wharton was not thinking of him or of escaping. His own affairs were blotted from his mind now. A man had been fired on in the bank, wounded, perhaps killed, and the bank robber was escaping with his plunder. That was enough for Harry Wharton to think of for the moment. The Bounder had been swiftest to act, but the captain of the Remove was not far behind him.

While Vernon-Smith was scrambling to his feet Harry Wharton passed him, raving across the pavement towards the black-bearded man who had fallen in the road.

But the man was on his feet again and running.

He ran like a deer.

There were shouts, yells, howls, from a dozen people in the street, startled by the shots that had rung out from the bank.

A constable, seeing a man running, leaped into the way. He spun over the next second, crashing, and the black-bearded man tore on, and vanished in the traffic of the High Street.

"After him!" yelled the Bounder.

"Wharton, this way!"

Smithy ran into the road, and joined the excited crowd already starting in confused pursuit of the bank robber.

Wharton did not heed the Bounder's call.

The bank robber was running for the bridge, with such a start and at such a pace that pursuit was minutes behind him.

Minutes or moments were enough for him, as Wharton knew; he had not forgotten the motor-boat tied up at the steps under the bridge.

He knew now why the man with the black beard had hired old Beuson's motor-boat and come up the Sark in it that morning.

It lay ready for him at the steps by the river, and, swift as the alarm had been, he had time to reach it ahead of pursuit. The Bounder had delayed him, but only for a moment.

Wharton did not follow up the street to the bridge.

There was an alley beside the bunshop that led down to the river, as the Greyfriars junior knew, but as the bank robber, a stranger in the town, naturally did not know.

Wharton was across the street in a flash, and darting down the alley to the river.

His idea was to get to the steps ahead of the fugitive and get the motor-boat out of his reach.

Fast as the desperate man ran, Wharton had ample time to get ahead of him, for the short cut by the alley was half the distance.

The captain of the Remove went down the alley as if he were on the cinder path.

He dashed out on the wharf at the end and ran along it to the steps by the bridge.

From above came a roar of voices, a trampling of feet, and the sound of a sharp, ringing shot. The hold-up man had fired back at the shouting crowd to check the chase.

But nobody was yet in sight at the river steps. The black-bearded man had not got there yet.

Wharton leaped at the motor-boat.

In an instant he tore loose the moorings, and with all the strength of a sinewy arm sent the craft shooting out into the river.

It spun away from the steps, turned in the current, and floated out into the middle of the Sark, drifting downstream.

In a twinkling it was far beyond reach.

Wharton panted.

He had cut off the escape of the bank thief. Only he could have done it, for only he knew that the man had a motor-boat ready at the steps.

But he had to think of his safety now. In a matter of seconds a desperate wretch would be racing down the steps, automatic in hand, to find his escape cut off.

Wharton ran back to the wharf.

He dropped into cover behind a stack of bricks, landed there by some barge that had come up the river in the morning.

There he lay out of sight, panting for breath, his heart throbbing in great throbs, perspiration streaming down his face.

He was a dozen yards from the steps that led down to the river. He listened.

There was a pattering of footfalls, and he knew that the man was running down the steps. From above, from the bridge and the High Street, came a roar of voices.

Bang!

The ruffian had fired again, at faces staring after him down the steps. The faces vanished promptly.

Wharton, out of sight, with thumping heart, listened.

"Blue blazes!"

He heard the yell of rage from the hold-up man as he found that the motor-boat was gone.

Wharton could imagine the scoundrel's feelings at that moment. Standing on the lowest step, with the water at his feet, the ruffian stared at the empty space where the boat had been. He stared out on the rolling river, and glimpsed the motor-boat, far out in the middle of the stream, floating away down the Sark. The Greyfriars junior ventured to peer round the corner of the stack of bricks. He saw the man glaring out on the river, with the rage of a demon in his hard, evil face.

He saw him thrust the automatic into his pocket and stare up the steps, at the top of which faces were again looking down. Then the rascal turned to the water again, and Wharton guessed his thought of plunging in and making a frantic attempt to swim after the motor-boat and clamber in. There was no chance, and Wharton knew it, and evidently the black-bearded man realised it.

Already, from above the bridge, a boat was pulling down under the arch from the boathouse there, and a police-



From the bank came shouts, yells and cries, as the bandit, with a single leap, cleared the steps and landed on the pavement. Another instant, and the thief would have been running. But in that instant, Vernon-Smith acted. Lowering his head, he leaped forward, crashed into the man's back, and sent him staggering across the pavement!

man's helmet gleamed in it. And men were coming down the steps, at the head of them Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield. Like a trapped wild beast, the black-bearded man stood, glaring; then, making up his mind suddenly, he came running along the wharf, and tore along it and disappeared on the towpath.

Wharton leaped to his feet. He had a glimpse of the man as he ran, then the rascal was gone, running down the bank of the Sark for his life.

"After him!" It was Inspector Grimes' roar. "There he is—after him! Follow me!"

The plump inspector came charging along the wharf. After him came a crowd shouting. They swept past Wharton as he stood by the stack of bricks, and went roaring down the towpath, on the track of the bank robber.

"Smithy!" shouted Wharton. The Bounder of Greyfriars was running with the mob. He checked, and stared round.

"This way, Smithy!" called out Wharton.

He joined the Bounder.

"Come on!" rapped Vernon-Smith.

Wharton caught his arm.

"Fathead! There's enough of them after that sportsman without us! This is our chance to get clear!"

The Bounder hesitated and nodded reluctantly. The excitement of the chase had a strong appeal for him. But there were forty or fifty men running and roaring after Inspector Grimes, and certainly the schoolboys were not wanted.

"He had a motor-boat here," panted Wharton. "I cut down by the alley, and sent it adrift—"

"Oh, my hat! How did you know—"

"I got a lift from him, up the river, this morning!" Wharton grinned

breathlessly. "Come on—I'll tell you as we go! We've got to pick up the other fellows in Oak Lane."

The roar of the chase died away down the river. Whether Mr. Quelch, and Wingate and Gwynne were still looking for them, Wharton and Smithy never knew. In a few minutes they were out on the open of Courtfield Common, and safe from capture.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Chase!

"I SAY, you fellows, there's the boat!"

Billy Bunter blinked up the river from the landing-place on Popper's Island. A crowd of Remove fellows were there, all looking in the same direction. Bunter's announcement was hardly needed as most of them had spotted the returning boat before the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

"Go hon!" remarked Peter Todd.

"You don't say so!" snorted Bolsover major.

"Yes, it's the boat!" said Bunter, blinking. "I know that boat! It's Coker's boat all right! But I can't see the fellows in it! Only one chap—Bob Cherry, I think, or Smithy."

"It's Johnny Bull, fathead, and he's bringing the boat back," said Peter. "Wharton must have tipped him, and gone into town to tip the other fellows. Well, the boat's all right, anyhow."

"But they haven't had time for any shopping!" said Bunter. "Bull can't be bringing the grub back in the boat."

"I guess that's a cinch!" remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Say, fat boy, did you work that out in your head?"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, we're getting fearfully short of grub," said Bunter. "There's no jam—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"And no marmalade—"

"Give us a rest."

"And no cakes—"

"Chuck it!" shrieked Peter. He was anxious about the fellows in Courtfield, and was not bothering about jam, or marmalade, or even cake.

"And no tarts—not a single tart," pursued Bunter, naturally keeping to the more important matter. "It's days since I've tasted a tart, Peter."

"Awful!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Not even a bit of jam roll left!" said Bunter, almost tearfully. "I finished the last bit yesterday!"

"I'll give you a roll," said Peter. "Not a jam one—but a roll, anyhow." And he grasped the Owl of the Remove by the shoulders, and Bunter rolled in the grass, bumping.

"Whoop!" roared Bunter. "Beast! Leggo! Wharrer you think you're doing, you silly idiot? Yaroooh!"

"Now shut up!" gasped Peter, having given Bunter a roll—quite an energetic roll, which nearly landed him in the river. Bunter lay and spluttered.

"Urrggh! Beast! Wurrghh!"

Unheeding, Peter went to lend a hand in pulling in the boat, which Johnny Bull had now brought to the landing-place. The two keepers, Joyce and Wilson, were still on the bank, leaning against a tree there, and watching. The boat was made fast, and Johnny stepped ashore.

"Where are the other fellows?" asked Hazeldene.

"Somewhere in Courtfield," answered Johnny Bull. "Wharton cut off to tip them; he told me to bring the boat

back, and here it is. Wingate and Gwynne jolly nearly grabbed it—but not quite."

"See anything of Loder?"

"Passed him, trotting up the towpath. He glared at me as I came by," said Johnny Bull, cheerfully. "He's not at Courtfield yet. But there's prefects rooting in Courtfield, and the fellows there will have to dodge. I hope they'll get through all right."

"They can't get back here, if they do!" remarked Wibley. "There's those two blighters still on the bank."

"If they show up, we can go over in the boat and lend them a hand, now we've got the boat back!" said Peter Todd. "We can handle a couple of keepers—a dozen of us can get across in the boat."

"Right!" assented Johnny Bull.

And the rebels of Greyfriars continued to watch the river and the bank, anxious to see something of their missing comrades.

"Hallo, there's Loder!" exclaimed Mark Linley suddenly.

"Looks as if he's in a hurry!" said Peter. "What the dickens—"

Loder who had disappeared up the towpath towards Courtfield some time ago, suddenly reappeared in sight. He was coming back, for what reason the rebels could not guess, and still less could they guess why he was coming at frantic speed. But he was! He was running as if for his life. They stared at him in wonder.

"I'll say that guy's burning the wind!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"What on earth—" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Oh, my hat! Look!" gasped Peter Todd. "His tile's gone, and he's not stopping for it! What the thump—"

"He looks scared!" said Lord Mauleverer. "By gad, what—"

In sheer wonder, the juniors gazed across at Loder of the Sixth as he came tearing along the towpath. His straw hat flew off and dropped behind him, but he did not stop to pick it up. Breathing in great gasps, with perspiration streaming down his face, Loder ran as if he was pursued by a mad bull. Who or what could be pursuing him on the towpath by the quiet Sark was a deep mystery. But that Gerald Loder was badly scared, one glance at him told.

He charged on madly, and came panting and gasping along the bank, opposite the island. The two keepers, leaning on the tree there, sighted him, and stared, and started out into the path. But Loder did not stop. He did not speak—his breath probably running short. He charged on, leaving the two men in velveteens and gaiters staring after him blankly.

"Something's scared him!" said Lord Mauleverer. "But what—"

"Oh, look!" roared Squiff.

Down the bank, the way Loder had come, appeared another running figure, coming round the curve of the river. It was a slim, dark man with a black beard and moustache, with hat jammed tight on his head. His left hand grasped a small black bag. In his right was something that gleamed bluish in the sunshine. It was an automatic pistol. The schoolboys stared at him spellbound.

They knew now what had scared Loder of the Sixth, and why he was running so desperately. It was really enough to scare any fellow, when, walking up the peaceful bank of a country stream, he met a desperate-looking fugitive with an automatic in his hand and murderous ferocity blazing in his

eyes. Loder, evidently, had turned tail and scudded at the first sight of that desperate fugitive coming down the river. Loder was vanishing in the distance down the stream as the bank robber came in sight of the juniors on the island. Peter Todd gave a yell.

"That's the man in the motor-boat!"

"By gum, the man Wharton got a lift from!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"But what the thump—"

"That was sure a gun in his grip!" gasped Fisher T. Fish, and Fishy made a backward jump and disappeared into the island trees. Perhaps Fishy fancied that the "gun" might go off!

But the black-bearded man did not glance at the island. He ran on like a hare. And now, from the bend up the river, came a roar—distant as yet, but growing nearer and louder. It was the roar of the chase.

"Somebody's after him!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"A crowd of them, I should say—"

Joyce and Wilson stared at the bank robber. He saw them at the same moment and threw up his automatic to a level. They were standing in his way, and the wretch who had shot a man in the bank for the sake of the plunder crammed into his black bag, was not likely to stick at much in effecting his escape.

Bang!

The bullet flew wide, as perhaps the bank robber intended it to do, though there could have been little doubt that he would have used that deadly weapon in earnest had the keepers attempted to stop him.

But the roar of the automatic, and the bullet whizzing past their heads, sufficed for Joyce and Wilson. They jumped back out of the path as if moved by the same spring without waiting for a second shot.

In another moment the running man was by, and going at a terrific burst of speed down the river.

"Here they come!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Old Grimes—"

"And half Courtfield—"

Plump Inspector Grimes was going strong. He streamed with perspiration; his official cap was cocked sideways; he gasped and panted; he puffed and he blew. But he was putting on a very creditable speed, and was still in the lead of the chase. The schoolboys gave him a cheer as he went charging past the island.

"Go it, Grimey!"

"Put it on!"

"Mind you don't burst!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Grimey!"

If Mr. Grimes heard, he did not heed. He looked neither to the right nor to the left as he charged on breathlessly.

Behind him came a running crowd. Two or three policemen led, and after them came all sorts and conditions of the citizens of Courtfield. Shouting and yelling they swept past under the staring eyes of the schoolboys on the island, and the two keepers joined the crowd, and went running with them. The whole swarm disappeared from the eyes of the garrison of Popper's Island.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Peter Todd. "Something's happened in Courtfield this morning."

"Looks like it," grinned Squiff.

"Bank hold-up or something of the kind," said Mark Linley. "My hat! No wonder Loder scooted when he saw that sportsman coming."

"The wonderfulness is not terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Loder did not let the

absurd grass grow under his ridiculous feet."

"And that's the man Wharton bagged a lift from," said Johnny Bull, with a deep breath. "I thought he looked rather a tough nut. I suppose we shall hear all about it when the fellows get back."

Down the river, in the direction of Greyfriars, the running crowd had disappeared, and the roar of voices died away in the distance.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Sir Hilton Popper Catches a Tartar!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Here we are!"

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were waiting at the old oak in Oak Lane when Harry Wharton and the Bounder arrived across the sunny common. Both of them had big bundles. Wharton and Smithy, who had kept on the trot, arrived rather breathlessly at the rendezvous.

"All serene!" said Bob, with a cheery grin. "I rooted out Franky in Chunkley's Stores, and we hit the jolly old open spaces at once. We haven't finished shopping; but we've got a lot of stuff. Did you find Smithy at the bank?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes; and a hold-up man, too," he answered. "There's been a terrific shindy in Courtfield."

"I fancied something was on," said Frank Nugent. "There's been a regular hullabaloo from the direction of the river." He made a gesture along the lane which led down to the towpath on the Sark. "A mob went by the end of this lane a little while back—"

"The bank robber scooted by the towpath," said Harry. "Grimey was after him with a crowd. He shot a man at the bank."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "I hope they'll get him."

"Sure to, I think," said Harry. "He planned to get away in a motor-boat he left at the bridge steps, but it was missing when he wanted it. He can hardly get clear with that swarm on his track."

Wharton and the Bounder rested on the fence by the lane, while their comrades were told of the thrilling happenings in Courtfield. They kept a wary eye open, but there was no sign of Mr. Quelch or Wingate or Gwynne on the common. No doubt they were still combing Courtfield for the juniors, if they had not given up the quest and gone back to Greyfriars.

But the juniors did not allow many minutes to pass. It was necessary to get back to Popper's Island—if they could.

"Johnny's got back with the boat long before this," said Harry. "If the coast's clear the fellows can fetch us across. But two of Sir Hilton Popper's keepers were watching on the bank when I left."

"That's all right," said Smithy. "There's four of us. We can tip two keepers into the water if they barge in. Come on!"

"We might find more than two, fat-head. We've got to be careful," said the captain of the Remove. "We'll cut through Popper Court Woods, and keep in cover till we see whether the coast's clear at the island."

"Come on, then!"

The juniors crossed the lane, and clambered over the fence on the other side. Popper Court Woods lay between them and the island in the river from Oak Lane. It was a short cut back, and in the thick woods there was ample cover. It was true that Sir Hilton

Popper had a strong objection to unauthorised persons crossing his woods, and had taken it upon himself to close up several ancient rights-of-way. But as they were making so free with Sir Hilton's Island, no doubt the Greyfriars rebels considered that they might make as free with his woods. Anyhow, they climbed the fence, and started, but with wary eyes open for keepers. Rights-of-way undoubtedly existed, though denied by the autocratic old baronet. But that would not help the rebels if they were collared by hefty men in velvetens.

Halfway across Sir Hilton Popper's estate they reached a "ride," shaded by magnificent beeches. Before stepping out into the open Harry Wharton glanced up and down the ride.

He drew his head back very quickly. Walking down the ride from the direction of the mansion, in the distance, was a tall and angular gentleman with an eyeglass gleaming in his eye, and a riding-whip under his arm. Had the juniors emerged from the trees they would have emerged fairly under the eyes of Sir Hilton Popper.

"Keep close!" breathed Wharton.

"What—"

"Old Popper!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"We could tip him over," suggested the Bounder.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said the captain of the Remove. "What's the good of asking for trouble? Keep close, and let him pass."

The Bounder grunted, but he assented. The four juniors kept close among the beeches as the heavy footsteps of the lord of Popper Court came along the ride. Sir Hilton had caught a cold after his visit to the island to deal with the rebels there—he had got rather wet. Now, it seemed, he was up and about

again. And he did not look good-tempered. The frown on his face, and the riding-whip under his arm, made even the reckless Bounder realise that it was only prudent to keep out of sight and let him pass unsuspecting.

Patter, patter, patter!

There was a sudden beat of running footsteps on the ride in the direction opposite to that from which Sir Hilton was coming.

Someone was coming up that path at a run.

Sir Hilton Popper heard the sounds of running feet at the same moment as the hidden juniors. He came to a halt within a few yards of them, and stared along the ride, his brow darkening, at the man who was running towards him. The juniors heard him give an angry grunt.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Wharton, as he peered from the trees, and sighted the man who was coming.

It was a slim, dark, black-bearded man, with a small black bag in his hand.

"The hold-up man!" hissed the Bounder.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob.

Evidently the fugitive had turned off the towpath, and dodged into the woods. He seemed to have eluded his numerous pursuers by so doing, for the juniors could hear no sound of a chase. The man looked more evil and desperate than when Wharton had seen him last. His hat was askew, his hair rough and untidy from the wind; his clothes were dusty, his face red with exertion and clotted with perspiration. He was evidently fatigued, and, though he was running, his pace was not rapid. A fierce and savage look came over his face at the sight of the baronet.

Sir Hilton Popper strode directly in his path. His riding-whip was in his

hand now, and he waved it imperiously. "Stop!" he barked. "Who are you? What are you doing in my woods? Trespassing, by Jove! What—what? Don't deny it! Trespassing, by gad!"

The running man stopped, breathing in gasps.

The juniors, unseen by either of the two men in the broad ride, looked on breathlessly.

They knew, if Sir Hilton Popper did not, that the black-bearded man had an automatic, and was ready to use it, as he had already used it in the Courtfield Bank and during the chase along the river. The same thought was in the mind of all four of the juniors. They would have been glad to collar the scoundrel and hold him for justice. But to rush across an open space at a desperate man with a deadly firearm in his hand was rather too doubtful a proposition. That the ruffian would shoot, if attacked, was certain.

But the old baronet, quite unaware that he was dealing with a desperate crook, loaded with plunder, hunted for his liberty, and perhaps for his life, planted himself in the man's path, angry, imperious, and unreasonable. To Sir Hilton's eyes, this man was a cheeky trespasser, taking a short cut through his estate. That roused the deep ire of the testy lord of Popper Court.

The man stood panting, gasping, his eyes glittering in a way that might have warned Sir Hilton of danger, had he been observant. He did not answer, having no breath to waste in speech, but the juniors, looking at him, read the ferocity in his face and guessed that he was uncertain whether to waste a few moments on the old fool before him or to shoot him down and run. And they breathed hard, knowing that if the

(Continued on next page.)

HORNBY SPEED BOATS

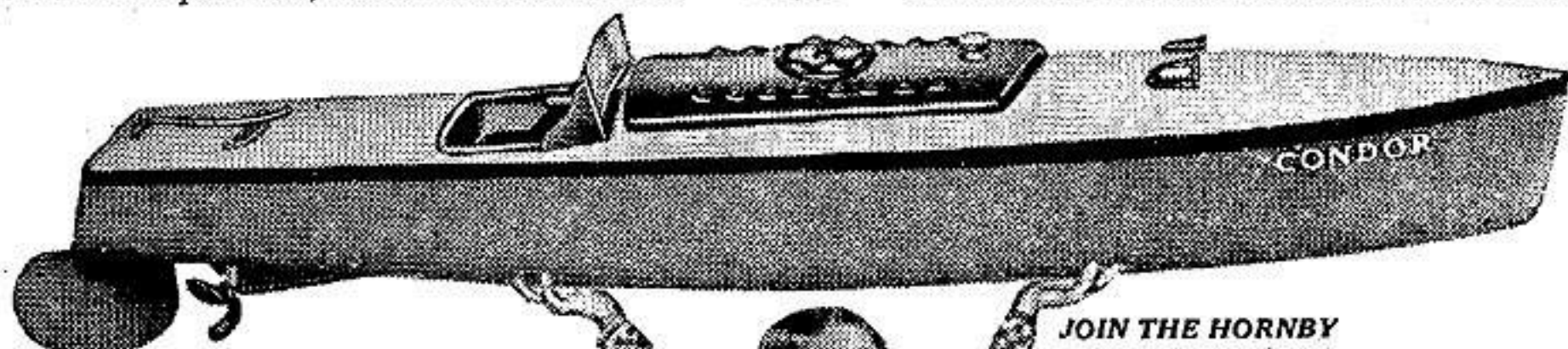
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foolish old baronet's life was threatened they had to go to his help, automatic or no automatic.

"Answer me!" hooted Sir Hilton, puzzled and irritated by the man's silence, and by his dogged, savage look. "Who are you? Why are you here? What? Trespassing! Don't dare to contradict me! What?"

"Let me pass!"

The man's voice trembled with breathlessness, but he tried to speak calmly.

"I will not let you pass!" roared Sir Hilton. "Do you fancy, my man, that I shall allow you to make free of my park? I have a great mind to give you into custody for trespass! By Jove, yes. Stand where you are. Don't dare to pass me. By gad!"

"The old fool!" whispered the Bounder. "Can't he see the man's desperate? Can't he see anything? The old idiot!"

Sir Hilton, evidently, could see nothing, except the fact that his land had been trespassed upon. That was enough for the lord of Popper Court.

Harry Wharton clenched his hands. Every moment he expected to see the automatic flash into view. But the hold-up man was controlling himself.

Desperate as he was, he did not want to shoot if he could help it. He knew, too, that a shot ringing through the woods would reach the ears of the swarm of pursuers hunting him along the river and bring them on his track again.

He backed away a few steps, and side-stepped, seeking to circle round the baronet. Sir Hilton promptly barged into his path again, brandishing his riding-whip.

"Stop!" he roared. "Don't dare to attempt to pass me! By gad! Stand back! Do you hear me? Stand back!"

The black-bearded man's hand slipped into his pocket. The watching juniors knew for what!

"We've got to chip in!" breathed Wharton.

"Hold on!" muttered Bob Cherry. He groped in his bundle and jerked out a tin of pineapple.

Standing clear of the beech, he lifted it and took aim.

"Good!" muttered Nugent.

"Easy to get him from here, if he pulls out that gun!" whispered Bob.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Will you let me pass?" The man's voice was thick. He cast a hunted look over his shoulder and then fixed his gleaming eyes on the baronet again. "I warn you to let me pass!"

Blind to danger—blind, as usual, to everything but his own transcendent importance, Sir Hilton snorted.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" he roared. "You will walk back the way you have come, you trespassing vagabond, and I shall see you off my land! Do you think my estate is the public highway, by gad? Go back at once, do you hear me?"

The man laughed—a low, bitter, savage laugh, that was not good to hear. Sir Hilton did not know that he was bidding a fleeing criminal walk back into the hands of his pursuers.

The hand came out of the pocket, the automatic in it.

"Stand aside, you old fool!" barked the black-bearded man. "Stand aside, or——"

Whiz!

Crash!

A whizzing tin of pineapple, hard and heavy, crashed on the bank robber's ear, and he staggered and fell headlong to the earth.

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THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In Deadly Peril!

SIR HILTON POPPER stood transfixed. Bang!

The automatic roared, as the man went over, the bullet flying away among the treetops over the ride.

That crashing blow on the side of the head had taken the bank-robber utterly by surprise. He sprawled over helplessly.

"Come on!" hissed the Bounder.

He rushed out of the trees.

Wharton and Bob Cherry and Nugent rushed after him.

To get hold of the sprawling man and grab that deadly weapon away from him before he had time to recover, and use it, was the idea in their minds. It was a terrible risk, but they had a chance, as the black-bearded man sprawled in the ride, dazed by the blow.

"Good gad!" stuttered Sir Hilton Popper dizzily. "Who—what—Good gad! What——"

Taking no heed of the amazed baronet, the juniors rushed across, straight at the bank-robber. The Bounder was the first, reaching him swiftly, and grabbing at his right arm.

Bang!

The automatic barked again, the bullet going into space. The man was utterly reckless now, and there was murder in his savage face.

"Quick!" panted Smithy.

He reeled away the next second, as the bank robber's left hand, clenched like a lump of iron, struck him. He released his hold on the rascal's arm as he staggered back.

The black-bearded man leaped to his feet with the activity of a cat. Wharton, Nugent, and Bob Cherry were almost upon him. But they stopped as the muzzle of the automatic rose and was thrust almost into their faces.

It was fortunate that they stopped, for in another second a stream of bullets would have swept from that deadly weapon. But as they stopped, the man sprang back, the automatic still aimed at them. For a fearful instant it seemed that he was going to fire, and every life there was at his mercy. But he held his hand, as he was not attacked.

"Back!" he snarled.

Panting, the juniors held back. The Bounder panted with rage. But though Smithy was reckless, he was not reckless enough to rush at certain death.

"Good gad!" gurgled Sir Hilton.

It seemed like a nightmare to the lord of Popper Court. He seemed hardly able to believe what was passing under his eyes.

The black-bearded man backed farther away, still with his weapon aimed. He did not speak, but his savage, snarling look was more eloquent than words. It was only for his own sake that he was not firing. But he would have fired had a single step been taken towards him.

Backing to a little distance, he made a move to pass on up the ride. Then the dazed Sir Hilton woke to life.

"Scoundrel!" he gasped.

Grasping his riding-whip, the lord of Popper Court was about to stride at the bank-robber, heedless of the levelled automatic. Sir Hilton's lofty brain was not quick on the uptake, and probably he did not realise that his life was in danger, that he was dealing with a man who would have shot him down with as little compunction as Sir Hilton himself showed to the wretched pheasants in his woods.

But the juniors understood, if Sir Hilton did not, and all four of them grasped him at once and stopped him.

They stopped him barely in time. In a split second more the lord of Popper Court would have rolled over, with a bullet through his body.

Far from realising that, Sir Hilton struggled angrily for release.

"What? What?" he roared. "How dare you? Let me go! How dare you? Great gad! Hands off! You young rascals——"

"You old dummy!" yelled the Bounder. "Keep quiet, you potty old ass!"

"What?" gasped Sir Hilton. "What?"

The black-bearded man was running again up the ride. The automatic was still in his hand, and he shot a rapid glance back, ready to fire if there was pursuit. But four pairs of youthful hands held Sir Hilton back from rushing on sudden death.

To the immense relief of the school-boys, the desperado disappeared up the ride, hidden from sight by the beeches.

Then they released the struggling, spluttering baronet.

He made an angry stride after the vanished hold-up man, and then turned back on the schoolboys, his eyes gleaming with wrath, his face purple.

"You young rascals!" he stuttered. "You young scoundrels! I know you! Remove boys—rebels! On my island, by gad!"

"You silly old ass!" said the Bounder coolly. "We've just saved your life! Can't you understand that that sportsman would have potted you, like a partridge, you crass old ass?"

"What? What?" gurgled the lord of Popper Court. Probably it had never occurred to Sir Hilton Popper that he was a crass old ass. Obviously he did not like being told so.

"That man is a bank-robber, Sir Hilton!" said Harry quietly. "He shot a man in the Courtfield and County Bank this morning—the police are after him."

"What? What? Nonsense!"

"Listen to that!" said Nugent, as there was a sound of shouting from the distance down the ride. "They're coming this way——"

Sir Hilton stared down the ride. Nobody was in sight, but the shouting voices could be heard through the trees. The hunted man had dodged his pursuers in the wood, but they had evidently got the right direction again, and were coming on.

"Nonsense!" roared Sir Hilton. He strode towards the juniors, grasping his riding-whip. "You are some of the rebel Greyfriars boys—you have dared to camp on my island—I shall secure you, and take you back to the school——"

"Hands off!" yelled the Bounder.

"You old ass——" gasped Bob Cherry.

"What? What? Dare to resist, and I will thrash you with my riding-whip before I take you back to Greyfriars!" thundered Sir Hilton. "If you dare to resist a governor of the school——"

With his left hand he seized Harry Wharton by the collar.

The next moment, the four juniors were all grasping him again. The fact that Sir Hilton Popper was a governor of the school did not seem to "cut much ice." Certainly they had no intention of allowing him to collar them and march them back to the school.

Sir Hilton staggered in their combined grasp, and the Bounder hooked his leg and he went down with a crash.

"Oooo-hoop!" spluttered Sir Hilton as he struck his own estate with a heavy concussion.

Wharton grabbed the riding-whip



The bank robber sped along the river bank, with plump Inspector Grimes, gasping and panting, hard on his heels. The rebel schoolboys on the island opposite gave Grimes a cheer as he charged past. "Go it, Grimey!" "Mind you don't burst!" If Mr. Grimes heard, he did not heed. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, as he raced on, breathlessly.

away, and, resisting a powerful temptation to lay it round its owner, tossed it among the trees.

Sir Hilton scrambled wildly up.

Crash!

The Bounder, with a mighty smite, smashed his hat over his ears, and Sir Hilton sat down again with a yell.

"Now cut!" said Smithy.

Bob and Nugent rushed back for their bundles and picked them up. Sir Hilton sat in the ride grabbing at his hat, spluttering.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob. "Here they come!"

Running figures appeared at a distance down the ride, coming on fast. In the lead was Inspector Grimes: redder and more breathless than ever, pouring with perspiration, but still game. The crowd behind him had thinned off, but there were still more than a dozen of them.

"Urrrgh!" gurgled Sir Hilton. He staggered to his feet, and blinked dizzily at the oncoming crowd. "Wurrgh! Good gad! Urrrgh!"

Mr. Grimes came thumping up.

"Have you seen—" he gasped. "We heard shots—have you seen—"

"Straight ahead!" called back Harry Wharton. "He hasn't been gone three minutes."

"A man with a black beard—"

"Yes, yes, straight up the ride."

The inspector pounded on. After him pounded the constables and the rest of the crowd.

Sir Hilton gazed after them blankly.

Leaving him gazing, the four juniors darted into the trees, and promptly vanished. When the lord of Popper Court remembered them, and looked round for them, they were gone. A quarter of an hour later, the juniors

were on the bank of the Sark, peering cautiously out of the trees on the tow-path. The coast was clear: Joyce and Wilson had long gone with the crowd in pursuit of the bank-robber. Across on the island a dozen fellows could be seen watching the bank.

"All clear!" said Bob.

"Right as rain!" said Harry, and they ran out of the trees and waved to the fellows on the island landing-place.

The boat shot out from Popper's Island, with Johnny Bull and Peter Todd pulling. A couple of minutes more, and the four jumped into it and pulled back to the island.

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Did you think you'd lost us, old fat bean?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Have you got the grub?" demanded Billy Bunter.

"We've got it!"

"Oh, good!"

Billy Bunter's troubled fat face cleared! The grub was all right, so everything was all right!

the woods like a hunted hare, he had somehow eluded pursuit, though again and again it had come very close. And it was still going on: he knew that, though the deep dark woods round him were silent and still, with no sign or sound of life.

The black-bearded man was no longer black-bearded. The black beard and moustache had disappeared into his pocket. But that change in his appearance was little help in the circumstances.

It would have been different had he been able, as he had planned, to make a getaway in the motor-boat.

Gunner Briggs, with his hard, clean-shaven face, was well known to the police. With a black, pointed beard and moustache, giving him a foreign look, the keenest eye at Scotland Yard would hardly have picked him out. In that guise he had hired the motor-boat at Friardale and run up the river. In that guise he had planned to escape—casting it off when he was safe.

But—

The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang 'aft agley." He had planned well. The bank raid had gone without a hitch. He had had to shoot—but Gunner Briggs had earned his nickname from his readiness to shoot when it was required. He had left a wounded man in the Courtfield and County Bank, and he had run with five hundred pounds in banknotes and currency notes in the little black bag. The moment's delay outside the bank, when a schoolboy had jumped at him, had done little harm. He had run for the river, ahead of pursuit—had the motor-boat been still where he had left it, he would have

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Hunted Man!

GUNNER BRIGGS lay in the dewy covert of a thicket, breathing hard and muttering imprecations.

Night had fallen, and darkness lay on the Sark and the wooded countryside. Darkness had been very welcome to the man with the automatic. How he had escaped the hunt he hardly knew. Winding and twisting and turning in



THE SECRET OF THE OLD OAK!

(Continued)

from page 13.)

raced away down the Sark at lightning speed.

Long before pursuit could have got anywhere near him, he would have abandoned the motor-boat, stripped off his disguise, and stepped into a train!

He had had it all cut and dried!

But the motor-boat had been missing! That little circumstance knocked the whole carefully laid scheme on the head.

How and why it was missing, he did not know! But it had gone—and he had had to cut and run on foot, with a roaring chase at his heels.

So far, he had dodged and escaped! But ultimate escape was more than doubtful—much more than doubtful! Time had been the great factor in the problem! He had had to get clear before the alarm went round! Now it had gone round, with a vengeance!

Every railway station for many miles would be watched. Every road would be patrolled. Every woodland path would be searched.

The black beard was gone, but Gunner Briggs was dusty, muddy, dishevelled, hatless—the most casual eye would know him for a fugitive. The whole countryside was up and after him. There would be a cordon of police surrounding that district, night and day, with eyes keenly open.

Gunner Briggs realised that he was in the tightest corner of his life. He lay in hiding now—but when morning came—

He was fatigued with the long, long twisting and winding and dodging in the woods. He was hungry—famished with hunger. To show himself anywhere in quest of food was to give himself up.

Indeed, the desperate man almost wondered whether it had been worth while to run at all. The game was surely up.

But he clung to freedom, and he clung to his plunder for which he had taken such risks. He still had his automatic. If he could have found a hiding-place, even for a few days, till the heat of the hunt died down—But where? He lay in cover now, but next day, police and keepers would be beating the woods—perhaps with dogs! Twice he had heard passing footsteps, and the murmur of voices, as he lay hidden. Now it was nearly midnight, and there was no sound, all was still.

While darkness yet lasted, he had to make plans. But plans were not easy for the hapless Gunner to make. Some deep, dark, remote corner, where he could hide like a hunted beast—

It was while he lay thus desperately thinking, scheming, planning, that the thought of the island in the river came into his mind.

He remembered the island he had passed coming up the Sark in Benson's

motor-boat; that was where that cheeky schoolboy had dropped on board and borrowed a lift.

The island was thickly wooded. It could only be visited in boats, so it was seurer than the woods where he now lay. Doubtless the police would search it for him; but the police would search everywhere—he had to take that danger. It would be, at least, safe from the general public—the tag, rag, and bob-tail who would join in the hunt for the excitement of it. The fewer the searchers the safer. And if they tried tracking him with dogs the water would stop the scent.

Gunner Briggs nodded in answer to his own thoughts. He had hit on his best move.

If he could lie low on the island for a couple of days and nights he might have a chance of breaking away and getting clear. He was a good swimmer and might trust himself to the river on a dark night. Food he would have to do without, but that was no worse on the island than on the shore. It was fairly certain that that little wooded island in the river was uninhabited. A schoolboy had been there in the morning—indeed, he had a vague impression that there had been a number of them there. But schoolboys, of course, could not be there at night.

The Gunner had, naturally, no knowledge of the state of affairs that reigned at Greyfriars School. He had never even heard of Greyfriars. Certainly he was not likely to guess that a Form belonging to a neighbouring school had camped on the island and stayed there. Such a contingency could hardly have occurred to the keenest mind.

He stirred at last.

Like a wild animal with the hunters near, he lifted his head and listened.

But there was no sound save the usual faint, indefinable sounds of woodland by night.

He crept out of his cover.

In the darkness, broken only by a glimmering of starlight through the thick branches overhead, it was not easy for a townsman to pick his way.

But he knew that the river was not distant, and he tramped and stumbled and groped among the bewildering trees till a glimmer of starlight on flowing water caught his eyes.

On the edge of the dusky wood he paused, peering out on to the towpath, watching and listening like the hunted animal he was.

But all was quiet and still, and he crossed the bank to the river's edge and stared out over the water. He had struck the Sark considerably above the island, but the top of the tall oak in the centre of the island was black and massive against the starlit summer sky. He gazed at it for some moments, not sure in the gloom whether it was on the farther bank, but he crept along down the river and made out the shape of the island.

Of the landing-place on the shore opposite the Popper Court bank he knew nothing; the place was strange to him. He fastened the little black bag by its straps on his shoulders to keep it out of the water so far as possible, and carefully fastened his automatic in a waterproof case, which he thrust into an inner pocket. Then he stepped into the water and swam. A few strokes carried him out and he let himself drift down the middle of the stream so that it was impossible for him to miss the island.

A few minutes more and he was scrambling among willows that drooped in the Sark and mud and wet rushes. Suddenly he gave a start and stopped, his head bent to listen. A sound reached

him from the stillness of the dark island.

It was a sound from a distance—a low, grumbling sound. Had he been in a building where there were sleepers he would have said that it was a snore. It seemed out of the question that anyone could be sleeping on that lonely island in the river, and he concluded that the noise came from a frog, or some animal in the wood.

He pushed on, getting out of the mud and rushes and into the thick, almost impenetrable mass of trees that clothed the bank of the island. Pushing his way among them he was caught on something that stretched from tree to tree. It caught him under the chin and almost threw him back.

In rage and wonder he groped at it. It was wire, thick and strong. And as he groped he found other wires tangled among trees and thickets.

"Blue blazes!" murmured Gunner Briggs in savage amazement.

Whether it was a barrier against poachers or trespassers, or whatever it was, the circle of the island was defended by line on line of wire, which made it exceedingly difficult to get through.

He crawled at last on the ground, squeezing under the lowest wire, and found himself on the inner side.

Round him trees and thickets were dark, tangled, almost like a jungle. He groped on cautiously, seeking a more open spot where he would be able to wring out his wet clothes and look for some sort of a sleeping-place.

In a few minutes he emerged into an open glade in the middle of the island, in the centre of which rose the massive old oak-tree.

Here the starlight fell in a silvery glimmer; he was able to see about him at last.

He stopped dead in the starlight, staring about him with startled, amazed, almost unbelieving eyes.

He was staring at an encampment.

A dozen or more bell tents, one or two larger tents, several huts built of branches were dim but visible in the starlight. From one of the tents came the sound that had first startled him, and he knew now what it was. In that tent Billy Bunter was snoring as he had been wont to snore in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars.

Gunner Briggs gritted his teeth in silent rage. He had not found solitude, as he had naturally expected, on that dark island in the river. He found himself in the midst of an encampment.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Doggo!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were fast asleep.

If they were dreaming, it certainly was not of the hunted man lurking in Popper Court woods.

Indeed, if they had thought of him they would have supposed that he had been captured during the day.

The captain of the Remove, rolled in blankets on a ground sheet, was sleeping hardly ten feet from the man who was staring about him in the star-glimmer. The July night was warm, and many of the rebel Removites were camping in the open air.

On the landing-place half a dozen fellows were posted, but they were all sleeping. It was not necessary to keep awake at night to watch. The rebels were wary of a night attack, but the half-dozen on guard would have awakened fast enough at an attempt to land on the island.

In fact, had Gunner Briggs known of the landing-place and got ashore there he would have alarmed the garrison without fail, for he would certainly have barged into some of them in the dark.

As it was he had given no alarm, and he stood nonplussed, at a loss. His searching eyes picked out Harry Wharton's face, on which there was a glimmer of starlight, and he recognised the schoolboy who had taken a lift in his motor-boat that morning, and whom he had afterwards encountered on the ride in Popper Court woods.

He scowled at the unconscious face. It was well, perhaps, for Wharton that the Gunner did not know that it was he who had cast the motor-boat adrift at Courtfield steps.

What the camp on Popper's Island meant the Gunner could not be expected to guess. But he could see that it was a camp of schoolboys and that there were a good many of them.

Instead of being one of the loneliest

spots in the county of Kent, the island in the river was rather thickly populated.

He stood, with the water dripping from him, in doubt. But his thoughts were working rapidly, and he began to realise that so long as his presence was not discovered by the campers, this was rather a stroke of good fortune than of ill-fortune.

Campers on the island would have a boat. That boat he could seize whenever he chose; it was one chance the more for him.

And even more urgent at the moment to the famished fugitive, a camp meant food. There was food for the taking.

If the schoolboys awakened, if the alarm was given, he could terrify them into submission with a deadly weapon. But it was not his game to give the alarm if he could avoid it.

His problem was to find a hiding-place on the island where the boys would not spot him at daylight. That

did not seem easy, for there were at least two dozen of them, and it was likely that they wandered all over the island where they had camped out.

But the giant oak rising in the centre of the glade gave an answer to the problem! There was safe cover for a dozen men in those huge, massive, spreading branches.

The Gunner gave a nod. He was beginning to see his way! But he had to have food, now that there was a chance of satisfying his hunger. It was a risk, but one that he had to take.

He had been standing motionless as a statue in the deep shadow of the trees for more than a quarter of an hour before he stirred.

But he stirred at last.

Stepping softly and carefully, making no sound, he moved about the camp. He spotted the cooking-stove standing a little apart from the camp. Beside it were several boxes, one of them a large

(Continued on next page.)



c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THE Yorkshire cricket ground at Leeds, the scene of the fourth Test match, is a place where many cricket records have been made.

And there is now a chance for a new record to be set up so far as England is concerned. Do you know, we have never won a Test match at Leeds up to now!

It is true that the Headingley ground is not so old, in Test history, as some of the places where we play these games. Only six Tests in all have been played there. Of these half-dozen, four have been drawn, and the Australians have won the other two. Obviously it is time we pulled ourselves together and did something really good for the benefit of the Leeds people who always turn up in their thousands, and who are about the best judges of cricket to be met anywhere.

If the story of Leeds is doleful from the England point of view, it abounds with wonderful deeds performed by Australian batsmen.

For example, on each of the last two occasions on which Tests have been played on this ground—1926 and 1930—centuries have been made by Australians before lunch on the first day. Incidentally, this is the only ground on which these remarkable performances have been achieved.

People who have seen dozens of Test matches; who have watched cricket all their lives, in a manner of speaking, still talk about Macartney's century before lunch in 1926 as the most wonderful innings they ever saw. I am inclined to agree with these people, too.

The circumstances were unusual. In the first place England won the toss, and the skipper, Arthur Carr, of Notts, took the unusual step of putting his opponents in to bat first. There had been rain overnight, and the England skipper, and his advisers, thought that the pitch would play tricks. Well, it seemed as though they

might be right when Maurice Tate got the wicket of Warren Bardsley with the first ball of the game. What a start! In came Charlie Macartney. He scored two, and then, in that same first over, the new batsman was missed in the slips off Tate—by the England captain. Most batsmen would have gone carefully after such an escape, but Macartney was not made of that sort of stuff. He went for the bowling bald-headed: knocked the best deliveries of our England bowlers all over the place, and with his century before lunch-time, put Australia on the way to a big score.

They didn't win the game, however, but I think they would have done so if the two Georges of the England team—Geary and Macaulay, who were both in the side for their bowling—had not made a great stand in the first innings. They succeeded after the star England batsmen had failed, and it was comparatively easy for us to make a draw of it after that.

SOME GIFT I

IN some ways the 1930 game at Leeds went a similar course, and in others it was even more remarkable. Again the Australians went in first, and again Maurice Tate took a quick wicket. Then came Don Bradman, at twenty minutes to twelve. This same Don Bradman was still in possession at half-past six the same evening, and he had meantime knocked our bowlers about to the extent of 300 runs. Going past the century before the first break, Bradman was just wonderful: the complete master of the bowling.

With his last scoring stroke of the day Bradman brought his aggregate for the season up to two thousand runs, and during the innings he passed his thousand runs mark in Test match cricket. It would take up too much space to set down all the new records established by Bradman in that innings.

What I remember most about the

amazing knock was the way he treated a change of bowling.

Practically every time a new man was put on, Bradman hit his first ball to the boundary—just to show 'em he feared no foe in any sort of armour.

We shall talk about that knock as long as we live. And Bradman will certainly remember it. Before he was out early on the second day he received news that a wealthy Australian was so pleased with his display that he was sending him a cheque for one thousand pounds.

There was a bit of a row on the last day of the match because an appeal against the light, made by the England batsmen, was upheld by the umpires. The spectators were annoyed, and said so. What the watchers did not realise was that, although the light seemed fairly good, the batsmen could not see the ball at one end, because there was no sight-screen there. I have never been able to understand why, seeing that there are sight-screens at both ends on the grounds where even schoolboy and village cricket is played, some of the grounds on which Test matches are played should be without sight-screens. But there it is.

£15 PER MATCH I

THE mention of Bradman's thousand pound gift leads me to answer a MAGNET reader who is anxious to know what the England professionals get when they play for England.

The answer is forty pounds per match, plus travelling expenses to and from the ground.

On the face of it, this may seem quite a lot, but there are things which take the gilt off the ginger-bread. For instance, the England professionals who play in a Test match have to pay their own hotel bills. As many of them have to stay five nights in the hotel, it will be seen that five pounds, at least, of the money goes in expenses.

Again some of the counties—but not all of them—deduct match-money from their "pros" when they are playing for England, and as a Test match involves absence from two county games, this may mean twenty pounds more off the Test match pay. It doesn't seem quite right to me that a man should play in a Test match for England for fifteen pounds, but there it is. All I have to add is that the honour of playing for England is considered a real reward.

"UMPIRE."

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tin trunk. The Gunner gave a stealthy glance round him, and then proceeded silently to examine the boxes, the contents of which he could guess.

He was right; they were the camp larder.

Quietly he made a selection of various articles, which he crammed into his pockets till his pockets would hold no more.

Among so many things he hoped that the campers would not miss a few articles, and, if they did, knowing nothing of a stranger on the island, they would surely conclude that some hungry fellow had turned out for an extra supper.

Anyhow, he had to chance it; and he did.

With his pockets full, Gunner Briggs crept towards the big oak-tree. Its thick branches made a circle of dark shadow in the starlit glade. He was glad to get into the shadow. A dry twig snapped under his foot.

The sound was slight; but in the deep silence, that was broken only by the faint murmur of the river, it sounded to his startled ears almost like the roar of his own automatic.

He stood still, his heart beating rapidly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was a drowsy voice among the sleepers. "That somebody up?"

Blotted under the dark shadow of the oak, Gunner Briggs' shifty eyes watched one of the sleepers sit up in the starlight scarce ten feet away from him.

Bob Cherry, half awake, stared round him.

"Hallo!" came another sleepy voice. "What's the row?" Peter Todd sat up in his blankets.

"Something woke me!" answered Bob. "Hear anything?"

Peter Todd listened intently.

"No; they're not coming, old bean! The fellows at the landing-place would call us fast enough if they did!"

"I suppose it's all right!" yawned Bob. "Can't be too careful, though. They might come at night."

"Catch them turning out of bed at this time of night to come along here for a shindy!" said Peter.

"Well, they might!" said Bob. "But it's all right now, anyway."

"Right as rain!"

The two juniors settled down to sleep again.

Gunner Briggs did not move.

He had heard every word that was spoken; but what it meant was a mystery to him. Apparently the campers on the island were apprehensive of hostilities from some quarter, and it was Greek to Gunner Briggs.

But they had no suspicion of him, that was clear; and that was all that he was troubled about.

He waited quietly till he was sure that the awakened schoolboys were safe back in the land of dreams. Then he crept softly to the old gnarled trunk of the oak, and with the greatest caution began to climb.

That was not a difficult task. He clambered up slowly and steadily, winding through the lower branches.

Twenty feet above the ground several great branches jutted out almost in a circle, and in the centre there was ample space, almost like a platform, for a tall man to lie at full length. And the Gunner was not a tall man.

In that safe and hidden refuge the hunted man felt more at his ease at last. He squeezed the wet from his clothes as well as he could and took off boots and socks to dry. Luckily for him it was a warm night—almost sultry. With his pocket-knife he opened a can

of beef, and hacked slices from a loaf. He ate ravenously.

A quarter of an hour later he was stretched out, his head pillowed on his arm, sleeping! Utterly fatigued, the bank-raider slept the sleep of exhaustion. And in the glade below, the Greyfriars rebels slumbered, little dreaming that Popper's Island had now another inhabitant.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Whack!

CLANG, clang, clang!

The rusty old fog-bell that swung on a low branch of the oak rang and clanged and clattered in the bright morning.

Bob Cherry was pulling at the rope.

Clang, clang!

The Greyfriars encampment turned out.

That cracked old bell, clanged by Bob's muscular arm, was not likely to leave a fellow asleep on Popper's Island—or within a mile! It awakened all the Greyfriars Remove—and also a hidden sleeper high up in the big oak, of whom they had no suspicion.

"Tumble up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Stop that row!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Roll Bunter out, you fellows!"

"Yarook! Beast! I'm getting up, ain't I? Leggo! Whoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of fellows went down to the landing-place to bathe. The river, rolling bright in the early sunshine, was deserted. At a little distance, on the towpath, a man in velveteens and gaiters could be seen. It was Joyce, Sir Hilton Popper's head keeper. But Joyce was not giving any attention to the island or its occupants. Probably he was hunting for traces of the desperate man who was known to be lurking somewhere along the Sark.

But as the keeper came along the bank opposite the island some of the Remove fellows gave him a cheery yell.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coming across old bean?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Come and have a ducking?" shouted the Bounder.

"Aren't you going to turn us off this island?" shouted Johnny Bull. "We're all ready to be turned!"

"The readiness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Joyce!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The keeper looked round at them, and then came down to the edge of the bank. His weather-beaten face was grave.

"You young fellows had better come off that island and get back to your school!" he called out.

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

"The betterfulness is not terrific!"

"Tell us another funny story!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"You're not safe there!" said the keeper.

"Is his nibs coming after us again?" asked Vernon-Smith. "Don't you worry, old bean; we're ready for Popper to pop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There was a bank hold-up at Court-field yesterday," said Joyce, "and the man is about here somewhere. He's armed."

"Tell us something we don't know!" chuckled the Bounder. "Why, we were on the spot, old tulip, and saw it all."

"Yes, rather!" said the captain of the Remove. "We're not afraid of that jolly old sportsman, Joyce! Haven't they got him yet?"

"No, Master Wharton, they haven't, and he's a desperate man," said the keeper. "He's in these woods somewhere, and there's going to be a big hunt for him to-day. You schoolboys had better clear off before the trouble begins."

"My dear man, we thrive on trouble!" grinned the Bounder. "We're not clearing off—not quite!"

"Hardly!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Joyce grunted, and tramped on up the bank. He was scanning the little shady paths that ran up into the wood as he went. Another keeper joined him, and the juniors noted that the second man had a gun under his arm. As the juniors looked after them there was a shout from a distance, and the two keepers disappeared into the wood.

"The jolly old hunt's up!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"By gum, I'd like to take a hand in it!" said the Bounder, his eyes glistening. "But it won't do to get off the island, I suppose."

"Hardly!" said Harry Wharton. "Old Popper's keepers are helping the police to hunt for that sportsman; but they'd be glad of a chance to bag any of us, if they could! Sir Hilton isn't at all pleased about our fortifying ourselves on his island."

"We shall jolly well have to lie low until they get that brute!" said Frank Nugent. "Lucky we got some grub in yesterday. We can make it last a few days on rations."

"Rations!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

"Yes, you fat cormorant!"

"If you fellows think you're going to starve me—"

"Kick him!"

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Napoleon Dupont, the French junior, was frying bacon for breakfast, and a savoury scent spread over Popper's Island. Open-air life gave a keen edge to most appetites, though it could not, perhaps, make Billy Bunter's any keener, Bunter having reached the limit in that direction. With thirty mouths to feed, and further supplies doubtful, for a time at least, most of the rebels agreed that it was only prudent to "go easy on the grub."

Prudence of that kind, however, did not appeal to Billy Bunter. Billy Bunter blinked at a plate that contained one single rasher and one solitary egg with a blink that expressed unspeakable indignation.

"I say, you fellows, what's the good of that to me?" he demanded.

"No good to you, old fat man!" asked Bob Cherry.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Pass it this way, then! I can do with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter did not pass it that way! He gobbled the rasher. The egg followed in a twinkling. Having thus made sure of them, Billy Bunter recommenced.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I'm hungry!" roared Bunter.

"We've heard that one!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've got to go easy on the grub, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "Goodness knows when we shall get in another lot."

"I'm hungry!"

"Like a roll?" asked Peter Todd.

"Beast! You keep off!" howled Bunter, guessing the kind of "roll" that Peter was going to hand out. "I say, you fellows, I can jolly well tell you that this won't do! You never brought any jam yesterday! You never brought any marmalade! Not even a cake! Not a single jam tart! You



"You trespassing vagabond!" roared Sir Hilton. "Get off my land at once! Do you hear me?" "Stand aside, you old fool!" barked the fleeing criminal, withdrawing an automatic from his pocket. "Stand aside, or——" Whiz! Crash! A whizzing tin of pineapple, hard and heavy, crashed on the bank robber's ear, and he staggered sideways.

know I like jam tarts! I've told you so! I've told you so a lot of times! Now you're keeping me short of brekker! If you think I'm going to stand it——"

"Shut up!" roared a dozen voices. "Shan't!" hooted Bunter. "I'm hungry! Famished! It's not much I eat, as you know——"

"Oh, ye gods!" "But a fellow has to have some brekker! I've no objection to you fellows going on rations, if you like. You can leave me out of it! See?"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "who agrees to rations for everybody except Bunter? Don't all speak at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It's all rot!" howled Bunter. "We can get in lots of grub! If you're going to be mean about the money, that's all right! I'll stand the expense. I happen to be short of money at the moment, as I can't get letters while we're here, so I shan't be getting my postal order. But——"

"Is he wound up?" asked Nugent. "The wound-upfulness is terrific!"

"And we've got lots, anyhow," howled Bunter. "There's a dozen cans of beef in that tin box. I don't care for it much—I'd rather have eggs and bacon for brekker, as you jolly well know. Still, I can do with the beef if there's nothing better. You fellows can do as you like, but I tell you plainly that I'm going to have my whack!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away to the camp larder with a determined expression on his fat face.

Half a dozen fellows rushed after him as he hooked a can of beef out of the store.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "Leggo!

I tell you I'm going to have my whack!"

"You are!" agreed the Bounder.

"Turn him over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"You're going to have your whack, Bunter! Flatten him out, and hold him down! Chuck over that cricket stump, Nugent."

"Here you are."

"Yaroop! Leggo! I say, you fellows, I don't want any of the grub. I—I—I don't mind not having my whack!" roared Bunter, as the Bounder flourished the stump. "Oh crikey! Oh lor! Whoop!"

Whack!

The stump came down on the tightest trousers on Popper's Island. Billy Bunter's fearful yell rang far and wide.

"Yarooooop! Ow! Wow! Beast! Oh crikey! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have another whack?" asked the Bounder.

"Yow-ow! No!" yelled Bunter.

"Leave off! Beast! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

One "whack" was enough for Billy Bunter!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Official!

"LOOK out!" "Not the jolly old enemy!" "Line up, though!"

A crowd of Removites on the island watched a boat pulling down the Sark. In the boat sat Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, and by his side Sir Hilton Popper, lord of Popper Court. Two Courtfield constables were there also,

and a couple of keepers pulled at the oars.

It was afternoon, and the morning had been rather exciting. From the island the schoolboys had had many glimpses of the hunt that was going on on both banks of the river.

Keepers and policemen appeared and reappeared from the woods along the Sark. Courtfield people came up and down the towpath, and villagers from Friardale and Pegg. Several times the deep bay of a hound had been heard from the woods, from which the juniors guessed that a bloodhound had been put on the trail of the hunted man.

With the whole country up, a wide cordon thrown round the district, and the hunt never slacking for a moment, it seemed extraordinary that the gunman had not been captured.

Evidently, however, he had not been captured yet, and the Greyfriars fellows wondered in what deep hiding-place he was lurking. They little dreamed how near he was to them.

Even Billy Bunter probably would have forgotten the food shortage had he been aware that the foliage of the big oak hid the man who was wanted, and that the deadly automatic was so near.

Nobody on Popper's Island, however, had the faintest suspicion of that. Unless some fellows climbed the old oak no such discovery was likely to be made. It was Gunner Briggs' cue to lie low, and he was as careful and cautious as a hunted animal with the hounds at hand.

Little dreaming that the wretch was within the sound of their voices, Harry Wharton & Co. gathered at the landing-place to watch the approaching boat.

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It was not the "enemy"—otherwise, the Greyfriars prefects. The enemy seemed to be fed-up, for the present, with dealing with the rebels. But they were on their guard, all the same. Sir Hilton Popper, who claimed to be the proprietor of that island in the river, had come on the warpath once, and if he was now looking for more trouble the rebels were cheerfully prepared to give him all he wanted, and even a little more!

"If they're coming here—" said the Bounder.

"Old Grimey isn't bothering about us," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "He's got his hands full with the bank raider."

"Well, they're coming here, anyhow!" said Smithy.

That was soon clear! The Popper Court boat pulled into the channel between the island and the bank, and its nose turned towards the landing-place where the rebels were crowded.

Skinner gave a low whistle.

"I say, if old Popper's called in the bobbies our number's up!" he remarked.

"I guess that will let us out!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Not in your life-time!" said the Bounder. "We'll duck old Grimes as soon as old Popper."

"The duckfulness will be terrific."

"It's not that," said Peter Todd.

"We're all right here," Peter, as the son of a solicitor, was supposed in the Remove to know all about the law. "We're not trespassing."

"Popper makes out we are!" said Skinner.

"What Popper makes out isn't law!" said Peter. "This island is common land, as everybody knows except old Popper! It's free to every subject of his Majesty King George the Fifth. Popper can make out that it's his property if he likes, but he would have to prove it before he could get the police to act for him."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Todd's right," he said. "Popper's a swanking old ass, and he has no more right to turn us off here than off the tow-path or the King's highway."

"I could get him from here with a biscuit tin!" murmured the Bounder.

"Fathead! Don't start a shindy!"

The boat pulled to the landing-place. Inspector Grimes stared at the crowd of Greyfriars juniors. The two constables were grinning. The Greyfriars rebellion was the talk of the neighbourhood by this time, and all the local inhabitants were interested in the garrison of Popper's Island.

Sir Hilton Popper wore a portentous frown. He saw nothing of an amusing nature in the extraordinary proceedings of the Greyfriars Remove. As a governor of the school, he took the matter very seriously, and still more seriously, as the proprietor of the island on which the rebels had fortified themselves. Sir Hilton had no doubt that he was the proprietor of that island, though there was an unfortunate lack of legal documents to prove his title to it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry greeted the new arrivals. "Want anything, Mr. Grimes?"

"Don't get out of that boat!" warned the Bounder.

"Eh—why not?" demanded Mr. Grimes.

"Well, the boat's dry and the water's wet!" explained the Bounder. "Better keep in the boat than be tipped into the water!"

"That's a tip, Grimey!" said Bob.

"You insolent young rascals!" roared Sir Hilton Popper, before the Courtfield inspector could speak. "I have ordered you off my island!"

"Save your breath, old bean!" said the Bounder.

"What—what?"

"You talk too much, old thing!" said Vernon-Smith. "What have you brought that old ass along for, Grimey?"

Sir Hilton Popper gurgled. Inspector Grimes made an effort not to grin. He hardly succeeded.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Grimes.

"We're here on business, young gentlemen! You are not thinking of obstructing officers of the law in the execution of their duty, I hope?"

"Certainly not!" said Harry Wharton

at once. "We're ready to help, if there's anything we can do."

"Hear, hear!"

"I have nothing to do with your dispute with your headmaster," said Mr. Grimes. "Sir Hilton has kindly lent me a boat and his assistance, and that of his keepers, in searching for the man who escaped from Courtfield yesterday. We are here to search the island."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"What on earth for?" demanded the Bounder. "Think your jolly old gunman is camping out with us?"

Mr. Grimes smiled.

"Not at all; but it is possible that he may have swum off to the island during the night—"

"Rot!" roared Bolsover major.

"Shut up, Bolsover!" rapped Harry Wharton. "Look here, Mr. Grimes, there's thirty fellows here, and the island isn't very large. You can't really think that the man could have parked himself here."

It seemed utterly unlikely—indeed, impossible—to the captain of the Remove and to the rest of the rebels. Inspector Grimes, indeed, had the same belief. But he was a thorough man in the execution of his duty.

"No, Master Wharton," said the inspector. "I don't think it's at all likely that the man could have landed here without some of you seeing him. But I've got my duty to do, all the same, and I'm going to search the island!"

Mr. Grimes made a movement to step on shore. He made a swift backward movement as the Bounder lunged with a cricket stump.

But the next moment the captain of the Remove caught hold of the Bounder's arm.

"Chuck it, Smithy!" he said. "It's all right, Mr. Grimes. You've got your duty to do, and we're not stopping you. We'll help you search the island, if you like. But it's got to be understood that nobody lands except officers of the law."

"Oh, quite!" said Mr. Grimes.

And he stepped ashore, followed by the two constables. Sir Hilton Popper made a movement to follow. The Bounder's stump lunged again, this time not knocked aside by his Form captain. It jabbed on Sir Hilton's waistcoat, and the lord of Popper Court sat down, with a bump that made the boat rock.

"Oooogh! Great gad!" gasped Sir Hilton. "Young scoundrel! Oh gad! Oooogh!"

"Sit down, Popper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The baronet scrambled up in the rocking boat. His face was purple with wrath. Mr. Grimes and the two policemen were already going up the path towards the camp in the centre of the island. Sir Hilton howled after them.

"Inspector Grimes! Turn those young scoundrels off my island! Do you hear me, sir?"

If Mr. Grimes heard, he did not heed.

With a hunt for a desperate hold-up man on hand, the police-inspector was not likely to bother his head about the testy old gentleman's dispute with a crowd of schoolboys.

"Mr. Grimes!" bawled Sir Hilton.

Mr. Grimes and the constables disappeared through the trees.

"Nothin' doin', old bean!" grinned the Bounder. "Stick in the boat, Popper! That's where you're safest!"

"I'll say that's your best guess!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"Joyce! Wilson! Follow me!" roared Sir Hilton.

He made a jump for the shore. Sir Hilton was there to assist the law in



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2

the hunt for the bank raider. But, apparently, he saw in the police visit to the island an opportunity to regain possession of "his" property. If so, he was disappointed.

A huge chunk of turf, hurled by Bolsover major, caught the baronet on the chin as he jumped.

He went over backwards into the boat again.

Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try it on again!" yelled Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Sir Hilton did not try it on again. With hardly a breath left in his lordly body, he sprawled in the boat, gasping and spluttering. For a time, at least, the lord of Popper Court was hors de combat.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Hidden One!

"**B**EASTS!" breathed Billy Bunter.

The fat junior quaked.

A few minutes ago he had been enjoying life. Now he quaked with well-founded apprehension.

In the deepest, thickest thicket on Popper's Island, the fat Owl of the Remove was hidden from sight. Bunter had been busy—supplying the pressing needs of the inner Bunter.

Rations did not agree with Bunter. It was all very well for the other fellows. Bunter was willing for them to go on rations if they liked. Personally, he was not willing.

Brekker had been frugal. Dinner had been frugal. Bunter had had hardly more than enough for one fellow, and enough for half a dozen fellows would still have left him with an aching void.

If the awful rotters supposed that Bunter was going to stand this sort of thing, they were jolly well mistaken. Bunter was resolved on that.

Right up to the moment when the official boat had been sighted on the Sark, Bunter had been watching for an opportunity, his eyes and his spectacles on the alert.

Then his chance came.

The whole crowd of rebels were at the landing place; the camp under the big oak was deserted by all but the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter could scarcely believe in his good luck. But he did not lose any time. Hidden by the surrounding trees from the sight of the rest, the fat junior jumped at the camp larder.

He did not remain there to devour his prey. Any minute some of the beasts might come back and spot him. He knew what to expect if they did—not only a stumping, which was bad, but the loss of his plunder, which was worse. Bunter stayed only to annex all the tuck that he could carry, and then he hunted cover. Deep in the thicket, hidden from sight, Billy Bunter proceeded to fill that aching void. Once more life was worth living.

But that forbidden feast was not over when there were footsteps in the bushes and thickets round him. He heard a cautious whisper, though he did not catch the words. Someone passed within a yard, rustling the branches round him.

Bunter sat and quaked.

He had no doubt that the juniors had discovered his grub raid, and were looking for him. He quaked with apprehension. Had his feast been finished, it would not have mattered so much. Bunter would have been prepared to deny knowing anything about the missing

tuck. But his pockets were still packed, and he had no time to dispose of the evidence internally.

"Beasts!" breathed Bunter. "Oh lor'!"

He squatted, and listened in an agony of apprehension. Creeping footsteps passed a yard from him. He had a glimpse of a leg.

He hardly breathed.

He was being hunted for. He could have no doubt of that. He did not even know that Inspector Grimes and his men had landed on the island, and it did not occur to his fat brain that it was the bank raider who was being hunted for.

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., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

I HAVE received quite a number of suggestions from various readers, regarding future features in the MAGNET.

A VERY CHEERY LETTER

comes from Jack Dixon, of Manchester, who wants to know where Doctor Birch-small and the cheery chums of what he calls "that renowned and hysterical (beg pardon, historical) establishment," have disappeared? Well, they are still very much alive and kicking—especially the latter. One of these days they may return to our centre pages. Perhaps other readers may care to write to me and tell me whether they would like more of these stories? As you know, I am always anxious to meet my readers' requests if I can possibly do so. I make a note of them all, and refer to the list when I am drawing up my programme for future issues.

One of my Norwich readers, who signs himself "Norfolk Mawther," suggests that the chums of Greyfriars might spend a holiday on the Norfolk Broads. Frank Richards tells me that he is keeping this suggestion by him, and will see what he can do about it.

By the way, what is a "Norfolk Mawther"? I must confess this has stumped me. Obviously it is a local expression that is not much known outside the county of Norfolk. Perhaps my reader will enlighten me next time he writes?

From an Irish reader, who signs himself "Uneasy," I have received a request to help him in

THE CHOICE OF A CAREER.

As you know, I am always eager to help my chums in this respect, but, unfortunately, this reader gives me no idea of what he is best fitted for. Most boys have an ambition of some sort, and it is a question of finding out the ambition that appeals most strongly. For a boy with a "mechanical brain," there are several openings in various engineering concerns, and such a boy should try to obtain an apprenticeship with a first-class firm. The boy who is keen on wireless can easily take up a course at one of the many wire-

Someone, evidently, was being hunted. And whom could it be but the grub raider? Bunter had no doubt of it.

There was still a lingering pain where the Bunder's stump had smitten that morning. Bunter did not want another.

He tried to still his breathing.

Again a faint whisper reached him. Then there was silence, save for a rustle in the thickets. They were still searching.

He hoped, from the bottom of his fat heart, that they would miss him and pass on. All round him was a screen of alders, willows, and ferns, mingled with
(Continued on next page.)

less schools, take a certificate of competency, and then obtain a situation as an operator, working his way up to the position of an expert in certain branches, such as television. I should imagine that there will be many openings in the near future for television experts.

The best advice I can give to any boy who has not settled in his own mind what he prefers to do, is to have a talk with his headmaster, and ask him to suggest what branch of industry his talents will suit. Often a schoolmaster can help where others cannot, because he sometimes knows a boy's capabilities even better than the boy does himself.

HERE'S an offer for any of you fellows who consider yourselves amateur conjurers! A certain society in London is offering

£525 FOR A TRICK!

Anyone who can manage to perform it can walk straight away with the money. But—well, yes, there is a bit of a catch in it. The trick in question is the often-mentioned Indian Rope Trick, and the sole reason that this large sum is offered is that scientists and professional conjurers claim that there is no such trick, and that the various stories told about it are just "traveller's tales." For many years India has been searched for a man who is capable of performing it, and a newspaper in India has advertised that it will pay an even larger sum of money than the above to anyone who does the trick.

Anyhow, chums, if you think you can do it, there's a small fortune waiting to be picked up. It will be interesting to see if anyone claims it. Incidentally, although the experts declare flatly that the Indian Rope Trick has never actually been performed, there are still many people who claim to have seen it years ago. I wonder if any of my many MAGNET chums in the Far East have witnessed it? If they have, I shall be exceedingly pleased to receive their letters on the subject.

Ready for next week's list of features? Right!

"FISHY'S FEARFUL FIX!"

By Frank Richards.

is another "super-production" of this first-rate boys' school story author. It's crammed with exciting situations, and when you've finished it you'll agree that it's as good as any story he has ever written.

Thrills you'll find in plenty in our further chapters of "The Black Hercules!" while the "Greyfriars Herald" supplement will be better than ever. Jump to it, chums, and order next Saturday's issue of the MAGNET at once!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,380.

masses of buttercups and dandelions and other weeds growing high. He had picked his hiding-place carefully. Only a very close search was likely to root him out. Probably the juniors, had they been hunting for him, would have missed him. Unfortunately for Bunter, the search was very close—very close indeed! The silence did not mean that he had been missed! It meant that he had been spotted!

Hardly six feet from the hidden Owl Inspector Grimes stood, his face grim and set, his heart beating rather more quickly than usual.

He made signs of silence to the two constables, close at hand. The three of them were listening intently. From a little distance came a buzz of voices at the landing-place. But there was a sound closer at hand. The keen ears of the inspector picked it up. It was the sound of subdued, terrified breathing. The inspector could not see who was hidden in that deep nook. But he knew that someone was hidden there!

Which, naturally, was enough for Mr. Grimes.

He had thought it very improbable that the escaping gunman could have sought refuge on the island while the schoolboys were camped there. He was making the search rather as a matter of form than anything else. But the discovery of someone hidden deep in the thicket altered his views entirely. Who could it be but the gunman?

Mr. Grimes was glad now that he had searched the island in the Sark. He was glad that he had run down his man. But he did not forget that the desperate ruffian was armed with a deadly weapon and that he had shot and seriously wounded a man at the Courtfield and County Bank, and had fired several times on his pursuers the previous day. That the wretch, if run down, would shoot, did not admit of doubt. Mr. Grimes was keen to do his duty, but he had no desire to stop a bullet with his portly person.

For a long, long minute he stood listening, and the two constables stood, half-buried in ferns, like statues, waiting for orders. They had rooted over nearly the whole of the island before reaching this spot. Now, however, they had no doubt that they were on the right spot.

Faintly, but unmistakably, came that sound of subdued breathing in the thicket. They had got him!

Mr. Grimes stirred at last. He did not speak. He was well aware that his official voice might draw a shot, if it was the gunman who was there, and he had not the slightest doubt that it was.

He made signs to his men to move round and encircle the suspected spot. The villain was to be given no chance of running.

Again a rustling sound came to Billy Bunter's ears. He hoped it meant that the beasts were going!

But it didn't. It meant that they were surrounding him!

Mr. Grimes could see only the helmets of his men when they were in position. But they were where he wanted them—ready to cut off the escape of the gunman if he fled, ready to jump on him if he resisted. The time for action had arrived, and Mr. Grimes drew a deep breath and screwed up his official courage to the sticking-point.

He made a cautious movement forward. He heard a gasp! The next moment he leaped, and crashed on the crouching figure in the ferns.

He grasped it.

There was a fearful yell.

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter wriggled wildly.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,380.

"Whoop! Beast! Leggo! Yarooop!"

Inspector Grimes wondered, for a fleeting second, whether he was dreaming. He was not grasping a desperate bank robber. He was grasping a fat schoolboy, who wriggled and squeaked.

"What!" gasped the inspector.

He released the Owl of the Remove. He stood staring at him. Bunter leaped up.

He did not even see that it was Mr. Grimes. He did not see anything. All Bunter knew was that he had been grabbed, and then unexpectedly released, and he did not stop to look, or to think, or to give the beast time to grab him again. He jumped for it.

Crash!

A bullet head, that felt like a battering-ram, thudded on Inspector Grimes' official tunic. It knocked all the wind out of the portly inspector. He went over backwards, as if Bunter's bullet head had been a bullet from the gunman's automatic. He crashed, gurgling.

Bunter, staggering from the shock, was grasped by a fat shoulder by one of the astounded constables. He yelled:

"Ow! Leggo, Bob Cherry, you beast! Ow! I'm not here! Wow! I haven't touched the grub! Yaroooh!"

"Urrrgh!" said Inspector Grimes. "Wurrgh! Oooooo-er! Groooooogh!" Sitting up dizzily, the hapless inspector pressed both hands over the spot where he had lately parked his lunch. "Oooooogh! Wooooogh! Mooooooogh!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Only Bunter!

"WHAT the thump—"

"What the dickens—"
Harry Wharton & Co., at the landing-place, heard the uproar from the interior of the island. The captain of the Remove ran up the path towards the camp. The other fellows rushed after him. Something, evidently, was happening. They wanted to know what it was.

"That's Bunter yowling!" gasped Peter Todd. "Bunter—"

"Ow! Leggo! Beast! Leggo, you beastly bobby!" came Billy Bunter's frantic howl from the thickets.

"Are they arresting Bunter?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Sounds like it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oooooo-ooooogh!" came an agonised gurgle. "Woooo-er! Wooh! Mooh!"

Harry Wharton & Co. plunged into the tangled thickets on the farther side of the glade. They came quite suddenly on the scene. They gazed at it, dumb-founded.

Inspector Grimes, with both hands pressed to the place where the pain was, sat gurgling, gasping, and guggling.

Billy Bunter, howling with alarm, wriggled in the grasp of one of the Courtfield constables. The other was bending over the breathless inspector.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter, as the juniors burst on the scene in a crowd. "I say, make him leggo! I won't be run in! Yaroooh!"

"What on earth—" gasped Wharton.

"Ooooo-er!" said Mr. Grimes. "Woooo-er!" With the constable's help he staggered to his feet. "Oooooogh! That young—ooogh—scoundrel—woooogh—that young—ooooooogggh—"

"I say, you fellows, I never touched him!" shrieked Bunter. "Make this beast lemme go! I never butted him! Besides, I didn't see him! I thought it was one of you fellows after me! I say—"

"Butted him!" gasped the captain of the Remove. "You blithering, be-

nighted Owl, what did you butt Mr. Grimes for?"

"I didn't! Never touched him! Besides, I thought it was Bob Cherry! How was I to know it was a fatheaded policeman?" howled Bunter. "What did he jump on me for, I'd like to know! Jumping on a fellow and nearly squashing him!"

"You young—ooooogh—you young—groooooogh—you young scoundrel, what were you hiding in the thicket for?" gurgled the inspector.

"I—I wasn't! I was—was fast asleep when I saw you coming—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" roared Bunter. "I've been jumped on! Nearly squashed! The beast grabbed hold of me—"

"What were you hiding for, you blithering Owl?" roared Bob Cherry.

"I wasn't! I haven't touched the grub! I didn't think it was you fellows after me! Why should I, when I haven't been near the grub?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"The fat villain's raided the grub, and hidden himself to scoff it!" said Nugent. "But I don't see why Mr. Grimes wanted to jump on him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bunder, a light breaking on his mind. "Did you think you'd got the bank raider, Grimey?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wharton. He understood now.

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

"The—the bank raider!" gasped Bunter. "He ain't here, is he? Oh lor! I—I say, you fellows, if that beast's on the island—"

"All serene, old fat man!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You're the only beast on this jolly old island!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly ass!" howled Bunter.

"How could he take me for the bank robber? Do I look like a bank raider?"

"Only like a grub raider!" chuckled Bob. "I say, Grimey, are you hunting grub raiders as well as bank raiders?"

Mr. Grimes, still gurgling and panting, was crimson as a beetroot.

He could not blame himself for that mistake! He had been hunting for a hidden man—and he had jumped on a hidden man!

How was the keenest police inspector to guess that the hidden man was not the hunted fugitive, but a fat, greedy Owl who had raided the stores and retired to that secluded spot to devour the same? Obviously, he couldn't have guessed that! But it was very unfortunate! He blushed to the roots of his hair as the Greyfriars fellows yelled and howled with laughter.

Even the two constables were grinning. But a ferocious glare from Mr. Grimes wiped the grins from their faces as if with a duster.

"I say, you fellows, will you make this beastly bobby leggo?" howled Bunter. "I haven't done anything, have I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At a sign from Mr. Grimes, the constable let go Billy Bunter's fat shoulder. Then the inspector himself grasped Bunter.

He did not take him by the shoulder, but by the back of the neck. He knelt on one knee, making a knee for Bunter with the other.

Across that knee the fat Owl of the Remove was jerked, face down. Mr. Grimes' left hand held him in that position. His right rose and fell rather like a flail.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

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

Smack, smack, smack!

Inspector Grimes had a large, plump,



Harry Wharton caught hold of Vernon-Smith's arm, as the Bounder was about to bring the cricket stump into play. "Chuck it, Smithy!" he said. "It's all right, Mr. Grimes. You've got your duty to do, and we're not stopping you. We'll help you search the island for the bank bandit, if you like. But it's got to be understood that nobody lands on the island except officers of the law."

heavy hand. It seemed to Billy Bunter like a sledge-hammer.

Those terrific spans rang like pistol-shots across Popper's Island.

Smack, smack, smack!

"I say, you fellows, rescue!" shrieked Bunter, wriggling like a fat eel. "I say—Yaroooh! I say—Oh crikey! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack, smack, smack!

"There!" gasped Mr. Grimes, releasing Bunter at last, and letting him roll into the grass. "There, that will teach you not to play practical jokes on a police officer executing his duty!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled and roared. Inspector Grimes, red and wrathful, signed to his men to follow, and tramped away from the spot.

Yells of merriment from the Removites, and yells not of merriment from Bunter, followed him. Mr. Grimes was still gurgling as he went. He still had rather a pain, and he was still short of breath. And it was clear that he was not in a good temper.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, sitting up dizzily. "I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you think this is funny—" howled Bunter.

"Just a few!" chuckled Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess it's the bee's knee!" chortled Fisher T. Fish.

"The funniffulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!"

"Beasts!"

"Now let's give him a few more for raiding the grub!" said the Bounder.

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows, I haven't raided

the grub!" yelled Bunter, in alarm. "I haven't touched it! If there's any gone, I expect it was old Grimes—"

"What?" gasped Wharton.

"Or one of those bobbies! I haven't touched it! I haven't eaten a thing since dinner, and I haven't got any biscuits or anything in my pockets now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five or six pairs of hands grasped the fat Owl, and his pockets were turned out. Quite a collection of eatables came to light.

"Now what have you got to say, you fat cormorant?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Squash him!"

"Jump on him!"

"Give him beans!"

"The beanfulness is the proper caper!"

There was a crash in the thickets, as Billy Bunter fled for his fat life. He barged wildly through bramble and briar, and the Removites, laughing, left him to it. They followed Inspector Grimes, who was going down to the landing-place—still breathing stertorously, and occasionally pressing a hand to his tunic.

Probably the merry laughter of the Removites made Mr. Grimes rather keen to get away as soon as he could. He could not blame himself for that little mistake with regard to Bunter; still, he had to realise that it was slightly ridiculous. He was anxious to be gone now that the island had been searched.

Although Mr. Grimes did not think it at all likely that the hunted man could be on a little island, where there were thirty fellows who had seen nothing of him, he had done his work.

Searching in the branches of the trees, thick and messy with their summer foliage, was scarcely practicable; but, short of that, the search had been thorough enough. The slightest "sign" left by the Gunner would have been enough for Mr. Grimes; but Gunner Briggs had left no sign.

High in the thick foliage of the tall oak the desperate man was hidden and unsuspected, and Mr. Grimes never dreamed for a moment that he was turning his back on the man he sought, though perhaps that absurd encounter with Bunter made him leave a little earlier than he would otherwise have done. Grinning schoolboys followed him down to the boat.

Sir Hilton Popper seemed reluctant to depart. But, observing that a number of the rebels had picked up lumps of turf, old cans, and other missiles, and were ready to greet him with a volley, the lord of Popper Court decided that Popper's Island was no place for him. He gave an angry snort as the boat pushed off.

"Good-bye, Grimey!" called out the Bounder. "We'll catch your man for you if he comes along this way!"

"Ta-ta, Popper!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ready for you, old bean, if you pop up again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Inspector Grimes frowned, Sir Hilton snorted, the constables grinned, and the boat pulled away.

The Greyfriars rebels were left on their island once more, little guessing that a desperate man, hidden at the summit of the tall oak, panted with relief as he spotted the boat pulling away up the river.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Rats!"

"I want my supper!" roared

Billy Bunter.

"You've had it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not join in the laugh. Bunter was not amused. The fat Owl blinked at the laughing juniors, with a ferocious blink that might have cracked his spectacles.

Bunter was hungry! That, of course, was nothing new! Bunter was generally hungry! Now, however, he was fearfully hungry—frightfully hungry—alarmingly hungry. Had the island in the Sark been a desert island, and Bunter a shipwrecked castaway on it, he could hardly have felt more awfully hungry.

Billy Bunter had eaten hardly twice as much as any other fellow there. But that was not the worst. The worst was that he had eaten nothing since the afternoon.

According to Bunter, he had helped himself to a snack which he was fully entitled to do. According to the other fellows, he had had his supper in advance, and there was no more for him.

All the fellows agreed that the grub-raider of Greyfriars needed a lesson! This was a lesson—and Bunter was getting it!

"Look here, Wharton—" spluttered the Owl of the Remove.

"Nothing doing, old fat man!" said Harry, shaking his head. "We've got to ration the grub. We may not be able to get any more in for days and days. We can't leave the island while that gunman is wandering about."

"If you're funky of a gunman—" sneered Bunter.

"Well, we don't want to meet him again!" said the captain of the Remove. "He's too jolly handy with that automatic of his. But we'd risk that, if that was all. It isn't!"

"You silly ass!" said Bob Cherry. "There's hundreds of people swarming up and down the river now after that sportsman, and rooting through the woods. All old Popper's keepers are out. We can't get off the island again till that little circus is over."

"If any fellow here had my pluck—" sneered Bunter.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Well, we haven't your pluck, Bunter—such as it is! But you've got it! You can go and try it on, if you like."

"Eh?"

"Good egg!" agreed Wharton. "We'll ferry you across to the bank, Bunter—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"And you can try your luck!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Bounder. "Bunter's the plucky man! Let Bunter go."

"Go it, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the grinning juniors. He did not seem keen on jumping at the suggestion. That other fellows should risk an expedition to the town for supplies, and risk getting back with them, seemed to the fat and fatuous Owl right and proper. But leaving the safe refuge of the island himself seemed to have no appeal for him.

Bunter did not want to be collared by Sir Hilton's keepers, or Greyfriars prefects. He did not want to interview the Head! Above all he did not want to meet the hunted gunman in the dusky woods. Not all the provisions in Chunkley's Stores would have induced

William George Bunter to make that venture.

Supper on Popper's Island that evening was very frugal. Even bread had to be economised, and butter was very scanty. There were some eggs, and some sardines, and a few other things, whacked out with care.

Obviously the rebels could not leave the island while the excitement of the gunman hunt was going on. The tow-path, generally almost deserted, was crowded all day. The woods, usually silent, were echoing to footfalls and shouting voices. There were a dozen boats up and down the river. All Sir Hilton Popper's keepers were out and on the alert, and two or three dozen gamekeepers from other estates had joined up to help. Greyfriars prefects had been seen a dozen times up and down the bank. Matters had to be allowed to quieten down before another expedition was made. Scores of pairs of eyes would be on the rebels at once if they started, and it was not likely that they would have a chance of getting back.

Bunter cared for none of these things! Bunter was thinking of food. And when Bunter was thinking of food, there was no room in his fat intellect for other considerations.

He sat and glowered.

His surreptitious feed that afternoon had been fairly extensive. But that was long ago. He was hungry again—fearfully hungry! Like an extremely fat Peri at the gate of Paradise, he eyed the good things he might not share.

But there was no help for Bunter!

Rations were the order of the day, and Bunter had had his rations, twice told! And that was that!

"If you'd like my egg, Bunter—" said the Bounder, suddenly.

Bunter brightened.

"Oh, good! You're a good chap, Smithy!" he gasped.

"One of the best!" agreed the Bounder. He held up an egg-cup, with a large egg showing in it. "Like it?"

Tom Redwing, who was sitting beside the Bounder, stared at him for a moment, and then grinned. He had seen Smithy consume that egg to the last morsel. He had also seen him reverse the egg-shell in the egg-cup when he had finished. Bunter hadn't!

Bunter stretched out an eager fat hand.

"Hand it over, old chap!" he gasped.

"You're not a mean beast like Wharton—or a stingy rotter like Cherry—hand it over. Gimme a spoon somebody."

"Here's a spoon!"

It might have been supposed that Smithy had saved Bunter's life from the expression on his fat face! Joy and relief were depicted there! He took the egg-cup in one fat hand and the spoon in the other.

Crack! Bunter jammed the spoon into the egg!

It went in very easily!

The egg-shell collapsed! Bunter blinked at it! His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles in his surprise.

"Oh," gasped Bunter. "Oh, lor'! I—I say, there ain't any egg in this! I say, it's empty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter as he realised that his fat leg had been pulled. "Yah! Beast! Rotter!"

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

Bunter hurled egg-shell and egg-cup to the ground. He gave the playful Bounder a look that ought to have withered him on the spot. So far from being withered, however, the Bounder roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" howled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I'm fearfully hungry."

"Good!"

"I'm famished!"

"Bravo!"

"I'm as empty as a drum!" groaned Bunter. "My tummy's just like a drum."

"Let's beat the drum!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter went supperless to bed. And, for the first time since the Greyfriars rebellion had started, and the rebels had camped on Popper's Island, the fat Owl's unmusical snore did not awaken the echoes of the Sark.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Two in the Dark!

MIDNIGHT!

Under the glimmering starlight, the Sark murmured and rippled round the dark island. A dim uncertain glimmer came through the branches over the camp in the glade. There was a sound of steady breathing from the dim forms stretched in slumber.

A fat face, adorned by a large pair of spectacles that caught a gleam of the stars, was put out of a tent. Bunter was not sleeping. Every other fellow was safe in the embrace of Morpheus. Sleeping, as a rule, was Bunter's long suit. He could generally sleep anywhere and anyhow. Now he couldn't! Sleeping was second on Bunter's list of the joys of life. Eating came first! And Bunter was hungry—ravenously hungry!

All was silent and still, and he crept quietly out of the tent!

He had to be cautious! If any of the fellows had awakened and spotted him, Bunter's last state would certainly have been worse than his first. He had had one lesson on the subject of grub raiding. They would have been quite ready to give him another.

On tiptoe, quaking, the fat Owl stole forth. On tiptoe he crept among the slumbering juniors. The big tin trunk, which formed the camp larder, was at his mercy if he succeeded in reaching it without awakening any of the fellows. It stood beside the cooking-stove, in the deep, dark shadow of a tree on the edge of the glade. Once safe in that deep, dark shadow, the hungry fat Owl would be secure from discovery, even if any fellow had awakened and looked round. He headed for that spot cautiously.

Suddenly, close on it, he stopped, his fat heart thumping, and listened. A faint sound had come from under the dark boughs of the beech tree where the camp larder lay. It sounded to Bunter like the creak of the lid of the tin trunk being lifted stealthily.

Bunter gasped.

If somebody else was at the trunk, it meant that another raid grabbed was on the trail. Skinner or Snoop or Fishy, perhaps—they were mean enough for it, in Bunter's opinion.

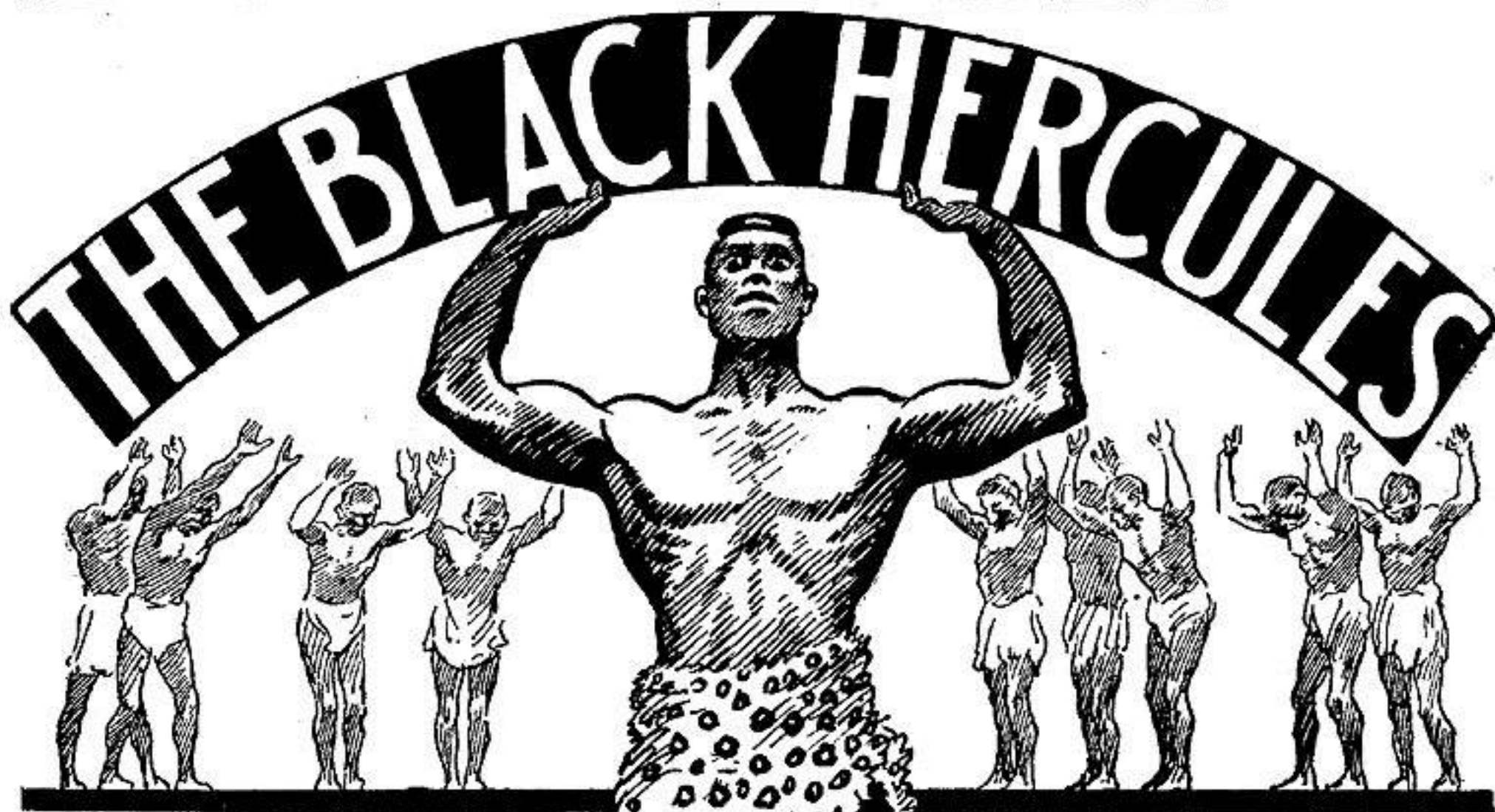
He listened intently.

Somebody was there, unseen in the blackness; but his fat ears caught another slight sound. He fancied that he could detect hurried breathing.

"The awful rotter!" breathed Bunter. "Sneaking cad—bagging the grub while the fellows are asleep! Mean beast!"

It was certain that somebody was up and fumbling with the tin trunk. It was not likely to occur to Bunter that

(Continued on page 28.)



Buried for Ever!

FROM a hidden observation post high up on the Rand, Sir Watkin Tomson, Commander-in-Chief of the South African forces, gazed across the long stretch of mine workings surrounding Johannesburg. His hair, which a few days before had been iron-grey, was now white, and his fine face was creased and lined with care, while the upright, soldierly bearing had given place to a stoop of utter dejection and hopelessness.

"It is impossible to fight against those—those things!" he muttered in a broken tone to his three companions, drawing a shaky hand across his forehead.

"Well, it's a pretty stiff proposition, sir," agreed Wing-Commander Bowman, "but we can't let those steel hordes simply walk through the country without putting up any opposition."

Sir Watkin Tomson took control of his nerves again and pulled himself up.

"No, you're right, Bowman," he said grimly. "The sight of those countless mechanical soldiers unnerved me for the moment."

The scene in front of them was enough to make the bravest man tremble, for the whole countryside was literally swarming with steel men marching in an odd, jerky fashion, but in perfect formation. The commander knew that the mechanical soldiers were constructed of bullet-proof metal, and that each one carried a deadly radium rifle.

"We'll find some way of ditching 'em, sir," remarked Speedy Jack Carter, the young air-mail pilot, "won't we, Tickler?"

"You bet we will. You'll see our plan work all right," replied Tickler Johnson, with a cheerfulness he was far from feeling.

The two English chums had been the first whites in Africa to know of this awful terror which was now approaching, for their mail plane had crashed in Angola near a wonderful steel city operated entirely by radium. They found that this city was controlled by an enormous negro who called himself King Hercules, and who planned to

establish a Black Empire by driving all the whites out of Africa.

Hercules was an extraordinary man, and with the aid of a renegade Portuguese, named Miguel Golanzo, he had produced thousands of silent radium-driven war planes. In addition, he had countless steel soldiers called Amarobs, and hundreds of incredibly fast bullet cars, all operated by radio activity.

It was only by temporarily wrecking the main radium control plant that Jack and Tickler had managed to escape in one of the wonder planes, to give warning of the approach of the Black Terror. Now their worst fears had been realised, and spread out before them was the advancing horde of Amarobs, relentless and irresistible.

Sir Watkin Tomson gave a signal, and away on the right there was a puff of white smoke, followed by a dull boom as one of the field batteries opened fire, followed by others all round.

Anxiously the four observers watched to see the effect of the bombardment, but the big field pieces might just as well have been throwing peas. Except where direct hits were scored the shells made scarcely any difference to the rapidly moving "troops." Gaps closed up as if by magic, and Amarobs sent flying by the force of the explosion simply picked themselves up and marched on again.

"There's nothing for it but to explode the mine workings," said Jack; and the commander nodded grimly.

Picking up his field-glasses, Jack focused them, while Tickler stood before a rough-and-ready switchboard which the engineers had hastily constructed.

There were about fifty thousand of the Amarob troops advancing in five separate waves one behind the other, on a front of some four or five miles, and Jack kept his eyes glued on a shaft which marked the position of the mines farthest away.

As the last line of Amarobs surged up to the shaft and marched past, he lifted his forefinger, and Tickler pressed the first switch. With a terrific rumbling the whole length of mine workings collapsed, leaving a huge impassable rift in the ground behind the Amarobs.

Instantly the steel men redoubled the rate of their advance and split into two, so that they moved rapidly right and left, extending their front at incredible speed. But with Bowman's assistance Jack and Tickler had laid their plans well.

"Flanks!" rapped Jack; and with a roar the mine workings on either side of the Amarobs collapsed.

The mechanical horde broke into a queer ungainly double, and came racing on. But they were not quick enough. A third detonation made a huge rift in the ground in front of them and they were trapped. The foremost ranks fell headlong into the collapsed workings while the rest suddenly halted.

With slow deliberation, Tickler pressed down switch after switch to explode the workings under the huge square in which the Amarobs were caught. The air became filled with dust as if some gigantic sandstorm was raging, and the whole earth shuddered and trembled as the deep mine workings collapsed.

Slowly but relentlessly what had been solid ground caved in beneath the mechanical men, and they disappeared from sight, to be buried under thousands of tons of earth.

"That was the only way to stop them," said Jack. "But unless I'm very much mistaken Hercules will soon have another army ready to launch on us, and

"We shan't find a trap like that for 'em again."

The little party returned to the commander-in-chief's headquarters at the Johannesburg airport, and got busy with preparations for resisting the inevitable second attack. Every available aeroplane in the State was called into service and placed under Bowman's control. Special trains raced dozens of tanks of all sizes to the city, while huge guns mounted on railway trucks were brought up and shunted into position. Heavy lorries poured into the city with ammunition and high explosives, and batteries of anti-aircraft guns were hastily rigged up.

Everything was carried out at top speed, for Sir Watkin realised that a fresh attack might materialise at any moment.

Sure enough, less than twelve hours after the destruction of the first Amarob army another flight of troop carriers was reported over Mafeking.

Profiting by his experience of the previous occasion, when the two chums had turned the explosive carriers and crashed them into the steel army, Hercules sent his troop carriers unaccompanied.

Jack, Tickler, and Bowman took the air in the big control plane, in which the two chums had escaped from Hercules, and waited for the oncoming fleet, while the rest of the defending aircraft were lined up in readiness.

"Here they come," announced Jack, as a blotch appeared in one corner of the screen and quickly resolved itself into a flight of planes.

"Gosh," muttered Tickler, "there must be a thousand of 'em!"

"Yes—and look!" Jack pointed out a larger plane flying behind, and higher, than the main fleet. "It's useless to try turning this lot, there's a control plane with 'em."

Jack depressed the control lever and dropped straight down into the huge, wide fissure caused by the collapse of the mine workings.

The plane dropped some way below ground level before Jack halted its progress and switched the screen up the other way. The three companions saw the enemy planes go flashing past above them at a terrific speed.

"Nearly caught that time," grunted Jack. "If we'd been in the air we might have got under the influence of that control plane. It was more powerful than this one."

They rose into the air again, and were in time to see the black fleet speed over the city and land two or three miles to the south.

"If I'm, they don't mean to get caught again!" said Tickler. "And they've cut off our retreat this time!"

In the Nick of Time!

"WHAT on earth has happened?" cried Bowman, as the machine dropped down to the landing ground.

"Where are all the planes gone?"

Jack nodded grimly towards what at first sight appeared to be a broad level thoroughfare running straight as a die from the aerodrome right through the city.

"The pilot of that control plane must have switched on the radium ray projector as he passed over the airport," said Tickler. "The rays will destroy practically anything in their path, and I'm afraid we've got no planes now."

See how all the buildings they passed over have disappeared!"

The three companions dropped from the plane, and were met by a crowd of amazed and uneasy Staff officers. The military men seemed unable to believe their eyes, and they recounted how when the enemy planes had passed overhead everything in a direct line below their flight had simply disappeared. Practically every plane had gone, and the airport buildings had been cut clean in half as if by some gigantic oxy-acetylene cutter.

As Jack and Tickler feared, the batteries of anti-aircraft guns had proved powerless against the strange planes, and the Amarobs were already being unloaded at top speed to the south of the city.

Sir Watkin Tomson in his headquarters was very agitated, and he called Bowman and the two chums into conference to ask their advice.

"The first thing to do is to put that main control plane out of action," said Jack. "While that is here we shall be liable to be wiped out by the radium ray."

"I've a better idea than that," said Tickler. "It would be practically impossible to get a direct hit first time, and before one of those big guns could get loaded again the ray would have wiped it out. I suggest, sir, that you get the troops all ready to evacuate while we try to put the control plane out of action."

Sir Watkin nodded.

"I'm afraid I'm in your hands, boys," he said. "You are the only ones who have any experience against this terrible menace."

Without further ado, the two chums returned to their plane, while Tickler explained his scheme. A few crisp orders sent men moving at the double, and at top speed a large cradle was fixed underneath the plane. Into this cradle was placed a huge aerial impact bomb, while Jack hastily rigged up a release cord which could be operated from inside the cabin.

Ten minutes later they were in the air, with Jack at the controls and Tickler seated before the photographic screen. Below they could see the deserted city, while beyond it the rows of massed Amarobs were lining up in readiness for the attack.

In a few seconds the pals were over the enemy machines, and Jack moved the controls to rise higher. To his horror, the machine refused to answer, and he suddenly realised that the control plane below had a stronger radium apparatus than their own, and that they had unsuspectingly flown right into its power like a fly into a spider's web.

Beads of perspiration stood out on Jack's forehead as he realised the peril and struggled with the controls. Their own apparatus was strong enough to put up some resistance, but they felt themselves being slowly but surely drawn downwards as the plane answered the stronger power of the machine below.

With grim face, Tickler stared into the screen, and saw the big control plane below grow nearer and larger until they were only about twenty feet above it.

"Here goes!" he said, and pulled at the release cord, although he knew that the explosion would probably destroy them as well as the plane below.

Almost immediately there was a terrific report, and the roof of the cabin seemed to fall in and hit the two boys

on the head. The plane was flung high into the sky by the sudden rush of air, and the chums knew no more.

On the ground the aerial bomb had done its work well, for by its very weight it had smashed through the control plane and the machine was torn to pieces, while rank upon rank of the massed Amarobs were bowled over like rows of ninepins by the force of the explosion.

Jack and Tickler came to their senses a moment or two later, to find themselves racing along at top speed. Fortunately, the plane was undamaged, for, like all high explosives, the bomb had spent its force sideways, and, being directly over it, they had escaped the worst effects. The control lever was still as Jack had left it, and he quickly slipped it over to reverse.

In a few seconds they were back once more at the airport, where Bowman quickly explained Sir Watkin's idea for evacuating the city. Although the danger from the Amarobs was just as great as ever, it was possible to make plans without fear of the terrible ray.

Field-telephonists from their outposts on the edge of the city reported that the Amarobs had started to advance. Their front extended across the main railway line to Kroonstad, but they had not yet reached the line to Kimberley, and the commander-in-chief proceeded to put his plans into action. For some five or six miles south of the city the railway and road to Kimberley ran almost parallel, and Sir Watkin gave orders for the big guns to be trained so that shells were dropped all along on either side. In a very short time road and railway were both hedged by deep shellholes, which would very effectively impede any attempt by the Amarobs to reach the line.

As many troops as possible were crammed into the big tanks, which immediately lumbered off down the road, while the guns were all coupled up and the rest of the men quickly embarked on a train.

Jack and Bowman went up in the plane to keep watch on the enemy while the long, heavy train with four huge locomotives each end pulled out of the doomed city and slowly got under way.

From their vantage point Jack and the wing-commander saw the convoy of tanks get safely past the Amarob lines without mishap. But, as if realising that the prey was slipping from their grasp, a horde of the steel men started to swarm over the shellholes to reach the railway.

The first ones fell headlong into the deep pits and were unable to get out, but others came tumbling on top of them so fast that the holes simply filled up with the grotesque figures, and the rear ranks were able to clamber over them on to the line.

Some two or three hundred succeeded in reaching the rails, where they ranged themselves stiffly at attention along each side of the track.

As the heavy train picked up speed Tickler, who was on the footplate of the leading engine, peered through the spectacle glass and saw the row of mechanical men. He could not at first make out what they were going to do, but as he watched, the Amarobs all bent down jerkily and started to tear at the rails.

With a yell of dismay, Tickler jumped for the whistle and gave three sharp hoots as a signal to the other engines; then, pushing the astounded driver to

one side, he seized the regulator handle and shoved it hard over.

As the other engines followed his lead the train seemed literally to jump forward at terrific speed, lurching and swaying violently on the narrow-gauge track.

With set face Tickler stared through the glass and saw that the Amarobs were just in the act of lifting one length of track. They tugged desperately to drag it from its bed of ballast, but the roaring train was on them. There was a grinding crash and the shrill sound of tearing metal as the heavy train raced into the middle of the mechanical soldiers. The air was filled with flying steel, and great fragments smashed into the engine cab.

For a breathless second the flying wheels slipped, and the big engines lurched ominously on the displaced metals; but, with a screech of protesting tyres, the train was past the danger-spot and pounded on to safety.

A Battle of Wits!

BOWMAN shrugged his broad shoulders hopelessly as he watched the tape-machine in the new headquarters Sir Watkin Tomson had set up at Kimberley after the retreat from Johannesburg.

The news was enough to make the bravest man despair. The whole of Rhodesia and the Transvaal had fallen to the relentless and irresistible Amarobs. Hercules had laid his plans well, for the news that a great Black Emperor had come to release the negro race spread like magic to the wildest and most inaccessible parts. While the steel troops were concentrated on the large white towns and centres of civilisation the natives in the bush and the more sparsely settled districts changed overnight from indolent, easy-going "boys" to fierce warriors filled with bloodlust.

The Bakwena and the Bangwaketsi, the Matabele and the Mashona, the Barolong and the Barotse had all risen in rebellion. Lourenco Marques had fallen, amid terrible scenes, to the Gaza, while enormous impi of Zulu, Swazi, and Basuto warriors were closing on Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg.

Farther south, in the portion of the Union still under white control, the position was little better. The large Chinese and Indian Colonies in the bigger towns had joined forces with the natives, and open terrorism reigned, and still the revolt grew.

"Hercules has sent an ultimatum to the Governor-General," announced Bowman to the two chums. "He has offered to cease hostilities if all whites will immediately withdraw from the country. The House of Assembly has rejected the proposal without discussion."

"I'm not surprised," remarked Jack; "although they might not have been so quick about it if they'd seen as much of Hercules' power as we have."

"Here's another item," continued Bowman. "Hercules has announced that as his offer has been turned down he will immediately bomb Kimberley and Bloemfontein. So we'd better get busy."

Without further ado Jack and Tickler left the G.H.Q. and boarded their plane in order to be able to give warning of the approach of the black explosive carriers.

The weather was cloudy, but intensely hot, and there seemed an eerie stillness everywhere as the machine rose straight up into the sky. Climbing to a height of some 20,000 feet, the chums saw about

fifty explosive carriers approaching from the north, with a large control plane flying behind them.

"That's done it!" groaned Jack. "There's no hope of our being able to turn 'em."

A crackling noise, followed by a vivid blue flash, caused him to give attention to the control board, but he could see nothing wrong. Switching over to climb, he found the machine rose easily enough, and almost immediately there was a frightful crash which nearly deafened the occupants of the plane.

"What's up?" cried Jack, startled by the appalling noise. "Have they started already?"

"It's all right," Tickler assured him, gazing into the photographic screen. "That was a thunderclap. There's a terrific storm on below, and those chaps are going to run right into it. Wonder what'll happen? We're well above it now, so there's no need for us to worry."

They peered into the screen, fascinated by the sight below. The enemy planes were being tossed about like corks, while vivid flashes of lightning stabbed in and out around them. Suddenly a great blue streak shot across the sky and seemed to go clean through the main control plane. In a fraction of a second the machine had disappeared in fragments, and, bereft of their control, the explosive carriers went tumbling headlong towards the earth.

"That'll teach Hercules he can't beat Nature, anyway," chuckled Tickler, as the enemy planes became rapidly smaller.

"Never mind about that," rapped Jack. "They'll blow the place up! Quick!"

He jammed the control plug into its socket and Tickler gripped the lever, moving it slowly forward and upward.

The disappearing planes checked their rapid descent, glided forward, and then slowly began to rise in obedience to Tickler's movements.

"Gosh!" whistled Jack. "We've got control of a whole fleet now. Let's try to intercept the flight that is going to bomb Bloemfontein. We might be able to engage them with this lot."

"But their control plane will be able to operate these," protested Tickler.

"No it won't," said Jack. "You ought to know by this time, that once these planes are set to work from a control plane they will obey the one nearest to them! Well, then, so long as we keep close enough we can do what we like with these."

Tickler nodded agreement, and with the deadly explosive carriers flying below, they set off towards Bloemfontein. Owing to the terrific speed of the aircraft it was only a matter of minutes before the chums were over the Orange Free State capital, and they could see at a glance that the enemy had not yet arrived.

Taking their planes well up, they waited for the arrival of the bombers, and amused themselves by speculating in the result of a fight between the rival fleets.

In less than half an hour, the bombers appeared from the north-west, and without hesitation the pals set out to meet them.

"Can't have these things falling about all over Bloemfontein," grinned Tickler, with a cheerfulness he was far from feeling. "Let's see how the separate controls work."

He pulled out a series of switches, each of which operated a formation of five planes independently of the others, and tested them.

They worked quite satisfactorily, and he set the fleet in arrowhead formation. The rival planes came on at top speed, their controller apparently unaware of his danger, and in a few seconds the two fleets met.

If the pals had reckoned on surprising their adversary they were mistaken, for the oncoming planes rose suddenly just as a crash seemed imminent.

"Take five switches each," cried Jack, and with his eyes glued on the screen, he started to juggle with the levers.

Up and round he brought his planes in an effort to crash them into those of the enemy, but without success.

Tickler, in his excitement, tried to crash one of his groups into the black control plane, forgetting that the machines would come under the guidance of their rival immediately they were nearer to him.

He muttered an imprecation as he found that his thoughtlessness had cost them five planes, but soon forgot his annoyance when he succeeded in driving one group right in the middle of the enemy fleet.

There was an earsplitting din as the explosive carriers met head-on and disappeared in a cloud of fine dust.

"That's seven of his and five of ours gone west," chuckled Tickler, bringing another group round to the attack.

Their adversary tried desperately to get away, but the boys countered each move skilfully and soon had the satisfaction of seeing another dozen of the attacking planes blown to atoms.

This setback apparently made the black controller hesitate. He circled his fleet round and round as if trying to make up his mind whether to turn back or try to break through.

Suddenly he strung his fleet out in a long line and came forward at top speed.

"I suppose he reckons to crash through," said Jack. "He ought to know that won't work!"

The two pals set their own planes in position and waited. Their keen eyes were watching every movement and their fingers were ready on the switches to counter the rising or dropping of the enemy fleet.

To their surprise the black planes did not attempt to swerve, but came straight on, and as the rival flights of planes met, the whole sky seemed to split in two under the force of the terrific explosion.

(Continued on page 28.)



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Jack and Tickler felt themselves flung into the air and dragged down again by the whirling eddies, and they were so intent on getting their craft back on an even keel, that they did not realise the plan of their opponent.

The Zulu pilot had seen that he could not get his explosive carriers past them, but he realised that there would always be a certain amount of danger to Hercules' plans while these two white lads possessed one of the control planes.

With the desperate bravery of a blind devotion to the new emperor he worshipped, the black man had decided to destroy the control plane operated by the two boys by crashing his own into it. His plan of sending the explosive carriers forward was only a ruse to put the white lads off their guard for a few moments, and it succeeded.

As Jack wrestled with his controls the other plane came shooting out of the maze of smoke and dust, straight at them.

Quick as thought, Tickler snatched at the main switch and tore it free, and without its driving power the machine started to drop, just as the enemy plane reached them.

There was a tearing of metal as the top of the plane was torn away, and the next moment they were a thousand feet below, falling like a plummet.

Tickler jabbed the switch back, and prayed that it would work. For a nerve-racking space of time they continued to fall, but gradually the rate of descent eased, and they sighed with heartfelt relief as the machine slid forward again.

"Gosh!" remarked Jack, as the damaged plane landed at Kimberley without further mishap. "We managed to stop those bombing squads of Hercules' and we're still alive! With a little more experience of his plans we'll beat him yet."

"You bet it won't be for want of trying," nodded Tickler grimly.

(Watch out next week for the final chapters of this thrilling adventure yarn and AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!)

THE SECRET OF THE OLD OAK!

(Continued from page 24.)

a desperate man, long hidden in the tall oak, had crept down while the camp slept to help himself to food. No thought of the hunted gunman was in Bunter's fat mind. He only wondered whether the depredator was Skinner or Snoop or Fisher T. Fish.

Whoever it was he was not going to raid the grub alone. Bunter was going to join in that proceeding. He crept on.

There was a sudden, startled gasp in the blackness under the beech. Bunter knew that the unseen one there had spotted him. But he had no time to think further. A dark shadow loomed for a second before his startled eyes, and the next moment he was staggering under a fierce blow that sent him spinning.

Crash! Bunter went down with a terrific bump.

He roared wildly as he hit Popper's Island.

"Oh! Ow! Yaroooh! Whooooop!"

The dark shadow flitted for a split second, and was gone. If there was a faint sound from the big oak, as a desperate man clambered back to safety, it was lost in the startled exclamations of the awakening juniors. Bunter's roar had startled the whole camp.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"Who—"

"Is it the jolly old enemy?"

"It's Bunter!"

"Yaroooh! Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter, sprawling. "Oh crikey! Ow!"

Harry Wharton & Co. leaped to their feet. They stared round them in the dim glimmer of starlight in the glade. Billy Bunter's frantic roars guided them to the spot where he lay sprawling in the grass. They stared down at him.

"Bunter—"

"What—"

"After the grub!" yelled the Bounder.

"Bag him!"

"Scrag him!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, sitting up dizzily. "I—I wasn't after the grub. I—I say, some other fellow was after the grub! He knocked me down—ow! Thumped me on the chest! Wow! I'm fearfully hurt! Yow!"

"Bump him!"

"Thump him!"

"Burst him!"

Billy Bunter's life for the next five minutes was crammed with incident. What happened to him he hardly knew. But he knew that he was bumped and thumped and ragged and scragged, till there was hardly a breath left in his fat carcass. It was a fearfully exciting time for Bunter; and he even forgot that he was hungry.

When the wrathful Removites had done with him, Bunter was not thinking of grub. He was not thinking at all. He was gurgling wildly for his second wind.

"Is that enough for you, Bunter?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Urrrggh!"

"Are you going to leave the grub alone?"

"Wurrreggh!"

"Roll him home!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Yurrgh!"

Bunter was rolled back to his tent. He was left there, gurgling, and the camp settled down to sleep.

For a long, long time gasps and gurgles and guggles came from Bunter's tent. And when he ceased at last to gasp and gurgle and guggle, he did not venture forth in search of grub again. Even Bunter was tired of grub raiding after that severe lesson. He slept at last, and his snore rumbled over the camp, and he dreamed that he was on a desert island, and had had nothing to eat for weeks and weeks and weeks.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next yarn in this grand series in which the Greysfriars rebels meet with further exciting adventures on Popper's Island. Note the title: "FISHY'S FEARFUL FIX!" and prepare for a real good treat!)

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THE NEW Greyfriars Herald



No. 95 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

July 28th, 1934.

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GREYFRIARS 100 YEARS AGO

July 24th, 1834, will surely go down as the most brilliant River Pageant Day ever known! Never before, in our judgment, have the banks of the Sark been adorned with such a gathering of illustrious males and beauteous females, and never have fashion and wealth been displayed to greater advantage.

The weather for the great occasion was ideal, the sun shining from a cloudless sky all day. The college was astir at an early hour and a constant procession of carriages and coaches, bearing parents and relatives, was soon passing through the gateway into the quadrangle.

At eleven o'clock the first race was rowed, and from that time onwards the fun, as the poet Burns put it, grew fast and furious. Oarsmen, from the giants of the Sixth Form down to mere babes of the First Form, vied with each other in showing visitors what masters of river craftsmanship they were, and the high-pitched voices of the ladies mingled pleasantly with the deeper voices of their gallant escorts in encouraging the competitors to greater efforts.

The most exciting incident of the day occurred when the half-mile race between the Fifth and the Fourth was terminating. Captain Culgrain, one of the judges, was standing too near the edge of the judges' raft for safety and, in leaning forward to gauge the finish, lost his balance and toppled into the water! Amid the hubbub that ensued, George Wharton of the Fourth and William Surtees of the Fifth were seen to dive in from their respective boats and swim to the rescue of the hapless man. Both are excellent swimmers, and they quickly brought Captain Culgrain up and piloted him back to the raft, where he was found to be little the worse for his disconcerting experience.

The result of the race, we should add, was declared to be a tie.

At dusk there was the customary procession of boats, illuminated by hundreds of torches, and afterwards a fireworks display of exceptional beauty and brilliance which excited much appreciative comment and frequent applause.

Without a doubt River Pageant Day this year has been a signal triumph for all concerned.

(Reading this makes us feel regretful that River Pageant Day at Greyfriars ever died out. They certainly knew how to enjoy themselves in the old days! It's an awful pity there's no record of the day's results. We'd give a day's pocket money to know how the babes of the First Form—which, of course, no longer exists—got on with their race!—Ed.)

LEARN HYPNOTISM THIS VAC

And come back to Greyfriars next term armed with a power that will make you the Terror of the Beaks! Stamp for parties.—PROFESSOR SNOOP, Box 333, "Greyfriars Herald."

COKER WEEK BY WEEK

Midnight Misadventure The Latest

Coker is a regular fiend for the open air at any time, so it came as no surprise when this week's heat-wave sent him into the open air to sleep.

Sleeping out of doors is not allowed at Greyfriars, so it had to be done on the strict q.t. Coker made all his preparations during the day. Having purchased a hammock and blankets from Chunkley's, at Courtfield, he hid them under one of the bushes near the gates all ready for night-fall. When bedtime came he slipped out of the House and fixed up the hammock between two trees near the school wall and calmly went to sleep in it.

It is hardly necessary to state that adventure came to Coker in the dead of night. It would, of course!

At an hour when all Greyfriars was wrapped in slumber, Coker awoke with a start to find

that some body was climbing over the wall into the quad. Coker didn't hesitate. With the newcomer dropped to the ground he went for him like a bull at a gate!

A few seconds later Greyfriars awoke to the sound of triumphant yells of "Got him! Wake up, everybody, and call the police! I've caught a burglar!"

Lights were switched on and fellows tumbled out of bed all over the House. In a short space of time the Head and several masters were running out into the quad.

Coker had certainly got his man right enough. He was dragging him across the lawn like a sack of coals.

There was only one drawback.

It wasn't a burglar after all. It was a different kind of night bird altogether.

Gerald Loder, to be precise!

PRESS ATTACK ON FAGS UNJUST

Not So Ill-mannered

The fags are fairly up in arms about the article, "Ill-Mannered Children," which appeared in a recent number of the "Sixth Form Magazine." They say it's a rotten shame and like the dashed nerve of the Sixth to attack them in this fashion. What's more, they add, the statements of the "Sixth Form Magazine" are untrue from beginning to end!

We must say we rather sympathise with the youngsters. The article they object to is to the effect that manners in the Third and Second Forms have gone to pot lately. We don't agree with that at all.

Our own idea is that Third and Second Form manners have shown a decided improvement in recent months.

We've kept a watchful eye on the fags lately, and in many ways they're much better than they used to be. For instance, at one time,



in the dining-hall, a fag who wanted the salt would rest his elbow in his neighbour's soup and lean over to get it

himself. Nowadays he yells across the table "Here, you! Gimme that salt!" The improvement in this respect is remarkable.

Then take dismissal of classes. We remember a time when morning break was the signal for a wild rush of kids out of the School House, yelling and whooping like Redskins on the warpath.

Now they play leapfrog, or trip each other up down the steps. Nobody, we venture to assert, can deny that they're much more polite to the masters. Why, in the old days, they used to doff their caps to a beak and make a "long nose" at him when he had passed. What a difference from the respectful doffing of the cap and poking-out of the tongue that we see to-day!

The more we think about it the more we feel that, by accusing the fags of bad manners, the "Sixth Form Magazine" has done them grave injustice.

SENSATION IN LITERARY WORLD

Fag's Epoch-making Essay

Last week we announced an essay competition for fags on the subject of "Soap." This week we have pleasure in announcing that the competition has been a staggering success!

We quite expected, of course, that our generous offer of herrings, doughnuts and ginger-pop would attract a large number of entries. What we did not expect was that entries would be received from nearly all the fags in the school; but that, nevertheless, is what has happened!

The essays are all of an extremely high standard, and the judges were amazed at the quality of the work submitted. They had little difficulty, however, in deciding on the winner, for one essay stood out at a first reading as a work of supreme genius and created an immediate sensation. As one of the judges remarked, it was lucid, logical, faultless in grammar and inspired in phraseology.

The prize, then, is awarded to the author of the masterpiece:

DICKY NUGENT. Second Form.

Here is his winning effort:—

SOAP.

Soap are a blessed newscience. The chap what invented soap must have been a silly beast. Why they want such a thing as soap beats me completely.

Soap's all right for them what like it. I don't—and I never did see why those what like soap should be so jolly anxious to get those who don't like soap to like it like they like it.

Soap am useful sometimes, of corse. It comes in handy when you want to grease the bannister rails for sliding, and it's just the stuff to add to Bolsover's ginger-beer when he's not looking. Apart from that, however, I ain't got much use for soap myself.

This essay ought to win the phirst prize. Let soap it does!

We should tell you that Master Nugent obtained top points for everything—composition, spelling and neatness. His neatness was really remarkable. A mere ten blots soiled his manuscript, as compared with twenty on the manuscript of the next best.

BATHING COSTUMES IN CLASS

Amazing Heat Wave Incident

When we tell you that Bunter was the only man in the Remove who didn't take advantage of Mr. Quelch's permission to adopt heat-wave wear in class the other morning, you may possibly form the opinion that Bunter

like in class this morning—bathing costumes, if they wish! The weather is far too hot for ordinary suits!"

You can just imagine the rush for the dorm, that ensued on the strength of that unexpected little speech! In the space of five minutes the Remove had changed their workaday togs for flannel bags and open-necked shirts, footer shorts and gym vests, and a variety of other costumes suitable for a sweltering day. Some even took the Beak at his word and went in for bathing costumes!



Bunter alone was left in his usual clobber.

"Why didn't you change, Fatty?" was the question a dozen Removites hurled at Bunter in the Form-room.

Bunter's reply was staggering.

"The fact is, I don't approve of wearing holiday clobber in class!" he said. "But we've got Quelch's permission!" howled Bunter's interrogators.

"He, he, he! Perhaps Quelch won't be so keen on it when he sees you!"

Before we had time to work out the meaning of that cryptic remark, Mr. Quelch walked in.

Much to our surprise he glared with a glare that almost shrivelled us up.

"What, may I ask, is the meaning of this?" he almost yelled.

"We—we did as you told us, sir!" gasped Wharton. "You told us we could wear anything we liked and—"

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



When he has his favourite Winchester repeater in his hand, Mr. Prout fancies that his eye is as good as ever—which may be the reason why, when "potting" rabbits, he accidentally knocked off P.-o. Tozer's helmet!

Coker, of the Fifth, has what he calls a "short way" with fags. When he tried to order Harry Wharton & Co. about in the quad, the "fags" had a short way with Coker—bumping him soundly, to Coker's painful astonishment!

Hertert Vernon-Smith has a reputation for remaining completely untroubled in emergencies. Even when a chimney-pot fell a few feet from him in the quad, "Smithy" sauntered on, unperturbed by his narrow escape!

Bunter says if he could live his life over again he would pay due attention to his figure, which he fears is sagging through inadequate "stuffing." He would eat twice as much and be twice the fellow—if possible!

When Peter Todd nicknamed Bunter the "Owl," he was thinking only of the likeness when Bunter blinks in at the study door. Owls are supposed to be wise—but Mr. Quelch is frequently in despair at Bunter's fatuousness!

When he bought a second-hand "movie" camera, Fisher T. Fish thought he could give the film producers points. A frenzied effort at production with Bunter intruding in every scene made Fish "reel" and want to "fade out!"

Dicky Nugent's Weekly Wisdom

Sammy Bunter is giving up his habit of winking. He winked when a fly was nocking about, and it took the doctor an hour to get that fly out of his eye.

I suppose Sammy felt that this eggspence put the "lid" on it!

A Successful House Party

Is assured, if you engage me as the life and soul of it! Favoured guests kept amused and undisturbed got rid of like lightning. Japes, rags and comic cricket matches organised!—WILLIAM WIBLEY, Box 222, "Greyfriars Herald."