

"THE FUGITIVE of the MOOR!" This week's Thrilling Story of HARRY WHARTON & CO. the Chums of Greyfriars.

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The FUGITIVE of the MOOR!



"HALLO, HALLO!" YELLED BOB CHERRY.
"THERE'S THE CONVICT!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Inedible!

"CHEEKY rotters!" grunted Billy Bunter.

Bunter was annoyed.

He stood on the terrace at Hilton Hall and blinked through his big spectacles at five fellows who were walking down the oak avenue.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove were, like Bunter, guests at Hilton Hall. And—though they had not the faintest idea of it—it was through Billy Bunter that they had received an invitation for the "hols" from Cedric Hilton of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

It was, in Bunter's opinion, rather thick for the cheeky rotters to walk off like this on a fine morning regardless of him—indeed, forgetful of his fat and important existence!

Bunter had nothing to do that morning. Hilton and Price of the Fifth had gone off somewhere in a car. Sir Gilbert and his lady were somewhere about; but Bunter was not keen on elderly society. There had been a crowd of guests at the Hall over Christmas, but they were gone now. Now the Famous Five were walking off, leaving Bunter to his own company.

Billy Bunter knew—what nobody else knew—that his own company was attractive and fascinating. Still, he did not want to be left to it.

So he blinked after the juniors on the avenue, and then bawled after them:

"I say, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped and glanced round.

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

"Wait for me!"

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BY

FRANK RICHARDS

"You coming?" sighed Bob.

"Yes, you beast!"

"We're going miles, Bunter!" called out Harry Wharton. "You'll get tired."

"Yah!"

"Look here, you silly ass, you know you can't walk!" hooted Johnny Bull. "You're too jolly lazy to, anyhow."

"I could walk any of you off your legs, and chance it!" retorted Bunter. "You just wait for me, see, while I get my coat."

"Look here, you fathhead—"

"Beast!"

"Oh, let's wait!" said Frank Nugent resignedly. "We'll give you a minute, Bunter."

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled in for his coat, and the chums of the Remove waited on the drive.

Really, they did not want to neglect their fellow-guest at Hilton Hall, but Billy Bunter was not exactly the fellow for a walk, especially on Blackmoor where the going was hard. A quarter of a mile made Bunter puff. Half a mile made him groan. A whole mile made him collapse. Really, they did not want to have to roll the fat Owl along like a barrel on a cold and frosty morning! However, they cheerfully resigned themselves to their fate and waited.

"Walsingham," hooted Bunter, "I want my coat! Where's that butler? Where's that silly ass Walsingham?"

"Your coat, sir!" said a quiet voice. Walsingham, the butler of Hilton Hall, was almost at Bunter's elbow.

"Oh, here you are!" grunted Bunter. "Hold it for me! Now, where's my cap?"

"Here is your hat, sir—"

"I don't want my hat! I want my cap! Where the thump— Oh, it's in my room! Go and fetch it, Walsingham."

The stately butler of Hilton Hall looked at Bunter. Sir Gilbert Hilton's butler was far too stately a person to be sent scuttling upstairs after a cap.

"John!" called Walsingham calmly.

A footman appeared from nowhere.

"Kindly fetch Mr. Bunter's cap from his room, John."

Billy Bunter snorted. He did not mind how long he kept the chums of the Remove waiting on the avenue, so far as that went. But they were beasts enough to walk off without him if he kept them waiting too long. Really, he had no time for Walsingham's stately manners and customs.

However, John was quickly on the spot. Walsingham ran the big establishment of Hilton Hall like clockwork, and the innumerable servants were always exactly where they were wanted at exactly the right moment.

"You'll find the cap in the armchair!" snapped Bunter.

"Yes, sir!"

"It's under the cushion on the chair!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped John.

Why a guest at Hilton Hall hid his cap under a cushion on an armchair in his room was a surprising mystery that neither the footman nor the butler could have elucidated.

John blinked at Bunter; even the stately Walsingham allowed surprise to

awn for a moment on his impassive portly features.

"Well, buck up!" snapped Bunter.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" John disappeared up the stairs.

By the time Bunter had tied his scarf and buttoned his coat John returned with the cap. He had found it in the extraordinary spot described by Bunter. It looked very rumpled and crumpled.

"Your cap, sir!" said John.

Bunter took it from him and blinked into it before he jammed it on his bullet head. There was a secret about that cap that only Bunter knew! Inside the lining a certain document was carefully hidden—a document that Cedric Hilton would have been very glad to get hold of, and which Price of the Fifth had made more than one attempt to snaffle during the Christmas holidays. But it was safe in its hiding-place, and Bunter jammed on the cap and rolled out.

"I say, you fellows!" he yelled.

Apparently tired of waiting, Harry Wharton & Co. were strolling away down the avenue. They were going slowly to give the Owl of the Remove a chance to catch them up.

"Stop for me!" roared Bunter.

If they heard they heeded not. They sauntered on, and Billy Bunter broke into a run, his fat little legs twinkling as he flew.

He overtook the Famous Five as they were turning out of a gate that gave on the open moor.

"Beasts!" he gasped. "I called to you to wait!"

"Dear me!" said Bob Cherry.

"The hearfulness is not the obeyfulness, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter snorted and rolled on with the juniors.

Far in the distance, in one direction, could be seen the high stone walls and roofs of Blackmoor Prison across the snowy moor. Beyond it the blur of smoke told where the town of Okeham lay.

But it was in the other direction that the juniors went, where a high tor rose black against the steely blue sky.

It was some time since snow had fallen, but there was plenty left on Blackmoor. A cold and frosty wind swept over the bleak moor. Five fellows thoroughly enjoyed a tramp in the keen, healthy atmosphere. Even Billy Bunter felt quite merry and bright for a time. But after half a mile, as usual, the fat Owl of Greyfriars began to puff and blow.

"I say, you fellows, where are you going?" he asked at last.

Harry Wharton pointed to the tor in the distance.

"That's more than a mile!" grunted Bunter.

"Go hon!"

"What the thump are you going up that beastly hill for?" demanded Bunter.

"Splendid view!"

"Oh, blow the view!"

"Miles and miles on a clear day like this!" said Bob Cherry. "Might spot that escaped convict from Blackmoor if he's still hanging about."

"Rot!" grunted Bunter. "Convict No. 33's cleared off long ago."

"He hasn't been caught yet," said Nugent.

"Blow him!" said Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you that I'm not clambering up that beastly hill, so you needn't think so, see?"

"If we have to lose your society for a little while, Bunter, we'll try to bear it with fortitude!" said Bob Cherry gravely.

"If you fellows want to walk, why

can't you walk to Okeham?" grunted Bunter. "There's a shop there where you can get jolly good tuck."

"You walk to Okeham!" suggested Johnny Bull.

Grunt! from Bunter. He would have preferred the pastry-cook's at Okeham to the splendid view from the summit of High Tor. But it was not of much use for Billy Bunter to walk to a pastry-cook's on his own. Pastries had to be paid for!

"Well, I'm glad you've had sense enough to bring something to eat," he said, glancing at a rather heavy attache-case that Bob Cherry carried in his hand. "Rotten place for a picnic, and rotten cold weather, too—but this air makes a fellow jolly hungry. They do us pretty well at Hilton Hall—the grub's good, I will say that! But it's a jolly long time between meals. I say, have you got something good in that bag?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Quite good!" he answered. "But you're jolly well not going to eat it, Bunter."

"It wasn't packed for you to eat," said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snorted Bunter. "If you'd told me it was a picnic, I'd have ordered Walsingham to pack something for me

Still at large, Convict No. 33 continues to haunt Hilton Hall, the mansion on the moor where Harry Wharton & Co. are spending their Christmas holidays. But the net is closing round the desperate man—and the chums of Greyfriars are very much there at the finish!

to carry. I'm going to have my whack of what's in that bag, I can tell you!"

"Not a morsel!" said Bob firmly.

"Well, you greedy beast!" exclaimed Bunter, in disgust. "You fancy you're going to picnic on the tor and leave me out?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter.

Midway between breakfast and lunch Bunter, of course, was getting hungry. Walking in the keen frosty air of the moors made him hungrier.

The bag in Bob's hand was a fairly good weight, and looked as if it was well packed. If it contained food, it looked as if there was enough for six!

It did not even occur to Billy Bunter's fat mind that possibly it did not contain food. Could any fellow, in his sane senses, start out for a long walk across the moors, carrying a heavy bag that contained anything but grub? Not so far as Bunter could guess!

He blinked at the Famous Five in almost speechless indignation. Beasts as they were, they were not, as a rule, greedy beasts! He could hardly believe his fat ears when they told him that he was not to be allowed to eat a morsel of the contents of the attache-case!

On that point, however, Bunter was determined. He was going to have his whack—and more than his whack!

He tramped on after the cheery juniors with a knitted fat brow, and little round eyes gleaming through his big round spectacles.

He puffed and he blew, he grunted and he gasped; but the thought of the ample contents of that bag spurred him on. The party reached the foot of the tor at last. Under a clump of leafless trees, banked round with snow, was a little wooden hut, used as a shelter by a shepherd in the summer-time. Now it was as lonely as Robinson Crusoe's dwelling on his island.

Bunter blinked into it and was glad to see a bench within.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come on, Bunter! We're going to the top!"

"I'm stopping here!" hooted Bunter. "I'm going to sit down, see? Look here, let's have the picnic here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you silly asses cackling at?" roared Bunter. "Look here, if you want to go to the top, I'll wait here for you, and I—I'll mind that bag for you while you're gone. It's too heavy for you to carry up the tor, Bob—you don't want to tire yourself out, old chap."

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

"Oh, do stop cackling!" snorted Bunter. "Leave the bag here! It will be safe with me!"

Bob winked at his comrades.

"You won't scoff what's in it while we're gone?" he asked.

"I hope you can trust me!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Right-ho!" Bob dropped the bag on the bench in the shepherd's hut. "We'll trust Bunter not to eat it, you men."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five, laughing, went on up the rugged slope of the tor. Billy Bunter was left with the attache-case.

He grinned.

The footsteps died away on the rugged slope. Bunter waited till the juniors were gone. Then he pounced on the attache-case. It was not locked. It opened under his fat hand.

Bunter blinked into it.

His fat jaw fell.

"Oh lor!" he gasped. "Beasts! Rotters! Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter had fully intended to start gastronomic operations immediately on the contents of that attache-case. But he didn't! He couldn't! Billy Bunter could eat almost anything. But even Billy Bunter could not eat a portable wireless set!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Blackmoor Convict!

"**B**EAST!" hissed Billy Bunter. He blinked at the wireless set.

He was strongly tempted to land his foot on it, and send it flying, so keen was his disappointment.

He restrained that impulse, however. It was only too certain that, if Bunter's foot had landed on the wireless, Bob Cherry's foot, later, would have landed on Bunter hard and often!

"The awful rotter!" hissed Bunter.

He had walked a mile and a half. The keen, frosty air had sharpened his always excellent appetite. He was hungry! And there was nothing to eat! He had taken it for granted that there was grub in that case. What was a fellow to think? But it was clear that he had taken too much for granted.

There was no grub! There was not a vestige of grub! There was the portable—merely that and nothing more.

Bunter rolled to the doorway of the hut again. He blinked after the juniors. But they were out of sight.

Very likely the beasts had sandwiches in their pockets. If so, those sandwiches were out of Bunter's reach till they came back from rambling on the tor. He shook a fat fist in the direction the juniors had taken.

If they fancied he was going to stick there, looking after that dashed wireless, they were mistaken. Bunter resolved to start back to Hilton Hall at once, and if some tramp came along and "pinched" Hilton's portable, that was the other fellows' look-out.

But the fat Owl did not start.

The thought of a possible tramp brought another thought into his fat mind—that of a more than possible convict!

Convict No. 33, who had escaped from Blackmoor Prison before Christmas, was still at large.

True, it was days since anything had been seen or heard of him. It was known that he had obtained food from some unknown helper, since his escape, or he could not have lived on the barren moor. Very likely he had cleared off, and was many miles from Blackmoor. The police and warders were hunting him—in vain. There had been a "treasure-hunt" got up to entertain the guests of Hilton Hall a day or two ago; and fellows had rambled far and wide on the moor. But no eye had fallen on Richard Pike, Convict No. 33, of Blackmoor. Ten to one he was gone for good. But—

But Bunter did not want to walk across the lonely moor by himself, all the same! The desperate man was capable of knocking him down, merely to get hold of his overcoat, as protection against the cold, if he happened on him. If he was not, after all, gone, Bunter did not want to risk meeting him alone.

He rolled back into the hut.

How long those beasts were going to be on top of the tor he did not know; very likely an hour or more. There was nothing to eat! The view from the door was bleak, even if Bunter had cared for views, which Bunter didn't! He turned to the wireless again.

Anyhow he could pass the time with it, though he could not, unfortunately, eat it. He began to twiddle the knobs. The machine was in good working order, and a squeak of Morse rewarded him.

Now that he came to think of it, Bunter realised that he might have guessed what Bob carried in that bag. Hilton of the Fifth was rather keen on wireless, and he had a magnificent electric set in his den at the Hall, as well as the portable which he sometimes took out in the car.

The Famous Five, like most schoolboys, were rather keen on the subject, too, and Bunter remembered that he had heard Hilton smilingly give Bob permission to take the portable out and try it on the open moor. Bob had an idea that the reception would be "jolly good" on the wide open spaces of Blackmoor, and no doubt he was right.

Billy Bunter was not skilful on the wireless. His fingers were all thumbs, so to speak, at that as at most things. Often, when Bunter proudly announced that he had got Rome or Moscow, the piece would be followed by an announcer's voice in English—demonstrating only too clearly that he hadn't!

Twiddling the dials, Bunter listened to morse and atmospherics, and grunted. He wondered whether there was anything "on" in the morning worth hearing. Early in the day he was, at least, safe from the prices of fat stock

and fat stockbrokers! But he did not want an entertainment consisting wholly of atmospherics.

Then he remembered that there was a concert of War veterans somewhere, which was certainly worth hearing, if he could get it. It was unfortunate that he had forgotten the station.

However, he twiddled and twiddled. "Beastly thing!" grunted Bunter.

A rousing chorus sung by old soldiers would have been grateful and comforting in that lonely, silent, desolate spot. He would have been glad to hear the voices of the cheery ex-Service men raised in a marching song.

"Blow it!" said Bunter, as nothing came.

He left it at last and went to the doorway again, in the hope of seeing something of the Famous Five. The possibility that they had sandwiches in their pockets made him anxious to see them again.

But he could see nothing of them. By that time probably they were on top of the high tor, and the rugged inequalities of the ground and straggling bushes banked with snow hid them from Bunter's eyes and spectacles.

But as he glanced over the open moor he gave a sudden start at the sight of a moving figure.

It was a rather slight figure, dapper and active, no taller than Price or Hilton of the Fifth—but a man's figure, all the same. Bunter's fat heart gave a sudden jump.

His range of vision was limited, even with the aid of his big spectacles. But he could make out that the man was coming swiftly towards the shepherd's hut at the foot of the tor, running bent low, as if desirous of avoiding observation. And, though Bunter could not clearly discern his garb, it had a resemblance to the convict garb of Blackmoor Prison.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

He watched the running, advancing figure, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

It was the convict!

He was sure of that!

The man had not, after all, fled. No doubt he had failed to find a chance of getting clear of the moors, and had lain in hiding somewhere. Now he had shown up. Why?

Bunter's first thought was to back into the hut and hunt cover there. But it dawned on his fat mind that that was useless.

Wherever the hunted man had lain in hiding, he was taking the risk of being spotted by coming out into the open. He was not taking that risk for nothing.

As he came closer Bunter had a glimpse of a hard, set, stubbly, desperate face. The man was making direct for the shepherd's hut—with a purpose!

And Bunter realised that it was useless to hide; the man knew that somebody was there. He was after clothes, food, money—anything. For all was grist that came to his mill in his desperate circumstances. It was clear to Bunter that the hunted, hidden wretch had been on the watch, that he had seen the party of schoolboys arrive at the lonely tor, and had seen five of them go on up the hill, leaving one behind with the attache-case. Desperate as he was, he would hardly have ventured to tackle the whole party. But it was easy enough to tackle one—and Bunter was the one!

The Owl of the Remove stood rooted to the ground with terror; his fat knees knocked together.

He thought of yelling for help, but

there was little chance that the Famous Five were within hearing. And the man was approaching with terrifying swiftness.

It was the convict—there was no doubt about that. Bunter could see now the muddy, tattered prison garb, the convict cap on the cropped head. It was Richard Pike, Convict No. 33, of Blackmoor—and he was coming straight at Billy Bunter like a hound at a stag.

Probably if he had seen the attache-case he supposed, as Bunter had supposed, that there was food in it for a picnic. And there was little doubt that he was in a half-famished state. Anyhow, he wanted clothes and money. Money, indeed, he was not likely to get from Bunter. But Bunter shivered at the idea of losing his overcoat and perhaps more on a day when the thermometer was near freezing point.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

What he was to do was rather a mystery to Bunter. But whatever he did, it behoved him to do it quickly.

Instead of which he blinked helplessly at the man from Blackmoor, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a snake. When he made up his terrified, fat mind at last to attempt to run for it the ruffian was terribly near.

But that clearly was all he could do. He jumped out of the doorway of the shepherd's hut and started in the direction the juniors had followed up the hill. He ran hard!

A sharp voice barked behind him. "Stop!"

It came like the bark of a savage dog. It was not likely to make Bunter stop. It spurred him on. He fairly flew.

Pattering on the snow behind him came the racing footsteps of the convict.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter suddenly. He was hardly ten yards from the hut when his foot slipped in the snow on the rugged slope and he went over.

"Urrrrgh!"

He rolled down.

"Owl! Help! I say, you fellows—Whooooop!" spluttered Billy Bunter.

He scrambled wildly up to resume his flight. As he did so the convict, with the bound of a tiger, reached him.

With a squeak of utter terror Billy Bunter rolled over again, with the man from Blackmoor pinning him down.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mysterious Voices!

"SILENCE!"

The word was savagely hissed at Bunter.

He gurgled.

Crumpled on his back in the snow, he blinked up at the fierce and savage face bent over him.

It was a face to terrify a braver fellow than Bunter.

Convict No. 33 at the best of times had been a hard case and a tough character. Days and nights of bitter hardship, of being hunted like a wild animal, had turned him into something like a human wolf.

His haggard face, sunken cheeks, stubbly chin, and glittering, savage eyes under knitted brows made a hideous picture of mingled suffering and ferocity.

Bunter would have yelled for help again, in the hope that the juniors on the tor might hear, but he dared not. One glare from those savage, sunken eyes was enough for him.

He gurgled into scared silence.

The sunken eyes scanned his face. He could see that the convict recognised him. With a knee planted on Bunter, pinning him down, Convict No. 33 gave a fierce glare round, as if in suspicious search of other enemies. But no one was to be seen, and his savage glance returned to Bunter.

"I know you!" he muttered. "You're one of the schoolboys staying at Hilton Hall."

"Ye-e-es!" stammered Bunter.

"I saw the others with you. Where have they gone?"

"Up the hill."

"Will they be back soon?"

"Oh, yes—any minute!" gasped Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was never a stickler for the truth, and if this fearful villain believed that the five sturdy Removites might appear at any

"Who?" snarled the convict doubtfully.

"Policemen and warders and—Ow! I—I mean there's nobody there!" gasped Bunter, as the knuckly fist was lifted again.

"Is that the truth?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

Convict No. 33 gave a swift glance over his shoulder at the narrow, dark doorway of the hut. There was no sound or movement in the little building, and he had little doubt that it was unoccupied. He had had to take his chances of that.

"Get on your feet!"

He released his grip on Bunter and allowed the fat junior to stagger up; but he watched him like a cat, ready to grasp him again. The hapless Owl of the Remove stood sagging with terror.

squeeze into the schoolboy's other garments. Fortunately for Bunter, that was obviously out of the question.

"Turn out your pockets!"

There was little to turn out of Bunter's pockets. A penknife with a broken blade, a twist of string sticky with ancient bullseyes, a stump of pencil with the point broken, a watch that did not go, and had been worth little when it did, and a French penny comprised the whole treasure.

"Money!" hissed the convict.

"That's all!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'm rather short of money! I—I've been disappointed about a postal order!"

"What?"

"I—I've only got that French penny left! You can have it! Nobody will take it—I mean—"



Billy Bunter blinked helplessly at the convict; then he jumped out of the doorway of the shepherd's hut and ran for dear life. "Stop!" It was the sharp voice of the convict, and it came like the bark of a savage dog. Bunter heeded it not. He fairly flew!

moment Bunter hoped that he would go.

A knuckly fist was raised over Bunter's face, and he gave a squeak of fear.

"The truth?" hissed Convict No. 33. "Do you want me to smash you, you fat fool? Do I look like a man to be trifled with? You dolt, I'd twist your neck as soon as a rabbit's! Have they gone for long?"

"Oh crikey! They—they're gone to the top!" groaned Bunter.

"Plenty of time, then!" The convict made a gesture towards the shepherd's hut. "Is anyone there?"

Bunter realised that the convict could not know whether there was anyone in the hut or not. It was twenty feet away, and he had not had a chance of looking into it yet. For all he knew, the juniors might have met other rambles on the moor at that spot.

"Oh, yes!" gasped Bunter. "A—A lot of people—"

"Take off that coat!"

"I—I say, it—it's o-c-cold! I—I mean you can have it; I—I—I want you to have it!" stuttered the wretched Owl.

He peeled off the overcoat. Slight as the convict was in build, it was likely to be a very tight fit for him. But any sort of a covering was a wind-fall to the hunted man exposed to wild winter weather on the bleak moors.

"Now your boots and socks!"

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

Convict No. 33 had small feet for a man. But it was doubtful whether he would be able to squeeze Bunter's boots on. He was going to try, anyhow.

Bunter fairly groaned at the idea of going barefoot in the snow. But the savage glare of the convict prevented hesitation. He sat down dismally on a stone to take off boots and socks.

The man watched him savagely and keenly. Bunter guessed that he was considering whether he could possibly

"Hang you!" snarled the disappointed ruffian. "Quick with those boots! Now take your jacket off!"

"I—I say, you can't get into my jacket!"

"I know that, fool, but it will be of use! Quick!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter was already feeling the cold without his overcoat. When he peeled off his jacket, the bitter wind seemed to go through his fat carcass like a knife. He shivered and shuddered.

If Convict No. 33, in better days, might have felt some compassion for the wretched fat Owl, he felt none now. His own sufferings from the bitter weather on the moors were enough for him to think of. Bunter shivered and trembled as he stood barefoot in snow.

Suddenly the convict spun round towards the hut.

A sound came from it.

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It was the sound of a voice.

Bunter's overcoat dropped from his hands as he started and listened, with terror in his haggard face.

Bunter, as surprised as the convict, stared through his spectacles. There was nobody in the shepherd's hut—Bunter knew that if Convict No. 33 did not.

Yet a voice came in muttering tones—a human voice!

"Who——" hissed the convict.

He broke off as a sudden roar of voices came from the hut. It was the roar of a chorus sung by men:

"Here we are!
Here we are!
Here we are again!"

For a single instant Convict No. 33 stood spellbound. Then, with the fleetness of a deer, he dashed away across the moor.

The plunder he had taken from Bunter lay where it had dropped. He did not give the fat junior a glance. That roar of voices from the lonely hut, telling of a crowd inside, was enough—more than enough—for the hunted man. He had—he could have—no doubt that there were a number of men in the hut—that at any instant they might spot him and come rushing out at him.

He flew.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked in wild amazement at the shepherd's hut. That sudden burst of voices had saved him from the convict. But who was there—how anybody could be there—utterly mystified him.

Like a hunted deer, the convict was running; when Bunter blinked round after him he was already vanishing in

the distance. From the shepherd's hut still came the merry roar.

Bunter, in a dazed state of amazement, but in immense relief, hurriedly put on boots and socks, jacket and coat and scarf. He was already chilled to the bone, and he gurgled with relief at being protected again from the bitter, icy wind. He almost tottered towards the hut.

Whoever was there—if anybody was there—was still going strong. It was "Tipperary" now coming out with a tremendous roar. The old familiar words came clear and strong:

"It's a long way to Tipperary;
It's a long way to go!"

Dizzy with amazement, Bunter blinked into the hut.

No one was there!

Like a fellow in a dream, Bunter blinked. The hut was empty! But the roar of the chorus was going on.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "The wireless!"

He blinked over a fat shoulder. The convict had vanished in the snowy distance. He blinked into the hut again. The portable set was going strong.

Evidently Bunter, when he gave up twiddling with the set, had left it on at the right station, and as soon as the ex-Service men's concert started, it naturally came through. That cheery roar of voices did not come from a party of picnickers in the hut, as the convict had supposed; it came from somewhere a hundred miles away.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Billy Bunter.

Really, it was lucky for Billy Bunter that he had not been able to eat what Bob Cherry had carried in the bag.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Tells the Tale!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter breathlessly.

Harry Wharton & Co. had explored the summit of the tor. Now they were coming down the rugged path on its side, when they sighted Billy Bunter coming up.

They had not expected to see the fat Owl again until they reached the hut at the foot of the tor. But there he was, clambering and puffing and blowing, with beads of perspiration on his fat brow.

Every now and then, as he clambered, he paused to turn his head and blink over a fat shoulder. He gasped with relief at the sight of the Famous Five.

"Coming up to the top?" asked Harry. "We'll go up again, if you like."

Bunter shuddered at the idea.

"No fear!" he gasped.

Evidently Bunter was not keen on climbing the tor. Why he had started at all was a mystery to the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows, can you see him?" gasped Bunter.

"Whom, and which?" asked Bob.

"The kik-kik-kik-kik——" stuttered the breathless Owl. "The kik-kik-convict!" He blinked round uneasily. "Is he gone?"

"You've seen him?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Oh dear! Yes! I—I thought he might be after me again!" gasped Bunter. "He ran for it, but I thought—Sure you can't see anything of him?"

"Not a sign," said Bob. "Mean to say he showed up while we were gone up the tor?"

"Oh dear! Ow! Yes! Ow!"

From where they stood now, half-way up the tor, the juniors could scan a wide expanse of Blackmoor. A turret of Hilton Hall could be seen in the distance, but there was no sign of any living thing.

"Sure you saw him?" asked Wharton dubiously.

"Ow! He collared me!" gasped Bunter. "Oh dear! I—I drove him off——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at!" hooted Bunter. "I can tell you I had a fearful struggle—hand-to-hand! I knocked him down——"

"Go it!" grinned Bob. "I can see you knocking down a jolly old convict! Sort of thing you would do!"

"Left him for dead?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

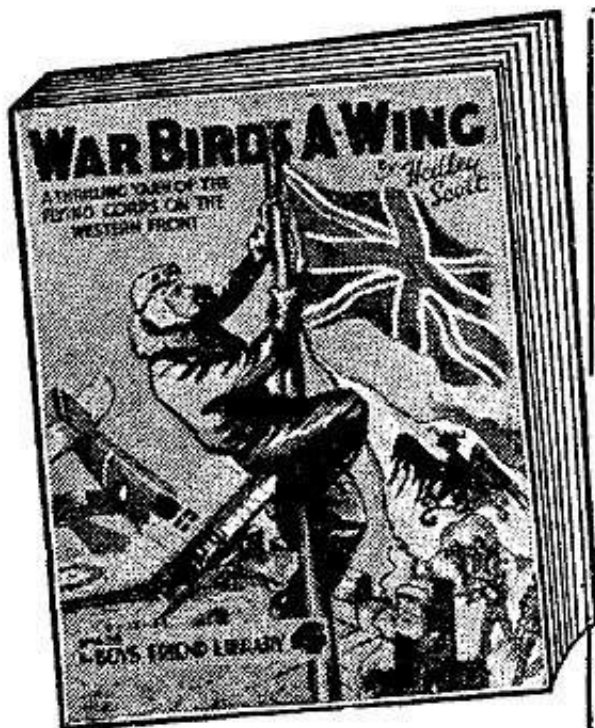
"You can cackle!" roared Bunter. "I've had to fight for my life! Luckily, I was able to handle him! He had enough, and cleared! But—but I thought he might come back, so I came up after you fellows——"

"I suppose Bunter fancied he saw something!" remarked Johnny Bull. "He wouldn't have started up the tor if he hadn't been frightened!"

"Beast!"

"Well, come on!" said Harry, laughing. "If the convict's around, we'll jolly well collar him. Inspector Trevelly would be pleased if we walked him into Okeham and handed him over."

The chums of the Remove went on down the rugged tor, Bunter gasping and gurgling after them. From below came a sound of music through the



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frosty air. Bunter had left the wireless turned on, and a fox-trot was coming through now, echoing over the moors and up the rugged slopes of the tor.

"You didn't scoff it, Bunter?" grinned Bob. "I rather thought you wouldn't when you found out what it was!"

"I say, you fellows, it was jolly lucky that wireless was there!" gasped Billy Bunter. "But for that, that awful beast would have—"

"What?"

"Oh! Nothing!" said Bunter hastily, remembering that he had defeated the man from Blackmoor in single combat. "The wireless had nothing to do with it, you know. I knocked him out!"

"Who?" roared Bob.

"The convict, you know."

"Fathead!"

That the fat Owl of the Remove had knocked the Blackmoor convict out the juniors were not likely to believe. They did not, therefore, believe that he had seen the escaped man at all.

But as they came near the hut the signs on the trampled snow caught their eyes. All five were Scouts, and knew how to read signs; and the "sign" in the snow was plain enough for anyone to read.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Somebody's been here since we went up the tor."

"It was the convict!" hooted Bunter. "He bagged my overcoat and jacket, and boots and socks, and all my money—"

"And gave them back to you?" grinned Bob. "You've got them on now."

"You see, I knocked him out—"

"I don't see!"

"The see-fulness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"This is where I struggled with him," said Bunter, stopping at the spot where he had rolled over, in the convict's grasp. "It was a fearful struggle. He had me down, and I thought it was all up with me."

"So it would have been, if it had happened," remarked Johnny Bull.

"It did happen!" shrieked Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

The juniors were quite puzzled. They picked up strange tracks leading to the spot, and leading away again. Somebody had been there! There had been some sort of a struggle. But that Billy Bunter had got the upper hand of a desperate convict, in a tussle, was rather too much for any fellow to believe. They were quite mystified.

"That's where I sat, to take off my boots and socks!" said Bunter. "He was going to put them on—try them on, at any rate—when—"

"When what?"

"Oh, nothing! It wasn't the wireless, but—"

"The wireless?"

"Nothing of the kind! I jumped up and went for him!" explained Bunter. "I gave him right and left. He soon had enough, I can tell you! He bolted."

"The convict did?" gasped Bob.

"Yes. Ran for his life!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Greyfriars fellows examined the tracks. They were clear enough in the snow. The trail approaching the spot had been made by a man running—the deeper impression of the toes determined that. But the trail leading away from the spot had been made by a man not only running, but racing—running as fast as a man could run. The "sign" was unmistakable to any eye skilled in scouting.

It was really amazing! Whoever had been there had fled at top speed—from Bunter!

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Bob Cherry. "Whoever he was, he bolted as fast as he could go. Why?"

"I jolly well frightened him off!" said Bunter.

"He saw your face suddenly?" asked Bob.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

"Well, there's nothing about you, except your features, that could frighten anybody!" argued Bob.

"It's jolly queer," said Harry. "The fact is, this track looks like the convict's. We've seen it half a dozen times or more, in one place or another, and it looks the same to me!"

"I was thinking the same!" said Johnny Bull. "But the convict wouldn't run away from Bunter!"

"He did!" roared Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, you ass," said Wharton. "It's nearly a week since the convict was seen, and it's not known whether he's still on the moors. If

THIS WEEK'S PRIZEWINNERS!

The following readers have each been awarded a prize in our competition on "Why I Like the 'Gem'":

Miss D. SALE, 63, Toynbee Road, West Wimbledon, London, S.W.20.—Vanity Case.

P. CARROLL, Liberty Square, Thurles, Co. Tipperary.—Penknife.

R. TURNBULL, 18, St. Paul's Road, West Hartlepool.—Book.

R. CHANT, 4, Leigh Road, Andover, Hants.—Fountain Pen.

C. HARRIS, 23, Bibury Road, Gloucester.—Pocket Wallet.

Miss E. LEONARD, 40, Blackfriars Street, Aberdeen, Scotland.—Vanity Case.

Except for the awarding of the remaining twenty-two prizes, this competition is now closed to readers.

Watch further lists to see if you are a winner.

(THE GEM, our school-story companion paper, is on sale every Wednesday, price 2d.)

you've really seen him it will have to be reported to the police at Okeham."

"Well, I have, and I'm going to report it, too!" declared Bunter. "If they get him I shall put in for the reward. There's fifty pounds reward, and I think I'm entitled to it if—"

"What about following the trail?" asked Bob. "How long is it since your features frightened him off, Bunter?"

"Beast! It's about half an hour since I drove him off—"

"Far enough away by this time—if it was the convict at all," said Johnny Bull. "What about the sandwiches and the wireless?"

"I say, you fellows, I'm fearfully hungry! You might have left the sandwiches with me—"

"There would be a lot of them left if we had!" grinned Bob.

The juniors went into the shepherd's hut. The wireless, on the bench, was still going on. Packets of sandwiches were turned out of coat pockets. Billy Bunter grabbed the first that came to light. Bunter was almost as famished as Convict No. 33, by this time.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

He shut off the wireless. From the moor came a deep, thrilling note, that the juniors had heard before. It was the bay of a bloodhound.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Man-Hunters!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. rushed from the shepherd's hut.

Billy Bunter lingered inside. The chums of the Remove had not finished the sandwiches. Bunter proceeded to finish them.

Far away, on the snow that covered the moor, the juniors picked up a group of dark figures. They recognised the thick-set, stocky figure of Inspector Trevelly, of Okeham. He had the hound in leash. Following him came two warders of Blackmoor Prison, with rifles under their arms. The hound, straining at the leash, was coming directly towards the hut at the foot of the tor, the Okeham inspector breaking into a trot every now and then to keep up with him. It was plain that the hound was on a strong scent.

"They're after him!" breathed Bob.

"And coming straight here!" said Harry. "Looks as if the convict has been here, after all!"

"The lookfulness is terrific!"

The three men out on the moor sighted the group of schoolboys before the hut and stared at them. They came on at a run.

Inspector Trevelly pulled in the straining bloodhound as he reached the spot.

"What are you boys doing here?" he jerked.

"We've been up the tor," said Harry.

"Have you seen anything of the man we want? Unless the hound's on a false scent, he came this way."

The juniors exchanged glances. According to Bunter, the escaped man of Blackmoor had been there, little more than half an hour ago.

"Quick!" rapped the police inspector, detecting that exchange of glances at once. "You're wasting time!"

"Well, Bunter says—" said Harry slowly.

"Bunter? Who is he? Oh, that fat fellow! Is he here? Call him!"

"Bunter!" roared Bob into the hut.

Billy Bunter rolled out, his mouth full of sandwich, and a sandwich in each fat hand. Inspector Trevelly glanced at him, and glanced past him into the hut. He spotted the portable wireless standing on the bench.

"What's that?" he jerked.

"Wireless," explained Bob. "Hilton lent up his portable, to try out here on the moor. We had it on—"

"Master Bunter! If you have seen anything of Richard Pike, Convict No. 33, of Blackmoor—" rapped the inspector, interrupting Bob. The hound was straining so hard that it was difficult to hold him in.

"Yes, rather!" chirruped Bunter. He gave the Famous Five a vaunting blink through his big spectacles. "I collared him—"

"What?" roared Mr. Trevelly, and the two warders stared at Bunter.

"I mean, he collared me!" gasped Bunter.

"You had better stick to the facts, young man!" snapped Mr. Trevelly.

"You are dealing with officers of the law. Waste no time. Has the convict been here? Sharp!"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Did none of you see him, if he was here?" rapped Mr. Trevelly.

"We'd gone up the tor," explained Wharton. "We left Bunter here, and he says that while we were gone—"

"Did the man attack you?" demanded Mr. Trevelly, with a searching and very doubtful glare at the fat Owl of the Remove.

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It was evident that he would have preferred information from any member of the party rather than William George Bunter.

"He jolly well did!" gasped Bunter. "He bagged my coat and jacket, and made me take off my boots and socks, and—"

Inspector Trevelly gave a grunt. As Bunter was wearing the articles enumerated, it did not sound probable.

"Then, why did he go without them?" he snapped.

"I drove him off!"

"What?"

"I—I knocked him right and left, and he—he ran for it—"

The expression that came over Mr. Trevelly's face as he heard that statement was quite extraordinary. He seemed bereft of speech.

"Bunter, you ass!" hissed Bob. "For goodness' sake tell the truth! Don't you understand that this is serious?"

"Beast!"

Inspector Trevelly gasped.

"You young idiot—"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Tell me what happened, if anything happened!" roared the angry inspector.

"You are wasting time—obstructing an officer of the law in the execution of his duty. You are liable to arrest—"

"Oh crikey!"

Mr. Trevelly grasped the fat Owl by a podgy shoulder. He shook him, till Bunter gurgled horribly. Some sandwich went down the wrong way, under that severe shaking.

"Now tell me the truth!" roared Mr. Trevelly. "Speak!"

"Groooooogh!"

"Have you anything to say?"

"Urrrrrggh!"

"Upon my word! I—"

"Ow! Urrgh! Give a fellow a chance to speak!" gasped Bunter. "I tell you he collared me—groogh—and bagged my coat and boots—gurrgrgh—and then—wurrgrgh—"

"Then what?" hooted the exasperated inspector.

Bunter paused a second. Truth did not come easily to Bunter. But the glint in Mr. Trevelly's eyes daunted him, and he did not want another shaking.

"Then—then the wireless came on!" he gasped.

"The what?"

"The wireless," gasped Bunter. "I'd put it on, but it hadn't started—and it started all of a sudden—a lot of men singing a chorus—and—the beast fancied there was a crowd in the hut, and bolted—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "So that was it!"

Inspector Trevelly stared blankly at the fat Owl for a few moments. But he caught on quickly enough.

"Which way did he go?" he jerked. "How long since?"

"More than half an hour. And—"

"Here are his tracks, sir," said Bob. He pointed them out.

Inspector Trevelly tramped away towards the trail of the running man that led away from the spot. That was the direction in which the hound was straining.

The hound bayed again, the deep, musical note ringing far over the silent moor. Then he loped on, and the warders followed the inspector. They were going at a trot now, hot on the scent.

"Come on!" said Harry. "Follow on, you men."

Bob Cherry hastily packed the portable into the attache-case, and the Famous Five followed the man-hunters. Billy Bunter rolled after them. He

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finished the last of the sandwiches as he rolled.

Nothing was to be seen of the hunted man. But, in spite of the snow on the ground, the hound picked up the scent, and the trail was visible in the snow. It wound away across the wild moor, and to the surprise of the hunters led after a time in the direction of Hilton Hall, as if the fugitive had thought of making for that mansion.

Then it swerved again to the open moor. Harry Wharton & Co., keen to see the outcome, still followed on; but Billy Bunter came to a halt.

"I say, you fellows, you'll be late for lunch!" he bawled.

Even that awful risk did not seem to worry the Famous Five. They tramped on unheeding; and Bunter, with a snort, rolled off to the gates of Hilton Hall. Bunter, at all events, was not going to be late for lunch.

For a mile or more the hound loped steadily on. Then, on the rugged bank of a frozen water-course, it came to a stop, running up and down the bank, and howling. The hunted man had taken to the ice, and it looked as if the bloodhound was baffled.

Harry Wharton & Co gave it up, and walked back to Hilton Hall, leaving the inspector and his companions still patiently trying for a scent. But they did not find it. Once more the hunted man of Blackmoor had baffled his pursuers.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Butler's Brother!

BILLY BUNTER started.

The sound of footsteps outside the door startled him.

It was not a startling sound in itself. Had Bunter been in his own room at Hilton Hall he would have given no heed.

But he happened to be in Harry Wharton's room, where he certainly had no business—at all events, no business that he could have explained.

Not that Bunter was "up" to anything to which any reasonable fellow could have taken exception.

He was simply selecting a pair of trousers for his own personal use—surely quite a harmless occupation!

They happened to be Wharton's best trousers.

That, to Bunter, was a trifle light as air. But he was aware that the owner of the garments might take a more serious view.

Bunter, as was his happy custom, had travelled "light" when he came to Hilton Hall. He had what he stood up in. When he wanted a change, it had to come from some other fellow's resources. So it was fortunate that the Famous Five were not travelling so light as Bunter.

It was the day following Bunter's adventure with the convict and the wireless, at High Tor. Bunter's clothes had been made rather muddy.

He had decided on a change.

After lunch he had heard the juniors talking about going out. So the opportunity seemed favourable.

Now he was in Wharton's room, carefully selecting trousers. It was absolutely rotten luck, that just as he had decided on the pair he was going to borrow, footsteps came along the passage outside.

Bunter started, listened, and scowled over his spectacles. Some of the beasts were coming up to their rooms instead of going out.

If Wharton was among them he would want to know what Bunter was doing there. There would be no borrowed

trousers for Bunter—much more likely a boot on those he was already wearing.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

Trousers in hand, he backed out of sight behind the window curtains. He was safe there, unless the beasts came to the window.

If it was Wharton, probably he had only run up for a cap or a scarf, and would be gone in a few moments.

It was Wharton, anyhow. Bunter heard the door open, and the voice of the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Trot in, Walsingham!"

Bunter started again in sheer astonishment. Walsingham, the butler, had come up with Wharton. Why, was a mystery.

Peering through the curtains Bunter saw the portly figure of the Hilton Hall butler roll in. The five juniors followed. They were all there. Evidently it was not Wharton just running up for a cap or a scarf. Something was "on."

Wharton closed the door.

Walsingham stood with a faint flush in his portly face, breathing hard. The five juniors were regarding him rather curiously.

So did Bunter from behind the curtain.

"Well, go it, Walsingham!" said Harry Wharton, who was apparently puzzled. "You said you had something to say to us—"

"Yes, sir!" breathed Walsingham. "I—I desired to speak to you young gentlemen, sir, where other ears could not hear, and so—"

"Well, nobody will hear us in this room!" said Harry. "Fire away!"

Bunter grinned behind the curtain. He was rather glad that he was there, now. This was getting interesting.

The flush deepened on Walsingham's portly face.

He had something to say to the juniors which other ears were not to hear, and Wharton had brought him there, for him to say it. But he seemed to find some difficulty in giving it utterance.

"I—I—I—it is about the convict, sir!" stammered Walsingham, at last.

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Inspector Trevelly, and some of the police and warders are now in the grounds of this establishment," went on Walsingham. "It seems that they were close on the man's track yesterday, with the bloodhound; but he eluded them. They seem to have the impression that he came in this direction, after escaping them, and that he may now be in the vicinity of Hilton Hall."

"Looks like it!" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors' faces were very grave now. The butler of Hilton Hall passed a hand over his forehead.

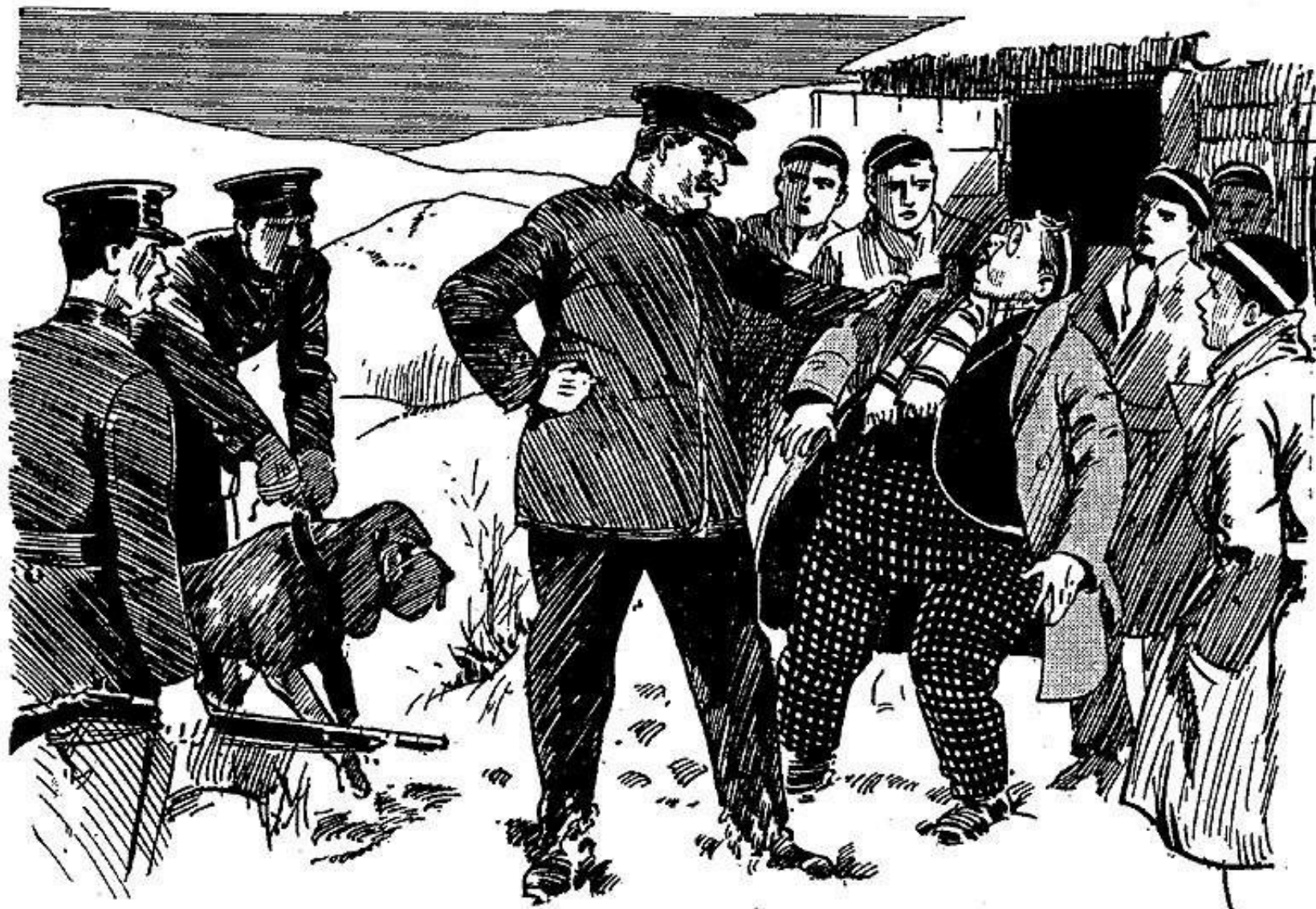
"You are aware of my secret, young gentlemen," he said, in a low voice. "You were with Master Cedric that day a week ago, when he found me taking help to the wretched man. You heard me confess to him that the man known as Richard Pike, No. 33 at Blackmoor, was in truth Richard Walsingham, my younger brother."

"Yes!" said Harry quietly.

Behind the window curtain, Billy Bunter's eyes opened wide behind his big spectacles. This was news to Bunter.

"Richard was not always what he afterwards became, sir!" murmured Walsingham. "It was a terrible shock to me, the night I saw his face at the window, and knew then that my wastrel brother had become a convict. No doubt, sir, I did wrong in aiding him, but blood is thicker than water."

The juniors were silent. That the butler had done wrong in helping a



"Ow! Urrgh!" gasped Bunter as the exasperated Inspector Trevelly shook him. "I tell you the convict collared me—groogh—and then the wireless started all of a sudden—a lot of men singing a chorus—and the beast fancied there was a crowd in the hut, and bolted!"

crook who had escaped from a convict prison, there could hardly be any doubt. But the claim of blood was strong.

"Master Cedric discovered me," went on Walsingham. "You young gentlemen were with him. Master Cedric kindly consented to keep my miserable secret, sir, on condition that I promised not to see Richard again, or to give him any further help. You heard me make that promise."

"I'm sure you've kept it, Walsingham!" said Harry. But he spoke rather slowly. The fact that the hunted man was still haunting the vicinity of Hilton Hall, that even now the hunters had tracked him to the grounds of the mansion, looked as if he still had a friend there—or, at all events, believed that he had.

"That is what I wished to say to you, sir!" said Walsingham. "It looks—you cannot help seeing that it looks—as if the man is still receiving aid from some quarter—from this quarter! I could not help thinking that that doubt would occur to your minds, young gentlemen, and that you might suppose that—that—"

Walsingham faltered. But he went on again:

"I have kept my word, sir! I have not seen Richard—I have not helped him—since that day! I am aware that he does not deserve help—only too well aware of it, sir! Knowing what you do, it would be your duty to give information to the police, if you believed that I was still in touch with the convict."

"That is so," said Harry. "But—"

"But if you can take my word, sir—"

Walsingham, with dignity.

"Certainly," said Wharton at once.

"That's all right, Walsingham."

"The takefulness of your esteemed word is preposterous, my venerable and

ridiculous Walsingham!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

"Right as rain!" said Bob Cherry.

"I thank you, gentlemen," said Walsingham. "That is what I desired to say, and I am very grateful."

And Walsingham, with a stately bow to the Famous Five, retired from the room.

The juniors exchanged rather curious glances.

"It's rough on the old bean," said Bob. "No end rotten for him, in the servants' hall, if it came out that the convict was a relation of his. Of course, he oughtn't to have helped the brute; but—well, we can trust his word to have nothing further to do with him. I must say it looked—"

"Most likely that ruffian still hopes to get help from him, and that's why he's hanging about Hilton Hall," said Harry. "I'm sure Walsingham is to be trusted to keep his word to have no more to do with him. Hark."

"The bloodhound!" breathed Nugent. It was the bay of the hound from the grounds, quite near the house. The juniors rushed across to the window to look out.

At a little distance, among the frozen trees, they glimpsed three or four dark figures against the snow; one of them with the hound in leash. They recognised the ruddy face and white moustache of Sir Gilbert Hilton among the hunters.

"Let's got out!" said Bob.

As they turned back from the window, there was a sudden squeak of alarm, and a howl of surprise from the Famous Five.

"Bunter!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"You fat villain!" roared Wharton.

"I—I say, I—I wasn't listening! I—I never heard what the butler said,"

gasped Bunter. "I—I came here for—for some trousers—"

"Squash him!" hooted Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter flew out of the window recess. He bolted across the room to the door. In an instant he had the door open, and was fleeing for his fat life down the corridor.

After him rushed the Famous Five. They forgot, for the moment, that they were at Hilton Hall and not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. Billy Bunter flew down the stairs, as the exasperated juniors came whooping down the corridor. Bunter, evidently, had overheard what Walsingham had said; and it had to be impressed on Bunter's fat mind that he was not to tattle about it; and bumping him, hard, on the polished oak floor seemed the most efficacious means. With vengeful faces the Famous Five rushed in pursuit.

Billy Bunter, in a state of breathless alarm, had just time to dodge into the billiards-room and bang the door after him, as they came scampering down into the hall.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Hundred Up!

CEDRIC HILTON leaned over the billiards-table and took careful aim with his cue.

Price, of the Fifth, standing with the butt of his cue resting on the floor, watched him with a faintly sarcastic smile.

The dandy of the Fifth and his Greyfriars pal spent a good deal of time in that apartment. Sir Gilbert Hilton was aware of that circumstance; but he was quite unaware that his son played with "quids" on the game.

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How many quids had passed over, from Hilton to his precious pal during the Christmas holidays, the dandy of the Fifth did not trouble to remember. But Price knew that he was making quite an income out of his wealthy friend.

They were having a hundred up now, and Price had left off—intentionally—at eighty. Price had an almost professional skill at the game, acquired out of bounds at Greyfriars during term, at the Three Fishers and such resorts. He could easily have given Hilton fifty in a hundred and beaten him. But it did not suit Price to display his powers. It suited him better to let Hilton fancy that he had a chance, and then beat him by a narrow margin.

Generally Hilton was a rather careless player. Now, however, he seemed to be exerting himself. He owed Price five pounds on the play, and Price had proposed double or quits, which put Cedric Hilton on his mettle.

They had the room to themselves. Outside, the wintry sun glimmered on frosty windows. Shaded lights burned over the table.

Click! It was another cannon! With unusual skill, and unusual luck, Hilton had made a series of cannons, leaving the balls well placed every time.

He looked round with a smile. "What's that, Pricey? Eighty, by Jove! We've tied!"

"You're comin' out strong, Cedric!" "Beatin' you this time, old man!"

"Go it, and good luck!" smiled Price. He did not think that Hilton would run out with another twenty, and as soon as he played again, he knew that he could score what he liked.

But his narrow face grew a little more serious as Hilton continued his game. He was having great luck, that was certain; but he was exerting himself to an unusual degree. The balls seemed to favour him. He was sticking to cannons, and they came off again and again.

At ninety, Price had quite ceased to smile. He had proposed double or quits, in the certainty that it would spell "double." "Quits" did not suit his book at all.

At ninety-six he scowled. "By gad! What about luck?" smiled Hilton, as he carefully aimed for another shot.

Just as he made it, there was a clatter as Price dropped his cue. Hilton gave a slight start, and missed the cannon.

"Sorry!" said Price. "Did it startle you, Cedric?"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Hilton carelessly, and he lounged back from the table. "Rather a good break for me, Pricey!"

"Fine!" agreed Price.

He chalked his cue carefully, and began to play, Hilton watching him. Four times in succession the red went in, and a cannon followed, and another cannon. The score tied.

"Close finish!" remarked Hilton.

Price suppressed a grin. He was good for a break of fifty at least, if he chose. But it never occurred to Cedric Hilton that he had not the ghost of a chance in the game.

Price made another cannon, leaving the balls nicely placed. Hilton gave a rather rueful laugh.

"Your game, Pricey!" he remarked.

"Oh, you never know your luck," said Price blandly. He wanted only one more cannon to run out, and he could have made a dozen.

But the unexpected happened.

Just as Price was taking his shot, the door was hurled open, and a fat figure

rolled hurriedly in and banged the door shut after him.

"Beasts!" gasped Billy Bunter, apparently referring to someone outside the billiards-room.

Price's shot went anywhere. He turned from the table with a scowling brow, and strode across to Bunter, grasping his cue.

"You fat dummy!" he hooted.

Bunter blinked round. He had been unaware that there was anyone in the room when he rolled in so hastily.

"Oh, really, Price!" he gasped. "Here, I say! Beast! Keep that cue away, you rotter! Yaroooo!"

"Hold on, Pricey!" exclaimed Hilton, laughing, as Price lunged at Bunter with the butt of the cue, jamming it in his fat ribs.

"Yaroooo!" roared Bunter.

"I'll smash him!" panted Price.

"Yoop! Keep off, you beast!" yelled the Owl of the Remove, prancing frantically round the billiards-table. "I say—yaroooo! Keep him off, Hilton! Yooo-hoooo!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Stephen Price never had a good temper. Now he had a very bad one!

The presence of the Remove fellows at Hilton Hall during the holidays was an incessant irritation to Price. Least of all did he like the presence of William George Bunter.

Now Bunter had stopped his break, and he was wrathful. He pursued the fat Owl round the billiards-table, banging with the business end of the cue.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hilton. "Go it, Bunter! Put it on! Here we go round the mulberry bush!"

"Yaroooo!"

Bang!

"Whooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"Ow! Help! Wow! Ow!" roared Bunter. He dodged behind Hilton, and clung to him for protection. "Keep him off! I say, is this how you treat a guest, you beast? Keep that rotter off! Yaroooo!"

"Chuck it, Pricey!" said Hilton, laughing.

He pushed the enraged Price back, his hand on his chest. It was only a light push, but it made the weedy cad of the Fifth stagger. At indoor games Price could beat Hilton hands down, but Hilton was the better man at outdoor games, which developed muscle.

Price staggered against the billiards-table.

"Hands off, you fool!" he snarled.

His eyes glinted at Hilton with something very like hatred for the moment. He despised Hilton from the bottom of his heart, though he was generally very careful to conceal that fact, and it enraged him that the fellow he despised could push him about like a doll, without even exerting himself.

"Draw it mild, old man!" said Hilton quietly. It was at such moments as this that he realised that his pal was a "bounder," and wondered what on earth had ever made him make friends with him.

"Let me get at that fat fool!"

"Yaroooo! Keep him off!"

"I'll smash him—"

"Oh, let him alone!" said Hilton irritably. "After all, he's a guest here, of sorts! Leave the young fathead alone, Pricey."

"A guest!" sneered Price. "Would he be here at all if he hadn't pinched a letter belonging to you and held it over your head? Wouldn't you kick him out this minute, if you dared?"

Hilton knitted his brows.

"That's enough!" he said curtly.

"Yah!" hooted Bunter, safe behind

the dandy of the Fifth. "I never pinched anybody's letter, as you jolly well know; I picked it up in the quad at Greyfriars, where Hilton dropped it. And I only picked it up to do him a good turn. Suppose the Head had found it—"

"That will do, Bunter," said Hilton.

"Nice for both of you, if the Head had found it!" snorted Bunter. "A letter from a butler—about a fellow borrowing money of him! About a fellow being in debt—debts that he couldn't tell his father about! If the Head had seen that letter—"

"Shut up, or I'll let Price get at you again!" said Hilton.

"Beast!"

Bunter, however, shut up. From behind Hilton he eyed Price suspiciously and morosely through his big spectacles.

Bunter did not like being reminded of the very peculiar circumstances in which he had secured an invitation to Hilton Hall for Christmas!

Cedric Hilton, with his usual carelessness of mind, had almost forgotten it, and would probably quite have forgotten it, but for constant reminders from Price.

Price, however, was not likely to forget it.

If that tell-tale document came to light, it meant trouble for Price as well as Hilton.

"Let's finish the game, Pricey!" said Hilton impatiently. "I want to get out of doors for a bit."

"Turn that fat fool out, then!" growled Price. "Get out, Bunter!"

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter independently.

Price set his lips hard. But for the fact that Hilton stood between them, the fat Owl would have got some more of the butt-end of the cue, harder than before.

"Buzz off, Bunter, there's a good kid!" said Hilton.

"Those beasts are after me," said Bunter. "I'm staying here! I'll play you a hundred up, if you like. I'm rather a dab at billiards."

Hilton laughed and chalked his cue to play. Price scowled angrily.

"That fool spoiled my shot, bargin' in!" he growled.

Cedric Hilton gave him a cool glance. "You spoiled a shot of mine, droppin' your cue!" he said. "I haven't made a song and a dance about it."

"I should have run out!"

"Oh, play if you like—I don't care!" said Hilton, shrugging his shoulders. "Run out, and get done. I want to get done. I want to get out of doors."

There was a tone in Hilton's voice that warned Price that his influence over the easy-going dandy of the Fifth was in danger. That influence was worth more to him than the stakes on the game.

"Oh rot!" he said. "Get on with it, Cedric!"

Hilton got on with it, and ran out easily enough. It was rather a satisfaction to him to beat Price for once, and Price affected to smile agreeably—as agreeably as he could. Hilton put his cue in the rack.

"Comin' out?" he asked.

"No. I'll smoke a cigarette here."

Hilton nodded, and lounged out of the billiards-room. Billy Bunter blinked uneasily at Price, and followed Hilton as far as the door. But there was danger without as well as within for the fat Owl of the Remove; Bunter was between the devil and the deep sea, as it were! As he hesitated Price called to him.

"Have a hundred up, Bunter?"

Bunter gave him a suspicious blink.

"No larks?" he asked.

Price laughed.
"It's all right! Play, old bean!"
"Oh, all right!" said Bunter, reassured, and he picked a cue from the rack and began to play—while Price waited to make sure that Cedric Hilton was safe off the scene.

Then he laid down his cue, suddenly grasped the fat and fatuous Owl, and backed him against the billiards-table. Bunter's cue went to the floor with a crash, and he gave a howl of alarm.

"I say—"
"Quiet!" said Price coolly. "I've got you now, you fat scoundrel, and I want that letter! I'm going to twist your arm until you hand it over!"

Billy Bunter's mouth opened for a fearful yell. Price jerked the grubby handkerchief from his pocket and stuffed it in. Bunter gurgled horribly.

Price gave his fat arm a twist.
"Where's that letter?" he asked pleasantly.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Rather a Row!

"SEEN Bunter?"
Cedric Hilton smiled.
He was putting on coat and hat to go out to join his father with the man-hunters in the park, when Harry Wharton inquired if he had seen Bunter.

"Lookin' for him?" he asked. "I thought he seemed rather pressed for time."

"Well, we rather want to see him," said Harry. He lowered his voice.
"The fact is, Hilton, the fat brute was listening when Walsingham spoke to us a little while ago, and he's found out, from what Walsingham said, about that relation of his. We want to make him understand that he's got to keep it quiet."

Hilton's face became very grave.
"I understand! You'll find him in the billiards-room," he said. "I left him there with Price. I think they're playing a hundred up."

"Right-ho!"
Hilton nodded, and left the house, and the Famous Five headed in a body for the billiards-room.

As they reached the door they heard a faint scuffling and gurgling sound from within, which was rather puzzling. If Bunter was playing billiards with Price of the Fifth, they might have expected to hear the click of ball and cue. But it was scuffling and gurgling that they heard.

Wharton opened the door and the juniors stepped in.

They stared in blank amazement at what they saw—Billy Bunter backed up against the billiards-table, with a handkerchief stuffed in his mouth, and Stephen Price grasping him and pinning him there.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Bunter—"

"Price—"

"What the dickens—"

Price stared round savagely. He had not expected to be interrupted by the Famous Five; they had hardly ever entered the billiards-room during their stay at Hilton Hall. Bunter's eyes turned on them with a wildly appealing blink, and he gurgled frantically.

Wharton closed the door, and ran across to the billiards-table. His friends ran after him. They were there to handle Bunter; but finding Price of the Fifth handling him in this manner, they forgot their purpose for the moment, and handled Price instead.

The cad of the Fifth was grasped by

three or four pairs of hands and dragged back forcibly from Bunter.

He turned on the juniors with clenched fists and blazing eyes. Bunter, staggering against the table, jerked the stuffed handkerchief from his mouth and spluttered.

"Grooogh! I say, you fellows—
Oooogh!"

"You young hooligans!" hissed Price.

"Get out of this, or—"

"Or what?" inquired Bob Cherry coolly. "Looking for a scrap, Price?"

GREYFRIARS CARTOONS

By Harold Skinner.

No. 27.—OLIVER KIPPS.

The Conjuring Genius of the Remove Form.



Here's Signor Kipps, the conjurer,
All ready for a show;
"Now oan I take your topper, sir?
You'll get it back, you know!"

And thus upon the stage he stands
And says: "I won't deceive!
Behold, there's nothing in my hands,
And nothing up my sleeve!"

I fancy I could handle you, Fifth Form man as you are! I'll try, anyhow!"

Price unclenched his hands. He was boiling with rage; but he did not want a scrap with the Removites.

"I—I say, you fellows, keep him off!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, he's dangerous! I'm nearly chook-chook-choked—"

"What's the meaning of this, Price?" asked Harry Wharton quietly. "You were handling Bunter, and you practically had him gagged with that hanky. Have you gone potty, or what?"

Price panted.

"You young rotters! You know what I want from Bunter—you're all in the

game with him! Hilton doesn't believe so, but I do."

"Mad?" asked Nugent in wonder.

"The madfulness is terrific."

"If you're not hand-in-glove with him make him hand over that letter!" snarled Price.

"What letter?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"You don't know?" sneered Price.

"Of course we don't know!" snapped Wharton angrily. "If Bunter's bagged a letter belonging to you, we'll make him hand it over fast enough! I know it's just one of his potty tricks. But—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Have you been prying into a letter of Price's?" demanded Bob.

"No!" gasped Bunter.

"Have you got a letter of his?" snapped Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I hope I'm not a fellow to sneak a fellow's letter."

"Yes, or no, you fat Owl?"

"No, you beast!"

"It's not a letter of mine, as I believe you know," snarled Price. "It's Hilton's, and Bunter pinched it at Greyfriars, a day or two before we broke up for the Christmas holidays."

"If it's Hilton's letter he's got, I suppose Hilton can ask him for it?" said Harry. "No need for you to butt in that I can see."

"I knew you were hand-in-glove with him, though that fool Hilton can't get it into his head," said Price bitterly.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" said the captain of the Remove curtly. "If you weren't a rotten cur, Price, you'd know that we had no hand in anything of the kind."

"Bump the cheeky cad!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Have you got a letter of Hilton's?" demanded Wharton.

"You can search me, if you like!" said Bunter, with dignity.

As the tell-tale letter was hidden in the lining of his cap, which, of course, Bunter was not wearing at the moment, that was a safe answer.

"He's got it!" snarled Price. "If you fellows didn't know before, you know now. But I jolly well believe you knew!"

"You cheeky rotter!" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Well, if you didn't know, why do you fancy that Hilton asked you here for Christmas?" sneered Price.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at him in blank astonishment.

Hilton's invitation for Christmas had come at a lucky moment, when some other arrangements had fallen through; and it had come as rather a surprise to the Remove fellows. But they had taken it in good faith, and accepted it at face value.

Bunter, certainly, had hinted a good many times that it was through him that the invitation had come. That, however, seemed improbable, if not impossible, that they had regarded it merely as the fat Owl's customary "gas."

Indeed, so far from believing that Bunter could influence Hilton into asking other fellows home, it was a mystery to them how Bunter had wangled an invitation for himself!

That the dandy of the Fifth could possibly want Bunter at Hilton Hall in the holidays seemed very unlikely; and they could only conclude that the astute Owl had somehow imposed on his easy-going good-nature.

Certainly they had never dreamed that Bunter had a hold over the sportsman

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of the Fifth, and had made unscrupulous use of it.

There was a long silence, of sheer astonishment, following Price's sneering words. Harry Wharton broke it at last.

"Hilton wrote, asking us here," he said. "Why shouldn't he, if he wanted to?"

"Did he want to?" sneered Price.

"I suppose so, as he did it! What do you mean?"

"I fancy you know what I mean."

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"I don't know what you mean, Price!" he said. "But I'm going to know what you mean, and you're going to explain at once. You're going to explain, you sneering cad, or you're going to have the thrashing of your life, here and now."

"Thrash the cur, anyhow!" growled Johnny Bull.

Price backed away a step. Even upon his doubting and suspicious mind it was borne in that the Famous Five knew nothing of Bunter's trickery.

"Well, if you didn't know, I'm sorry!" he said grudgingly. "But that doesn't alter the fact that Bunter got hold of Hilton's letter and kept it, and made him ask the fat rotter here and you along with him."

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter! Let's have this clear!" said Harry Wharton very quietly. "You say that Bunter picked up a letter of Hilton's at Greyfriars, and kept it. Any ordinary letter wouldn't have been any use to him. What sort of a letter do you mean, then?"

"Bunter can tell you, as he's read it!" sneered Price. "It was a letter from Walsingham, the butler, here—if you don't know already!"

"That doesn't make sense! How could Bunter hold that over Hilton's head—a letter from his father's butler?"

Price shrugged his shoulders.

"We had some bad luck towards the end of the term," he said. "Hilton tried to borrow money from Walsingham, as he'd done before. That was in the butler's letter, and mention of other things—debts and things—which Cedric would have to explain to the Head, if it all came out. If Dr. Locke saw that letter it might mean the sack for Hilton—and most likely I should be dragged into it, too! That's what that fat scoundrel was trading on."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

Bob Cherry clenched his hands. His eyes were blazing.

"You rotter! Oh, you rotter, Price! You're saying that Bunter was practically blackmailing Hilton—and you fancied that we had a hand in it?"

"What was a fellow to think?" sneered Price. "I'm not sure yet—"

"I'll make you sure, you cur!" said Bob, between his teeth, and he rushed at Price, hitting out right and left.

Price's hands flew up in defence. But Fifth Form man and senior as he was, he backed away, driven headlong before the attack of the angry and indignant junior. For nearly a minute there was a fierce scrap in the billiards-room of Hilton Hall; and then Stephen Price went down with a crash.

Bob's eyes gleamed down at him.

"Get up, you cur! Get up and have some more!"

But Price of the Fifth seemed to prefer the floor. He remained where he was, gasping and panting.

Leaving him there, the Famous Five gathered round Billy Bunter, and marched him out of the billiards-room.

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THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bad for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter blinked uneasily at the chums of the Remove.

Without a word, they had marched him upstairs to Wharton's room. Bunter was glad enough to get away from Price, so far as that went. But though the Famous Five had rescued him from Price, he was feeling very uneasy. He could not help suspecting that they had brought him there to deal with him quietly. How they were going to deal with him, was rather a painful question to Bunter.

Wharton closed the door. With grim faces, the chums of the Remove fixed their eyes on the alarmed Owl.

"I—I say—" stammered Bunter.

"Now, we want the truth," said Wharton quietly. "You've got a letter belonging to Hilton of the Fifth?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Where is it?"

"I—I—I've lost it!" gasped Bunter.

"We'll help you find it again!" said Bob Cherry grimly.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"There's something in that letter that Hilton would be afraid for the headmaster of Greyfriars to see?" asked Harry.

Bunter grinned.

"Well, he naturally wouldn't want the Head to know that—"

"Don't tell us what's in it, you fat rotter! Answer my question!"

"Yes!" grunted Bunter. "About his debts, and—"

"That's enough! You found the letter, and read it, and kept it! That's the sort of thing you would do, I suppose. And you made Hilton ask you here for Christmas, on the strength of it?"

"Well, look how you fellows let me down for Christmas!" said Bunter indignantly. "Mauly, too, and Smithy, and Toddy—let down all round!"

"And you made him ask us?"

"Well, naturally, I wanted my pals with me!" said Bunter. "I think you might thank a chap, getting you invited to a magnificent place like this. There's such a thing as gratitude!"

"You—you—you unspeakable idiot!" gasped Wharton. "Do you think we'd have come within fifty miles of the place if we'd known?"

Bunter grinned again.

"Well, I knew you were fussy," he said. "I told Hilton that you were fussy, and that he would have to put it nicely. He did, didn't he?"

"Hilton can't have imagined that we knew anything about it," said Nugent. "He's not a suspicious rotter like Price!"

"Oh, that's all right, old fellows!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Hilton knew you never knew anything. I knew you wouldn't come if you knew! I explained to him that you were fussy—"

"Oh, kill him!" growled Johnny Bull. "That's what you call gratitude, I suppose!" said Bunter. "I've stood you a splendid Christmas holiday when you were let down by your own people. Haven't you had a jolly good time here?"

"Yes, you fat idiot!" said Bob.

"But if we'd known—"

"Well, as you never knew, that's all right," said Bunter. "You see, I wanted my old pals with me. I don't mean that I wanted to borrow your clothes and things, though I suppose a fellow can borrow a shirt or a pair of trousers, or a necktie, from a pal? As for the few small sums you may have lent me during the holidays, you know

perfectly well that I'm going to settle up every shilling as soon as I receive some postal orders I'm expecting!"

The Famous Five gazed at him.

Why Bunter wanted their company at Hilton Hall during the "hols" was hardly a secret. Bunter was not in a financial position to travel on his own. When Bunter had any money it always went the same way—in tuck! Friends with cash in their pockets were absolutely essential to Bunter when he was on his travels.

All that was nothing new; they knew their Bunter, and expected it of him. But the way in which he had "wangled" that invitation to Hilton Hall came as a surprise to the chums of the Remove.

There was one thing to be said in favour of the unscrupulous young rascal—he was too utterly obtuse to realise that wrongdoing was wrong!

Even now that they had found him out he did not seem to realise that there was any cause for wrath!

He blinked round at their grim faces.

"I hope you fellows ain't going to cut up rusty when we're getting such a jolly good time here," he said. "I hope you're not going to be fussy."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"We've got to see Hilton at once, you fellows," he said. "We can walk over to the railway station with our bags—we won't trouble him for a car. The sooner we get out, the better!"

"What-ho!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter stared.

"You're not going?" he ejaculated.

"You fat, frowsy Owl, do you think we shall stay another minute here now we know why Hilton asked us?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Why not? The grub's good—"

"Wha-at?"

"Jolly good!" said Bunter warmly. "I've never been in a show where the grub was better. Lots of it, too! Well, the grub's all right—so everything's all right! As for Hilton, he can't boot you out—he daren't! Price can't do anything! So what are you worrying about?"

Harry Wharton burst into an angry laugh.

"It's not much use telling you what we're worrying about, Bunter," he said. "Never mind that! We're going at once, and Hilton can explain it to his father how he likes—that's up to him, after the rotten trick he's played by asking us here. And you're going to hand me that letter to give Hilton."

"I'm jolly well not!" roared Bunter. "Why, Hilton would kick me out if he got hold of it!"

"More power to his giddy elbow!" said Bob.

"Hand it over, you fat freak!" snapped Wharton.

"Shan't!" howled the fat Owl of the Remove. "All very well for you fellows. Hilton seems to want you here! He doesn't want me! He would give me the boot, I can jolly well tell you!"

"Will you hand over that letter?"

"No! Mind your own business!" snorted Bunter. "I got you a splendid holiday here! You're ungrateful! Well, if you want to clear, clear, and be blowed! I'm not going! And I can jolly well say—Yarooooop! Leggo my neck!"

"Where's that letter?"

"Ow! Leggo! Wow! I—I haven't got it; there—there never was a letter, really! I never picked it up in the quad at school, and it wasn't from Walsingham, and there was nothing in it about Hilton owing money, and I say—Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow! If you don't stop shook-shook-shaking me, you beast, you'll make my gig-gig-glasses



"I desire to speak to you young gentlemen," said Walsingham, "where other ears cannot hear. I—I—I—it's about the convict." Billy Bunter, hidden behind the curtain, pricked up his ears and took in every word.

fall off, and if they get bub-bub-broken, you'll have to pip-pip-pip—"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Pip-pip-pay for them!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I never had any letter! And I've lost it, too! And—and I gave it back to Hilton this morning! Honest Injun! I—I hope you can take my word!"

"Bang his head on the wall," suggested Johnny Bull. "Hard!"

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows, you're worse than Price! I say— Whoop!"

Bang!

"Yaroooh!"

Bang, bang!

"Ow! Beast! Stop it! I say, you fellows, if you're going, it's time you started. There's a train from Blackmoor at— Yoo-hoo-h! Whoop—"

Bang!

"Oh crikey! I say, I'll get the letter!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo! Oh lor! My napper! Wow! It's in my room— Wow!"

"Come on, then!"

"You fellows needn't come! I—I'll go and fetch it! I—I'll come straight back with it, of course."

"Take his other arm, Bob!"

"Beast!"

With Wharton holding one arm and Bob Cherry the other, Bunter was marched into the corridor, the rest of the Co. following.

He was marched into his own room.

"Now, sharp!" snapped Wharton.

"I—I say, I—I forget where I put it!" gasped Bunter.

"Kick him!"

"Yaroooh! Keep off, you beast! I'm getting it, ain't I?" howled Bunter. He disinterred a crumpled cap from under the big cushion in the seat of an armchair. "I say, you fellows, you might mind your own business! It's nothing to do with you—"

"Not if you hadn't landed us here, you fat rotter!" said Wharton. "Now it is our business, and we're seeing to it. Where's the letter?"

"Now—now I come to think of it, I—I left it at Greyfriars— Whoop! If you kick me again, you beast, I'll— Yaroooooh! I'm getting it as fast as I can!" shrieked Bunter.

He jerked open the lining of the cap, which he had pinned over the hidden letter. Wharton jerked the letter from his hand.

A glance at it showed that it began "Dear Master Cedric," and that it was signed "Francis Walsingham." That was all it was necessary to see. It was the right letter!

Wharton crumpled it in his pocket. The Famous Five walked out of Bunter's room, leaving the fat Owl blinking after them with a blink of indignant wrath that almost cracked his spectacles. Time and again Price of the Fifth had attempted to get hold of that letter, and failed. But Bunter had lost it now! The power was gone from his fat hands. It did not look as if Bunter's stay at Hilton Hall would last till the end of the holidays!

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. went downstairs and out of the house. They were going to find Hilton, tell him what they thought of him, throw the letter in his face, and then shake the dust of Hilton Hall from their feet for ever!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hand to Hand!

HILTON of the Fifth paused in a frosty "ride" in the park to light a cigarette.

He was looking for the party who were hunting through the park for the man from Blackmoor, but he had not fallen in with them yet.

Several times, on the wind that swept over the moors, the bay of the bloodhound had been wafted to his ears. The hunt was still going on in the extensive park, but it had drawn to a long distance from the house.

Having lighted his cigarette Hilton strolled on, with his hands in the pockets of his overcoat, listening for sounds to guide him through the wood towards Inspector Trevelly and his party.

But the bay of the hound when he heard it again was far away—hardly heard from the distance. He walked on under the leafless frosty branches of trees that extended and joined over the ride.

Always careless, he was not on his guard; but had he been wary he would hardly have looked up into the branches overhead for an enemy.

He did not dream that from the branches of a beech beside the ride, a pair of fierce, sunken eyes watched him as he came sauntering along.

Convict No. 33 breathed hard and shut his teeth at the sight of the handsome, elegant, well-dressed Fifth Former of Greyfriars.

Lurking in the dense park the fugitive ruffian had heard, again and again, the bay of the seeking hound. And he had taken to the trees as a last chance of throwing the bloodhound off the scent. Clambering from branch to branch of the closely packed elms, oaks, and beeches, it seemed that he had succeeded for the time, at least, for the hunt was now a good half-mile from him.

But it was only a respite; escape seemed as hopeless as ever. Since he had received no further assistance from Walsingham, the convict's case had become absolutely desperate.

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

Walsingham, if the butler could be forced by appeals or threats, to aid him again, was his only hope. That was why he was there. But the chance was a desperate one, with the police and warders in the park, and the bloodhound baying on his trail, and the whole household watchful and alarmed.

The sight of Hilton gave him a gleam of hope.

With a change of clothes and money in his pockets, he had a chance of getting away from the moors. He was a slightly built man, hardly as sturdy in build as the Fifth Former of Greyfriars. It would be easy enough to wear Hilton's clothes, if he could get them. And the Greyfriars senior looked as if he had money in his pockets.

Convict No. 33 breathed hard and deep.

His gleaming glance shot watchfully round him like that of a hunted beast. There was no one in sight, no one at hand. The man-hunters were far away, and there was no sign of anyone following Hilton from the mansion.

And the Greyfriars senior, utterly unconscious of danger, was walking directly under the branches of the beech.

It was such a chance as the hunted man had hoped for, longed for, but never dreamed of getting. He swung himself out on a branch, to drop into the path below.

Once his grip was on Hilton the rest was easy. He was ready to beat the Greyfriars fellow into insensibility to prevent him from giving the alarm when he left him, after robbing him of clothes and money. In his present desperate straits there was little at which Convict No. 33 was likely to hesitate.

With a sudden spring he landed in the ride from the branch, only a few feet from Hilton.

"What the dooce—"

Hilton jumped back with a gasp of astonishment and alarm, the cigarette falling from his lips.

He was no coward; but his face went white as he recognised the tattered, muddy, haggard figure of the convict, and realised that he was alone in the lonely park with a man who was utterly desperate.

Before he could decide what to do, before he could even think, the convict was on him with the leap of a tiger.

By luck, more than design, Cedric Hilton warded a fierce blow, and the next moment he was struggling with the convict.

Hilton was slim and elegant, but he was by no means a weakling, and he had pluck. He struggled manfully in that fierce grip.

But the convict was stronger, and desperation lent him an added strength. Hilton reeled and staggered in his grasp.

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"Help!" he shouted.

He was able to shout only once. Then he was down on his back on the hard, frosty ground, the convict over him.

A fierce grip on his throat choked back the cry he would have uttered. The convict's eyes burned down at him like a wild animal's.

With his left hand gripping the Greyfriars senior's throat, to keep him silent, Convict No. 33 drew back his right, clenched hard.

Hilton struggled frantically.

He knew that a crashing blow was coming—a blow that, if it landed, would stun him. That was the ruffian's intention.

With a desperate effort he twisted his head aside as that savage blow came down, and it missed him, the clenched knuckles thudding on the frosty ground.

There was a howl of pain from the convict. His knuckles were barked, his hand almost numbed.

Hilton for a moment had a chance. He almost succeeded in throwing the ruffian off, and the grip relaxed from his throat.

"Help!" shrieked Hilton.

His voice came hoarse, husky, choked. But it rang through the frozen trees of the park. There was no chance of his wild cry reaching the ears of the men with the bloodhound—they were too far away. But someone else might be in the park—a keeper, perhaps.

"Help!"

A second time he shrieked, and then the grasp of the savage ruffian was on his throat again, choking him into silence.

Crash! came a knuckly fist, landing on his forehead, and dazing him. But he still struggled gamely.

There was a patter of feet on the ride. Five fellows came into sight from the direction of the mansion, running. Harry Wharton & Co., looking for Hilton of the Fifth in the park, had heard his desperate cry.

Hilton neither saw nor heard them; his senses were swimming. The patter of their running feet was soft on the snow that lay in the ride.

The convict, his glittering eyes fixed on the Greyfriars senior, was unaware of their coming. His brawny fist was drawn back for another blow—a blow which, if it had landed, would have stunned Hilton, if it had not done still more serious injury.

But that blow did not fall.

Harry Wharton & Co., as they saw what was happening on the ride ahead of them, put on a desperate spurt.

Wharton reached the convict just as the savage blow was descending. He plunged headlong, breathlessly, at the ruffian, grasping him, and bearing him back. The convict's fist landed in his ribs, instead of on Hilton's temple, and make him gasp.

A snarl of rage broke from the man from Blackmoor. He turned on the junior like a tiger, grasped him, and hurled him aside with a strength that Wharton could not resist.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove went sprawling on the earth.

It would have fared hard with him had not his comrades been at hand. But the Co. at the same moment came up with a rush.

"Collar him!" panted Bob.

The convict, snarling, leaped back, and back again. The juniors followed him up, with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

Again he leaped back; yet he seemed uncertain whether to fly, or to

attempt to tackle the whole bunch of them. But he seemed to realise the hopelessness of that; and he turned suddenly, and ran into the trees with the fleetness of a hunted deer.

Nugent ran to Wharton and helped him up.

"Hurt, old chap?" he gasped.

Wharton panted.

"Only a bump. Let's see to Hilton."

The convict had vanished in the trees. The chums of the Remove gathered round Cedric Hilton. He lay half-stunned on the snow, moaning faintly, his hand to his bruised forehead. They raised him to a sitting position, and he leaned heavily, supported by Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull. Far in the distance the fleeing footsteps of the man from Blackmoor died into silence.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Vanished Convict!

"YOU'RE hurt, Hilton," muttered Harry Wharton.

Hilton grinned faintly.

He was recovering himself now, though his head was aching terribly, and he was still too exhausted to rise. But he was getting back his breath, and his coolness with it.

"I've had a bit of a thump," he drawled. "By gad! That blighter has a fist on him like a lump of iron. Lucky he never got in a second knock."

The juniors had quite forgotten the bitter and angry feelings with which they had been seeking the dandy of the Fifth. They were not thinking now of telling him what they thought of him. The sight of the dandy of the Fifth struggling in the desperate grip of the convict had quite driven that idea from their minds.

Now as he sat spent, with his handsome face disfigured by a blackening bruise, their only feeling was one of friendly kindness.

"The brute was in that tree!" said Hilton. "By gad, I've had a close shave! He was going to knock me out! Did you hear me yell?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"I'm glad you were taking a walk just about this time!" grinned Hilton.

Wharton coloured.

"The fact is, we were looking for you," he said. "We asked Walsingham which way you had gone, that was how we came along this path—"

"Glad you wanted to see me!" said Hilton. "Anythin' special?"

"Oh! Never mind now," said Harry, his colour deepening. "Let's get you back to the house! You want that lump seen to."

"Ow! My head's aching!" muttered Hilton. "Give me a hand up; I think I can totter now."

The juniors helped him to his feet. He stood unsteadily, his hand pressed to his bruised forehead. He was cool enough now, but he shuddered as he thought of what the result would have been had the convict landed that savage blow from which Wharton had barely saved him.

"Let's help you!" said Bob.

Hilton made rather a grimace. The Fifth Form man did not want to turn up at the house supported by juniors of the Remove! But as he started to walk he staggered, and after that he was glad to let Bob and Johnny take his arms and help him along.

"All right now," he said, as they reached the terrace before Hilton Hall, and he managed to walk on unaided.

"If you're all right we'll cut off and

let Mr. Trevelly know what's happened," said Harry.

"Do!" said Hilton. "Tell the pater, if he's there, that I'm not hurt."

"Right-ho!" said Wharton, with a smile.

Hilton, with an effort, walked on alone, and the Famous Five turned back. From the other end of the park, on the wind, came the faint baying of the baffled hound. They had news for Inspector Trevelly which the Okeham inspector would be glad to hear, and they started off at a rapid trot, guided by the distant baying that came from moment to moment.

"This rather knocks things on the head," said Bob Cherry, as they trotted along under the frosty trees. "I was feeling inclined to punch Hilton's face, but I suppose a fellow can't punch him now."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Hardly!" he said. "He's had enough punching, to judge by that lump on his napper. After all, he's been civil to us here, and we may as well be civil when we go. We shall have to get a later train, that's all."

"I'd rather have liked to stay to see the finish of that convict!" said Johnny Bull. "Can't be done, though. I can't quite make Hilton out. He seemed to make us welcome enough. But—"

"We'll kick Bunter again before we go!" said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

"The kickfulness will be terrific!"

The juniors kept up a steady speed. From one path they turned into another, and another, and at length sighted the hunters.

The bloodhound, with Inspector Trevelly, holding the leash, was snuffing

at the snow, and seemed at a loss. The warders stood by with their rifles under their arms. Sir Gilbert Hilton was tugging at his white moustache. The whole party turned as the juniors came panting up.

"What do you schoolboys want here?" jerked Inspector Trevelly, apparently not greatly pleased by their arrival.

"News for you, old bean!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We've seen your man."

"Seen him?" The inspector was instantly alert. "Here?"

"In the park—about half a mile—"

"Lead the way!" jerked Mr. Trevelly. "Tell me as we go along."

"This way!"

"The convict got hold of Hilton in the park," said Harry. "He's not hurt, sir!" he added quickly, as Sir Gilbert uttered an exclamation. "Only a bruise
(Continued on next page.)



"The most successful footballers are those who love the game as a game!" says "Linesman." If you want expert advice on the great winter game, write to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. He'll be only too pleased to oblige.

THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS!

THERE are many qualities which must, of necessity, be found in the successful footballer. That is very obvious. Quite frequently, however, I get letters from readers who, in effect, ask me what I consider to be the first essential towards progress in the game. I have two such letters in my post-bag this week, from such far-distant towns as Carlisle and Plymouth.

By way of reply, I shall give my opinion that the first essential to success is love of the game as a game. For it is love of the game which begets enthusiasm, and to the enthusiastic all things are possible.

I often hear people refer to professional footballers somewhat scathingly. They say that they are in football for what they can make out of it. That sort of statement does less than justice to the average player. True, when the "pro" gets to the top class he makes money out of the game. He has to make money, because we all need a bit of the "ready" in this world. But in the course of my experiences I have come into close contact with hundreds of professional players, and give it as my opinion that the most successful are those who love the game as a game.

Let me tell you about one player—a young fellow only just past the twenty-years-of-age mark—who has been in the football news of late. This is Ralph Birkett, the Arsenal outside-right. His football experience reads like fiction, but I shall just give you the facts.

When this boy was fifteen years of age he was looking for a job as an office-boy, and as he lives not far from the ground of the Torquay football club, he called there to ask for a job. As the club happened to be in need of a boy they gave him a job, and he started one Monday morning. On the Friday, when he received his first wages, he was told that as the club had a match on the ground the following day, he would have to come to work. The lad

was disappointed at this news. "I am sorry," he said, "but I have always played football on a Saturday afternoon, and I am so keen about it that I don't want to give up my game. I must play for my club at Paignton."

As the lad was so keen he was allowed off on Saturday afternoons to play football with his local team.

About three years later, the lad was in the Torquay United first team, and after he had been there a few weeks he was transferred to Arsenal. His keenness and enthusiasm are the big secrets of his success.

SWITCHING POSITIONS!

HERE is another little story which shows up enthusiasm and grit in its proper light. I was talking to a very fine player—an International left-winger—about Murphy, the right half-back of West Bromwich Albion, and this International paid what seems to me a very fine tribute to his opponent. "The annoying part about that fellow Murphy," said the International winger, "is that he refuses to acknowledge himself beaten. When you diddle him once he doesn't take the slightest notice, and when you beat him a second time he won't admit it. He just keeps on worrying." That's the stuff of which the best footballers are made.

In these notes on a previous occasion I have pointed out the virtues of switching positions from time to time—insisted that a player is not necessarily at his best in the position on the field in which he originally played. There comes a reminder of this from a Scottish reader who is keenly interested in the Hamilton Academicals side.

They have done quite well in the Scottish League this season, and my informant tells me that there are only three regular members of the

first team this season who are playing in the same positions as those in which they started their football careers.

Concerning these switches, there is a peculiar coincidence. The goalkeeper, Shevlin, used to be a centre-forward, and the centre-forward of the side, Wilson, was formerly a goalkeeper. Indeed, Wilson still declares that goalkeeper is his best position, and during the mid-week practice he often goes between the posts to "keep his hand in," so that should he fail as a centre-forward he will be able to go back beneath the bar.

Having gone into Scotland for a moment, I can stay there to answer a reader who draws my attention to a recent remarkable match in which Motherwell were concerned. They were playing against Dunfermline, and the score at half-time was two to one against Motherwell. In the second half, however, the Motherwell players pulled themselves together and actually scored eight goals, to win the game by nine to three.

AN AMAZING GAME!

THE question which is put to me is whether there is any parallel in first-class football to this remarkable second-half performance. I can only recall one. In 1908 those two keen northern rivals, Newcastle United and Sunderland, played a First Division game at Newcastle.

The first half was quite ordinary, and the score at half-time was one goal each. In the second half the Sunderland forwards "went mad," and in the course of twenty-eight minutes they scored eight more goals, winning the game by nine goals to one.

Incidentally, that was the biggest away win ever recorded by an English First Division side. There was one other interesting feature about that amazing game. It was the first in which Albert Shepherd, who had just previously been transferred from Bolton Wanderers, played for his new club on the Newcastle ground.

I get many letters from boy footballers concerning their physical fitness. There is a typical one from D. W., of Stepney, who says that after a game of football he gets pains in his legs, which prevent him from running comfortably for several days.

I am sorry that it is impossible to give advice in cases of this sort. The only thing to do is to consult an expert, who can diagnose the trouble. There is something wrong physically with a player who feels like that at the end of an ordinary game.

"LINESMAN."

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or two, and he's gone back to the house. We happened to come along in time."

"Thank goodness for that!" said the old baronet. "My son—in the hands of that desperate man—" He shivered. "You are sure—sure that Cedric is not badly hurt?"

"He had a knock, sir, but he told us to tell you he wasn't hurt. He was able to walk in alone," said Harry. "We came to bring the news! The convict jumped down on him from a tree—"

"That's how he beat the dog!" said Mr. Trevelly. "But we know that he's here—only a matter of time now."

They hurried on, and reached the spot where Hilton had struggled with the convict. The hound strained at the leash, evidently picking up the lost scent again at once.

"Follow me!" said the inspector, as the eager hound tugged him along.

The early winter dusk was falling over Hilton Hall and the surrounding moors. But it was still light enough to see the way. Fast on the track of the hunted convict loped the hound, the hunters following. Harry Wharton & Co. followed on, keen to be in at the finish—if there was a finish.

By path and ride and tangled coppice the hunt went on, till at last the trail led in the direction of Hilton Hall. The windows of the stately mansion were lighted now, and they gleamed and glimmered through the thickening dusk when the man-hunters emerged from the park.

Once more the hound was at a loss. He ran to and fro, snuffing and whining. Mr. Trevelly set his lips hard. This time he had hoped for success—counted on it. But again the scent was lost and the hunted man of Blackmoor had eluded him.

The Okeham inspector stood holding in the hound and staring towards the great facade of Hilton Hall. There was an expression on his face that made the juniors exchange glances as they read it in the dusk. They wondered whether Mr. Trevelly was suspecting that the hunted man had a confederate within those stately walls. If so, his suspicions came too late, for the juniors were assured that Walsingham had kept his word and was no longer helping the fugitive. Yet it was strange enough that the trail had led them so near to the Hall.

"He is not far away—I am certain of that, Sir Gilbert!" said the Okeham inspector at last. "But—" He shrugged his shoulders.

The scent was lost, and it was not likely that the skulking convict would be found now that the winter darkness was descending on Blackmoor like a cloak.

Harry Wharton & Co. had to give up the idea of being "in at the death," and they went in to pack their bags.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Last Word!

"TRICKLE in!" called out Cedric Hilton.

There was a tap at the door of his "den."

In that handsomely appointed apartment the dandy of the Greyfriars Fifth Form lay on a sofa before a crackling wood fire, his head resting on down pillows and he had a bandage over his forehead.

Except for the bandage and a pallor in his cheeks he looked much the same as usual. Price was with him. Lady Hilton had been with her son, but she left when Price came in—for which the

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cad of Greyfriars was duly thankful, as it enabled him to light a cigarette.

Hilton told him what had happened—Price listening, with a faint sneer on his face.

"No end heroic of the fags!" he drawled.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Hilton, with unusual sharpness. "What a fellow you are for sneering, Pricey! That brute might have cracked my skull if the fags hadn't come up—and I can jolly well tell you that I don't believe you would have jumped right at that ruffian, as young Wharton did, so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Price shrugged his thin shoulders. The tap at the door interrupted him as he was about to reply, and Harry Wharton came in.

Hilton gave him a cheery smile.

"Oh, you kid!" he said. "Take a pew! Nice of you to look in on the interestin' invalid! Chuck that smoke away, Pricey."

"Rot!" said Price, and went on smoking.

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Harry, with a glance of contempt at Price.

"I'm not staying a minute."

"Do!" said Hilton. He glanced curiously at the face of the captain of the Remove, which was rather set in expression. "Nothing up, I hope, kid?"

"Well, yes," said Harry. "We're going—"

Hilton gave a start, and sat upright in his surprise. The movement brought a pang of pain to his damaged head, and he uttered a sharp yelp:

"Ow!"

"Better keep still, with that lump on your napper, Cedric!" yawned Price.

"Have a cigarette, old chap."

Hilton did not heed him. His eyes were on Wharton.

"Did you say you were goin'?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Isn't that rather sudden?" asked Hilton. "Of course, you're free to do as you like; but I thought you were staying on till near the end of the vac. If you mean that something's happened to upset you, give it a name. Has Price—"

"It isn't Price!" said Harry.

"Well, what is it?" Hilton spoke rather sharply. "I've done my best so far as I know, and I don't think the pater and mater have been wantin' in hospitality. If you've taken offence at somethin' give it a name."

"Gettin' a bit alarmed about the convict, perhaps!" suggested Price.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Pricey!" said Hilton irritably. "Look here, Wharton! Explain yourself, and don't be a young ass!"

"I'll explain, if you like," said Harry. "We know now why we were asked here, and that's enough for us. That fat fool, Bunter, doesn't need to be wanted, or made welcome, when he barges into a fellow's place; but I think you might have known, Hilton, that it wasn't quite like that with us."

"I don't see—"

"I shouldn't have seen you before we left, only I've got something that belongs to you, and that I must give you," said Harry. He drew the crumpled letter from his pocket, and tossed it on the sofa beside Hilton. "That's yours."

"What the merry dooce!" ejaculated Hilton, in astonishment.

He made no motion to take up the letter. But Price, with a very strange and startled expression on his face, pounced on it.

"By gum!" Price's eyes sparkled

with excitement as he grabbed it up.

"Cedric, it's the letter!"

"What letter?" snapped Hilton.

"Walsingham's!"

"What?"

"The one that the butler wrote you at the school—the one you lost, and that fat rascal Bunter found!" gasped Price. "Look at it!"

He held the letter up before Hilton's face, and the dandy of the Fifth stared at it blankly.

"Good gad!" he exclaimed. "The letter!"

"Oh, good luck!" exclaimed Price. "It's the letter, right enough!" He gave the captain of the Remove a glance. "You've read this, of course?"

Wharton's lip curled.

"I had to look at it to make sure that it was the right letter, when I took it from Bunter, Hilton," he said. "I saw your name on it, and Walsingham's signature. I saw no more than that, whatever that cad may think."

"Do shut up, Pricey!" said Hilton.

"Oh, let him run on!" said Wharton contemptuously. "I'm quite indifferent to the opinion of a rank outsider and rotter!"

Price laughed.

"Hard words break no bones!" he said. "We've got the letter. That's the letter that Bunter has been holding over your head, Cedric—the letter that might have got you sacked from Greyfriars, if the Head had seen it—and me, too, perhaps! We've got it."

"Chuck it in the fire!" said Hilton.

"Right-ho!"

Price crumpled the letter in his hand, and tossed it into the heart of the glowing logs.

It flamed, and was consumed in a moment.

Price's narrow eyes danced. He was greatly elated. That danger was over—the danger of being "up" before the Head of Greyfriars next term. That had been a very real danger if the letter had remained in existence, in the hands of the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove. All his attempts to "snaffle" it at Hilton Hall had failed, and he had given up hope of success. Now it had ceased to exist.

Cedric Hilton drew a deep breath of relief.

He had not worried about that tell-tale letter so much as Price had, his nature was too easy-going and careless for that. But it was a weight off his mind to see it disappear into fluffy ash in the fire.

"Thanks, Wharton!" he said. "You've done me a good turn."

Wharton stepped back.

"You might have guessed what we should do, if we knew how matters stood," he answered curtly. "There's no more to say—good-bye!"

"Hold on! There's a lot more to say!" said Hilton. "First of all, I want to know how you knew anything about that letter at all. I'm quite certain that Bunter never let you know."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You can ask Price that!" he said.

Hilton gave his pal a rather dark look.

"I warned you to say nothin' to those fags, Pricey! I told you they knew nothin' of Bunter's rotten trickery, and warned you—"

"I know that! But I'm glad I did, as it's turned out," said Price coolly. "I believed that they were hand-in-glove with the fat scoundrel—"

"You would!" said Wharton disdainfully.

"I admit now that I was mistaken," said Price. "But I had to let it out,



The Famous Five stared in blank amazement at the sight of Billy Bunter backed up against the billiards-table, with a handkerchief stuffed in his mouth. "Now, you rotter!" hissed Stephen Price. "Where's that letter? Hand it over!"

Cedric, when they came on me this afternoon in the billiards-room, handling Bunter. I was goin' to get the letter off him, if I could, and they—"

"It was a good thing that Price let it out," said Harry. "It let us know where we stood. As soon as we know, we made Bunter give up the letter, as Price would have guessed if he hadn't been a howling cad himself—"

"Thanks!" said Price, laughing.

"You've acted rottenly to us, Hilton!" went on Wharton, with a tremor in his voice and a gleam in his eyes. "You asked us here, and we took it in good faith! You'd no right to treat us like that!"

"I don't see it," said Hilton, flushing. "I let that fat young rotter, Bunter, come here, because he had that hold over me—I don't see what else I could have done in the circumstances. But you—"

"Bunter made you ask us. He wanted fellows here with him for reasons of his own, and he made you ask us." Wharton's eyes flashed. "We were all surprised, but we took it at face value, and we came. And now—now we've found out—oh, it's rotten! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself for treating decent fellows like that!"

"I never meant—"

"No use talking! You're free to act as you like now—the letter's burned, and you're safe!" said Wharton, with bitter scorn. "You can turn your guests out as soon as you like—but we're going to save you the trouble. My friends are packing their bags now, and we're going!"

"I tell you—"

"We came to tell you so this afternoon in the park, only that convict knocked you out, and we had to put it off. Sorry you were landed with us a couple of

hours longer than was necessary!" added Wharton, with sarcasm. "But we're going now!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, chuck it, Cedric!" said Price. "Let them clear, and a good riddance to them! I'm sick of them here, if you're not! And—"

"Shut up, Price!" snapped Hilton. "Look here, Wharton! Listen to me. I—"

"I'm done here!" said Harry, and he walked to the door and walked out of the room, shutting the door after him with a snap.

Hilton, with a hand to his aching head, stared after him.

Price laughed.

"Good!" he said. "If I'd known the young rottors would take it like this, I'd have put them wise before. I'm glad I—"

"Will you shut up!" hissed Hilton.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Cedric! I suppose you don't want that crew of cheeky fags here?" snarled Price.

"You can suppose what you like!"

Hilton rose slowly from the sofa. His head ached, and it seemed to spin as he rose. He put a hand on the sofa to steady himself.

Price stared at him angrily.

"Where are you goin'?" he asked, between his teeth.

"Find out!"

"Look here, Cedric!" said Price savagely. "If those dashed fags stay here, now we can get rid of them, I don't! If they stay, I go!"

"Please yourself!"

"What?"

"I said please yourself."

And Cedric Hilton, with uncertain steps, went to the door, leaving Stephen Price with an expression on his face like unto that of a demon in a pantomime.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

To Go or Not to Go!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Get out!"

"Shan't!" howled Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove glared through his spectacles in great wrath.

The Famous Five were in Wharton's room.

The Co. had packed their bags, and had only waited for Wharton to come back, after taking the letter to Hilton, before they cleared.

Wharton was fastening his suitcase. The other fellows were all ready to go, and he was nearly ready. Bunter was not ready.

Bunter was not going—if he could help it! Bunter, indeed, saw no reason to go! If Hilton, now that he was safe, kicked him out, he had to go—but, short of that, the Owl of the Remove saw no reason whatever for departure from Hilton Hall. Whether Hilton would kick him out, was, to Bunter's fat mind, the only question.

He glared in great wrath at the chums of the Remove. He had concealed the true circumstances from them because he realised that they were "fussy." But, really, he did not expect sensible fellows to carry fussiness to this extent.

"I say, you fellows, you're not going?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you blithering owl!"

"What for?" asked Bunter.

"Kill him somebody!" said Bob.

"I mean, has Hilton told you to clear?" asked Bunter. "I don't believe he would! I don't see how he can. How's he to explain it to his father?"

"Shut up!"

"Shan't! Look here, I think it's pretty thick, to let me down after

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"I've got you a Christmas holiday in a splendid place like this!" exclaimed Bunter hotly. "What about me?"

"Fathead!"

"You see, Hilton may turn on me, now, owing to the rotten trick you've played on me, bagging that letter and all that!" said Bunter. "I don't really trust the fellow; he may turn on me."

"Very likely, I think," grinned Bob.

"Well, you fellows stand by me!" said Bunter. "We're pals, ain't we? I can't stay here on my own—you see that? But if we all stick together we can pull it off! Hilton can't make a row. He couldn't let his father know, could he? We've only got to stick together and stick it, and we're all right till the end of the vac. Don't you see that?"

"Idiot!"

"The grub's good!" said Bunter. "Mean to say that you've got any fault to find with the grub?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Really, it was not much use trying to explain things to Billy Bunter!

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter warmly. "I've never had better grub anywhere. Not even at Bunter Court. The turkey—"

"Dry up!"

"And the Christmas pudding—"

"Ring off!"

"And the mince pies—"

"Ready!" said Harry, rising and picking up his suitcase. "We'll carry our bags down. Better get out as quietly as we can! It will be a bit awkward to run into Hilton's people—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, do shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here, I'm jolly well not coming with you!" declared Bunter.

"You're jolly well not!" agreed Johnny Bull. "I advise you not to come in reach of my boot, you fat frump!"

"Beast! Letting a chap down!" said Bunter indignantly. "It will be jolly difficult for me to stay on after you're gone. If we all stick together, it will be all right—at least, there's a jolly good chance. But if you let me down like this—"

"I think," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully, "that we'd better bump Bunter before we go. He keeps on asking us to."

"Hear, hear!"

"The bumpfulness is the proper caper!"

"I say, you fellows—leggo!" roared Bunter, as the Famous Five grasped him and up-ended him.

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"Whooooop!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow! Beasts! Leggo! Go as soon as you like—wow! Get out—ow! Jolly glad to see the last of you—yarooooop! Ow!"

Bump!

"Oh crikey!"

"There!" gasped Bob Cherry. "That will do! If you didn't weigh a blessed ton, we'd give you another—"

"Yoo-hoo-hoooh-hoop!"

"Come on!" said Harry; and leaving the Owl of the Remove sitting on the floor, gasping and spluttering, the Famous Five picked up their bags and went to the door.

"Hold on!" said a quiet voice.

An elegant figure, with a pale face and a bandaged forehead, blocked the doorway. Hilton of the Fifth stood there.

His face was very pale, and his lips

set with pain. In his present state even a little exertion told on him. He rested one hand on the doorpost as he stood looking in at the juniors.

They stopped.

"You ass, Hilton!" said Bob. "You oughtn't to be getting about in that state. You'll come a cropper."

"Your fault," said Hilton, with the ghost of a smile. "If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, Mahomet has to come to the mountain. You've got to give me a chance to explain."

"Nothing to explain!" said Johnny Bull, with a grunt. "That fat rotter Bunter made you ask us here, and it was rotten of you to do it when you didn't want us. Now we know, we're getting out."

"But suppose I did want you?" said Hilton.

"Oh, rot!"

"Let me explain," said the Fifth

GLAMORGAN GETS GOING!

Have a chuckle at this yarn, for which Noel Ball, of 2, Rhondda Terrace, Ferndale, Glam., has been awarded one of this week's MAGNET POCKET KNIVES!



Father: "What are you crying for, Peter?"
Peter: "Do you see those stairs over there?"
Father: "Yes! But what—"
Peter: "Well, I didn't!"

Send in that rib-tickler of yours
—NOW!

Former. "That fat young rascal Bunter landed himself on me. He bargained to bring other fellows with him. If he'd landed me with a crew of his own kidney, I should have felt pretty sick about it."

"Oh, really, Hilton—" gasped Bunter.

"Shut up, you fat freak!" growled Johnny.

"Beast!"

"But when I found it was you fellows, it was different," went on Hilton. "My pater was glad to hear that you were coming. Wharton—your uncle is his old War pal. I'm not saying that I'm frightfully keen, as a rule, on Lower Fourth society. But I was glad to have you here—you were all welcome, though Bunter wasn't! You see, you stand on rather a different footin'. I asked you sincerely, and meant what I said—and mean it now! I'm askin' you to stay on for the time

arranged. I want you to! Can't you take a man's word?"

The juniors were silent.

It was hardly possible to doubt Hilton's sincerity, for Bunter's hold over him was gone now, and he was free to do as he liked.

"Wash it all out," said Hilton. "I'm not surprised that you've got your backs up! But get 'em down again, see? I shall feel frightfully sick if you clear off like this! I want you to stay on! Isn't that plain enough?"

"Well, yes," said Harry doubtfully.

"But—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" shrieked Bob.

"Beast!"

"Wash out the 'buts,'" said Hilton. "Make it a go! And, look here, one of you give me an arm back to my room; my head's splittin'! Is it a go?"

The chums of the Remove exchanged glances. They could see that the dandy of the Fifth was in earnest—and they did not want to keep up a state of offended dignity for nothing! The bags plumped on the floor.

Hilton smiled.

"That's right!" he said. He leaned heavily on the doorpost, his handsome face very pale. "Oh, my napper!"

Wharton ran to him.

Two of the juniors helped Hilton back to his room. The other fellows unpacked the bags.

Billy Bunter, gasping after his bumping, grinned while he gasped. The Famous Five had accepted Hilton's earnest and pressing invitation to stay on at the Hall. So had Bunter! Hilton had not spoken to him, or looked at him; but that did not matter to Bunter. So long as he was not kicked out, Bunter was going to stay. He was not kicked out! So he was going to stay! And he did!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Struck Down!

MIDNIGHT!

A wild wintry wind wailed over the old red roofs of Hilton Hall, and rustled the ancient ivy, ridged with snow.

Francis Walsingham, the butler, sat before the fire in his comfortable and well-lighted sitting-room and listened—to the wind, and perhaps for other sounds.

His portly face was dark and troubled.

He was thinking—of the man who lurked on the moors, or in the frozen park; the man who had been sentenced to Blackmoor Prison, under the name of Richard Pike, but whose real name was Richard Walsingham.

The younger brother had always been a black sheep—as a valet, he had robbed his master; as a crook, he had gone from bad to worse. Yet it had been a terrible shock to the respectable, middle-aged butler of Hilton Hall to learn that his brother was a convict—that he was serving a sentence in the grim, stone-walled prison only a mile or two away across the moors. He had not known it till the night of the convict's escape, when the sight of the haggard face at the window had given him the shock of his life.

Blood is thicker than water, and the butler had helped the wretched fugitive of the moors—till Hilton, "put wise" by the suspicious Price, found him out. The secret had been kept, only on condition that Walsingham cut the connection on the spot—and he had promised. He had kept that

promise, hoping that the hunted man would make the most of the chance given him and escape. He had done for him all he could—more than he had had a right to do.

But the man had not gone!

Why he was lingering in that neighbourhood, dangerous for him, the butler could guess—he still hoped, by persuasion or threats, to receive help from the brother he had disgraced and shamed.

Walsingham was thinking of him, wondering if he would make some desperate attempt to re-open communication. It would surely mean the finish for him, for the mansion was watched—police and keepers were abroad in the frosty park. Wild as the winter's night was, it did not cause Inspector Trevelly to relax his vigilance.

Walsingham sighed. He could have little affection for a relative who had been nothing but a trouble, an anxiety, a shame, and a disgrace to him. Yet he would have been glad to hear that Convict No. 33 had got clear away—away where he would never be heard of again.

He did not think of going to bed—he could not sleep, knowing that the hunted man was so near. The lights were out in the great mansion at that hour; if any light still burned, blinds and curtains hid it from the outside. The great building lay a black mass in the dark night. Cedric Hilton, in his "den," was up late—his aching head banished sleep. Walsingham intended to go up once more before he turned in, to see whether he could do anything more for Master Cedric. But he was not thinking of him now. He was thinking of a hunted, half-famished, desperate man who lurked in snow and wind and darkness.

He gave a sudden start.

The door of his bed-room, adjoining his sitting-room, opened quietly.

Walsingham's eyes fixed on it in startled surprise.

A figure came through—a tattered, haggard figure in torn convict garb. Walsingham sat motionless, his eyes on it.

His portly face was deadly pale. The hunted man of Blackmoor was not lurking in wind and darkness! He was within the house—he was here!

"Richard!" articulated Walsingham, at last. He half-rose, and sank back into his chair again.

The convict crept to the fire, stooped, and warmed his chilly hands. His sunken eyes were on the butler, watchfully, warily, as a wolf's.

Had Walsingham attempted to give the alarm, the desperate man was ready to spring on him. But the portly butler sat as if half-stunned, only gazing at him in horror.

"You're pleased to see me, Francis?" asked the man from Blackmoor mockingly.

"Richard—you here!" breathed Walsingham.

"Here!" The convict nodded and grinned. "They lost me in the park. I beat the hound by taking to the branches, and then—I knew your window, old man. It was locked, but you may remember that I have always had skill with a lock—and I am here! I've been hiding in your bed-room! Now—I heard the chime of midnight! They're all asleep!"

Walsingham nodded. He seemed unable to speak.

"We're safe, then?"

Another nod.

"Get me some food! I'm famished!"

"Richard!" Walsingham's voice was husky. "You cannot stay here! You cannot remain a moment! You—"

"Will you refuse me food?"

Walsingham was silent for a long minute. Then slowly he rose from the chair.

"You shall have food," he said.

"Then you must go."

The convict made no answer to that. He sat down in the armchair that the butler vacated, and warmed himself at the fire. In the electric light, his face showed up white, haggard, thin, and wolfish. But there was a gleam in his eyes that told of hope.

The butler quietly went out of the room. He returned in a few minutes with a tray loaded with viands.

It was set at the convict's elbow, and he devoured the food ravenously.

"Lock the door!" he muttered, over his shoulder.

Walsingham turned the key.

He stood, with a clouded and troubled brow, while the famished man ate and drank. A glow came into the haggard face of the convict.

He finished the meal at last.

"That's better!" he said. "Now we can talk!"

"You must not remain—"

"Cut that out! I want clothes and money, and then you will see the last of me! Once I've got an outfit, I shall take my chance of getting away. By gad, I shall be glad to get off the moors." He shuddered. "I'd never have taken the chance of getting out of Blackmoor, only I knew you were butler here, Francis—and I knew you'd help."

"I had no right to help you!" muttered Walsingham. "It was breaking the law—and you never deserved it at my hands, Richard! Now I can help you no further! I have given you food—I could not refuse you that! I can do no more! Go as you came, or—"

"Or what?" jeered the convict.

"Or I shall give the alarm!" said Walsingham firmly. "I will not betray my master's trust in me; I will not break my word to his son; and I will not break the law to help a man who deserved every day of his sentence, and more! I can do nothing more for you, Richard—I have done too much already! Go!"

"There are clothes in your room, I think," said Richard. "If you do not help me, I can help myself! But money?"

"I have none!" said Walsingham. "I do not keep money here, Richard! A few pounds, perhaps—"

"A hundred would see me through!" "You are talking folly! Go while there is yet time."

The convict eyed him.

"You were always a fool, Francis!" he said. "You've thrown away all your chances. I dare say you've feathered your nest, in your own way—a few hundreds in the bank, what?"

"I have five hundred pounds in the bank, Richard," said Walsingham quietly. "Every shilling of it earned by faithful service. If you can escape abroad, and send me word, I will send it to you—all—to give you a chance to make a start in an honest life. Here I cannot help you."

"In Sir Gilbert's safe there is probably ten times as much!"

"Silence!"

"Let me speak! Listen, you fool!" The convict bent forward, with an eager face. "Can't you see your chance? I've a master's hand on a safe. With your help—without it, if you keep quiet—I can crack the safe, and—"

"Silence, I say!"

"Whatever there is, I share with you! All the blame can be laid on me—it will be known that Convict No. 33 did the trick! No one will dream of suspecting you. You will keep your place—unsuspected—safe! With a few thousands—"

Walsingham walked to the window and unfastened it. The convict's eyes followed him savagely.

"What are you going to do?" he hissed.

"Villain and rascal!" answered the butler, in a choking voice. "I give you one minute to go! Then I shall alarm the house! I repent now that I ever gave you a helping hand—you are too vile to help!" He threw open the casement. "Go! Go while there is yet time—"

"Fool! I tell you—"

"You have less than one minute—then I call for help!" said Walsingham.

"Fool! Fool! Silence!"

The convict ran to the window. Walsingham stepped aside for him to clamber out over the low sill.

Quick as a flash the ruffian turned on him, his clenched fist dashing out. The blow took the butler by surprise. It crashed on his temple, sending him headlong to the floor.

Instantly the convict shut the window, drew the blinds across it, and turned to the fallen man. His clenched fist was ready for another blow, if it had been needed. But the butler of Hilton Hall lay senseless at his feet.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Getting America!

"YOU kids sleepy?" asked Hilton, with a smile.

"Not a bit!" said Harry Wharton.

"It's late—"

"You have to sit up late to hear America!" said Bob. "Owing to the difference in time, my beloved 'carers, it can't be helped."

Bob was sitting at the electric wireless in Hilton's den. He was turning knobs and listening—to silence.

Hilton laughed.

His bandaged head was still aching, and he was not in the least inclined for sleep. The Famous Five were sitting up with him. Bob Cherry had an idea of "getting" America on the wireless, which was quite an interesting proposition to the chums of the Remove.

(Continued on next page.)

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Generally, the chums kept early hours in holiday-time, as at school. Still, hols were hols, after all, and a fellow could stretch a point occasionally. And America could not be "got" before midnight, when the air was clear.

Hilton of the Fifth was quite aware, however, that getting America, by itself, would not have kept the juniors out of bed till that hour. He was glad of their company, as he did not want to go to bed, and getting America made the sitting-up interesting to them.

Getting America, or sitting up with a fellow who had been knocked out, did not interest Billy Bunter. Bunter had gone to bed.

Fortunately, nobody missed Bunter. In fact, he could not have done the other fellows a better turn.

Bunter was snoring in his room, his deep snore the only sound within the great building. There would be more sounds when America was "got"; but America was not got yet.

Price would have been willing to sit up with his pal, with cigarettes and banker or nap as an accompaniment. But in his present state, neither cigarettes nor cards appealed to Hilton.

So Price had gone off sulkily to bed, and was missed no more than Billy Bunter. Hilton found the company of the five cheery juniors quite grateful and comforting.

Lying on the sofa, with his head resting on a down cushion, Cedric Hilton was as comfortable as his aching head permitted him to be. And Harry Wharton & Co., though perhaps a little sleepy, were quite merry and bright. On both sides, host and guests were anxious to wash out remembrance of disagreement, and they had had quite a cheerful hour or two with the wireless—till midnight chimed, and then Bob started for America.

The chums of the Remove had their own wireless at home; but nothing like Hilton's expensive and magnificent set—a Christmas present from his father, and the best radiogram that cash could buy. Bob, who was very keen on the subject, just revelled in that wonderful set.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Something's coming!" said Bob.

Squeak, squeak, squeak!

"Morse!" said Harry, laughing.

"Well! Morse is rather interesting, when you understand it," said Bob. "It's jolly useful to be able to read Morse, you fellows!"

"Useful, but not what you'd call musical," said Johnny Bull. "Shut it off, for goodness' sake!"

Bob twiddled dials.

"Got it on the right station?" asked Nugent.

"Well, it's the Cincinnati station I'm after," said Bob.

"America can't be discovered without some trouble," said Hilton gravely. "Look what a job Columbus had!"

The juniors laughed.

"Can I help?" asked Johnny Bull, getting up.

"Yes, old chap; there's something you can do," answered Bob.

"Well, what?"

"Put some logs on the fire! It's going down."

"Fathead!"

Johnny Bull dropped logs on the fire in the wide old grate, and a myriad of sparks leaped up. Bob Cherry cocked his ear to listen; but there was still no sound from America. Cincinnati seemed coy.

"Keep the fire going," remarked Bob, "or we shall be like that chap who sat up late to get Peru."

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"What happened to him?" asked Hilton.

"The fire went out, and he got Chile!" explained Bob.

"I don't see how he got Chile if he couldn't get Peru!" said Johnny Bull, with a stare. "And what difference did the fire going out make?"

"Chilly!" hooted Bob. "Chile—Chilly! He got chilly because the fire went out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! It's a joke?" said Johnny, after some reflection. "I see!" And after a little further reflection he laughed. "Ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here it comes!" exclaimed Bob.

Strains of music came through. Bob's eyes gleamed with the light of success. This was the first time he had "got" America. His set at home was not equal to the strain. The twiddle of a violin came clearly through.

"By Jove, that's plain!" said Hilton, sitting up.

"It won't wake the house?" asked Bob, thinking of that rather late in the day, as it were.

"Hardly! Doors and walls are thick in this old place," said Hilton, "and we're a good distance from the other

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rooms. That's all right. Sure that's coming from America?"

"Where else could it be coming from?" said Bob confidently. "It's America all right! We've got America at last, you men. Fancy that coming all the way across the jolly old Atlantic! What?"

"Fine!" said Harry.

"The fineness is terrifically preposterous, my esteemed Bob!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Listen!" murmured Bob. "When the piece is over, we shall hear a voice. Listen for a gent talking through his nose, and guessing and calculating."

The juniors listened, very keen to hear a voice proceeding from the United States, even if it talked through a nose, and guessed and calculated. The piece ended, and a voice came through:

"Vous avez entendu—"

"What the thump!" ejaculated Bob.

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

"That wasn't America—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've got a French station!" chuckled Hilton.

The expression on Bob's face made his comrades nowl. He had been so confident that he had "got" America. Instead of which he had evidently picked up a belated French station a few hundred miles away.

"The silly ass!" hooted Bob, with a red face, and he twirled a knob, cutting off the further remarks of the unknown French gentleman. "Bother him! It's time they shut down over there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at, you fatheads! I'm going to get America or bust!"

"Go it!" said Hilton, laughing.

"That is, if you don't want to go to bed, Hilton!" added Bob, considerably.

"No fear! I can't sleep with this napper!"

"You'll forget that when you hear America!" said Bob. "Frightfully interesting to hear America, old bean! Listen!"

Squeak, squeak, squak!

"That rotten Morse again!"

"Re-Morse!" said Johnny Bull, who sometimes made a joke. "That's the second time, so it's re-Morse! Remorse for disappointing you, old bean!"

"Kill him, somebody!" said Bob. "We shan't be long now, you fellows! We're simply bound to get America."

"Any of you men getting hungry?" asked Hilton. "You'll want another supper staying up as late as this. I thought Walsingham was coming up again, or I'd have had something here; but I suppose he's forgotten and gone to bed."

The juniors smiled. They had supped long ago, and not so heftily as Billy Bunter. Sitting up late, they realised that a certain inward emptiness was making itself felt.

"I'll go down—" said Hilton.

"You won't!" said Bob, getting up. "You keep your old napper quiet! I'll go down, if you like. I know my way about!"

"Lots of stuff in the sideboard in the dining-room," said Hilton. "Cakes and biscuits and candied fruits, if that will do. The pantry will be locked up now, but I could call Walsingham—"

"Let him snore!" said Bob. "I'll go down and snaffle something from the dining-room. You come and help me carry the plunder, Wharton! Bunter would be sorry he'd gone to bed if he dreamed what was on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll leave the wireless on 428 metres," added Bob. "It may start any minute now."

Leaving the wireless all ready for America—if America made up its mind to come through—Bob went out of the "den" with Wharton. He turned on a little pocket flash-lamp, and the two juniors softly and silently descended the stairs. They did not want to wake anybody up, at past half-past twelve at night, and they tiptoed their way down by a glimmer of light.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

CONVICT No. 33 bent over the insensible butler, breathing hard.

Walsingham stirred, and moaned faintly.

A savage grin came over the convict's hard face. In a few minutes, the butler would return to consciousness. No. 33 did not lose those few minutes. He snapped a blind-cord, and bound the butler hand and foot, knotting the cord with savage tightness. Then he forced open Walsingham's mouth, and jammed a handkerchief into it. He tied it there safely, and the butler lay bound and gagged when his eyes opened dizzily.

He stared up at the convict.

No. 33 of Blackmoor grinned down at him.

"My turn now, Francis!" he said.



"Go! Go while there is time!" said Walsingham. Instead of clambering over the low sill, the convict turned on him and hit out with a clenched fist. The blow took the butler by surprise. It crashed on his temple, sending him headlong to the floor.

"Lie there, you fool—lie there, and tell what story you like, when you are found to-morrow. I shall be far enough away by then."

Walsingham could not speak. He could not stir. He could only gaze at the desperate rascal, and the dumb appeal in his look had no effect on Convict No. 33.

Walsingham knew only too well what the rascal intended doing, a complete change of clothes, and—

Convict No. 33 was going—but he was not going empty-handed! He needed money for his flight—and Sir Gilbert Hilton was a rich man! He bent over the butler.

"Where is the safe? In the library?" He whispered the words. "Nod your head for yes."

There was no sign from Walsingham. The convict gave him a black and bitter look. Then he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"I shall find it easily enough! I have the night before me. Fool! Did you think I should go with empty hands and empty pockets? Fool! I have a cunning hand with a safe, Francis—and the kind of safe they have here will not give me much trouble! I would undertake to open it with a can-opener." He laughed, showing his teeth. "Wish me luck, Francis! By the time they find you here, tied up like a turkey. I shall be far away—Black-moor has seen the last of me!"

Walsingham made a frantic effort to speak. But he could utter no sound. The convict laughed again, and went to the window, where he stood listening for some moments.

Only the wild wind could be heard from without. But he knew, as Walsingham knew, that the frozen park was still being combed for him—his pursuers

were not far away. He still had to take his chance when he crept away from Hilton Hall like a thief in the night.

But he was prepared for that! In the black darkness he would elude the man-hunters, and once he was off the moor, once he was away from men who knew his face, there was nothing about him to excite suspicion—he could hire a car—the way of escape was open! Only he needed money for his flight—and money was to be had for the taking.

He crossed to the door, switched off the light, and stepped softly out of the butler's room, leaving the bound man in darkness.

Shutting the door quietly after him, he crept softly away. In his hand was an electric torch he had taken from Walsingham's room; and he turned on a tiny beam of light.

The interior of the great house was strange to him; but the crook who had been sentenced to seven years at Black-moor had been accustomed to finding his way about strange houses at strange hours! He had no doubt of finding the safe—of cracking it when found—of stuffing the pockets of his stolen clothes with stolen money—the whole thing was easy! It was half-past twelve—all were sleeping; he had hours before him if he wanted them. Nothing could have been easier.

He tiptoed in the great oak-walled hall with watchful eyes. He looked into room after room. The safe was most likely in the library or in Sir Gilbert's study—he had to find out. He swung open a great oak door which led into the vast dining-room of Hilton Hall.

He stepped in and stared about him. A glance was enough. That was not the room he wanted.

He stepped out again, pulling the

door softly shut after him. As he did so, a faint sound of footfalls fell on his ears.

Footfalls—on the stairs!

Instantly he shut off the torch. He stood crouched back against the door he had just closed, his heart beating in throbs.

A light gleamed on the staircase. Someone was coming down—more than one! One of them was carrying a pocket flashlamp.

He caught the gleam of the light, and glimpsed two shadowy forms. His lips were drawn back from his shut teeth in a snarl like that of a cornered wolf! Who, at that hour—why—

The light gleamed over the oaken banisters! It gleamed on a white, fierce, desperate face, staring up with glittering eyes. And the lamp nearly fell from Bob Cherry's hand.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob. "The convict!"

"What!" gasped Wharton.

"Look—I saw him—I'd know his face anywhere—look!" roared Bob Cherry. "Look!"

His light was directed full on the desperate face below. Wharton gave one startled stare, and then jumped to the staircase switch and turned it on. Instantly the hall was flooded with light.

"The convict!"

"Collar him!"

"Help!" roared Wharton.

The desperate man below was running! He was not thinking of the safe now! He dashed to the door.

But the door was bolted and barred. He turned, desperate, mad with rage, as the two juniors rushed at him.

"Help!" yelled Bob.

His powerful voice rang through the house, and as he yelled, he hurled him-

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self at Convict No. 33. Wharton's grasp was on the rascal at the same moment; and like the wild beast he was, the convict struggled and fought and scratched and tore; while on all sides came calling voices, flashing lights, hurried footsteps—the sounds of a suddenly awakened household.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last of Convict No. 33.

"HELP!" Hilton leaped to his feet. "Help!" "What—" he exclaimed. "That's Bob!" panted Nugent. "And Wharton! What the thump—Come on, you fellows!"

What had happened downstairs in the dark the juniors had no idea. But that yell for help, ringing through the house, was enough for them.

They dashed out of Hilton's den and tore down the stairs. Hilton of the Fifth, forgetful of his aching head, dashed after them.

The hall below was flooded with light. Three figures were rolling on the polished floor in a desperate struggle.

It was well for Wharton and Bob that their comrades were up and awake and came so swiftly to their aid. The convict, fighting like a wild animal, was hard to hold, and he would probably have got the better of the two school-boys in a few minutes. But it was in hardly one minute after the first call for help that Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh came racing down the stairs.

They hurled themselves into the fray. Hilton was only a few moments behind them. Then he lent his aid also, though there were so many hands on Convict No. 33 now, that there was not much left of him to grab.

"Bag him!" panted Bob. "It's the convict!"

"The convict!" gasped Hilton.

"Great pip!"

"We've got him!"

They had him—there was no doubt about that! Convict No. 33 was still trying to struggle; but each arm and leg was in a firm grasp, and an arm was round his neck. He still strove to

escape, but he could only wriggle in so many hands.

"What is all this—what—" boomed the deep voice of Sir Gilbert Hilton, as he arrived on the scene, half dressed.

"What—"

"The convict, father!" gasped Hilton.

"Good gad! Here!" gasped the baronet. "Hold him—secure him! John—Thomas—William—Walsingham! Where is Walsingham? Call Walsingham! Good gad!"

"We've got him, sir!" panted Harry Wharton.

"The goatfulness is terrific!"

"Got him safe and sound!" gasped Johnny Bull. "It's the jolly old convict all right!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good gad!" gasped Sir Gilbert. "Here—in my house—while the police are actually watching the building! Open the door, Walsingham! Call them in! Where is Walsingham? Why is he not here? John, call Walsingham at once! Thomas, open the door!"

The great door of Hilton Hall swung wide, and light blazed out into the winter night. A stocky figure in uniform appeared in the light, staring in. Inspector Trevelly had not been far away.

"Here's your man, old bean!" called out Bob Cherry. "We've got him for you—a New Year's gift!"

Inspector Trevelly tramped in, and stared at the convict in utter wonder. But in less than a second, wondering as he was, he had the handcuffs snapped on the wrists of Convict No. 33.

Two prison warders followed him in. They took Convict No. 33 by either arm. Panting, breathless, the ruffian could only snarl.

"That's the man!" jerked Inspector Trevelly. "He's given us a long run, but we've got him at last! Take him away!"

The man from Blackmoor was marched out, between two warders. Outside, others gathered round him.

Handcuffed, surrounded by his captors, Convict No. 33 disappeared into the night, on his way back to Blackmoor Prison, where the iron gates clanged on him.

Hardly had the door of Hilton Hall

closed on the convict, when a startled yell from John the footman drew everyone to the butler's room. John had switched on the light there, revealing Walsingham bound hand and foot on the floor.

"Walsingham!" exclaimed Sir Gilbert. "What—how—"

Inspector Trevelly bent over the butler, and removed the gag. Walsingham panted for breath, as the Okeham inspector cut the cords that bound his limbs.

"The convict!" he gasped.

"We've got him!" said Mr. Trevelly, with grim satisfaction. "I suppose he fixed you up like this?"

"Yes, yes! Is he—is he—"

"He's on his way to Blackmoor now, with the darbies on!" said Mr. Trevelly. "He's had his run, but it's over now!"

Walsingham panted, but said no more. Harry Wharton & Co., and Cedric Hilton, knew what was in his mind. But his secret was safe with them. And it was safe with Convict No. 33, behind iron bars and stone walls at Blackmoor.

"Listen!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The excitement was over, the household had gone back to bed, and the Famous Five had gathered in Hilton's den again, coming up with cakes and biscuits and candied fruits for a very late supper, which would have delighted the heart of Billy Bunter had he been there. But Bunter was not there! Bunter was the only occupant of Hilton Hall who had not been awakened! His snore had gone on steadily through the disturbance, and was still going on. For which the chums of the Remove were duly thankful.

The Famous Five had forgotten the wireless; even Bob, for the moment, had forgotten America. They were discussing the startling happenings of the night, and the capture of the Blackmoor convict, when there came a whirr, and a mutter, and a voice with a nasal twang, that was quite startling.

"Listen!" Bob Cherry dropped his cake. "We've got it!"

"What the thump!" exclaimed Hilton.

"America!" chirruped Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Another French station?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Shut up, fathead, and listen!" hooted Bob.

"My esteemed Bob—"

"Shut up!"

The juniors grinned and shut up. Bob jumped to the wireless. He gloated over it. It was not a European station this time. An announcer's voice—speaking through the announcer's nose—came clearly through—through the nose and three thousand miles of space! It was followed by a burst of music!

"Hurrah!" chuckled Bob. "We've got America!" He chuckled again. "Worth sitting up for, what?"

"Well, we shouldn't have got the convict if we hadn't been sitting up—"

"Oh, blow the convict! We've got America! Chuck that cake away, and shut up, and listen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently Bob was more pleased by getting America than by getting the Blackmoor convict! However, the chums of the Remove had got both, that eventful night, and they were feeling very satisfied when, at last, they got to bed.

THE END.

(There will be another topping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "COKE'S COUSIN COMES TO GREYFRIARS!" It's brimful of exciting situations, chums, and every "Magnetite" should make a point of ordering his copy EARLY!

The Big Comedy Success of the Week

Algy Plant wanted to join the Foreign Legion because he liked the uniform. The authorities kicked him out! Then, when he didn't want to be a Legionnaire the authorities kicked him in! So Algy found himself acting as an officer in the Camel Corps. He lost himself in the desert and he lost the men under his command. He got himself mixed up in a war with Arabs—and beat the whole bally lot of 'em!



"COME ON, THE CAMELS!"

is a sparkling complete Foreign Legion yarn you must read. It's full of fun and packed with thrills—and it's only one of this week's big-hit story attractions in to-day's issue of

The RANGER

Every Saturday. At all Newsagents and Bookstalls 2D.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MY CHUMS.



Come into The Office. Boys!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

HERE'S a curious yarn of a modern Houdini, chums. It doesn't come from the United States this time. It comes, however, from Montreal, not so very far away from the States.

This new "handcuff king" was locked up in the town gaol for a minor "crime." Those in charge thought he was perfectly secure, but they discovered their mistake when the prisoner calmly ambled along the cell corridor and asked the warder for a drink. How he got out of the cell the man refused to tell.

The next time the warder placed him in a different cell, double-locking the door to make sure. Five minutes later, the warder found his charge coolly using the prison telephone to have a chat with a friend. Back went the prisoner to a "desperate characters" cell. The warder was getting a bit fed up by this time, so he handcuffed the modern Houdini to a wall, after which he double-locked the door. After a while, the warder thought he would have a look to see how the prisoner was getting on. To his astonishment the cell was empty!

Eventually, the prisoner was found in another man's cell, having broken in this time instead of out. His excuse was that he wanted someone to keep him company. The warders are still trying to find out how it was done!

Have you ever seen

STONE MUSHROOMS?

G. H., of Oxford, has, and he wonders what they are. During a recent hike in the country he saw several huts perched on the top of what appeared to be stone mushrooms about three feet in height. He wants to know why anyone should go to the trouble of perching buildings on top of artificial mushrooms.

Well, the buildings he saw were old-fashioned granaries. The "stone mushrooms," as he describes them, are really devices to prevent rats from getting into the granaries. The rat smells the grain, and tries to clamber up the stone to get into the granary. When it reaches the top of the stem, however, its further progress is prevented by the mushroom-shaped overhang of the supports. By this means rats were kept from making raids upon the granaries.

Now for a few

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

Divers can Talk to each Other under Water! By touching the glasses in their helmets, two divers can converse freely under water. The curious thing is that their voices sound flat and lifeless.

There are still Cave-Dwellers in England! Not far from Kidderminster there are two caves which have been converted into houses in which people live. The caves are so old that no one can compute their age. Though they are now at a considerable height, they were at one time beneath the sea!

Waterspouts Occur in the Straits of Dover! Four waterspouts, one large and three smaller ones, were seen off Calais as late as 1903. Waterspouts have also happened at Killarney in Ireland.

Football is now Popular in the Vatican City! By special permission of the Pope, the Vatican guards have formed a football team. They play on a field specially constructed for them.

JUST while I get a breather, have a chuckle at the following joke which well deserves the first-class pocket-knife which I have sent to:
P. Milford, of 46, Paul Street, Exeter, who submitted it.



Brown: "Those fairy-cakes we had at Willie Wiffies' tea party were as hard as rock."
White: "I know. That's why I said 'Take your pick!' when he handed them round!"

HERE'S A GOOD TIP!

Were you lucky enough to receive a copy of EVERY BOY'S HOBBY ANNUAL for Christmas? Or was your luck out this time? I'm asking you this because I want you to know that there's still a chance to obtain your copy if you haven't yet got it. But you'll have to hurry; only a very few copies are still

left at the bookstalls, and even these are fast being snapped up!

Perhaps you were given pocket-money for a Christmas present? Then what better way of spending it than on a copy of this best-of-all hobby books? Even if you had set your heart on getting a wireless set, a model plane, new gadgets for your model railway, or something like that, EVERY BOY'S HOBBY ANNUAL is still the best present you can buy yourself, because it will tell you how to make these things at much less than the cost of shop-bought ones—and just as good, if not better, ones at that!

EVERY BOY'S HOBBY ANNUAL is the finest book for any fellow with a hobby—or who wants to start one. And it also tells you all the latest news about railways, motor-racing, aeroplanes and other modern wonders in interesting articles written by experts and illustrated with striking action photos.

WHAT IS A "JEW'S HARP"?

is the question which "A Staunch MAGNET Reader," of Norwich, asks me. This curiously named instrument, strictly speaking, is not a harp. The name is a corruption of the words "Jaw's Harp," so called because this small musical instrument is held in the jaws, between the teeth. It consists of a metal frame, holding a steel tongue. The tongue is set in vibration by strokes of the finger, and varying breathing reinforces the tone and regulates the pitch.

My chum could easily obtain one at any toyshop. They are not expensive, and quite a good one can be obtained for a few pence.

Just room for

A CYCLING QUERY,

which comes from "Cyclist Reader." He wants to know how to prevent a cycling cape from sticking. As he informs me that it is a cheap cape, I am afraid he will have difficulty in preventing this stickiness. If it is a cape of the oilskin type, similar to the oilskin coats which sailors wear, the oil-proofing can be renewed by scraping off the present covering and oiling heavily with colza oil. This, however, is a long task, and no one, but a sailor on a long voyage with plenty of time on his hands, would bother to do it.

NOW for next week's super programme. The first item is

"COKER'S COUSIN COMES TO GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

I still continue to receive shoals of letters telling me how much my readers appreciate the special stories by this famous author. I've just been having a chat with Mr. Richards, and I can tell you he's got some brilliant wheezes "up his sleeve" for the New Year. When you've read next week's story of the Greyfriars chums, you'll certainly say that it's as good as any we have published—and that's the greatest thing that could be said about a school yarn.

Our centre pages will contain another "Greyfriars Herald," packed with chuckles, while our other features will appear as usual.

Cheerio, chums, and all the very best for the New Year.

YOUR EDITOR.

CAPTAIN CRIMSON!

BY
MORTON PIKE.

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

DAN HICKERMAN, an Excise-officer, arrives in Widenwater with the intention of putting "paid" to Tom Roke and his smuggler friends. He fails in his purpose, however, thanks to the intervention of "Captain Crimson," a mysterious highwayman, and two boy chums named Jack Lennard and Billy Jepp. Later comes news that Prince Charles Edicard, the Young Pretender, together with his Highlanders, has landed in Scotland, and is making for London. In consequence of this, Lennard and Jepp join the Dragoons as gentlemen volunteers. They are trapped in a farm-house by a rebel pack under the command of Lord Trimmingham and made prisoners. As they are about to make a bid for freedom, the ring of steel on steel is heard outside, followed by a cry of: "Down with the rebel dogs!"

(Now read on.)

A last Chance!

UNFASTENING the shutters, and wiping the steam from the little panes, Jack and Billy looked out on the far-end of a thrilling spectacle, recognising men of their own regiment.

Two of their late captors stood at bay against the stable wall, and as one of them fired a corporal's white-laced hat spun from his head. But half a dozen of Cobham's men closed round the pair, blotting out that fight to a finish.

From farther down the yard came more pistol shots and shouting, and then a solitary Highlander dashed under the window, gave a wild scream as he tried the latch, to find it fastened against him, and sped like a hare for the big barn, followed by three Dragoons, who rode in after him!

"That fellow will get short shrift!" said Billy grimly.

As he spoke, Jack, turning his head at a sound behind them, made a flying leap across the room, where the earl was in the act of climbing out of the opposite window.

"Nay, sir!" laughed the gentleman-volunteer, catching him by one leg and hauling him back without ceremony. "Pray do not leave us at the very moment when we could enjoy your lordship's society to better advantage. Oh, struggle, would you? Then take that!" And he knocked him spinning on to the feather bed, where he cowered, with both hands raised, as Jack stood over him.

"Curse you! Do you understand what this means if I am taken?" entreated the earl, in a voice that trembled with terror. "You shall have a hundred guineas, trooper, for the chance of escape! See, here is my purse!" And he fumbled in his breeches pocket.

"Not if you made it five hundred, you, who would have burned our thumbs in a candle-flame!" replied Jack, his contemptuous words half drowned by the shaking of the bolted door and a loud voice, crying:



It was a fine sight as Jack and Billy turned in their saddles and watched the scarlet battalions swinging along!

"Open, in the King's name!"

As Billy drew the bolt back, their own captain strode in, followed by Major Dugdale, whose hearty laugh of greeting was good to listen to.

"Egad, lads, I left you in a hornets' nest, and no mistake, and it cost me a hard ride to get you out of it!" he cried. "That was a pretty fight in the barn yonder, captain. I'd have saved the brave fellow, but he preferred their broadswords to my mercy."

"Which brings the number up to four killed outright and three prisoners. Not so bad for a beginning—eh?" laughed the captain.

"Please, your honour, there were eight of the rebels," said Billy.

"True; but their sergeant got away, and I doubt if they'll overtake him, since 'tis snowing again."

Hearing which, Jack Lennard registered a silent hope that the young sergeant might escape, rebel though he was, remembering how he had flaunted the man who still lay where he had been flung, staring with that livid face of his at the major whose side was turned towards him.

"And so, Master Billy Jepp, you thought I had left you all in the lurch, did you?" said the major.

"Nay, sir; how come you to think that?" faltered Billy, very crestfallen, but trying to brazen it out.

"I generally believe the evidence of my own ears; but I forgive you, for the facts seemed all against me!" And he clapped Billy on the shoulders.

"But who is this wounded gentleman?" interrupted the Dragoon officer, suddenly aware of the figure on the feather bed, whose presence the table had partly concealed.

Major Dugdale turned his head.

"Ha!" he said, a light gleaming in those deep-set eyes of his. "In all this hurry-scurry I was forgetting my amiable relative."

"You here!" cried the earl hoarsely, his face, if possible, more livid than ever.

"It would almost seem so, unless your vision is defective," said the major dryly. "And, now I come to look at you, what's the matter with your right eye?"

Jack's blow had half closed it, which fact did not tend to improve his lordship's beauty, and as he got slowly on to his feet, his tormentor saw that he was without his riding-boots.

"Egad, 'twas too bad of us to disturb your slumbers when you were settled down so snugly for the night," began Major Dugdale. Then his bantering tone changed all at once as he turned to the Dragoon officer: "May I suggest, Captain Warden, that 'twould be well to send an express without delay to his Royal Highness, telling him the Pretender is in Derby, and also what has happened here? These two troopers are smart lads, who will find their horses where they left them." He pointed to the pair who had ridden with Jack and Billy on that adventurous patrol. "Moreover," he added meaningly, "I

want a private word with this gentleman before we mount again."

The captain, understanding, nodded as he withdrew.

The gentlemen-volunteers were about to follow him, when the major checked them.

"Stay, both of you! The time may come when I shall be glad of trusty witnesses," he said. "One of you close that door!"

"Odds life! You mean to murder me, then!" cried the earl, snatching at a pistol.

"Put that down!" commanded the major, covering him with another. "Were our positions reversed I have little doubt your craven soul would take advantage of the opportunity. Fortunately for you, my notions of honour are very different!"

Jack and Billy felt a strange thrill of admiration for the speaker without knowing why, though both realised that there was something mighty serious behind it all, which they were about to learn.

As the terrified man let the uncocked weapon fall on the ground, the major folded his arms.

"And so, my precious Cousin Marmaduke, you have come out for the Pretender!" he said, speaking with a deliberate slowness that drove his words home. "The first of us Dugdales to fail in his duty to the King! We, who in past times sacrificed all in the cause of loyalty, and won as our reward the proud title you wrongfully filched from me—I who, if every man had his rights, should stand here to-night, Christopher, Third Earl of Trimmingham!"

"It is a lie!" muttered the other. "You cannot prove it!"

"It is the truth, and I shall prove it in another place. Step by step I have worked to that end, and but for this foolish rebellion in which you have entangled yourself against all my warnings, the thing had been done by now. Where is your wonderful cunning that gained for you an earldom and one of the richest estates in England by foul fraud, when it has brought you to a traitor's doom? Who knows but the very headsman's block that awaits you may not have been cut from one of the Dugdale's ancestral oaks? What a thrice-times fool have you proved yourself, Cousin Marmaduke!"

For an instant a spark of vindictive courage brought a wave of colour into the flabby cheeks, and Marmaduke Dugdale raised his head.

"Do not make too sure!" he retorted. "Ere the end of another week, my king, not yours, may have the ordering of axe and block. With a troop of dragoons behind you 'tis easy to be bold, but I have seen dragoons run before the muskets of the prince's Highlanders."

"Then, from what I know of you, my brave Marmaduke, you must have seen it from a safe distance!" His cousin allowed a smile to mingle with the contemptuous sneer. "Yonder rabble, mis-called an army, numbers little more than five thousand, or half Cumberland's force, which only waits the order to carve them into collops when my express shall have reached the duke! If time were not upon the wing, I could give you the names and strengths of every ragged regiment that follows your precious prince, for I counted them last night at Ashbourne myself."

The wretched Marmaduke's head dropped on to his chest again, knowing that the game was up.

"What are you going to do with me?" he moaned, flinching as the major unclasped his arms and the pistol barrel

glinted in the light of the one candle that still burned.

"Not what your craven imagination might believe!" was the stern reply. "You see only one alternative—a traitor's prison or a swift death at my hand. But there is another. Put on your boots!"

"What mean you? I do not understand," faltered the trembling cur, shaking in every limb.

"You hardly would, you worm! Put on your boots, I say—and quickly! I am giving you your last chance! The world shall never say that Christopher Dugdale came into his own over the corpse of his enemy! I hear the troopers mounting already on this side of the house. Yonder opening between the barn and the cattle-byre will take you to safety—and France, if you are wise! Go now, before I kick you out of the window!"

The solitary candle gave a warning flicker, showing the amazed witnesses, in their scarlet and yellow, standing at attention, and the real earl pointing to the open shutter.

Even then, as Marmaduke clambered into the heavy drift, the despicable nature of the man who judged every one else from his own low standard made him throw a terrified backward glance over his shoulder at the shining pistols, expecting to be shot.

But his troubles were not yet finished, for before he had floundered half the distance through snow that reached to mid-thigh, a mounted trooper spied the dark figure and fired his musket at random from the angle of the house.

"By heavens!" cried Major Dugdale, as the leaden ball tore a splinter from the gate of the byre. "If that bullet has found its billet, it has saved a mort of trouble in the future!"

They ran to the window as three of Cobham's men plunged their heavy horses to the spot, and, discovering the passage which the fugitive had gained, entered it in single file with all the zest of a fox-chase.

Another whirl of snow, full in their faces, blotted out the buildings, and when they reappeared they were empty-handed and cursing their ill-luck.

"Got away, sir!" laughed the corporal, in answer to Major Dugdale's hail. "The whole regiment would never find him on a night like this!"

The solitary candle flared up and went out as the man spoke, and the major drew his cloak about him.

"We, too, must be going, for I must have speech with the duke ere dawn," he said. "Warden will ask no questions, and you will say nothing of what has happened here—no word of who I am. 'Twas no fault of mine that I had to lift the curtain of my life for a moment and show the bones of our family skeleton mouldering behind it, lads. The time may even come when I shall tell you more, for we shall meet that rascal yet again."

"How so, sir, when your honour warned him to fly to France?" asked Jack, wondering now that Major Dugdale spoke once more in his natural voice, where he had heard that voice before.

"A guinea to a gooseberry he joins the Pretender by sunrise!" laughed the major, as they mounted their horses in the stable. "And now farewell, since my duties may carry me far before I see Cobham's men again! None of us is likely to forget our first brush with the rebels, I fancy, and you will have

a rare tale for the good folk of Wide-water Black Boar when the campaign is finished."

"What, sir! Do you know Wide-water, then?" cried the two gentlemen volunteers, in astonished chorus.

"Ay, that I do!" laughed the duke's spy. "Better, seemingly, than you know 'Captain Crimson'!"

The next moment he was gone.

The Young Pretender's Last Fight!

"**E** GAD, Billy, I'm not sorry to be up and doing again, for I lay cold last night; and, what's more, I had an odd dream," said Jack Lennard, as the two gentlemen volunteers and the other men of their troop rubbed their black horses down in the early morning.

"I never had much time for dreams, Jack!" grinned Billy Jepp.

"Nor I, for the matter of that," retorted Jack. "But mine was so real that it woke me, and I had to open the tent flap and look out. I thought that the enemy was quite close and about to attack."

"Did you see anything?"

"Not even my hand before my face, for a darker night surely never was. I wonder what has become of Major Dugdale all these months?"

"Ah, that was a strange business—that meeting with his cousin in the farmhouse near Derby!" said Billy Jepp. "I sometimes think we have not heard the end of that story."

"I only hope it won't finish with a bullet from Lord Trimmingham's pistol if they should meet in action; but that's unlikely, since we've seen nothing of our friend since Falkirk."

"Odds life!" laughed Billy, who had just straightened his back, and was looking under his hand. "The major always had the knack of turning up at unexpected moments, and yon rider coming on at speed seems like him to me."

A horseman was galloping towards the Duke of Cumberland's camp at Nairn from the west, jockeying his mount like a man who rides for a wager. As he passed along the front of Cobham's men he waved his arm.

"You're right, old fellow!" whispered Jack. "That was Captain Crimson, sure enough, and he doesn't gallop his favourite grey roan into a white lather without good reason. There's important news of some sort which he carries to the duke!"

They had not long to wait, as, close on the heels of the order to "Strike camp," the tall figure of Major Dugdale came down the dragoons' lines.

"I hope your broadswords have a keen edge on 'em, for the army marches in an hour," he said. "You'll eat your breakfasts with a better relish when I tell you that the prince and his men were within three miles of you just before sunrise, meaning to fall on with sword and dirk if the darkness had not delayed their march until all chance of surprising us was at an end."

"What about my dream?" cried Jack triumphantly. "But where are they now, sir?"

"I left them making the best of their way back to Drummoissie Moor, some eight miles towards Inverness; a weary, draggle-tailed host, hungry and dispirited by the night march that led to no fight, and the duke will know how to take advantage of their misfortunes. We move in an hour, and, in my opinion, our next encounter should end the business."

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"For which I, for one, shall not be sorry, since, after all, I would rather be fighting the French than our own countrymen," said Jack, with a frown.

"Hush, my dear lad!" said Dugdale warningly. "Do not let any overhear that sentiment, though I applaud it. I have just seen the orders that will be read out directly, and Cumberland has no mercy for rebels. You have a relative with the enemy, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; my mother's brother, Uncle Donald," replied Jack, with a sigh. "It was of him I was thinking when I spoke."

The major nodded with a troubled frown.

"I wish him well, rebel though he be. I remember at Widewater when he stayed with your parents. A charming fellow and a good soldier."

"But 'Captain Crimson' was never inside our house!" exclaimed the lad.

And Major Dugdale laughed heartily. "Possibly not, my bold Dragoon, though do not make too sure even of that. Here come the orders, and I am wanted elsewhere."

The mysterious individual whose nocturnal exploits had kept their little home-town agog for months, but whom nobody had ever set eye on, strode away, leaving them both wondering as they looked blankly at one another.

After the Duke of Cumberland's orders had been read out at the head of every regiment and the men had breakfasted, they were mustered in three columns. Then the drums rolled, the colours floated out in the sunshine, and the march began.

For eight miles they tramped steadily forward through ground that became so soft and boggy, that by the time the enemy were sighted the white-gaitered infantry were ankle-deep in water, and the rumbling field-pieces had to be dragged forward by hand.

In the distance, some mile and a half away, Jack and Billy could see dark figures massed on the brow of a low ridge, which they knew must be the prince's army. But nothing stirred, and again, after a brief halt, the order was given to form column and advance.

It was a fine sight as Jack and Billy turned in their saddles and saw the scarlet battalions swinging along in their broad buff belts, the conical caps of the Grenadiers very conspicuous, with the White Horse of Hanover embroidered on the front flaps, and the turned-back coat skirts showing their red vests and breeches.

Their own comrades of Cobham's Dragoons, with their facings of full yellow, carried their muskets, butts foremost, in leather buckets on the off-side.

"Here comes the duke," said Billy,

as a very fat young man, blazing with scarlet and gold, rode along the front of the regiments which were forming by his orders in three lines, each regiment three deep, the sergeants dressing the ranks with their halberds.

William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, was not a great soldier, but he paid considerable attention to detail, and had worked out a scheme which he hoped would help to victory, for the Highlanders fought after a fashion of their own, receiving bayonets on the round of shield they carried, which they had only to put aside to leave their opponent completely at the mercy of the keen claymore.

To counter this, the duke had drilled each man to thrust, not at the enemy immediately in front, but at the attacker on his right, and they had learned their lesson well.

Still, he was leaving nothing to chance, and, remembering how shamefully some of the battalions had given way in the past before the mad rush of the clansmen, he addressed them in a loud voice before the fight began, the

rode away to deliver his harangue elsewhere.

Jack turned his head and looked at his chum.

"You're thinking of your uncle and I of Squire Dashwood; but we're neither of us going to fall out on that account," murmured Billy. "If we have the ill luck to meet, they're as like to kill us as we to kill them. But what a dreary place this is now the sun has gone in!"

"And 'twill be drearier still ere it sets!" said a familiar voice, as Major Dugdale reined up his roan mare beside them. "I have been taking a squint at the enemy through Mordaunt's spyglass, and I promise you those fellows yonder mean business. If they win, the Crown of England may change heads; if they lose, then Heaven help them, for they'll get no mercy from our general! And there goes the first shot!"

A puff of white smoke rolled along the ground and a loud report boomed out, making many a heart quicken behind those broad buff belts and more than one three-cornered hat duck involuntarily, as a cannon-ball whizzed overhead, to splash harmlessly into the marsh behind them.

The Battle of Culloden Moor had begun just before one o'clock in the day, and, despite some magnificent Jacobite valour, worthy of a better cause, in five and twenty minutes that cause was lost for ever!

All the rebel shots flew wide, save one, which carried away the leg of a man in the 20th Foot. But when Colonel Belford brought his cannon to bear, ghastly lanes were ploughed through the devoted clans, and one ball, aimed by Belford himself at the prince, who sat his saddle on a little knoll amid a group of horsemen, covered the prince with mud, and killed a man beside him.

"When are we going to charge?" cried Billy, glimpsing the carnage through the dense smoke.

"Be patient, lad, for, unless I am very wrong, from the way those Highlanders are acting, 'tis they who will do the charging very soon, and pray Heaven our men stand firm!" replied Dugdale, standing up in his stirrups. "Yes, yonder they come, Lord George Murray leading their right-wing! Who have we got to meet them over there? Why, 'Barrel's Blues' and Munro's, with Wolfe's regiment to take them in flank! And here's an ally we had not reckoned on!" he added, as a fierce storm of sleety rain swept in the faces of the advancing foe!

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's nerve-tingling chapters of this popular Old Time yarn!)

ANOTHER GREAT SCHOOL STORY

TO READ

When you have finished the grand school yarn in this number, you will, of course, want another one to read. Then get

"FIGGY'S DARK HOUR!"

the powerful long yarn, starring the chums of St. Jim's, which appears in this week's ripping number of

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officers standing, spontoon in one hand, laced hat in the other, his words coming distinctly to the ears of the two gentleman-volunteers.

"You must fight to-day, lads, as you have never fought before, for in your rear lies a swamp and in front an enemy that will give you no quarter!" he exclaimed. "Listen to this letter found upon one of the rogues," and he read aloud a bloodthirsty screed, prepared specially for the occasion. "If any of you feel fear, or have friends in the enemy's ranks, for Heaven's sake fall out now! I would rather have a thousand bold fellows under me to-day than ten thousand who are lukewarm! And, gentlemen," he concluded, turning to the officers, "remember, there are to be no prisoners—do not misunderstand my meaning!"

And, with this bloodthirsty hint, he



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