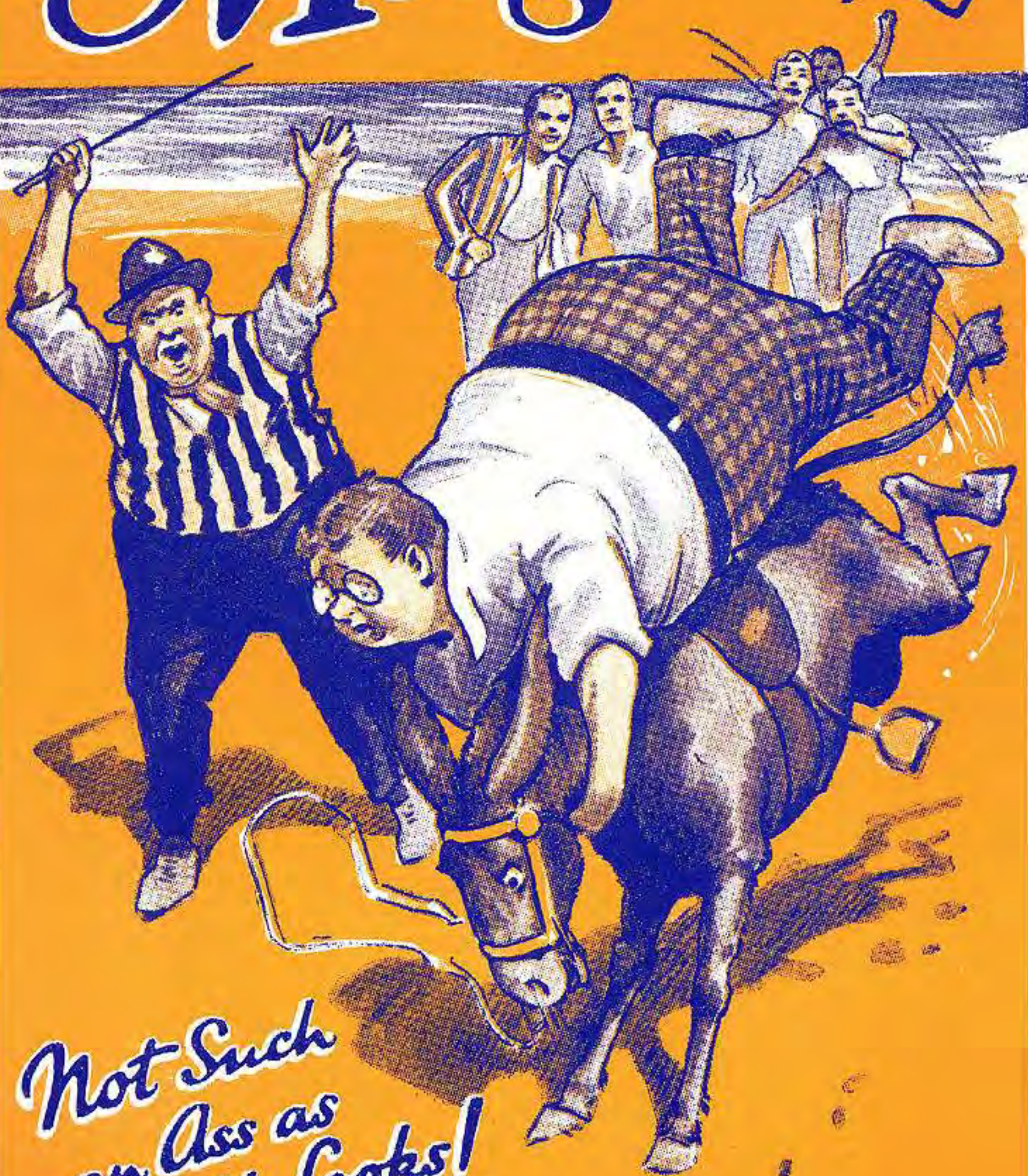


Billy Bunter raises roars of "THE MYSTERY OF PORTERCLIFFE HALL!"
laughter in . . . **Grand Holiday Yarn Inside.**

The Magnet



*Not Such
an Ass as
He Looks!*



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

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.

I SUPPOSE most of my readers have seen cockles, and many may have sampled them. I came across a little bit of information the other day that might interest you. The cockle seems a perfectly harmless shell fish, but actually, it's anything but that. You might find it hard to believe, but

COCKLES KILL OYSTERS!

They don't attack them tooth and nail, as it were, but they set to work in a much more determined manner. If cockles are left in a river bed, they multiply to such an extent that they suffocate any oysters which may be in their midst. The principal place in this country where oyster fishing is carried out is in the River Colne, which is also a breeding place for cockles. So numerous have the cockles become, that serious steps have had to be taken to dispose of them. The river bed has had to be dredged for cockles, and terrific quantities have been brought up—far too many to be disposed of in the ordinary market. The question of what to do with the cockles caused much thought. But it was solved at last, and they were used to fill up unwanted holes in a marsh near Brightlingsea.

Talking about shellfish, here is another thing you'd hardly believe. You've all heard of man-eating tigers, but here is a new one:

SHELL-FISH THAT CATCH MEN!

It sounds unbelievable, but men have been known to be killed by clams. The particular brand of clam which does this is found on the Great Barrier Reef of Australia. These shell-fish have been known to attain a length of ten feet, and to weigh over a ton!

On certain occasions, divers have been known to be caught in the shells, and have been unable to free themselves.

One clam will make over 150 gallons of clam chowder—a delicacy which is greatly appreciated in America.

I NCIDENTALLY, one of my Bradford readers asks me to tell him something about

THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

of Australia, so here goes:

It is really a series of coral reefs which extend along the east of Queensland, at a distance from the coast which varies from 10 to 150 miles. The total area is about 100,000 square miles, and it represents the original coast-line of Australia. It is not one continuous line, for fresh water from the rivers have caused gaps in it, through which steamers can pass. Thus, the Barrier Reef forms a great natural breakwater, holding back the storms of the Pacific, and making calm water between the reef and the mainland.

In addition to clams, pearls and trepang are collected. Trepang is another name

for Beche-de-Mer, which is sometimes described as

SEA CUCUMBERS.

They are not vegetables, however, but slugs. And, believe it or not, the Chinese eat them! In shape they rather resemble cucumbers, and range from six inches to two feet in length. To prepare them for food, the sea-slugs are first boiled, and then split open. They are then dried in the sun or smoked. There are several varieties, most of which come from the Great Barrier Reef. Others are found on the coasts of the East Indies.

Nearly three thousand tons of these slugs are exported annually, and they are valued at well over a quarter of a million pounds!

The next question I am asked to answer concerns

BARBARY APES.

Harry Grayson, of Salisbury, asks me if any monkeys are natives of Europe. Wild native monkeys are found only in one spot in the whole of Europe—and that is at Gibraltar, where the Barbary Ape is found disporting itself on the famous rock. The curious thing about the Barbary Ape is that it is only found at Gibraltar, and on the African shore immediately opposite, while monkeys which are allied to it are confined to Asia.

The Barbary Apes cause a great deal of destruction in the gardens and orchards of Gibraltar, but they are most carefully protected. Do you know why? An old legend has it that Britain will lose Gibraltar when there are no more Barbary Apes on the rock. You can imagine, therefore, that some people began to get worried some time ago, when it was discovered that there were only four Barbary Apes in the whole of Gibraltar. Others were immediately procured from Africa, and settled in their new home, where there is now a large herd of them.

Men are going so high into the stratosphere nowadays that it is difficult to keep pace with the records which they are creating. John Hodges, of Bristol, asks me to tell him

THE WORLD'S ALTITUDE RECORD!

Even while his letter was in the post, two Russian airmen actually rose to a height of 10,500 metres, as against the previous record, set up by two Polish airmen, of 9,700 metres. In twenty minutes their balloon had reached a height of five kilometres, and a few minutes later the airmen had to don their oxygen masks. Until the balloon reached a height of eight thousand metres they ascended in an atmosphere of absolute quiet, but when that height was reached, strange unexpected sounds, which seemed to come from the earth, were heard. These sounds were described as being like the noise of a train passing beneath, although there were no trains passing beneath, and, at that height, the noise of a train would not have been heard. What were those sounds? No-

body knows, as yet, but doubtless other scientists will ascend in an endeavour to solve this strange mystery of the stratosphere.

HEARD ABOUT UNCLE BOB?

He's one of the liveliest characters you could ever come across. He stands for rollicking fun, and he is introduced to you in a very jolly card game called BOBS Y'R UNCLE.

It's the easiest and jolliest of all card games to play—there are no difficult rules to remember—it's just one long spell of real fun.

The 54 brightly coloured cards in each pack feature many amusing characters from familiar nursery rhymes. Of course, Uncle Bob plays an important part—always turns up where he is least expected—and that's where the excitement begins!

But I can't let you into all the secrets of this intriguing game: you need only see it to realise the laughter and thrills it gives. There's nothing like BOBS Y'R UNCLE to banish the blues. It costs 1s. 6d., and the fun you get out of it is worth that small sum many times over.

You can get this splendid new card game from any newsagent, toyshop, or leading store. Hurry and get it—before it's too late. Stocks are plentiful, but there's bound to be a rush!

N OW to answer the query which comes from Arthur Brewis, of Sunderland. He asks:

WHAT IS A GONFALON?

It is the name given to a square or oblong flag fixed on a cross-bar at the end of a staff. This reader (and others) might also be interested to know the various names given to other forms of flags. Here they are:

Penconnel is a triangular flag, wide at the staff and tapering to a point. A flag which has the appearance of two penconnels joined in the middle is called a **pennon**.

Banner is an oblong flag squared at the ends.

Jack is a flag which is flown at the "jack-staff" of a ship—that is the small flagstaff right in the prow of the vessel.

Ensign is a national flag, and is flown at the stern of a vessel to denote to which country it belongs.

Talking about flags, there is one thing that will certainly not cause your interest to flag! It is

"THE PHANTOM OF PORTERCLIFFE!"

By Frank Richards,

next week's long complete yarn dealing with the further exciting holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. There's fun in plenty as well as thrills—especially when Fish's "popper" comes face to face with the Red Earl of Portercliffe—in this rousing story. Billy Bunter, of course, is very much to the fore. No summer series away from Greyfriars would be complete without the fascinating society of William George!

As next week will see the final chapters of our popular adventure story by Harrison Glyn, it behoves all of you to make certain of reading it. The "wind-up" is an extremely good one. Full particulars of another smashing yarn to follow will also appear in this issue. And I might add that you'll like the new yarn as Bunter likes tarts. And, like Bunter, you'll be wanting more!

Our other features—a really humorous "Greyfriars Herald" Supplement, the Rhymester's contribution, and my little chat—will be bang up to their usual standard.

Cheerio, chums! Meet you again next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

The MYSTERY of PORTERCLIFFE HALL!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

—Featuring the World-Famous Chums, **HARRY WHARTON & CO.,** of GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Some Rag!

HARRY WHARTON stared blankly.

He was staring in at the doorway of his room at Portercliffe Hall.

What he saw there almost took his breath away.

"Great pip!" he ejaculated. "Who—what—"

He could hardly believe his eyes.

It was the day following the arrival of the Greyfriars party at Portercliffe Hall. The Famous Five and several other Remove fellows were the guests for the holidays of Mr. Hiram K. Fish—"popper" of Fisher T. Fish of the Greyfriars Remove.

So far everything had gone smoothly. Chandos, the butler, and his numerous staff ran the magnificent establishment like clockwork.

Even Billy Bunter seemed to be satisfied!

Bunter had told the other fellows that the grub was all right; and when the grub was all right, of course everything was all right!

Harry Wharton & Co. had walked down to Margate after lunch that day—that famous resort being only a short distance from the Hall. Coming back merry and bright, but rather warm and dusty, they had come up to their rooms to brush off the dust before joining the rest of the party at tea on the lawn. Wharton, naturally, expected to see his room in neat and apple-pie order, as he had left it. Instead of which—

He almost wondered for a moment whether a hurricane had struck it! It looked like it.

Obviously, it was a "rag."

It was a tremendous rag! Somebody had been very busy in that room!

Wharton was not unaccustomed to rags! Such things happened frequently enough in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

But a rag at Portercliffe Hall, where the Greyfriars fellows were guests for the holidays, was quite a different matter. It was very much out of place.

"My hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Who—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called Bob

With his knowledge of the private affairs of the Fishes—Popper and Son—Billy Bunter has high hopes of a glorious holiday at Portercliffe Hall. But for some unaccountable reason Bunter's schoolfellows seem bent on making life unbearable for the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove. What is the reason?

Cherry along the corridor. "Anything up, old bean?"

"Come and look!" gasped Wharton.

Bob came and looked.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came along. They all stared into the wrecked room.

"Who on earth—" exclaimed Frank.

"What howling ass—" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"What terrific and preposterous fat-head—" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The chums of the Remove entered the room. It was a large room, superbly furnished, like all the rooms at Portercliffe Hall. But it was in a state that might have made Chandos, the butler, faint, had he beheld it.

Wharton's suitcase was open. Its contents were scattered all over the floor. The bedclothes had been dragged all over the room. A boot or a shoe was stuck on each corner of the bedstead.

Various garments were draped over the pictures on the walls. Wharton's evening clothes—a nice, natty suit—was stuffed with a pillow and twisted sheets, and sprawled on the dismantled bed. Two dress-shirts, which had been white as the driven snow, trailed over the bedside table, with streaks of ink smudging their white fronts. An occasional table stood upside down in the middle of the room. Its legs were ornamented with socks and slippers.

"Who on earth can have been ragging here?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in blank amazement.

Wharton's lips set hard.

"Whoever it was is going to be jolly sorry for it!" he said.

"But who—" said Frank. "Must have been one of the fellows. But what fellow would be idiot enough to rag in Mr. Fish's house?"

"I'm going to find out!" said Harry grimly.

Staring round at the wrecked, dismantled room, the chums of the Remove could only wonder.

"Wibley's a practical joking ass!" said Bob. "But Wib wouldn't play a

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fool trick like this in a house where he's a visitor."

"Kipps is a bit of a joker," said Nugent. "But he wouldn't—"
"Or Smithy!" said Johnny Bull. "Smithy might if a fellow rowed with him—but you haven't?"

Wharton shook his head. The juniors grinned at the idea. Alonzo Todd was not the fellow for a rag, even of the mildest description.

"Or Bunter!" said Nugent. "Even if he was idiot enough, he's too jolly lazy to take all the trouble."

"And I suppose Fishy doesn't treat his guests like this!" grinned Bob.

Harry Wharton stood angry and puzzled.

It was impossible to think of a member of the Greyfriars party who had perpetrated such an outrageous rag. It seemed still more impossible to suppose that one of the servants had done such a thing.

But it had been done! Somebody had done it!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob suddenly. "Look!"

He pounced upon an article that lay near the upturned table. It was a handkerchief.

"Bunter's!" exclaimed Nugent.

The handkerchief was seriously in need of a wash. That seemed to indicate that it was Billy Bunter's.

But there was proof. In one grubby corner were the initials "W. G. B.," which demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that the article belonged to William George Bunter!

"Bunter!" gasped Wharton. "That fat idiot!"

"The esteemed and idiotic Bunter!" exclaimed Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"The fat chump—"

"The howling ass—"

"The blithering bloater—"

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"If this is Bunter's idea of a joke," he said, "Bunter is going to learn not to be so funny! By Jove, I'll burst the fat boulder!"

"The burstfulness is the proper caper!" agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Wharton turned to the door, breathing hard. His friends followed him. The finding of the handkerchief, dropped in the midst of the wreck by the ragger, settled the matter for all of them.

Frank Nugent caught his chum by the arm as he headed for the stairs.

"Hold on, old chap!" he said hastily.

"What are you going to do?"

"Look for Bunter and mop him up!" answered Harry.

"I mean, as we're all visitors here—"

"I don't suppose Fishy will mind my mopping up that especial visitor," answered Wharton. "I believe he doesn't want him here at all—goodness knows why he let him come. Anyhow, I'm going to mop him."

He hurried down the stairs, followed by his chums. In the hall below Fisher T. Fish was lounging with his hands in his pockets, and a rather curious expression on his bony face. He was watching the stairs, as if in expectation of seeing the juniors hurrying down.

"Say, what's got you, big boys?" inquired Fisher T. Fish. "You surely look excited a few."

"Oh, here's Fishy!" said Wharton. "Look here, Fishy, that idiot Bunter has been ragging in my room!"

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish.

"I jolly well do! Any objection to my giving him what he's asked for?"

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"I'll say nope!" he replied. "I guess this shebang's other name is Liberty Hall, and you sure carry on jest as you want."

"Seen Bunter?"

"Yep! On the lawn in a hammock."

The Famous Five hurried out to look for Billy Bunter on the lawn. And Fisher T. Fish's grin grew wider and wider as he watched them go. Fishy seemed to be amused, and it was clear that he had no objection whatever to anything that might happen to W. G. Bunter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ginger-Pop for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter, reclining in a hammock swung under a shady tree on the wide, green lawn, squeaked unheeded.

Three fellows sat in deckchairs near at hand—Wibley, Kipps, and Smithy, Remove fellows of Greyfriars. A little further off, in a wicker garden chair, sat Alonzo Todd, who had once been a Greyfriars junior.

On a little green table were bottles of ginger-pop, bottles of lemonade, and glasses. Billy Bunter heaving himself up a little in the hammock, blinked at them through his big spectacles. The refreshments were out of his reach. So he blinked round and squeaked again:

"I say, you fellows!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, leaning back in his deckchair with his legs crossed, and his hands clasped behind his head, took the trouble to reply:

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast! Will you hand me the ginger-pop?"

"No!"

"Lazy rotter! I say, Wib—"

"Shut up!" yawned Wibley.

"Kippers, old man—"

Kipps of the Remove did not seem to hear. Kipps, the conjurer, was sitting up in his chair, practising a sleight-of-hand trick with a mechanical spider. It looked a very real spider as it appeared and disappeared under Kipps' skilful manipulations.

"Alonzo!" squeaked Bunter. "I say, Alonzo, old chap! I say, come and get me a ginger, will you? You're not a lazy rotter like those lazy rotters, old fellow."

Alonzo sighed, and looked up from the book he was reading.

It was not a book that Alonzo was willing to leave. It was a volume presented to him by his Uncle Benjamin, entitled: "The Story of a Potato; From the Seed to the Saucepan." Alonzo found it entrancing.

"My dear William," he murmured "you do not appear to have observed that you are much nearer to the table than I."

"I'm tired!" explained Bunter.

"I also am a little fatigued, my dear William!" said Alonzo gently.

"I'm not feeling well—"

"I am so very, very sorry," said Alonzo, concerned at once. "Do you think you ate too much lunch, my dear Bunter? I rather feared that you were over-doing it."

"Oh, don't be an ass! I mean—it's a touch of—of pneumonia," explained Bunter. "I got it in the—the leg! My grandfather was lame with it."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Alonzo, in astonishment. "I was quite unaware that pneumonia affected the lower extremities—"

"I—I mean plumbago!" said Bunter hastily. "I can't move my arm—"

"Your arm?"

"I mean my leg! Get me some ginger-pop, old chap."

Alonzo rose from his chair and laid down his entrancing volume. Alonzo was a very trustful and very obliging fellow. If Bunter could not move from the hammock, Alonzo was more than willing to wait on him.

The fat junior sat up in the hammock, and Alonzo handed him a glass. Then Alonzo proceeded to open the ginger-beer.

Alonzo was kind. He was obliging. But he was clumsy. Alonzo was always doing obliging things; but misfortune seemed to haunt his footsteps when he was doing them.

What he intended to do was to open that ginger-beer and pour it into Billy Bunter's glass. What he actually did was to remove the cork at the wrong moment, and send a sudden spurt of ginger-beer into Billy Bunter's fat face.

Squish!

Splash!

"Gurrrrgh!" spluttered Bunter, as his fat face and spectacles were flooded. "Wurrrgh! You idiot—gurrrgh! Oh, you fathead—ooooogh!"

"Oh, dear!" ejaculated Alonzo. "I am so very, very sorry, my dear William—"

"Wurrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Smithy, Wibley, and Kipps, in chorus.

Alonzo glanced round at them reproachfully.

"My dear friends!" he exclaimed. "The deplorable mischance is surely not a matter to excite risibility—"

"Yaroorh! Oooooogh!" spluttered Bunter. "Oh, you dummy! I'm soaked! Woogh!"

"My dear William—"

"Urrrrgh!"

Billy Bunter scrambled furiously out of the hammock. Apparently he was, after all, able to move. Indeed, he moved very quickly.

The ginger-beer seemed to have enlivened him quite a lot.

Drenched with that refreshing beverage, the Owl of the Remove scrambled out, his little round eyes gleaming vengeance through his wet spectacles.

"My dear William—" said Alonzo.

Thump!

"Oooooop!" gasped Alonzo, as a fat fist smote his chin, and he staggered backwards. A punch with Billy Bunter's weight behind it, was more than enough to double up the slim Alonzo.

He staggered two or three paces and crashed backwards—headlong—landing on the Bouncer in his deckchair.

Then it was Smithy's turn to yell.

Stretched out in that deckchair, with his hands behind his head, Smithy received Alonzo on his waistcoat, with a terrific crash.

"Ow! Oh! Oooooogh!" yelled Smithy.

"Oh dear! Goodness gracious!" gasped Alonzo, sprawling.

Crash! Under the weight of the two of them, the deckchair slipped and collapsed. Vernon-Smith sprawled on the collapsed chair; Alonzo sprawled on Vernon-Smith; and Kipps and Wibley roared:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith gave Alonzo a shove that sent him rolling off. Then he jumped up, red with rage. The Bouncer of Greyfriars was not a particularly good-tempered fellow at the best of times. Now he was in a very bad temper indeed.

He grasped Alonzo Todd, and banged his head on the grass. Wild roars came from Alonzo.

"Oh! Ow! Yooop! Yoo-hoop! My dear—yaroorh—my dear Herbert—Oh, goodness gracious—wow!"

"Take that, you blithering, clumsy idiot!" gasped Smithy.

"Whoop!"

Leaving Alonzo for dead, as it were, the Bounder made a jump at Billy Bunter. Bunter was mopping ginger-beer from his fat visage. Smithy interrupted him.

He grasped the fat Owl of the Remove by the neck, twirled him round and planted a foot on him.

"Ow! Oh crikey!" yelled Bunter. "Beast! Wharrer you kicking me for? Wow!"

Instead of explaining what he was kicking him for, Smithy kicked him again—and yet again! Bunter yelled and fled.

After him flew Smithy, till kicking. Smithy had a dozen aches and pains distributed in various parts of his person.

where it lay in the seat of the garden chair, Alonzo Todd clambered into the empty hammock and stretched himself there to repose, and recover from his exciting experiences. And in the drowsy warmth of the August afternoon, he dropped into a gentle slumber—from which he was destined to be rudely awakened.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Quite a Mistake!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came out of the house at a trot.

Fisher T. Fish had told them where to find Bunter—in a hammock on the lawn. They headed for the lawn and the hammock.

Wibley and Kipps had strolled away.

He picked up a soda-siphon from the table.

"Bunter seems to have developed a taste for ragging," he remarked. "Let's see how he likes a rag!"

The juniors chuckled.

Wharton, with the siphon in his hands, stepped close to the hammock, and put the nozzle over the edge in the direction of the sleeper's head.

Sqooooosh!

A stream of soda-water flew! It splashed on a sleeping face, and there was a sudden wild howl as the sleeper awakened.

"Oooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gurrrrrgggh!"

"Give him the lot!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "This will teach Bunter not to be so jolly keen on ragging."



The mild and gentle face of Alonzo Todd, streaming with soda-water, gazed dizzily and reproachfully at the Famous Five. "Alonzo!" gasped Nugent. "Great pip!" "For what reason—grooogh—have you played this most—urrrgh—disagreeable prank, my dear Henry?" gurgled Alonzo. "I—I—I thought it was Bunter in the hammock!" stuttered Wharton.

He seemed keen on distributing some over Bunter.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-wow!" roared Bunter as he fled.

They disappeared among the shrubberies, the Bounder dribbling Billy Bunter like a fat football. Bunter's frantic yells died away in the distance.

Alonzo Todd picked himself up. He rubbed his head, which felt quite dizzy after establishing such violent contact with the solid earth.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Alonzo. "Oh, my goodness! I cannot help thinking that dear Herbert—wow!—is very, very cross—yow-ow!—very, very bad-tempered indeed! Ow!"

Alonzo rubbed his hapless head. He was not angry—the good Alonzo was never angry. But he was hurt—very, very hurt!

Even "The Story of a Potato; From the Seed to the Saucepan"—had lost its attraction in Alonzo's present dizzy state. Leaving that fascinating volume

The Bounder was not to be seen—neither was Bunter. But there was the hammock—with the outlines of a figure within easily visible. The Famous Five arrived at the hammock.

Billy Bunter had been in that hammock a short time ago. Somebody was in it now. It was slung high, and the chums of the Remove could not see who it was. But they had no doubt, of course, that it was Bunter.

There was a sound of steady breathing from the hammock, which showed that the occupant was asleep—though Bunter did not seem to be snoring, as was usually the case when slumber's chain had bound him.

"Here he is," grinned Bob Cherry, "taking a nap after his jolly old exertions. What about bumping him out in a heap?"

"The bumpfulness is the proper caper!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hold on!" said Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton gave him the lot. Soda-water streamed from the siphon, splashing and drenching the wriggling figure in the hammock.

Wild howls and gurgles and snorts and gasps came from that wriggling figure. With a last squeak, the siphon was emptied, and Harry Wharton, laughing, set it back on the table.

"Wooooogh!" came from the hammock, which was rocking wildly as its occupant wriggled. "Wurrrgh! Oooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Groooooogh!"

"That's a tip for you, you blithering Owl!" said Harry Wharton. "You won't rag my room again in a hurry!"

"Gurrrgh! My dear Henry—Urrgh!"

Harry Wharton jumped almost clear of the ground.

Gurgles and gasps were unrecognisable. But as soon as he heard a voice from the hammock he expected to hear Bunter's squeak. Instead of which it was the piping squeal of Alonzo Todd! Even if he had not known the voice he would have known the mode of address. Nobody but Alonzo would have addressed him as Henry!

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Wharton.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Is—is—is it Alonzo?"

It was! A drenched and dizzy figure sat up in the hammock. The mild and gentle face of Alonzo, streaming with soda-water, gazed dizzily and reproachfully at the Famous Five.

"Alonzo!" stuttered Nugent.

"My d-d-d-dear Henry—" gasped Alonzo.

"For what reason—grooogh!—have you played this most—urrgh!—disagreeable prank, my dear—oooogh!—Henry!" gurgled Alonzo.

"I—I—I thought it was Bunter in the hammock!" stuttered Wharton. "He was in it when we went out, and Fishy told us— Oh, my hat!"

"Oooooogh!"

"Sorry, old man!" gasped Wharton.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Alonzo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I see no occasion for—grooogh!—laughter, my dear Robert!" gasped Alonzo Todd. "I am very, very wet, and very, very uncomfortable! I—oooogh!"

"Awfully sorry, old chap!" said Harry. He helped Alonzo out of the hammock. "Quite a mistake—ha, ha!—I mean, fearfully sorry! What the thump did you get into Bunter's hammock for, you ass?"

"Dear William had taken his departure, and—grooogh!—it is running down my—ooooch!—neck. I am very, very wet—woooogh!"

Alonzo trailed away to the house in search of the nearest towel. The chums of the Remove stared after him, and then looked at one another. They grinned.

They were sorry for the unfortunate mistake, of course. Still, there was a funny side to it, though it was lost on the hapless Alonzo. It was so exactly like Alonzo Todd to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"I say, you fellows—"

A breathless fat figure shot out of the shrubberies, and came bounding across the lawn. The Famous Five spun round, and gave their attention to Billy Bunter.

"I say, keep him off!" roared Bunter, as he came panting up.

"Keep who off, fathead?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"That beast Smithy! He's been chasing me all over the place—kicking me, too!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Oh dear!" Billy Bunter blinked over a fat shoulder. But the Bounder was not to be seen.

"Have you been ragging Smithy, too?" demanded Wharton.

"Eh? I haven't been ragging anybody!" gasped Bunter. "The beast was in one of his rotten tempers, because Alonzo fell over him, and he made out it was my fault, because I knocked Alonzo over. Oh dear! I say, you fellows, I believe he's still after me—ow!"

"You've been ragging my room!" said Harry.

"Eh?"

"And I'm going to mop you up!"

Bunter jumped back in alarm.

"Look here! If you're going to be a beast like Smithy—"

"Collar him!"

"I say, you fellows—yarooooch!"

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roared Bunter, as the Famous Five colared him.

Bump!

The fat figure of the Owl of the Remove smote the lawn of Portercliffe Hall. The yell that came from Billy Bunter roused all the echoes of the lawn, the terraces, the shrubberies, and the park of that magnificent establishment.

Bump!

"Whooop!"

Bump!

"Yarooooch!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow! Oh crikey! Leave off!" shrieked Billy Bunter. "Wharrer you up to, you silly idiots! What have I done? Yarooooch!"

Bump!

"Yooooop!"

"There!" gasped Wharton. "I think that will do! You won't rag a fellow's room again in a hurry!"

Bunter sat up and spluttered for breath.

"Oooooh! Oh crikey! Oh dear! Ow! Who's been ragging your room, you silly ass? I haven't! Ow!"

"You have!" roared Wharton. "We found your hanky there!"

"Ow! I never left it there! I haven't been near your room! What should I want to rag your silly room for? Wow!"

"Somebody else did it and left your hanky there as a keepsake, what?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Beast! I haven't been in the room at all," yelled Bunter, "and I've got my hanky in my pocket! Wow!"

"That's another one, then! I tell you we picked it up!" exclaimed Wharton. "What's the good of telling whoppers, you fat ass?"

"I tell you I never did!" howled Bunter.

"Gammon!"

"If you can't take a fellow's word—" roared Bunter. "I should think you know me well enough to take my word!"

The Famous Five chuckled. The fact was, that they knew Bunter too well to take his word. Truth and Bunter had long been strangers. They had never had even a nodding acquaintance.

"Give him another one for telling whoppers!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows—leggo!" shrieked Bunter.

Bump!

"Yarooooop!" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away and left him to roar.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Popper and Son!

HIRAM K. FISH sat, or rather sprawled, in a deep leather chair in the library of Portercliffe Hall.

A long, thin cigar was between his long, thin lips, sending up a little cloud of blue smoke before his long, thin face.

On that long, thin face was an expression of satisfaction, which indicated that the gentleman from New York was pleased with himself and his surroundings.

Books covered the extensive walls, almost from floor to ceiling. None of them, so far, had been opened by the new occupant of Lord Portercliffe's magnificent abode—nor was likely to be. Mr. Fish's only reading was the financial news. Over his grapefruit in the morning he read columns of figures with deep appreciation. The rise and fall of empires would have cut no ice with H. K. Fish. But the rise and fall

of stocks and shares touched him where he lived.

Fisher T. Fish, standing on the hearth-rug, had also a satisfied expression on his bony face.

Fishy was accustomed to passing the vacation at the school on his lonely own. New York was too far away for the holidays, and Greyfriars fellows seldom or never seemed keen on asking Fishy home with them. Now there was a change—a tremendous change!

Few Greyfriars fellows dwelt in such an abode as Portercliffe Hall. Fishy guessed, reckoned, and calculated that even Mauleverer Towers had nothing on Portercliffe Hall. Wharton Lodge and Cherry Place were merely hovels in comparison. Even Mr. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder's millionaire father, did not keep up style like this.

A vast building with vast grounds, superb butler and numerous staff, garages and cars and chauffeurs, picture gallery and armoury—even a haunted turret—there was everything imaginable at the gorgeous residence which its owner could not afford to keep up.

Young Lord Portercliffe, having inherited that "white elephant" from his uncle, the late lord, and having paid the death-duties thereon, lived cheaply in Switzerland on what he had left.

Unwilling to let the old place go to rack and ruin, the young lord had only one method of keeping it going—letting it to other people who could afford to run it—the fate of many a stately old home of England!

By that method the Hall was kept in repair, and the numerous staff saved from joining the ranks of the unemployed.

Since that immense establishment had belonged to its present owner it had had a variety of tenants—American millionaires or plump stock-brokers, for the most part.

Now Hiram K. Fish was the tenant.

But the fact that he was only a tenant was rather a secret.

Fisher T. Fish had announced proudly at Greyfriars that his "popper" had bought Portercliffe Hall! In point of fact, Mr. Fish had hired it for three months, with an option to purchase. Which was a very different matter!

Whether Mr. Fish exercised that option and bought the place depended on circumstances—very strange and mysterious circumstances, of which the guests at the Hall had not the faintest idea or suspicion.

As the lowest possible price was at least £30,000, and as Mr. Fish did not possess one-half of that sum, it was unlikely that he would buy it out of his own resources.

Out of whose resources he was going to buy it, if he did buy it, was Mr. Fish's secret—a very strange secret!

Popper and son knew that secret! Nobody else did! Only Billy Bunter knew that "something" was on; Billy Bunter having obtained surreptitious knowledge by reading a letter at school written by popper to son.

Bunter knew from that letter that Mr. Fish was only a tenant of the Hall, with an option on it; that it was a business deal and that Mr. Fish calculated that he was going to make a million dollars on the transaction!

Which was very mysterious and puzzling indeed to Billy Bunter!

Portercliffe Hall was a place to lose money on, certainly not to make money on, so far as Bunter could see.

Nevertheless, it was a certainty that Hiram K. Fish, who was spending money, expected to see it again, and more along with it. "Swank" appealed

to both popper and son; but dollars came first—an easy first!

"I guess," remarked Mr. Fish, taking the long, thin cigar from his long, thin mouth, "that it was onlucky that fat clam getting a once-over on that letter, son. I sure warned you not to spill the beans."

"I reckon that pesky piecan cinched the letter and read it afore I even saw it!" grunted Fisher T. Fish. "That's why he's here."

"He ain't spilt any beans yet?"

"He's sure wise to it that if he does he goes out on his neck!" growled Fisher T. "But he's got such a chin on him, he sure might chew the rag, all the same—I guess he can't always help it."

"He don't know a whole lot," said Mr. Fish musingly. "I never put much into ink! But he knows we ain't bought the place—he knows it's a business deal—and he knows we're going to look for something here. He don't know what."

"That fat guy is a bonehead!" said Fisher T. "But if he spilled the beans to the other guys they sure might guess something."

"He's got to beat it!" said Mr. Fish decidedly.

"I guess I've started in to make him tired of staying here," said Fisher T., with a grin. "I reckon Wharton's giving him some sockdolagers jest about now. And I'll say he's going to get some more—a regular course of sprouts, and then some."

Mr. Fish smiled.

"You're sure spry, Fisher!" he said.

"A few!" agreed Fisher T. "And I got another idea, pop! I guess that fat guy is going to be located in the haunted turret. I'll say that the ghost will scare him a few."

Popper stared at son.

"The ghost!" he repeated. "You young gink, you allow you believe in that guff?"

"Not a whole lot!" admitted Fisher T. Fish. "But I guess Bunter will if he spots a guy with a sheet over his head in the middle of the night."

Mr. Fish chuckled.

"Son, you're spry!" he said approvingly. "Touch that bell!"

Fisher T. Fish touched the bell. It summoned Chandos, the butler, to the presence of Hiram K. Fish.

Chandos swam rather than walked in. Plump and portly, with a double chin, Chandos gazed down a large fruity nose at his employer.

"Sir! You rang!" said Chandos.

"I sure did!" assented Mr. Fish.

"Say, I guess I want you to shift Master Bunter's room for to-night."

"Very good, my lord!" Chandos coughed. "Excuse me, very good, sir!" Chandos, it seemed, was so accustomed to addressing lords that he found it difficult to realise that he was for once employed by a common mortal.

"You'll locate him in the turret-room!" said Mr. Fish.

Chandos started.

"The turret-room, sir?"

"I guess it's called the haunted room," said Mr. Fish. "You don't want to mention to Bunter that it's haunted. It might skeer him a few. Jest change him over—see? My secretary is coming to-morrow, and you can fix up Bunter's old room for him."

"But, sir—" stammered Chandos.

"I guess that's the lot!" said Mr. Fish.

"But, sir—the—the haunted room—" Mr. Fish gazed at him.

"Search me!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean to say you take any stock in a ghost story, Chandos!"

Chandos coughed.

"No, sir! Certainly not, sir! Nevertheless, it is a fact that strange sounds have been heard from the haunted turret—"

"Search me!" repeated Mr. Fish.

Mr. Fish had been quite pleased when he took over Portercliffe Hall, lock, stock, and barrel, to hear that there was a haunted turret. It gave the finishing old-world touch to the aristocratic establishment.

But though a family ghost was a very respectable possession, believing in the ghost was quite another matter. Mr. Fish guessed that he had no use for spooks.

"I fear, sir, that the young gentleman might, perhaps, suffer from fright," suggested Chandos.

"I guess we'll chance it!" said Mr. Fish, while Fisher T. Fish grinned. Chandos, of course, was quite unaware that that was the object of popper and son.

"The room has not been occupied, sir, since the time of the late Lord Portercliffe," said Chandos. "It is somewhat damp—"

"I guess that cuts no ice."

"A somewhat gloomy room, sir," urged Chandos. "With so very many apartments to select from, sir, doubtless you will approve of my finding some other apartment for Master Bunter."

It was quite unlike Chandos to argue in this way. He was far too well-trained a butler to do anything of the kind. But he seemed quite concerned about placing Master Bunter in the haunted room.

But Mr. Fish was not the man to be argued with. He was paying Chandos, so long as he was in occupation of Portercliffe Hall. When Mr. Fish paid a man he expected that guy to jump to orders.

"I'll say you can pack it up, big boy!" said Mr. Fish.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" gasped Chandos. The Portercliffe butler was unaccustomed to this mode of address.

"Park it!" explained Mr. Fish.

"Eh?"

"Swallow it and get it right down!" further elucidated Mr. Fish. "Put it where it won't be seen again."

"Sir—"

"I guess," said Mr. Fish, "that I've put you wise, bo! Go and do it!"

"But—"

"You ain't hired," explained Mr. Fish, "to chew the rag! You don't want to shoot off your mouth any more! When I want you to talk I guess I'll say talk, and then you can sure get going! Ontil then, park it! You get me? Have that turret-room ready for Bunter! Now git!"

Chandos almost tottered from the room.

Neither the late Lord Portercliffe nor the present Lord Portercliffe had ever addressed him in this style. He was told to "git"—and in an overwhelmed state he "got."

Hiram K. Fish resumed his cigar and conversation with Fisher T. And Chandos, in spite of his objections, whatever they were, gave instructions for the turret-room to be prepared for Master Bunter.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Sudden Soot!

C RASH!

Yell!

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

The Famous Five were in the hall after tea. Vernon-Smith had gone up

the stairs. Billy Bunter, as he went, squeaked after him:

"Bring me one, Smithy!"

From which the chums of the Remove guessed that Smithy had gone up for a cigarette after tea—or that Bunter, at least, thought that he had.

That, however, was no business of theirs, and they did not heed; but they heeded the sound of a crash, loud though afar, and a louder yell.

Chandos, who was in the hall, gave a start, and both his double chins trembled. Fisher T. Fish, who was also there, winked at a statue of Hercules, a gigantic bronze figure leaning on an immense club. But the Famous Five ran up the stairs.

They did not need telling that something had happened to the Bounder, and they wondered what. The terrific yell sounded as if damage was done.

They ran into the corridor on which the juniors' rooms opened.

At the end of that corridor was a staircase that led up to the east turret—the turret that was, by repute, haunted by the spectre of an ancient Portercliffe. At the other end was a window and a balcony, rich with roses. In the middle of the corridor, outside the Bounder's room, was a strange and startling figure.

They did not recognise it as Smithy for the moment.

From head to foot it was black as the ace of spades.

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

"Who the dickens—" ejaculated Nugent.

"Smithy!" gasped Wharton.

"The esteemed Smithy!" yelled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the blackfulness of the absurd Smithy is terrific!"

"Oh! Owl! Ooogh! Wow!" came from the staggering blackened figure. "Oh, gad! Who's done this? What—Ooogh!"

"Soot!" repeated Wharton dazedly.

"Yurrgh!" spluttered Herbert Vernon-Smith.

From his blackened face his eyes blazed with fury.

Soot smothered him. It scattered round him in clouds. It streaked and streamed over the polished oak floor.

A large flat wicker basket lay in the doorway. It had been lodged on top of the door against the lintel. And it had fallen, crashing, on the Bounder's head as he pushed the door open.

The door had been left ajar to support the booby-trap. But the moment it was opened, down came the basket of soot, with awful results for Smithy.

The juniors came running up, aghast. This sort of prank would have been considered rather "thick" in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. At Portercliffe Hall it was miles, if not leagues, outside the limit.

Who had done it? The thought of Bunter leaped into their minds at once. Bunter, they had no doubt, had ragged Wharton's room that day. Was this also the work of the fat and fatuous Owl? Had Billy Bunter, for some inexplicable reason, entered upon a course of wild and whirling ragging?

Vernon-Smith spun towards the chums of the Remove, his sooty fists clenched, his eyes blazing from a face of soot.

"Who did this?" he yelled.

"The whofulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You, Bob Cherry—"

"Not guilty, my lord!" grinned Bob.

"You're fool enough," snarled the Bounder.

Evidently in his rage Smithy wanted

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a victim, and was in a hurry to find one.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "Nobody here would have played such an idiotic trick."

"Then who was it?" yelled the infuriated Bounder.

The Famous Five could not answer that. They did not know.

They suspected Bunter, on account of the previous rag. But they were not going to tell Smithy their suspicion. He was in a frame of mind to treat a suspicion as a proof, and begin reprisals without a lot of investigation.

Gasping with rage and soot, the Bounder dabbed at his face. He tramped savagely into his room.

Every guest's room at Portercliffe Hall had a bath-room attached; and the Bounder was in need—pressing need of a wash. But badly as he wanted a wash, he did not head at once for the bath-room door. He glared round in the hope of picking up some sign of the fellow who had laid the booby-trap for him.

The Famous Five went as far as the doorway, treading carefully out of the way of scattered soot, and looked in. They saw the Bounder, with a howl of rage, pounce upon something that lay on the polished floor.

It was a paper bag of bullseyes.

"Bunter!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob. "It was Bunter, of course. And the fat idiot was bound to leave a clue behind him."

"Bunter all over!" grinned Johnny Bull.

The alloverfulness is terrific!"

Vernon-Smith held up the bag in sooty fingers. Only five or six bullseyes remained in it.

Indisputably it belonged to Bunter. Nobody else in the Greyfriars party carried bullseyes about with him. But they were a favourite comestible with the Owl of the Remove. Only that day he had been seen devouring bullseyes from a paper bag. When Bunter was not asleep, he was generally eating something. And that day he had been eating bullseyes.

"Bunter," repeated Vernon-Smith. "I suppose this is because I kicked him this afternoon. By gad, I'll—" He strode to the door.

"You're not going down like that!" gasped Bob.

"I'm going for Bunter—"

"But, my dear chap—"

"Smithy, old man, get a clean up first!" exclaimed Nugent. "What the dickens will the servants think?"

"Hang them, and what they think!"

"Well, what will Mr. Fish think if he sees you?" exclaimed Wharton.

"He can think what he dashed well likes!" howled the Bounder. "He shouldn't have that potty porpoise here playing potty tricks! I tell you; I'm going to smash him! I'm going to break him up into little pieces!"

And the soot-smothered Bounder rushed down the corridor towards the staircase.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Johnny Bull.

The chums of the Remove followed.

They could understand Smithy's wild wrath, and his fierce desire to get at Bunter. Still, there was a limit. He was in no state to go down into the magnificent hall of Portercliffe.

Smithy cared nothing for that. He wanted vengeance, and he wanted it at once. He flew to the stairs, and flew down.

A portly, plump figure half-way up the stairs stopped at the sight of him with a startled squeal. It was Chandos. Chandos, surprised and shocked by

the disturbance above, was coming up to see what was the matter.

At the sight of a wild, blackened figure, flying down the staircase towards him, Chandos stopped suddenly.

He did not recognise Vernon-Smith. His dearest relative would hardly have recognised the Bounder in his present state.

Chandos saw what seemed to be a wild and excited negro hurtling down the staircase at him, and he stopped, and staggered. Wide and broad as the stairs at Portercliffe Hall were, there was no room for portly butlers to stagger about on them.

Chandos missed his footing, and rolled down.

Bump, bump, bump! went the plump and portly figure, from stair to stair, and at every bump there came a gurgle from Chandos.

"Say, what the great horned toad!" gasped Fisher T. Fish.

He was standing at the foot of the grand staircase, staring up, when Chandos came rolling down.

Before Fisher T. Fish could skip out of the way, Chandos rolled on him, and brushed his skinny legs from under him.

"Aw, wake snakes!" yelled Fisher T. Fish.

He crashed. Chandos rolled over him as he sprawled. A second later Smithy, coming down full pelt, stumbled over the two of them, and crashed also. It was quite a mix-up at the foot of the grand staircase at Portercliffe Hall.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bad for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER sat up in his chair, and blinked at the startling scene, his little round eyes almost popping through his big, round spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

From the stairs above Harry Wharton & Co. looked down at it. Three or four footmen came hurrying into the hall by the service door to see what was the matter. Wibley and Kipps came scudding up from somewhere; Mr. Hiram K. Fish from somewhere else. Quite a little crowd watched the mix-up at the foot of the stairs. Alonzo Todd joined them with a botanical volume under his arm, and an expression of great amazement on his face.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Alonzo.

"What the John James Brown—" roared Mr. Fish.

"Aw, wake snakes!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish, wriggling under the portly butler like a worm under a traction engine. "Aw, dragginoff! I'll say I'm squashed! I'll tell a man, I'm sure winded! Yaw-aw! Yoop! Hookinoff!"

"Wurrgh!" Chandos was gasping. "Wurrgh!"

The Bounder was the first up.

Half his soot had been brushed off, scattering over Chandos and Fishy. But there was plenty left. Smithy was still black as the ace of spades, and scattering clouds and wisps of soot as he moved. He planted a knee in Chandos' ample waistcoat, and a hand in Fishy's eye, and heaved himself up, and scrambled to his feet.

"He, he, he!" came from Bunter. "I say—he, he, he! Why, what—yaroooh!"

The Bounder jumped at him.

Smack! smack! smack!

Bunter rocked right and left under tremendous smacks.

He rocked and roared.

In Bunter's bullet head there was nothing of an intellectual nature to be damaged! But the bullet head itself suffered severely.

Smack! smack! smack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Oh, crikey! Leave off!" shrieked Bunter. "Wharrer you hitting me for, you beast! Ow! Help! I say, you fellows—whoop!"

Smack! smack! smack!

Billy Bunter dodged wildly round the spacious hall! He dodged round Mr. Fish, round Kipps and Wibley, and round Alonzo Todd. After him flew the enraged and sooty Bounder, still smiting.

Fisher T. Fish staggered up! He pressed both hands to his waistcoat, and moaned! Chandos rose more slowly; with the help of John, and James and Peter, the footmen, who grasped him and heaved him to his feet. They led Chandos away, tottering, by the service door.

"Say, what's the circus?" roared Mr. Fish.

Smack! smack!

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter got behind Alonzo! Alonzo tried to ward off the enraged Bounder. He pushed him back.

"Is—is—is that Herbert?" gasped Alonzo. "My dear Herbert, I beg you not to give way to your temper, and to castigate dear William in that very, very violent manner! I am bound to say—yarooooooh!"

Alonzo suffered the fate of a luckless peace-maker. A drive under his chin sent Alonzo staggering.

Then the Bounder jumped at Bunter again.

This time he got his grasp on the fat Owl, and there was no more dodging for William George Bunter.

Smack! smack! smack! whack! bang!

Bunter's yells rang far and wide.

"I say, you fellows! Help! Oh, crikey! Help! He's mad! Help! Yoo-hoop!"

The Famous Five scampered down the stairs. They rushed at Vernon-Smith, grasped him, and dragged him back by main force.

"Chuck it, Smithy!" gasped Wharton. The Bounder struggled savagely.

"Let go, you fools! I'm going to smash him! I tell you—"

"Enough's as good as a feast, old man!" gasped Bob. "Chuck it! Hold him, you fellows!"

And the Bounder was held, dragged away from Bunter. Billy Bunter roared frantically.

"I say, you fellows, keep him off! He's mad! Oh crikey! Ow! What's the matter with the silly idiot? Ow! Wow!"

"I'll smash him—"

"Beast!"

"You silly owl," roared Wharton. "What did you fix up a booby trap in Smithy's room for?"

"Eh! I didn't!" stuttered Bunter.

"You did, you blithering ass!"

"The didfulness was terrific."

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter indignantly. "I haven't been near Smithy's room. This is the second time you've made out that I've been ragging, you beasts!"

"So you have, you fat freak!"

"I haven't!" shrieked Bunter.

"Chuck it, Smithy, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Wharton, as Mr. Fish, with a snort, strode away. "You're not in the Remove passage now, you fat-head! Haven't you ever heard of such a thing as manners?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled the Bounder.

But perhaps he realised that Bunter had had enough! He tramped away up the stairs—heading, this time, for the bath-room. Billy Bunter stood rubbing his singing head—what time Alonzo nursed his chin!



Vernon-Smith wanted vengeance, and he wanted it at once. A portly, plump figure, half-way up the stairs, stopped at sight of him, with a startled squeal. "Oooch!" It was Chandos. The butler saw what appeared to be a wild and excited negro hurtling down the staircase at him, and he stopped and staggered.

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter. "What made that silly idiot Smithy think I did it?"

"You howling ass!" roared Bob. "You left your bullseyes in his room."

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter. "I ate nearly all my bullseyes, and I left the rest in the bag in my own room."

"Did they walk into Smithy's?" asked Johnny Bull with a snort.

"Well, I never had them there! I say—"

"Oh, rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific."

"Look here, you beasts!" howled Bunter. "I never did it, and I never ragged in your room either, Wharton! And if you fellows can't behave yourselves a bit better than this, I shall jolly well clear off and let you have your holiday without me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" roared Bunter. "I can tell you, I jolly well mean it! I'm not standing much more of this, I can tell you! I've a jolly good mind to go after Smithy, and thrash him—"

"Do!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I'm sure Smithy would be pleased!"

"I shall treat him with contempt! The beast—he's smothered me with soot! I shall have to wash now—"

"Poor old Bunter!" sighed Bob. "He washed when we broke up at Greyfriars, and was going to make it do for the holidays—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

And he rolled away—in search of that extra wash—a very great hardship, from Bunter's point of view. Bunter did not like washing! But with soot all over his fat person, even Bunter realised that a wash was unavoidable. He snorted indignantly as he went. His knowledge of the private affairs

of the Fishes, popper and son, had landed him at Portercliffe Hall; and Billy Bunter had anticipated a glorious time there. But the time he was getting, so far, was not very glorious.

The grub was all right—and when the grub was all right, Bunter's usual view was that everything was all right! But it was turning out anything but all right! Fisher T. Fish, it was true, was very civil—to keep Bunter from "spilling the beans." But the other fellows seemed bent on making life at Portercliffe Hall not worth living for the fat Owl! With this extraordinary idea in their heads that Bunter had been ragging, they were pitching into him right and left.

Billy Bunter was beginning to wonder whether Portercliffe Hall was worth while, after all! Which, if he had only known it, was exactly what Fisher T. Fish guessed, reckoned, and calculated that he would soon begin to wonder!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Haunted Turret!

SNORE!

"Bunter!"

Snore!

"Let him rip, you guys!" said Fisher T. Fish.

It was bedtime. In fact, it was rather later than bedtime, as rules were a little relaxed in the holidays. The Greyfriars party had been gathered round the radio-gram in the hall; but at ten o'clock they decided that it was time to get a move on. Bunter, who had dined, not too wisely but too well, as was his happy custom, was already fast asleep in a deep leather chair—his snore drowned by the wireless. But

when the radio was shut off, Bunter's snore woke the echoes in its turn.

Bob Cherry called to him, and Harry Wharton shook him by a fat shoulder. Whereupon Fisher T. Fish barged in.

"If he wants to snooze hyer, let him snooze, you guys!" said Fishy. "I guess he can beat it for bed any old time he likes."

"Well, we'd better tell him we're going!" said Harry.

"Oh, let him snooze."

"My dear Fish," said Alonzo Todd. "It would surely be better to acquaint Bunter with the fact that we are about to retire—"

"Can it, old thing," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'm saying leave Bunter to snooze as long as he likes. I'm sure sitting up a piece."

"Oh, all right," said Harry.

As Fisher T. Fish was host, he had to be given his head. Certainly, Billy Bunter did not like being woke up, and was not likely to thank fellows for waking him. On the other hand, when he did wake up, he would be annoyed to find that the other fellows had gone to bed and left him downstairs. It was not easy to please Bunter. Still, nobody was particularly keen on pleasing him, so that did not matter.

The Famous Five, and Alonzo and Kipps and Wibloy and the Bounder, went up the big staircase, after bidding good-night to Fisher T. Fish, who was staying up a "piece." Smithy looked back over the banisters with a sarcastic grin on his face.

"What's Fishy's game, you men?" he asked.

"Eh? What?" asked Bob.

"He's keeping Bunter up for some thing. I believe they've been changing his room. Is he going to lark with the fat duffer?"

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Hey, diddle diddle!



to get her poor dog a
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A
Riot of
Fun

"The larkfulness of the esteemed Fishy is not usually terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, he can get on with it, anyhow," said the Bounder. "He doesn't want Bunter here—and I certainly don't!"

"If he doesn't want him here, why is he here at all, then?" asked Kipps.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know the answer to that one," he said. "But I jolly well know that Fishy doesn't want him. I believe he's keeping him up for some jape—and if he is, more power to his elbow." Smithy had not yet forgotten the booby-trap and the soot!

Bunter's snore echoed after the juniors as they went.

The Bounder's remarks rather puzzled them. All of them, as a matter of fact, had an impression that Fisher T. Fish did not want Bunter at Portercliffe Hall. But they could imagine no reason why he should have him there if he did not want him.

It was rather puzzling, too, why he was letting Bunter snore on in the arm-chair and sitting up with him. Fishy was not supposed to be much of a practical joker, and it seemed unlikely that he was intending any "lark" on the fat junior, as the Bounder suspected.

However, it was no business of theirs, and the juniors dismissed the matter from their minds and went to bed, where they were soon deep in the sound and healthy sleep of happy youth.

Meanwhile, Bunter snored.

Fisher T. Fish sat up.

Mr. Hiram K. Fish glanced into the hall, with his long, thin cigar in his long, thin mouth, grinned, and went back to the library.

Fishy sat and yawned.

He did not like sitting up late. Late hours meant loss of health, without any compensating gain.

But no doubt Fishy had his reasons on this particular occasion. Chandos came into the hall at last. He hid a yawn behind a plump hand.

"If you are requiring nothing further, sir—" said Chandos.

"Nunk!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" Chandos was learning a new language since the Fish family had taken up their residence at Portercliffe Hall. But American was not a language quickly learned.

"I mean nix!" explained Fishy. "You can beat it!"

Chandos beat it.

Snore! came steadily from Bunter. Fisher T. Fish, yawning deeply, sat up and waited. Everybody else had gone to bed by the time Billy Bunter's eyes opened behind his big spectacles, and he blinked round. It was getting near midnight.

"I say, you fellows!" grunted Bunter.

"Ready for bed, old bean?" asked Fishy.

Bunter sat up.

"I say, where are the fellows?" he asked.

"Gone to bed."

"Beasts!"

"I guess I sat up with you, old thing," said Fisher T. Fish amicably. "I'll sure tote you to your room, if you're ready."

Bunter blinked at him. He knew, of course, why Fishy was so civil to him at Portercliffe Hall; it was because he might otherwise spill the beans. But he was surprised that Fishy should carry civility to this length.

Sitting up till nearly midnight was really not required of a schoolboy host. Bunter might have been grateful for such polite attention, had he possessed

a grateful nature. But—as often happened when Bunter woke after sleeping off the effects of a gargantuan meal—he had woke up peevish and irritable.

"Just like the rotters to go off to bed without calling a chap!" he grunted. "You might have woke me up, Fishy."

"I reckoned you'd like to have your snooze out, old-timer."

"Rot!" said Bunter.

He rose from the armchair, stretched his fat limbs, and yawned.

"I'm hungry," he said.

"I guess there's eats in your room," said Fisher T. Fish. "I sure told Chandos to put a cake and a bag of doughnuts on the table by your bed."

Even Bunter was a little touched by this kind attention. Fellows he had stayed with before had never seemed to care whether he might get hungry in the night. This was undoubtedly very thoughtful of Fishy.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, more amiably. "I'll go up, then."

He negotiated the stairs, Fisher T. Fish following him and switching off lights as he went.

In the corridor where the Greyfriars juniors had their quarters Bunter was heading for his room, when Fishy tapped him on a fat arm.

"This way," he said. "You got a new room to-night, Bunter."

"Rot!" grunted Bunter. "My things—"

"Moved into your new room, old fellow," explained Fisher T. Fish. "Popper found that there was some damp smell in your room, and we sure want you to be comfortable hyer, Bunter. We've planted you in the turret-room. Bootiful room—it was occupied by his lordship."

"Oh, all right."

At the end of the corridor was the stair leading up into the turret. Billy Bunter did not like stairs. However, he followed Fisher T. Fish up.

Fishy switched on the light in the turret-room.

Bunter blinked round that apartment with sleepy eyes, but with considerable satisfaction.

It was a large and handsome room. High up, it had a view in the day-time of the surrounding country—the sea and the estuary of the Thames, and Margate and Ramsgate and the North Foreland. Now the windows were curtained with long curtains of a rich material. A gigantic four-poster bed, with a canopy, bulked large. The floor was of ancient polished oak, dotted with handsome rugs.

There were two other doors beside the one by which Bunter entered with Fishy. On a table by the bed was a tray containing cake and other comestibles, as well as a carafe of water and a bottle of lemonade. Billy Bunter deigned to be pleased. Obviously he was in better quarters than the other guests—as so distinguished a visitor, of course, merited.

"I guess you'll be O.K. here," said Fisher T. Fish.

"It's a bit far away from the other fellows!" Bunter, of course, had to find some fault, or it would not have been Bunter.

"His late lordship used this room," said Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter grunted.

"I don't think so much of lords as you do, Fishy. You see, I ain't an American."

"You pie-faced clam—"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—" stammered Fisher T. Fish. He had forgotten caution for a moment.

"Look here, Fishy—"

"I guess I'll be hopping!" said Fisher

T. Fish. "You'll be all right here, old pippin. As for ghosts—"

"Ghosts?" repeated Bunter.

"They say this is the haunted room," said Fisher T. Fish calmly. "Didn't I mention that before?"

"No, you jolly well didn't!" said Bunter warmly. "Look here—"

"Waal, you don't believe in ghosts—"

"Of course not! But—"

"And you ain't afraid of ghosts, anyhow—a plucky guy like you!"

"Not likely! But—"

"Waal, good-night, Bunter!"

"I—I say, Fishy—"

The door closed on Fisher T. Fish.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He stood blinking round the room uneasily through his big spectacles. Then he stepped to the door, opened it, and blinked out.

"Fishy! I say, Fishy!" he squeaked.

But Fisher T. Fish was gone. All was darkness and silence. It was so dark and so gloomy outside that Bunter rather hurriedly shut the door again and turned back into the brightly lit room.

Midnight chimed from somewhere.

In the silence and solitude of midnight, at a distance from the other occupants of the vast building, the thought of ghosts was very uncomfortable.

Billy Bunter was tempted to clear out of the haunted turret. It would have been all right if the beast hadn't mentioned it—for Bunter, of course, did not believe in ghosts. What did the silly ass want to put the idea into his head for?

He sat on the edge of the bed and ate the cake.

That made him feel better.

After all, ghosts were all rot! And he had to sleep somewhere—and the bed would not be made in his old room. Bunter resolved to leave the light burning, and being by that time terribly sleepy he turned into the big four-poster. It was a very soft and comfortable bed. Bunter's fat head sank luxuriously into a down pillow, and he slumbered—and his deep snore woke the echoes of the haunted turret.

He dreamed.

But he did not—as, perhaps, Fisher T. Fish calculated—dream of ghosts. He dreamed of the cake he had packed away, and a sweet smile adorned his fat face as he slumbered.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Two of Them!

FISHER T. FISH grinned—a wily grin.

It was one o'clock, but the transatlantic junior had not gone to bed. Fishy was sleepy—fearfully sleepy—but he had business on hand that night, and business came first. Fishy could not think of bed yet.

Fishy had waited an hour in his own room, and now he was getting to work. He was arranging a sheet over his head, draping it round his bony form.

Two eye-holes had been cut in it, where it covered his face, for vision. Fishy's sharp, keen eyes gleamed through.

In the light there was nothing terrifying about his aspect; he looked exactly like what he was—a fellow with a sheet over his head. But in the darkness it would be quite different.

In the shadowy gloom he would look very ghostly indeed. And it was in the dark that Bunter was going to see him.

Very likely Bunter had left his light burning; if not, he would try to switch it on when he was awakened by a

ghostly figure. In either case, it did not matter, as Fishy had "put paid" to that in advance by the simple operation of turning off the current at the meter. In all the vast building of Portercliffe Hall nobody could get a light till the electric current was turned on again. So that was O.K.!

In his own room Fishy was getting himself up as a ghost by the gleam of an electric flashlamp.

Now he shut off the lamp and slipped it into his pocket under the sheet. All was ready for his enterprise.

Bunter did not believe in ghosts. And he was not afraid of them—in the day-time. But at midnight's stilly hour it was quite a different matter. It was a certainty—or a cinch, as Fishy would have said—that the Owl of the Remove would be frightened out of his fat wits when he saw that spectral figure at his bedside in the gloom.

As for the possible effect of such a trick on a fellow's nervous system, Fishy did not give that a thought. He knew that it was a foolish and dangerous trick to play. But his view was that Bunter had barged in where he was not wanted, and that he could take what was coming to him.

If he did not like what happened at Portercliffe Hall, he could pull up stakes and vamoose as soon as he liked—and the sooner, from the point of view of Fisher T. Fish, the better!

Fisher T. Fish wanted a party at Portercliffe Hall. He wanted to swank in the eyes of Greyfriars fellows—and, naturally enough, he did not want to pass the holidays without company. Also, Harry Wharton & Co. were going to be made use of in the strange and mysterious business transactions that Hiram K. Fish was scheduled to carry out at the Hall. But Fishy did not want Bunter.

Bunter was not attractive personally—and he knew too much! All Fishy wanted of Bunter was that the fat Owl should "vamoose the ranch"—and do it quick!

So Fishy had set his wily brain to work to devise ways and means of making Bunter fed-up with Portercliffe Hall. Bunter could not be kicked out, because he could spill the beans. But he might be made to take his departure of his own accord. That was Fishy's hospitable object.

Quietly Fisher T. Fish stepped out of his room.

The corridor was dark and gloomy, but the faint glimmer of summer starlight from the big window at one end was enough for Fishy.

He groped along silently to the stair at the other end that led up to the haunted turret.

He reached the landing outside the turret-room; it was pitchy dark there, and he groped for the door.

Silently he opened it.

He stood in the aperture, listening. From the darkness within the room came a deep, rumbling sound of a snore.

Fisher T. Fish grinned under the sheet. Evidently Billy Bunter was asleep.

Fishy stepped soundlessly within. Bunter was going to wake suddenly—to see a startling sight.

It was true that the spectre who was supposed to haunt the turret was said to appear in a costume of the proper period. According to the legend, an ancient Portercliffe, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, had been slain in a duel in that apartment, and his blood had left dark stains on the old oak floor. The restless spirit haunted the scene—clad, naturally, in trunk hose

and a ruff, such as he had worn in life. Ghosts, obviously, could not be subject to the changes of fashion in garments. An Elizabethan ghost would walk, if he walked at all, in Elizabethan costume.

Fishy was aware of that. But he had no Elizabethan costume on hand; and he guessed, reckoned, and calculated that a sheet over his head would be good enough for a bonehead like Bunter.

Leaving the door half-open, ready for a prompt vanishing trick, Fisher T. Fish, silent in soft slippers, glided in. The four-poster loomed up dim in the gloom, but Bunter's snore was an easy guide. Noiselessly Fisher T. Fish glided towards the bed.

Suddenly he halted.

His feet seemed glued to the oak floor. His keen, sharp eyes almost popped through the eye-holes in the sheet over his bony face. His heart gave a wild jump and pounded on his skinny ribs.

What did he see?

Was he dreaming?

From the darkness, against the opposite wall, appeared a pale glimmer of a ghostly, phosphorescent light.

It outlined a figure—a dim, spectral figure.

It was a figure in trunk hose, with a huge Elizabethan ruff round the neck, and a cloak draped round the massive form.

The face was dim, but so far as it was visible it was of a dead whiteness. In one dim hand gleamed a bare sword!

Dimly, spectrally, the figure glimmered in a pale greenish light.

Fisher T. Fish stood transfixed.

He gazed through the darkness at that awful figure. From the bed, undisturbed, came the steady snore of Billy Bunter.

Bunter was still fast asleep—unaware that two rival ghosts were in the turret-room.

The spectral figure moved.

Fishy's heart almost ceased to beat.

It was moving from the wall—as if it came out of the solid oak of the wall itself—towards the bed. Then, like Fishy, it suddenly stopped—and he knew that it had seen him. There was a flash in the gloom as the ghostly sword moved in the ghostly hand.

Fishy woke from the spell of terror.

He forgot that he had come there to play ghost. He gave one fearful yell of horror and fear and bounded out of the turret-room. He bounded for the stair, caught his long thin legs in the sheet that draped him, and pitched down, bumping and crashing down the stairs to the corridor below.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

An Alarm in the Night!

HARRY WHARTON sat up in bed, rubbing his eyes.

He wondered whether he was dreaming.

But it was no dream. A wild yell and a sound of crashing and bumping had awakened him—and the yelling was still going on. Somebody out in the corridor was yelling in frantic terror.

"What the thump—" gasped Wharton.

He groped for the shaded light at the bed-head, but the light did not come on. He jumped out in the dark and groped to the door and dragged it open.

"Aw! Keep off!" came a frantic howl. "Leggo! It's got me! Help!"

"Fishy!" gasped Wharton.

Wild yells and shrieks rang through the darkness.

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Other doors opened, and there were calling voices. All the Greyfriars fellows had been awakened, and they were turning out. Through that terrific din only one fellow slept on. That one was Bunter. In the turret-room Billy Bunter's snore was still going strong.

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

"What's up?" yelled Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed chums—"

"What's the matter with the light?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "The light won't come on!"

"Get a light, somebody!"

"Aw! It's got me!" came the terrified shriek of Fisher T. Fish. "Help! It's sure got me! Ooooooh!"

"It's Fishy! Has he gone potty?" exclaimed Kipps.

"The pottiffulness is terrific—"

"Anybody got a light?" shouted Wharton.

"Here!" came the cool voice of the Bounder.

There was a gleam in the darkness. Herbert Vernon-Smith came out of his room with an electric torch in his hand.

"This way, Smithy—"

"Something's happened—"

"It's Fishy—"

Lighted by the Bounder's torch, the juniors ran up the corridor towards the turret stair. The light gleamed on Fisher T. Fish.

He was rolling, scrambling, and struggling in a tangled sheet on the floor. And he yelled and howled incessantly in dire terror.

In his wild fear, Fishy did not realise that he was tangled in the sheet he had fastened on to play ghost. He fancied that the spectral figure of the turret-room had "got" him.

The awful idea of being in the grasp of spectral hands had made the hapless trickster almost beside himself with fear and horror. He struggled and shrieked and howled in sheer hysteria.

"Fishy!" exclaimed Nugent.

"What's the matter, Fishy?" gasped Bob.

"What on earth's he doing in that sheet?"

"Mad as a hatter, I should think."

"Hold the light, Smithy!"

The Bounder kept the light on Fishy, while the other fellows grasped him and dragged him up and tore away the entangling sheet.

For a moment or two, Fishy struggled frantically in their hands; then, as he realised that the hands were human, he ceased to struggle and clung to Harry Wharton, trembling convulsively from head to foot.

"Keep it off!" he moaned.

"Keep what off?"

"The gig-gig-gig—"

"The whatter?"

"The gig-gig-ghost!" stuttered Fisher T. Fish. "Aw, wake snakes! I figured that it had got me! Jerusalem crickets! Stick to me! Don't go away! Keep that light on! Can you see it?"

"We can't see a ghost!" said Nugent, with a grin. "Are you trying to pull our leg, you ass?"

Fisher T. Fish, still clinging convulsively to Wharton, gazed round him with bulging, terrified eyes. Nothing was to be seen in the corridor of a spectral nature, however.

"Been walking in your sleep?" asked Wibley.

Fisher T. Fish groaned.

"I—I saw it!"

"What—and where?" asked Harry blankly.

"In the turret-room—the ghost!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "Oh, wake snakes! I guess it gave me a turn! Sure you can't see it?"

The amazed juniors stared at him.

That Fishy had had the fright of his life was clear. He was shaking as if with the ague, and his bony jaws shook, his teeth rattling. But that he had seen a ghost they were not likely to believe.

"What were you doing in that sheet?" asked Wharton quietly.

The Bounder chuckled.

"The fathead's been playing ghost, and scared himself!" he said.

"Serve him jolly well right, then!" grunted Johnny Bull. "A silly, dangerous trick—"

"Seen his own reflection in a glass perhaps!" suggested Nugent.

"Nop!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I saw it—I sure spotted it—the ghost! Oh crumbs! Oh crikey!"

"Bunter's in the turret-room," grinned the Bounder. "Fishy went there to scare him and scared himself."

"I'm telling you I saw it!" yapped Fisher T. Fish. "In the dark—oh crikey! The ghost—"

"A reflection in a glass—"

"Aw, can it! I'm telling you it was got up in a costume like you see in stage plays—it wasn't a guy in a sheet—and there was a queer light about it—oh, carry me home to die! I sure seen it."

"Let's go up and investigate—"

Fisher T. Fish shuddered.

"Nop! I guess I ain't butting into that room agin! Not so's you'd notice it! I figured that it had got me when that doggoned sheet tangled round my legs! Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

"What's the matter with the light?" asked Nugent, pressing a switch on the corridor wall. "It doesn't come on."

"I guess it's turned off downstairs!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "You see, I wasn't going to let that fat clam get a light when he saw me—and then—I—I saw it—" He broke off, shuddering from head to foot.

"Rot!" said Harry tersely.

"I'm telling you—"

"Go and turn the current on, fat-head, and—"

"I dursn't go down—"

"I'll come with you with the light, you ass!" said the Bounder contemptuously. "You fellows scared of waiting in the dark?"

"Ha, ha! Hardly."

"I tell you I seen it—"

"Rubbish!"

"Come on, you ass!" grunted Vernon-Smith, and he took Fishy's bony arm with one hand, and, holding the light with the other, led him down the lower stairs.

The Greyfriars fellows were left in the dark to wait. Certainly they were not afraid of ghosts. But it was rather creepy, waiting there; and they were glad when the light flashed on.

Fisher T. Fish came back with the Bounder. He seemed to be recovering a little now; but he was still white and shaking. Bob, listening at the foot of the turret stair, chuckled.

"Bunter's sleeping through it!" he remarked. From the turret-room above, of which Fishy had left the door open, came the echoing sound of a rumbling snore!

"Better go up and look round," said Harry Wharton. "Come on, Fishy, and show us just where you saw it."

"I—I—I—guess—"

"Oh, come on!"

"I—I—I calculate—"

"The ghostfulness is not really terrific, my esteemed funky Fishy!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

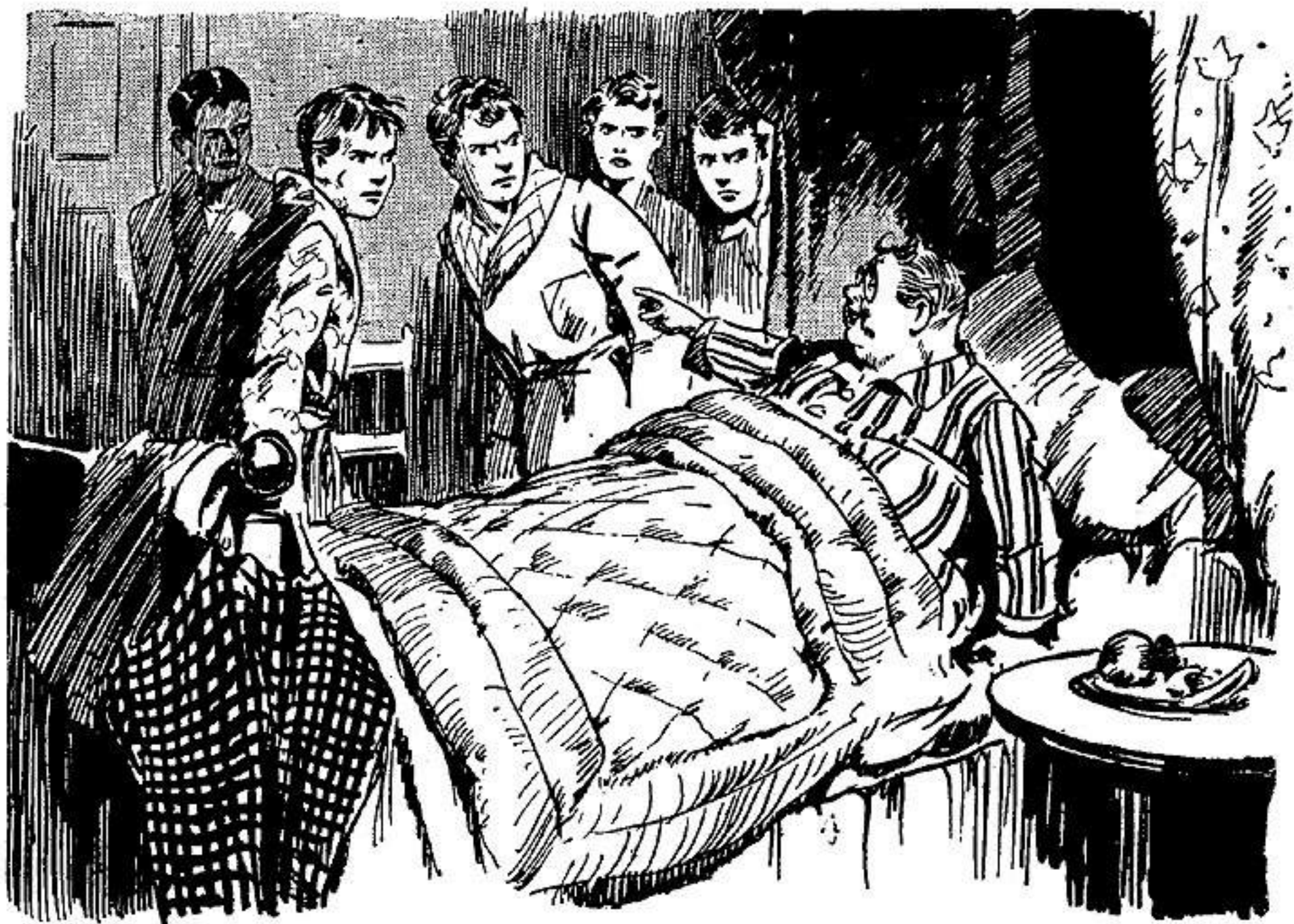
"I'm telling you I seen it—"

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

"The rotfulness is preposterous!"

"Waal, you mosey in if you like—I sure ain't going to!" said Fisher T. Fish.



Billy Bunter grinned at the Greyfriars party from the big bed. "Pluck up your courage," he jeered. "I'll look after you if there's any ghosts—he, he, he! You're looking rather pale, Wharton!" "You fat chump!" "Funky crew!" said Bunter. "Waking a fellow up because you're frightened! Think I'm going to sit up with you and watch for ghosts! He, he, he!"

"I guess I'm going back to my room, and I'll say I wish I'd never left it. Oh, Jerusalem crickets! I sure have had a bad turn!"

And Fisher T. Fish limped down the passage to his own room. Ghost or no ghost, he was not going to enter the haunted turret again. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged a grin.

"Anybody else scared?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No fear!"

"Come on, then!"

And the Greyfriars party marched up the turret stair and into the turret-room—to look for the ghost; but assuredly without any expectation of discovering one!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Who Wants Bunter?

BILLY BUNTER sat up in bed. He groped for his spectacles, jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked at the crowd of fellows in the turret-room.

Some sound of the uproar perhaps had penetrated Bunter's deep slumber—anyhow, he awakened at last, when the Greyfriars fellows crowded in to look for the ghost. Bunter was not scared. The light was full on; and his first blink told him who the intruders were. He was only surprised and annoyed at being woke up.

"I say, you fellows," he squeaked.

"Oh, the jolly old sleeping beauty's woke up!" said Bob. "Seen anything of a ghost, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Rattling chains or clanking bones, or anything in that line?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Look here, what have you woke me

up for?" snorted Bunter. "If this is a lark, I jolly well don't like it, see."

"The larkfulness is not terrific, my idiotic Bunter."

"Fishy's been here," explained Harry Wharton. "He fancied he saw a ghost and got a bad scare. So we came to look."

"Silly idiot!" grunted Bunter. "Waking a fellow up with such rot! Lot of nervous old hens!"

"You cheeky fat ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "Who's nervous?"

"You are!" retorted Bunter. "Ghosts! Yah! I'll jolly well eat all the ghosts you find here! Funky lot! He, he, he."

The juniors glared at Bunter.

After what Fishy had stated, they had felt that it was up to them to give the turret-room the "once-over." Bunter was sleeping there alone; and though ghosts were improbable, it was possible that Fishy had seen something—he was, at least, quite certain that he had.

It was like Bunter to reward them in this style for taking the trouble. He grinned at them from the big bed scornfully.

"Pluck up your courage," jeered Bunter. "I'll look after you if there's any ghosts—he, he, he! You're looking rather pale, Wharton!"

"You fat chump!"

"You look a bit sickly, Nugent."

"Ass!"

"Funky crew!" said Bunter. "Waking a fellow up because you're frightened! Think I'm going to sit up with you and watch for ghosts! He, he, he!"

The juniors made no further reply to Bunter. They looked rather hastily round the turret-room.

There was, it was certain, no ghost to be seen. Neither was there any trace

of a recent visitant, human or super-human.

Two doors, beside the one on the landing, were there—one led into a bathroom, the other into a large clothes cupboard, now empty. There was no exit—or entrance—by either.

Only by the door on the landing could anyone have come in. Ghosts, certainly, if any, might have passed through solid walls. But if any playful person, beside Fishy, had been playing ghost, it was not easy to see how he had got into the room.

In an ancient building like Portercliffe Hall, secret passages and doors possibly existed—indeed probably. But the solid walls of the turret-room could hardly have contained secret doors, for they had the open air on the outside. The turret stood high and detached from the main building like a tower. The bathroom was a modern addition, partitioned off from what had originally been a single large room.

"Nothing!" said Harry Wharton. "Fishy must have fancied it!"

"He, he, he! Did you think you were going to find a ghost?" chuckled Bunter.

"No, you ass—but we might have found somebody playing ghost!" snapped Wharton. "Let's get out—I'm going back to bed."

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

And the juniors crowded out of the turret-room.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter.

They did not heed.

They had heard enough from Bunter. Leaving him alone in the haunted room, they shut the door and went back to bed.

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THE MYSTERY OF PORTERCLIFFE HALL!



(Continued from page 13.)

Bunter ceased to grin.

So long as the juniors were all present, the fat Owl of the Remove was not afraid of ghosts and was much entertained by accusing them of nerves and funk. But as soon as he was left alone, a change came o'er the spirit of his dream, as it were.

He blinked uneasily to and fro through his big spectacles. There was a faint wail of the wind blowing up from the sea by the North Foreland. It echoed in the haunted room and Bunter listened uneasily.

He did not take off his spectacles and lay his head on the pillow again. He sat blinking in the electric light, and the longer he sat and blinked the more uneasy he grew.

Ghosts were all rot, of course! Bunter knew that! But the fellows had said that Fishy had fancied that he had seen something! What was it Fishy fancied he had seen?

The other fellows had gone back to bed—probably they were already asleep again. Bunter grew more uneasy.

Suddenly he gave a violent start and his fat heart thumped. A faint sound came through the silent room. Was it the wind?

It sounded to Bunter's fat ears more like a low groan.

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter.

Whether it was the wind moaning round the thick stone walls and ancient ivy of the turret or whether it was the groan of a disembodied spirit, Billy Bunter did not stay to ascertain. He made one bound out of bed—and another bound to the door.

He tore open the door and rushed out on the landing. He went down the turret stair two at a time and dashed along the corridor and hurtled into the first room he came to.

"I—I—I say!" gasped Bunter.

He switched on the light. There was a startled exclamation and Harry Wharton sat up and stared at him.

"What the thump—"

"I—I—I say!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've come—I—I thought you—you might be nervous, old chap, so—so I'm going to stay with you—"

"Are you?" said Wharton grimly. "Well, I'm not nervous, old fat bean, and I'm not going to listen all night to the snore of a funky porpoise. Get out!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Whiz!

Wharton's pillow flew!

Bump!

"Wow!" roared Bunter, as he sat down.

Wharton chuckled.

"Have the bolster?" he asked.

"Beast!"

Bunter did not wait for the bolster. He squirmed out of the room into the passage. Wharton, chuckling, fielded his pillow and settled down to sleep again. Bunter moved along to the next door, opened it, and switched on the light.

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"I say, old chap—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I—I'm going to stay with you to-night, Bob, old chap! After the fright you've had, old fellow, I—I thought I—I'd come—"

Bob groped over the side of the bed. "Where's that boot?" he grunted.

Bunter did not wait for him to find the boot. He slammed the door and disappeared. A minute later and Johnny Bull, settling down to balmy slumber after the alarm, was startled by the door opening and the light flashing on.

He glared at a figure in striped pyjamas surmounted by a fat face, with a large pair of spectacles that flashed back the light.

"I say, Bull, old chap—"

"You podgy idiot! What do you want?" growled Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, do you mind if I sleep in this room? You see—"

"Yes, I do! Get out!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You're not afraid of ghosts!" said Johnny sarcastically. "You were fearfully amused at the idea! Well, get back to your jolly old ghosts!"

"I—I say, I—I thought I—I heard a groan—"

"You'll hear one soon, if you don't clear! You'll do the groaning! If I get out of bed to you—"

"Beast!"

Bunter slammed the door. The next room, he knew, was Nugent's. Nobody seemed to want Bunter, and he had little hope that Frank would give him a heartier welcome than Wharton, Bob, or Johnny. So he opened Nugent's door softly and did not switch on the light. He listened.

If Frank Nugent was asleep, there was no need to awaken him. Bunter's idea was to creep quietly into the bed by his side. The beds were all big and old-fashioned, with ample room for two. The fat Owl listened breathlessly.

There was no sound. On tiptoe, he crept towards the bed, his fat hands outstretched to grope his way.

He reached the bed—groping. His groping fingers clawed over a sleeping face.

Frank Nugent was asleep! But that clawing on his face awakened him with startling suddenness.

He started up with a gasp.

Crack!

The top of his head came into violent contact with a fat chin.

"Ow!" gasped Nugent.

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

"Ow! Wow!" Nugent rubbed his head. It felt hurt. "Who—what—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" yelled Bunter, staggering back from the bed and clasp- ing his fat chin with both podgy hands.

"Yow-ow! Wow! Beast! You've broken my jaw—ow! You've knocked out all my teeth! Wow!"

"Is that Bunter?" gasped Frank Nugent. "What the thump are you doing here, you potty porpoise?"

"Yow-ow-ow! My chin—ow! My jaw! Wow! Oh crikey!"

Nugent switched on the bedstead light. He stared blankly at the fat Owl of the Remove, clasp- ing his damaged chin in anguish.

"You blithering idiot!" roared Nugent. "What the thump are you larking for?"

"Ow! I wasn't—wow! I—I—yow-ow?" —Swipe!

Nugent grasped his pillow and smote! He jumped out of bed and smote again and yet again. With a series of wild howls, Billy Bunter dodged out of the room and fled.

Alonzo Todd was the next to be awakened.

Alonzo came out of a dream of wondrous botanical specimens to find his light on and a fat hand shaking him. He blinked up at Bunter.

"My dear William—" he ejaculated. "What—"

"I—I say, Alonzo, I—I can't sleep, and—and I thought I'd like your company, old chap!" said Bunter. "D-d-d-do you mind if I have half your bed? I—I want you to tell me about geology—"

"I regret that I am unacquainted with that fascinating science, my dear William!"

"I—I mean botany—"

"I should certainly be very, very pleased to place my botanical know- ledge at your disposal, my dear William, but the hour is so very, very late—"

Bunter crawled into the bed.

Alonzo gazed at him.

Any other member of the Greyfriars party would doubtless have rolled Bunter out on the floor. But the kind and gentle Alonzo did not think of such a very, very rough proceeding as that. But even the kind and gentle Alonzo remonstrated.

"My dear William! There is hardly room for two. I mean, as you are so very, very fat—"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" said Bunter. "I say, can I have the pillow?"

"But I require the pillow, my dear William—"

"Don't be a selfish beast, Alonzo! You can turn up the end of the bolster. I say, give a fellow room!"

"But, my dear William—"

"Don't jaw!"

"But—"

"For goodness' sake, let a fellow go to sleep!"

"But—"

Snore!

Billy Bunter was at rest at last. There was not much more rest for Alonzo that night. But Alonzo, fortunately, did not matter.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

At Merry Margate!

"GUFF!" said Hiram K. Fish. That was Mr. Fish's verdict on the ghostly happenings of the night. And, indeed, in the bright daylight of an August day, Fisher T. Fish wondered whether he really had seen that spectral figure in Elizabethan ruff and trunk hose, or whether he had imagined it.

The other fellows had no doubt about it. Fishy told them about it over break- fast, and they smiled.

"I say, you fellows, perhaps it was Wibley playing tricks!" suggested Billy Bunter.

"Mo!" ejaculated Wibley.

"Well, you're so keen on dressing up and playing the goat," said Bunter, "and you've got a lot of theatrical rubbish in your box, I know that!"

"How do you know what's in Wibley's box?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! If you think I was looking in Wibley's box for some socks and collars, it shows what a suspicious beast you are! Besides, I never found any, and I had to get some out of Nugent's room—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you been playing the giddy goat, Wib?" asked Harry Wharton. And all eyes turned rather suspiciously on William Wibley.

At Greyfriars School, Wib was the great chief of the Remove Dramatic Society. He lived, moved, and had his being in amateur theatricals. If any member of the Greyfriars party had

an Elizabethan costume on hand, certainly that member was likely to be Wib, and no one else.

But Wibley shook his head.

"Nothing of the kind," he answered. "I'm not ass enough to play ghost and frighten silly asses like Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Wibley—"

"It wasn't Wibley!" said Fisher T. Fish. "If it was a fellow playing tricks, I guess it wasn't one of this caboodle! Nope! I'm telling you I saw him plain, and he was twice as big as Wibley or any of you. As big and broad as Chandos."

The juniors glanced at Chandos, who was presiding over the function of breakfast with the assistance of several footmen.

They smiled! Chandos was of medium height; but he was of more than medium width. If the ghost of the turret was as big and broad as the Portercliffe butler, certainly that ghost could not have been a schoolboy playing tricks.

"Say, Chandos!" said Mr. Fish.

"Sir!"

"You ever heard of the pesky ghost being spotted in this lyer shebang?"

Chandos coughed.

"There are many stories to that effect, sir! Servants have heard strange sounds from the turret-room. The room has not been occupied since the time of his late lordship. But—"

"You sure ain't seen the pesky spook with your own optics?" demanded Mr. Fish.

Chandos coughed again.

"No, sir!"

"I guessed not!" said Mr. Fish. "I'll surely say it's all guff!"

"All rot, of course!" said Bunter. "But I'm not going to sleep in that room, Fishy! I don't believe in ghosts, and, of course, I shouldn't be afraid of them if I did; but I'd rather have another room. I say, you fellows, are we going down to Margate this morning?"

Bunter dismissed ghosts, and came down to more practical matters. On a sunny August morning ghosts seemed rather absurd; even to Fishy, who had beheld the awesome phantom of the turret-room. Margate was a much more attractive topic.

Mr. Fish rushed off in a car that morning, having business on hand. There were few moments in Hiram K. Fish's life when he had no business on hand.

Wibley and Kipps went to play tennis, the Bunder lounged away by himself, probably to smoke a cigarette in some shady spot, and the rest of the party walked down to Margate, which was only about a mile from Portercliffe Hall.

Merry Margate was packed with visitors, as was usually the case in the merry month of August. The Famous Five were keen on a bathe; but Billy Bunter had his eye on the donkeys.

Billy Bunter was, according to his own account at least, a great rider; but he preferred the quiet and patient donkey to the mettlesome horse. It was easier to keep on a donkey. There were donkeys on the beach, in charge of a stout, red-faced gentleman in a striped pullover.

"I say, you fellows, what about a ride?" asked Bunter. "Here's the donkeys."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, I didn't know you had any relations in Margate, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry.

"Beast! I say, one of you fellows pay, will you? I've left my notecase at Portercliffe Hall."

"Left anything in it?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Yah!"

"'Ere you are, sir!" said the gentleman in the striped pullover. "Jump on, sir! Lend you a 'and, sir?"

"I don't want any help, thanks!" said Bunter haughtily. "I'm a pretty good rider! I say, you fellows, don't wander away!"

"No fear!" said Bob. "We want to see the performance!"

Billy Bunter proceeded to mount

without assistance. The donkey turned his head, and gazed thoughtfully at Bunter.

Perhaps he doubted whether he would be able to carry the weight. The donkey was, of course, an ass; but he was not such an ass as to carry Bunter's weight if he could help it.

He moved, as Bunter heaved himself up. Missing the donkey's back, Bunter

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS.

Our clever Greyfriars Rhymester very nearly let us down this week. He was told to interview "Nap," but mistook the order and went and had a nap! He's turned in a brilliant effort since, nevertheless, as you will agree when you read these verses written around

NAPOLÉON DUPONT

The French junior of the Remove.

(1)

Dupont is a Frenchman, a likeable chap,
Whose accent is certainly queer.

He's usually known by his nickname of
Nap—

He's small, but he doesn't know fear!
A sportsman is he, and a jolly fine chef,
As Bunter's the first to admit.

To the voice of that corpulent charmer
he's deaf,
Refusing to give him a bit.



I called in to see him and found him
at work

With a frying-pan over the fire.
I sniffed a sweet odour and started
to smirk,

My mouth watered high with
desire.

The smell of those omelets was
certainly prime,

I hoped that the taste was as good.
I'd shift 'em a dozen or so at a time,
And keep on for hours, if I could!



(4)

"Bon soir!" said Dupont (which means,
"How do you do?").

"Entrez!" (which is, "Please take a
seat!").

So I did, and said: "Now for a nice
interview.

Let's talk about things as we eat!
Those omelets are ripping, old fellow, I
think;

I could do with a bite, by the way.
With a glass of cream-soda, or something
to drink.

Parfaitement! So what do you say?"



I gave him a hand, just by way of
reward,

For letting me stay to the feast.
Though hungry, I felt I could really
afford

To wait a few minutes, at least.
I willingly gave him my aid as a
friend,

To master old Virgil's blank verse,
And helped him so well that I found,
In the end,

I'd made his bad Latin—much
worse!



(7)

For quite a long time we were busy as
bees—

We finished when half-hour was gone.
Dupont said: "Now take zem to Quelch,
if you please,

While I dish ze omelets—bon!"

I hurried away with the lines at full speed,
And left them for Quelch (on the floor),
But as I dashed out to return to the feed,

I ran into Nap at the door.

(8)

"Zat Bunter says Quelch ask for me!"
he declared.

"But Quelch isn't here!" I replied.
He looked round the study while I stood
and glared,

And then we rushed back, side by side.
A horrid suspicion was urging us on,
We rushed back, and—oh, what a sell!

For Bunter, the beastly fat brigand, had
gone!

(P.S.—And the omelets as well!)

sat on the sand with a bump that nearly shook the Isle of Thanet.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do that again!" said Nugent.

"Ow!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Wow! Give me a hand up, you beasts! Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Ooogh!"

Alonzo, the obliging, gave Bunter a hand up. The Owl of the Remove staggered to his feet. The man in the striped pullover grinned.

"Hold his head!" yapped Bunter. "Keep him steady! Don't let the brute back away just as I'm getting on!"

The striped gentleman held the donkey's head. Once more Bunter heaved himself up. This time the donkey kept still, and Bunter, putting rather too much energy into the heave, shot over his back, and landed on the other side. Again there was a bump; and Margate seemed to tremble to its foundations.

"Yarooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Splendid!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Do it again!"

"Terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess this is a sight for sore eyes!" remarked Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say this is the bee's knee."

Again Alonzo helped Bunter to his feet. The fat junior glared round with a red and wrathful face.

Not only the Greyfriars juniors, but quite a number of other people were now interested in Bunter's equestrian performances. Trippers gathered round to gaze. Little boys and girls with spades and pails suspended sand fortifications to give their interested attention to Bunter. Bunter was the cynosure of all eyes.

"I say, you fellows——" gasped Bunter.

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Heave ahead!"

"I think you might lend a fellow a hand—standing round grinning like a lot of Cheshire cheeses—I mean cats!"

"Let me assist you, my dear William," said Alonzo.

The striped gentleman held the donkey again. Billy Bunter clambered up once more, with the assistance of the kind Alonzo. This time he landed on the donkey's back.

The donkey stood quite still for a moment. Then he gave a sudden jump. Bunter rocked.

"Ow! I say——"

"Stick on him, sir!" gasped the gentleman. "He's all right. Now then, Neddy, you keep still and behave. Now—— Oh, corks!"

That donkey was accustomed to riders of all sorts and sizes; but it was his first experience of a rider like Bunter. Feeling so tremendous a weight on his back, the donkey's idea seemed to be to get rid of it in the shortest possible space of time. He did!

Bunter rocked and rolled. Luckily Alonzo was there. Bunter's arms fastened round Alonzo's neck as he rolled off the donkey.

"Oh, goodness gracious!" gasped Alonzo Todd, as he crumpled up. He was even less fitted to carry Bunter's weight than the Margate donkey.

"Hold me!" shrieked Bunter.

"Oh dear! Oh goodness! Yarooooh!" Alonzo collapsed on the sand. Bunter sprawled over him. The donkey turned his head, and looked at them both. And there was a roar that woke all the echoes of Margate beach.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Wild Ride!

"W HOOOP!" roared Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. "I guess this is the elephant's side-whiskers," chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear! Will you gerroff, my d-d-dear William?" came a suffocated voice from underneath Bunter. "I—I—— Groogh! Ooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five dragged Bunter up. Alonzo Todd sat up and gurgled. Alonzo was quite dizzy and winded.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "Help me on that moke! That idiot Alonzo made me fall off!"

"My d-d-dear William—— Ooogh!"

"All hands on deck!" chortled Bob Cherry. "I say, keep that moke still! Now, then, heave him up!"

The striped gentleman did not find it easy to keep the moke still. Neddy, usually a very patient animal, was now restive, and seemed alarmed. He was jumping and kicking and plunging.

"Now, Neddy!" urged the owner. "You keep quiet, blow you! Let the young gentleman get on, bless you!"

Ere he is, sir—quiet as a blooming lamb!"

Neddy did not seem quite so quiet as a lamb, blooming or otherwise. But his master held his head firmly, and another gentleman in a jersey held his tail, and between the two of them Neddy was kept fairly stationary.

Harry Wharton & Co. grasped Billy Bunter together, and heaved him up.

Many hands made light work. At long, long last Billy Bunter was landed on the donkey's back.

"Stick on!" gasped Bob.

Bunter was sticking on. He gathered up the reins and felt quite safe.

"Don't be an ass!" was his grateful answer. "I suppose I can ride a donkey. Easy enough. You should see the bunters I ride at Hunter Court—I mean the hunters I ride at Bunter Court."

"All right now?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yes, you fathead! Do stand clear! What are you fellows getting in the way for? I wish you'd leave a fellow alone."

"You silly ass!" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Beast! Can't you get out of the way?"

The juniors got out of the way. Neddy was standing quite still. Bob Cherry had a suspicion that Neddy was only biding his time. He did not like the look in the donkey's eye. But Bunter's confidence had returned, now that he was safe in the saddle, and the steed seemed quiet.

"Sure you're all right, sir?" asked the striped gentleman doubtfully.

"Yes; let go."

The donkey was released.

"Gee up!" snapped Bunter.

He jerked the reins, and kicked the donkey in the ribs.

Neddy "gee'd" up. He gee'd up quite suddenly. It was clear that Bunter had an alarming and exciting effect on Neddy, and Neddy was not in his usual mood. Neddy threw his hind legs into the air.

It was quite a natural proceeding on Neddy's part. All he wanted was to get rid of the extraordinary object on his back.

But it was very disconcerting to Bunter.

He pitched forward, lost the reins, and clasped the donkey round his hairy

neck. There was a startled squeal from Neddy, and a yell from the Margate crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped the gentleman in the striped pullover.

He was keen for custom; but he was wishing by that time that this particular customer had not come along.

"Help!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Neddy was prancing, more like a restive colt than a sedate Margate donkey. That frantic clutch round his neck did it with Neddy. Scared almost out of his asinine wits, Neddy pranced and plunged and kicked, and bolted.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Stop him!"

"Look out!"

"Stop that moke!"

"Catch him!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Arter him!" shrieked the man in the striped pullover.

Clatter, clatter, clatter! went Neddy's wild hoofs. He was in full flight. Frantic howls came from the unhappy rider clinging on his back.

"Ow! Wow! Help! I say, you fellows! Yarooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After him!"

There was a wild rush in pursuit. People clutched at the donkey, and jumped out of his way. Howls and yells and shouts only added to the animal's excitement.

There was no stopping him. With a burst of speed seldom, or never, equalled by a seaside donkey, Neddy hit the open spaces.

The Famous Five and Fisher T. Fish, and the striped gentleman, and about a hundred trippers, raced and chased after him in vain. Neddy showed a clean set of heels.

"Urrrgh!" gurgled Bunter.

What was happening, Billy Bunter hardly knew. It seemed like some awful nightmare to Bunter.

Somehow, he stuck on. Only his frantic grasp on the donkey's neck kept him on. But the tighter he grasped that hairy neck, the more frantic Neddy became.

He raced; he flew! The shouting crowd was left behind. But other crowds, and other shouts lined the route. Bunter had a terrified glimpse of a motor-bus; he missed a snorting car; he barely escaped the clutch of an excited policeman in the Northdown Road. And still Neddy flew.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter.

He could see little but a hairy neck. He clutched and clung. He rocked and rolled; but he stuck on.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

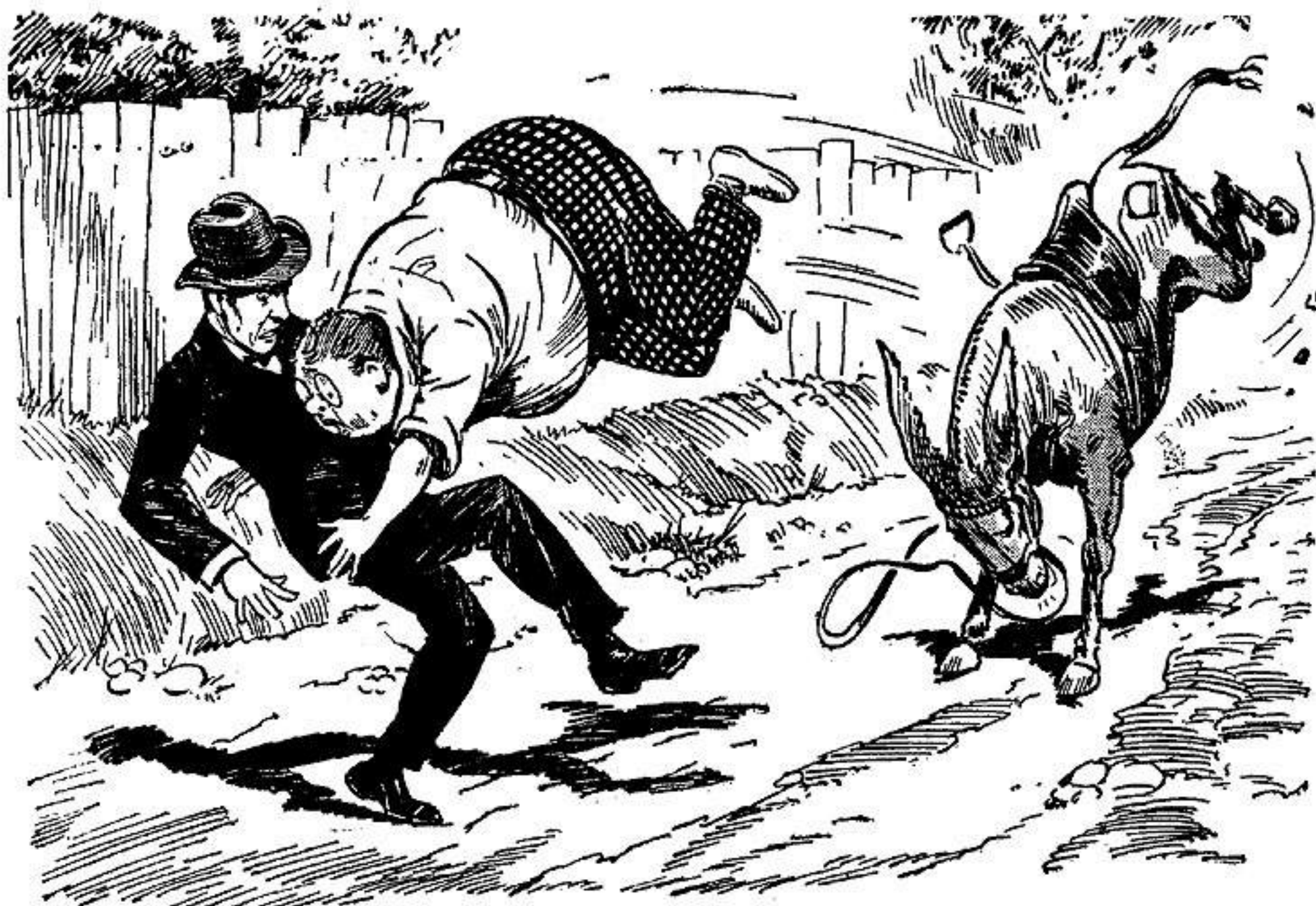
He was on a country road. Margate had been left behind. Still the terrified donkey flew on—like Mazeppa's wild steed, only anxious to get rid of his rider.

If Bunter had fallen off, no doubt Neddy would have trotted quietly home. But Bunter did not fall off. He was doing his very best not to fall off. Uncomfortable as his perch was on the donkey's heaving back, it was preferable to a bump on the hard high road. Billy Bunter held on like a limpet to a rock.

But little as he could see of his surroundings, Bunter had a glimpse, and realised that he was on the road that led past the gates of Portculliffe Hall. Neddy, unconsciously, was taking him home.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. "Stop, you beast! Stop, you brute! Stop, you putrid moke! Stop! Oh crikey!"

He glimpsed a walking figure in the road. It was that of a slight man



As he arrived at the spot where the man in black stood, Neddy suddenly stopped. The jerk of that sudden stop unhooked Bunter, and the fat junior lost his grasp on the hairy neck and shot off. Crash! Bunter hardly knew what he hit, as he crashed. But the little man in black knew! "Gurrrrgh!" he gasped, as he staggered backwards.

dressed in black, walking ahead, who turned to glance back at the wild clatter behind him.

"I say—help!" yelled Bunter. "I say, stop him! Stop this donkey! I say—yarrrooooo!"

The little man in black stared at him blankly. He made no motion to stop the donkey. He grinned.

There was nothing, so far as Billy Bunter could see, to grin at. But the man in black grinned, quite a wide grin. He seemed amused by the strange sight of a fat schoolboy clinging to the hairy neck of a donkey in mad career.

"Oooogh! Help!" roared Bunter. "Stop him!"

The man in black chuckled. Instead of stopping the donkey, or making any attempt to do so, he stood grinning, just as if the thing was comic instead of tragic.

But Neddy, perhaps, misunderstood. Or perhaps he was tired of that wild race. Anyhow, as he arrived at the spot where the man in black stood, Neddy, instead of shooting past, suddenly stopped.

The jerk of that sudden halt unhooked Bunter! He lost his grasp on the hairy neck and shot off.

Crash! Bunter hardly knew what he hit as he crashed. But the little man in black knew! He knew only too well! For it was the man in black that Bunter crashed on, as he flew like a bullet from the donkey's back.

The man in black ceased to grin quite suddenly! He gave a wild howl, and went over backwards.

Billy Bunter found himself sitting on something that was softer than the hard high road. He did not realise, in the confusion of the moment, what it was. It was a waistcoat!

From under Bunter, as he sat, came a horrible gurgle.

"Gurrrrgh!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Ow!"

"Urrrgh!"

"Hee-haw!" came from Neddy, in joyous accents. He had got rid of his load at last, and his musical voice proclaimed his satisfaction. "He, hee-haw!"

And Neddy turned round and trotted away.

Bunter, thankful that he had fallen on something soft, jammed his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked through them to see what it was. He gave quite a jump when he made the discovery.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

And he rolled off the waistcoat.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hunted Down!

BILLY BUNTER gasped for breath.

He was rumpled and crumpled, tousled and untidy, red as a newly boiled beetroot, streaming with perspiration. But he was not in so bad a state as the gentleman he had fallen on.

The man in black sat up in the dust, pressing both hands to his waistcoat. He seemed to have a pain under it. He gurgled spasmodically.

"Urrgh! You—you idiot! Urrgh! You—you dolt! Gurrrgh! Wait till I get my breath! Wurrgh!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him. The little man in black had rather a hard, sharp face, and did not look as if he were a very pleasant-natured gentleman at the best of times. Now he looked fearfully unpleasant.

His rather narrow eyes glittered, and his thin lips were hard set. Billy Bunter was not quick on the uptake.

But even Bunter could see that it would not profit him to linger in the vicinity till the man in black recovered his breath.

For the moment the man was hors de combat. He was winded! Bunter grasped the fact that it would be wise to set out on his travels before the enraged man could get going.

"I say, it wasn't my fault, you know!" gasped Bunter.

"Urrgh! Wa-a-a-wait till I g-g-get my bib-bib-breath!" gasped the man in black. "W-w-w-wait!"

"If you'd stopped the donkey—" argued Bunter.

"J-j-just you w-w-wait till I g-g—" Bunter decided not to wait.

His mount was gone—not that Bunter would have climbed on that donkey again for love or money. He was at a considerable distance from Margate, and the high palings that bordered the road enclosed the park of Portercliffe Hall. Bunter decided to start for home. And he started.

He did not run—but he walked very fast!

"Stop!" came a gasping voice behind him.

Bunter walked faster.

Bunter, of course, was not to blame for the accident. And it had been very lucky that the man in black was there for him to fall on, otherwise he would have had a very disagreeable bump on a hard road. But it was clear that the man was in a bad temper, and Bunter did not like his looks. The less he saw of the fellow the better. He put on speed.

The man in black got on his feet at last. He was still gurgling a little. He collected his hat and stick. Then he ran after Bunter!

The Owl of Greyfriars blinked round
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through his spectacles, at the patter of feet on the road. He glimpsed an infuriated face, and an upraised walking-stick.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He was not feeling disposed to run on that hot August morning, after his exertions with the Margate donkey. But he ran! He ran hard! The great gates of Portercliffe Hall were at some distance, and that was Bunter's only refuge. He flew.

But Bunter was too heavily handicapped for a race. He had too much, much too much, weight to carry. And the slim little man in black ran very fast.

Whack!

"Yoop!" yelled Bunter, as the walking-stick came down over his fat shoulders.

Whack!

"Whooooo!"

Whack!

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter turned. It was useless to run on with that unpleasant man just behind him, beating him like a carpet.

"Look here!" yelled Bunter.

The man in black grasped at him with his left hand. Only too clearly he intended to continue operations with the stick in his right.

In sheer desperation Bunter hit out. The enemy did not seem to be expecting that. He had been concentrating on catching Bunter, and whacking him with the stick. Now he had caught him—and he caught also a thudding fat fist, with his chin.

He sat down suddenly.

Bunter whirled round again and flew!

Portercliffe Hall was in sight. The great gates were wide open. Bunter's little fat legs flashed and twinkled, as he flew for that refuge. Panting and

gasping, he reached the great gateway, and flew in.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

An almost endless drive wound through oaks and beeches towards the mansion afar. Bunter dropped into a walk, and panted on. He did not suppose that the man in black, ferocious as he was, would follow him into private grounds.

But, a few minutes later, blinking back, he sighted a figure in black, coming up the drive behind him.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

The man was walking now, not running! But he was following Bunter up the Portercliffe avenue.

The fat Owl of Greyfriars was feeling as if he had not a run left in his podgy limbs. But three whacks from the walking-stick were enough for him—he did not want any more. He burst into speed again.

Panting and gasping, Bunter barged on up the long avenue. Surely the stranger, disagreeable as he was, would not have the neck to follow him through private grounds right up to the house! Bunter blinked back again through his spectacles.

"Oh lor!" he gasped.

There was the man in black—coming steadily on! Billy Bunter gave him one terrified blink, and flew.

The great doors of Portercliffe Hall stood wide open. In the great doorway stood an ample form—that of Chandos, the butler, looking out.

But the Portercliffe butler was not looking at Bunter. He was gazing beyond him, at the man in black. He seemed interested in that individual, and did not observe Bunter at all.

That was rather unfortunate for Chandos. For Bunter, short-sighted and

in a state of wild alarm, did not observe Chandos, either.

He charged up the great granite steps, and charged blindly in—and crashed!

Chandos hardly knew what hit him. It felt like a battering-ram, or a traction-engine! Chandos' portly legs were swept from under him, and his portly form rolled over in the hall.

"Wooooh!" gasped Chandos.

"Oh crikey!" spluttered Bunter.

He staggered from the shock.

He had a glimpse of a figure in black coming up the steps. He bolted like a rabbit for its burrow. The man, it seemed, was still after him, actually following him into the house! Billy Bunter streaked across the vast hall, and bolted into the first open door—that of the library. Mr. Fish, had he been at home, would probably have been there. But Hiram K. Fish had not yet come in.

Bunter blinked back across the hall. In the great outer doorway a figure in black appeared! The man was coming in!

That was enough for Bunter!

He streaked across the library to a large settee on one side of the magnificent fireplace and plunged underneath it. There, out of sight of his relentless pursuer if the man in black followed farther, Billy Bunter gasped for breath and palpitated with funk.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Sneezes!

CHANDOS regained the perpendicular.

He gasped for breath and stated round him a little dizzily.

Bunter had vanished into the library. The slim man in black stood on the threshold of Portercliffe Hall, looking at Chandos with a faintly amused smile on his hard-featured face.

It had not occurred to Billy Bunter's fat brain that the man in black might have business of his own at Portercliffe Hall, and that he had been on his way thither when overtaken on the road by Bunter and the donkey. That, however, was the case. The slim gentleman had probably forgotten Bunter by that time. He stepped in at the great doorway, taking off his bowler hat as he did so and revealing a glossy, oiled head of dark hair, and nodded familiarly to the butler.

"A hot day, Chandos!" he remarked.

Chandos drew himself up to his full height. His height was not so impressive as his width, but he made a massive figure, planted directly in the path of the newcomer.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Bosanne?" demanded Chandos in his rich, port-wine voice. "I wonder at your impudence in coming here."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Bosanne.

"Indeed!" repeated Chandos. "I have not forgotten you, Mr. Bosanne! You were his late lordship's secretary. His late lordship discharged you from his service with ignominy. Although the facts were not made public, Mr. Bosanne, I was perfectly well aware at the time that the late Lord Portercliffe—"

"A crusty old bean, Chandos!" said the slim man. "I believe he found fault with you more than once. Wasn't there a fuss about certain bottles of his ninety-two port being missed from the wine cellar?"

Chandos' portly face crimsoned.

"I will not listen to your insolence, Bosanne!" he said. "You left his late lordship's service under a cloud. You

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were found prying into papers that did not concern you—"

"Cork it!" said Mr. Bosanne.

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Chandos.

"Put the bung in!" said the man in black. "You always talked too much, Chandos. It's a bad habit!"

The Portercliffe butler raised a large, plump, commanding hand and pointed to the drive.

"You had better go!" he said.

"Better not, I think," said the slim man. "Is Mr. Fish in?"

"He is not at the moment!" Chandos lowered the plump hand. "Do you mean to say that you have any business with Mr. Fish?"

"Just a few!" said the man in black.

"I happen to be his secretary!"

"Oh!" gasped Chandos.

He stared blankly at the hard-featured man who had once been Lord Portercliffe's private secretary—and was now, apparently, Hiram K. Fish's.

He had been aware that Mr. Fish's secretary was expected at the mansion, but Chandos had certainly not expected to find in him an old acquaintance.

The slim man grinned.

"Keep a civil tongue, Chandos!" he said. "I'm glad to be back in the old place! I'm prepared to be civil—if you are! But if you talk too much you may find yourself looking for a new butler's job."

Chandos gasped.

"If—if you are Mr. Fish's secretary, you—"

"I've said so!"

Mr. Bosanne handed Chandos his hat—which the butler took mechanically. Then he walked across the hall to the library door like one who knew the way well. Chandos, with the bowler hat in his plump hand, stood staring after him.

The man in black sauntered into the library.

At that moment a fat face was peering out from under a big settee and two uneasy eyes were fixed on the library doorway, blinking through a large pair of spectacles.

At the sight of the figure in black Billy Bunter's head popped back under the settee like that of a tortoise into its shell.

Bunter palpitated!

He had not heard what was said in the entrance hall, and he had not, of course, the faintest idea that the man in black was the secretary Mr. Fish was expecting to arrive at Portercliffe.

He could only conclude that the man in black was still after him—amazing as it was that the fellow should venture to penetrate into the interior of the mansion.

Why hadn't the servants stopped him? What did Chandos mean by letting the beast come in just as he liked?

Anyhow, there he was; and Bunter squatted under the settee in a state of funk. It was a hot day, and it was very close and warm under the settee. Likewise it was a little dusty there, and particles of dust tickled Bunter's fat nose as he breathed.

He was in dread of sneezing! But he dared not sneeze with that dangerous character in the room! Did the man know he was there?

Evidently he had come straight to the library, just as if he knew that his quarry had taken refuge there. Bunter, crouched in terror, had a view of black trousers and a pair of black shoes as the slim man came directly towards the settee. In an agony of apprehension he expected the beast to stoop and hook him out.

To his surprise the legs stopped and reversed! The man in black sat down! Billy Bunter breathed again.

The man did not know he was there! He had crossed to the settee to sit on it! After all, settees were made to be sat on!

His feet were only ten or twelve inches from Bunter's little fat nose as he sat. Bunter blinked at them.

Alarmed as he was, he was growing more surprised than alarmed. It was amazing that the man in black should sit down in the library and take his ease there. The cheek of it!

Bunter, however, was glad that the beast was unaware of his presence. He wrestled with a desire to sneeze—which, if gratified, would certainly have made the man in black aware of his presence immediately.

How long was the beast going to stop there?

Bunter heard the scratch of a match. Then there was a scent of tobacco—a rather penetrating scent of an unusual tobacco. The man in black had lighted a cigarette—some foreign sort of a cigarette, from the smell.

He had the nerve to sit there smoking!

How long this lasted Bunter never knew. It seemed to him ages that he squatted in that hot, dusty, stifling recess under the settee on which sat the man in black. Several times Mr. Bosanne tossed cigarette-stumps into the fender—he seemed an inveterate cigarette-smoker, smoking one after another without cessation. That, very likely, was what made him such a bad-tempered beast, Bunter considered.

Was he ever going? Why didn't some servant come and turn him out? Bunter could only wonder.

The library door opened at last.

Bunter almost gasped with relief. It was somebody at last! Peering past the legs in black, Bunter had a view of long, thin legs in grey! It was Mr. Hiram K. Fish who had entered.

The black legs stirred as the slim man rose to his feet. The grey legs came over towards him.

"Aw, here you are, Bosanne!" said the voice of Mr. Fish.

"Here I am, sir!" said the man in black.

Bunter had to suppress a gasp of surprise. It dawned on his fat brain now that the man in black was not an amazingly cheeky intruder who had barged into the house after him! He was there to see Mr. Fish.

They sat down on the settee.

The hapless Owl of the Remove now had a view from his hiding-place of two pairs of legs instead of one pair. He wondered whether it would be safe to venture out now that Mr. Fish was present. The man in black was a savage-tempered beast; but surely in Mr. Fish's presence he would have to restrain his temper? But Bunter did not feel quite sure! And he was safe where he was!

"The butler guy knows you, I guess!" said Mr. Fish.

"Quite so, sir!" answered Mr. Bosanne. "I was here a good many years as secretary to his late lordship."

"You sure won't be here so long as my secretary, big boy?" said Mr. Fish, with a dry chuckle. "I guess two or three weeks will be enough to give the whole show the once-over, big as it is. And you got a clue."

Billy Bunter caught his breath.

"Son's with me here," went on Mr. Fish. "He's got a party of boys from his school with him for the holidays. I guess they'll sure be useful, rubbering round the old place. You jest mention secret passages to a party of schoolboys, and I guess they'll nose 'em out."

"Nothing so far, sir?"

"Nunk! Bags of time yet," said Mr.

Fish. "I got the shebang for three months, with option to buy—and I guess I'll buy fast enough, if it turns out like you allowed, Bosanne."

"There is no doubt whatever about that, sir!" said the man in black. "I was quite aware of every step taken by his late lordship, and there is absolutely no doubt—"

"Waal, I'm banking on it!" said Mr. Fish. "I'll mention that I'm spending some dollars on this hyer shebang; but I'll tell a man it's worth a few to cinch a cool million—"

"Atchooooooh!"

Bunter had struggled long with that sneeze!

He had struggled valiantly.

He had held it back, hard! And at that moment he was more anxious than ever to keep it clamped down. For Mr. Fish's mysterious remarks were of the deepest interest to the fat junior under the settee.

Billy Bunter had no scruples about listening to what was not intended for his fat ears! And he was on the very verge of discovering the secret—the mysterious reason why Hiram K. Fish had located at Portercliffe Hall, and guessed, reckoned, and calculated that he was going to make a million dollars profit by so doing.

If only he could have held that sneeze a few minutes longer—

But he couldn't!

The dust that was tickling his fat little nose was too much for him. That sneeze, so long suppressed, was no longer to be denied.

It burst forth with all the more force for its long suppression! It almost raged like a gale! It was rather a roar than a common or garden sneeze!

"Atchoooh-hoooh—hooop! Chooooop!" sneezed Bunter, under the settee.

The two men seated on the settee bounded up together.

"Who—?" ejaculated the man in black.

"What the John James Brown—" gasped Mr. Fish.

"Is it a dog?"

"I guess—"

"Atchooooooooh!"

Mr. Fish stooped and peered. Then he reached and grabbed. A skinny, sinewy hand grasped a fat ear, and Bunter was hooked out like a winkle from a shell. He rolled on the polished floor and spluttered.

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Fish.

"That fat fool!" exclaimed the man in black.

"I guess—"

"Oooogh! Atchoooh! I—I wasn't there!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean, I—I hid there because that beast was after me—atchooooooh-hooop!—I never heard a word you were—chooop!—saying—"

"You pesky, pie-faced piecan!" roared Mr. Fish. He made another grab at Bunter!

The fat Owl squirmed wildly out of the way. He barely dodged the clutching hand, and flew for the door.

"You pesky jay!" Mr. Fish charged after him. "You doggoned piecan—"

Bunter tore open the door. He leaped for the hall! Mr. Fish reached him as he leaped.

A long leg shot out; and a heavy boot crashed on the tightest trousers in the county of Kent.

Crash!

Bump!

"Yaroooooooh!"

Bunter flew across the hall. Mr. Fish, with a snort, slammed the library door after him. Bunter rolled and roared.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Atchoooh! Wow! Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Billy Bunter had expected a great time at Portercliffe Hall. But he was finding it a good deal more exciting than he had expected.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Sees It All!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came back merry and bright from Margate in time for lunch.

They rather wondered what had become of Billy Bunter. One donkey had wandered back to the sands—but the other, as Bob Cherry remarked, had not turned up again. It seemed that Neddy had distributed Bunter somewhere in the outskirts of Margate. They hoped that the fat Owl had not been damaged—except, perhaps, Fisher T. Fish. Fishy had no objection to Bunter getting damaged—indeed, the more that superfluous guest was damaged, the more Fishy was pleased.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

There was Bunter—reclining, not to say sprawling, in a deep armchair in the hall when the juniors came in. He blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"Where did your brother drop you?" asked Bob.

"Beast!"

"Damaged?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I had a rather decent ride—round the country, you know!" said Bunter. "If you fellows think I fell off that donkey—"

"Well, we did think so, when the donkey came back without you!" said Harry, laughing.

"Nothing of the kind! I just sent him back when I was done with him," said Bunter airily. "I—I thought he'd find his way home all right! I'm a pretty good rider, you know! You should see me backing the hunters at Bunter Court!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After what they had seen of Bunter backing the Margate donkey, the idea of seeing him backing a hunter seemed to entertain the Greyfriars fellows. They roared.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snorted Bunter. "I say, Fishy! There's a low blighter called Bosannee blown in—"

"That's the popper's secretary!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, he's a low rotter, and jolly uncivil," said Bunter. "You'd better warn him to be a bit more civil, Fishy, if you want me to stay here!"

"I guess—" began Fisher T. Fish. But he checked himself. It was not judicious to tell Bunter exactly how much he wanted him to stay!

"The beast had the cheek to whop at me with his stick, because I fell on him when the putrid donkey pitched me off!" continued Bunter.

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

"I—I mean, the donkey didn't pitch me off!" said Bunter hastily. "What I mean is—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're going to cackle at everything a fellow says—" hooted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Harry Wharton & Co. made the acquaintance of Mr. Bosannee at lunch. They did not take very much interest in the small man in black; but Billy Bunter favoured him with several scornful and contemptuous looks—which, however, the secretary did not seem to observe. Indeed, he did not seem to observe William George Bunter at all.

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Fortunately, the lunch was good and ample. Billy Bunter's ruffled feelings were soothed. The grub being all right, everything was all right; and the smiles returned to Bunter's fat face.

After lunch, Bunter rolled away to his room for a nap.

This was Bunter's custom after a meal—and it seemed rather a good custom to the other fellows, as it relieved them of Bunter's fascinating society for an hour or two. They did not feel the need of a nap themselves—having had only one lunch each! Bunter, who had parked three or four, one after another, naturally felt the need of repose after his exertions.

He plumped down on a soft ottoman in his room, and laid his bullet head on a soft cushion with great satisfaction. But he did not drop into balmy slumber so easily as usual.

There were three places where Mr. Bosannee's stick had whacked, and every one of them had a twinge in it. And there was a still more painful twinge where Hiram K. Fish's foot had landed.

Bunter closed his eyes behind his big spectacles; but his usual snore did not materialise. He could not sleep. Those twinges were too insistent.

It was about half an hour later that the sound of his door opening caused him to open his eyes behind his spectacles.

A thin, keen, sharp face looked into the room.

Bunter blinked at Fisher T. Fish.

Fishy, standing in the half-open door, was listening! Why he had come to the room in this surreptitious way, and why he was standing there listening with intent ears, puzzled Bunter for a moment. Then a gleam came into the little round eyes behind the big, round spectacles. Fishy was "up" to something; and he wanted to know whether Bunter was asleep!

Which naturally made Billy Bunter very curious to know what Fishy was "up" to. He closed his eyes again and snored.

Snorrrrrrrrrrr!

Fisher T. Fish had been looking towards the bed. Now he changed the direction of his glance, and spotted Bunter on the ottoman under the window.

The snore was reassuring. Fishy stepped into the room and closed the door behind him quietly.

Softly he stepped towards Bunter.

Had Bunter been asleep, certainly he would not have heard him. But though Bunter had his eyes closed behind his spectacles and was snoring, he had never been wider awake. He heard the stealthy footsteps approaching.

It cost Bunter an effort to keep his eyes shut and to keep up the snore; but he was intensely curious to know what Fishy's game was.

The other fellows were all out of the house. Through the open window floated a distant sound of voices from the tennis courts. Of all the Greyfriars guests, only Bunter was indoors. Fishy, evidently, had picked that moment for this surreptitious visit to Bunter's room. But why? Bunter wanted to know.

Had he been asleep, he would not have felt the light touch that brushed him. And Fishy guessed, reckoned, and calculated that he was fast asleep, as he generally was after one of his gargantuan feasts.

The bony fingers touched Bunter's necktie.

Snore!

There was the faintest sound of retreating footsteps, the soft sound of a closing door.

Bunter opened his eyes and stared through his spectacles.

Fisher T. Fish was gone.

In utter amazement, the Owl of the Remove sat up on the ottoman. He almost wondered whether Fishy had gone off his rocker.

What did it mean?

He had supposed that Fishy had come there to play some trick or other, and he had pretended to be asleep, to catch him at it. But Fishy had stayed hardly a minute in the room, and gone as quietly as he had come. He had done nothing but lightly touch Bunter's necktie.

Bunter groped over that tie with a fat hand. His tiepin was gone!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, more amazed than ever.

Fishy evidently had abstracted that tiepin and taken it away! Why?

Fishy was not a scrupulous youth, but he could hardly be suspected of "pinching" a guest's tiepin. Moreover, though Bunter often declared that tiepin to be extremely valuable, the actual fact was that it was of imitation gold, and Bunter had originally acquired it from a Christmas cracker. Its value, at a generous estimate, was about threepence.

What did Fishy want it for?

Bunter sat and thought.

Thinking was not Bunter's long suit. Still, his fat intellect could work, though it was not as a rule very active.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

Certain happenings of the previous day which had been extremely mysterious now became rather less mysterious as Bunter reflected.

Harry Wharton & Co. had bumped him on the lawn for ragging Wharton's room. His handkerchief had been picked up there. The Bunder had pitched into him for rigging up a booby-trap over his door—his bullseyes had been found on the spot. Both circumstances had puzzled Bunter, who knew—if nobody else did—that he was not guilty of either the ragging or the booby-trap.

Somebody, somehow, must have dropped his hanky and his bullseyes where they had been found—how and why was a problem beyond Bunter's fat intellect. But now he had a light on the subject.

Without being intellectually brilliant, Billy Bunter could guess what Fishy was going to do with that tiepin!

Another rag was going to happen—and that tiepin was going to be found on the spot—proof positive that Bunter had done it!

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He saw it all now.

The beast wanted him to clear, lest he should "spill the beans." And this was his deep-laid scheme!

The other fellows, one after another, were going to be made to pitch into Bunter—and such a process in the long run would undoubtedly have made him tired of Portercliffe Hall as a holiday resort!

"Beast!" said Bunter for the third time.

Some fellows after making such a discovery would have cleared. Not so Billy Bunter! Offended dignity did not weigh very much with the Owl of Greyfriars.

A hearty welcome was not necessary to Billy Bunter when he was on a visit. Anything short of the boot was good enough for Bunter. Bunter was not going to turn his podgy back on Portercliffe Hall! He was going to put paid to Fishy and his little game now that he saw it all. There was a grin on Bunter's fat face as he rose from the ottoman and rolled to the door and blinked cautiously into the corridor.



"I'll jolly well give the fat frump a tip about barging into the court!" said Bob Cherry, swiping at Bunter with his tennis racket. Whack! "Ow!" yelled Bunter. "Keep that racket away—yaroooh!" Whack! Wharton followed up with his racket. "Yaroooh! Beast!" "Roll away, you benighted barrel!" roared Cherry, landing once again. "Ow! Beast! Wow!" Bunter fairly roared.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Fishy Gets Busy—So Does Bunter!

FISHER T. FISH was grinning, too. Probably he would not have grinned had he been aware that Billy Bunter was "wise" to his surreptitious and nefarious proceedings. But Fishy had no suspicion of that.

He was in Bob Cherry's room. From the window there was a view of the tennis courts, and Bob could be seen there—so the coast was quite clear for Fishy. Bob and Wharton on one side, Nugent and Hurree Singh on the other, were playing a doubles; the good Alonzo was keeping the score for them, Kipps was obligingly collecting stray balls, and the Bounder, Wibley, and Johnny Bull were in deckchairs, watching the play. Everybody was occupied—more or less—at a safe distance. Fisher T. Fish had chosen his moment well.

Fishy was getting busy.

The rags on Wharton and the Bounder had had painful results for Bunter. Equally painful results would accrue from Bob when he saw his room—after Fishy had done with it!

Bunter's rolled-gold tiepin lay on the floor, where it caught the sunlight from the window—and could not fail to catch the eye of any fellow coming into the room. That was the clue to the ragger!

More than once that extremely cheap tiepin had dropped out of Bunter's tie, the fastening being defective. What more likely than that it had dropped out again while the fat Owl was busy ragging?

It was, in fact, a "cinch."

Fisher T. Fish grinned cheerily.

Never a very scrupulous fellow, he had no scruples whatever about this. If a guy chose to horn in where he

was not wanted, he could take what was coming to him—that was Fishy's view.

He could not deal with Bunter personally—the fat Owl might have spilt the beans! But the other fellows could—and would—if they believed that Bunter had developed a remarkable and exasperating propensity for ragging. Before long, at this rate, Bunter would be tired of Portercliffe Hall—so Fishy guessed, reckoned, and calculated.

Fisher T. Fish sorted out a silk hat which Bob Cherry wore unwillingly on special occasions. He set it brim upwards in the fender.

Taking a long-handled brass fire shovel, he groped in the chimney with it. There was no fire in the grate, but there was soot in the chimney. Fisher T. Fish ladled it down—into the hat!

This was merely a beginning. Fishy had a very extensive rag mapped out in his bony head. But he felt that it was a good beginning. Finding his Sunday topper full of soot was sure to get any guy's goat, Fishy calculated. He chuckled as he ladled away with the fire shovel, and the hat slowly but surely filled with soot.

He was happily unaware that an eye was peering through the keyhole of the door from the corridor.

Fishy did not make much noise—he was a wary and cautious guy! But Billy Bunter, tiptoeing down the corridor and listening intently with his fat ears, spotted the room he was in.

He knew that Fishy would be in one of the juniors' rooms, and could easily guess how he would be engaged there—now that he saw it all! And as soon as he blinked through the keyhole of Bob Cherry's door, he was sure.

The fireplace being opposite the door, Fisher T. Fish, kneeling at the grate, had his back to the door, and Bunter

had a back view of him—and his occupation.

He barely repressed a fat chuckle as he discerned Fisher T. Fish ladling soot into Bob's silk hat!

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

Fishy was busy! He was likely to be busy for some time. And evidently he had not the remotest suspicion that Billy Bunter was awake—still less that Bunter was watching him.

The fat junior rose from the keyhole, grinning, and tiptoed down the corridor to the stairs.

Out of hearing of Fisher T. Fish, he put on speed. He rolled down the staircase and, like Iser in the poem, he rolled rapidly!

In a minute, or less, Billy Bunter was out of the house and cutting away towards the tennis courts.

He arrived breathless.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked.

The ball had come over the net from Nugent into Bob's court. He was watching the flight of the ball, racket in hand, and certainly had no eyes or ears for Billy Bunter.

But Bunter had no time to lose.

If Fisher T. Fish was to be caught in the act of ragging Bob's room, there was no time to spare; and tennis did not matter, anyhow.

"Bob, old chap—" squeaked Bunter.

Bob did not heed. The tennis ball had bounced, and Bob ran at it to catch it on the hop.

"Keep off, you ass!" called out Johnny Bull, as Bunter ran on the court.

Bunter did not heed.

"I say, Bob—" he gasped.

He rushed on.

Bob swiped at the ball.

The sudden irruption of Billy Bunter

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charging across the court, caused him to miss the ball. It flew on beyond the base-line. But every bullet has its billet—and so had that swipe! There was a terrific crack as the tennis racket landed on Billy Bunter.

Crack!

"Yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter.

"What the thump—" gasped Bob.

"Yow-ow-ow! Whoop!" roared Bunter, as he sat down suddenly, and hard. "Ow! Beast! Wow! Rotter! Yow!"

"Game!" said Alonzo Todd gently. Nugent and the nabob had been forty-fifteen; and as Bob had lost that shot it was now game for them. Which, naturally, was not pleasing to the two fellows who had hoped to pull level.

"You silly ass!" roared Bob.

"You blithering idiot!" howled Wharton.

"Yaroooh!"

"You potty porpoise—"

"You insane rhinoceros—"

"Yoo-hooop!"

"Play that one again," called Nugent over the net, laughing.

"Oh, rot, we've lost it!" growled Bob.

"But I'll jolly well give that fat frump a tip about barging into the court!"

Whack! from Bob.

"Ow! Keep that racket away!" yelled Bunter.

Whack! from Wharton.

"Yaroooh! Beast!"

"Roll away, you benighted barrel!" roared Bob, landing the racket again.

"Roll off, you flabby freak!"

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Bunter sat and roared. Wharton and Bob laid down their rackets, grasped him by either fat arm, and yanked him to the edge of the court.

"Sit on him, Smithy!" grunted Bob.

The Bouncer chuckled.

"Right-ho! Roll him over here."

"Ow! Leggo! Beast! Yarooooooh!" roared Bunter as he rolled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—leggo! I say, I came to say—whoop! I came to tell you that Fishy is—yaroooh! I kik-kik-came—wow!"

"You blithering bloater—"

"You barging bandersnatch—"

"Ow! Leggo! I tell you that Fishy is—yoop! Can't you let a fellow speak?" shrieked Bunter. "Fishy's ragging your room, Bob, you beast! Ow!"

"Wha-a-at?" Bob Cherry, in his astonishment, let go the fat Owl and Bunter sat and spluttered.

"Beast! That's what I came to tell you!" he gasped. "He—he—he's filling

your silk topper with s-s-soot—oooogh! Ow!"

"Mad or dreaming?" asked Bob, regarding the fat Owl in sheer wonder.

"Ooooogh! Beast! Ooogh!" Bunter scrambled to his feet, gasping. "I tell you the beast came and pinched my tie-pin, thinking I was asleep, and he's put it in your room, and now he's ragging—oooogh! Making out that it was me—groogh—same as he did with Wharton's room—oooogh—and my hanky—and that booby-trap in Smithy's room—grooogh—"

The chums of the Remove stared blankly at Bunter. They forgot the interrupted tennis. Bunter had taken their breath away.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Wharton at last.

"I tell you he's at it now!" yelled Bunter. "Playing rotten tricks, and making out it was me! If you go in now you'll catch him at it! He's got your topper, Bob—"

"My topper—"

"Filling it with soot—"

"S-soot?" stuttered Bob.

"From the chimney! I say, you fellows, go and catch him at it—I tell you he's in Bob's room now!" gasped Bunter. "Making out that it was me—oooogh!"

"But why—" gasped Wharton.

"Let's go and see!" said Johnny Bull.

And the Famous Five hurried away towards the house, leaving the other fellows staring, and Billy Bunter gasping spasmodically for breath.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Catching Fish I

"SEARCH me!" gasped Fisher T. Fish in sudden alarm.

The silk hat was full of soot!

It had been rather a long process, but it was finished now. Fishy laid down the shovel, and lifted the hatful of soot from the grate, and placed it in a conspicuous position on a table in the middle of the room.

Fishy guessed that he was not finished yet—not by any means! But he guessed wrong! For at that moment there came a sound of scampering footsteps in the corridor.

Fisher T. Fish jumped, spilling soot from the hat.

He had figured that the guys were busy at tennis. But some of them, it was clear, had come in! If Bob was among them—

"Wake snakes!" gasped Fisher T. Fish.

He stared round for a hiding-place. In a split second he dived under the bed.

He was only just in time. The door flew open, and Bob Cherry flew in. After him came the rest of the Co.

"Nobody here!" gasped Bob.

Fishy, under the bed, scarcely breathed. The new arrivals could see nobody there. But they could not fail to spot that somebody had been there recently. He hoped that they would figure that it was Bunter! He little knew!

"There's Bunter's tiepin," Wharton picked it up from the floor.

"And there's my topper!" roared Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

The Famous Five stared at the topper standing on the table, overflowing with soot.

Bob Cherry glared at it. Toppers cost money. And this topper, it was certain, could never be worn again—not, at all events, without a very extensive process of cleaning. This was hardly the way that a guest's topper was treated in the best circles.

Johnny Bull, grinning, pointed to a streak of soot on the floor. It led from the table to the bed.

If Bunter's tale was true—and the Co. did not doubt it now—Fisher T. Fish was in the room somewhere. That trail of soot showed where he was.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

Johnny Bull stepped to the grate, and picked up the poker.

Poker in hand, he stooped beside the bed.

"Anybody under here?" he called out.

Fisher T. Fish quaked. Did they guess that he was there? He crouched silent, quaking.

The next moment the silence was broken as Johnny lunged under the bed with the poker. It was broken by a terrific yell as Fishy's bony ribs caught the end of the poker.

"Yoo-hooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sounds like somebody there," remarked Johnny Bull. "I'll give him another dig."

"Yoop! Keep that poker away!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish. "You've sure punctured me, you piecan! Aw, wake snakes! Wow!"

Fisher T. Fish rolled out into view.

He scrambled to his feet, and stood rubbing his bony ribs, and blinking at the chums of the Remove. It was a fair catch. There was no doubt about that. Fish was caught.

"Is this what you call a joke, Fishy?" inquired Bob Cherry, pointing to the soot-filled topper.

"Aw! Don't you guys go off on your car!" mumbled Fisher T. Fish. "I guess it was jest a leetle joke."

"And we were to suppose that Bunter had done it?" said Harry Wharton, holding up the tiepin.

"I—I—I guess—" stammered Fisher T. Fish.

"It was you ragged my room yesterday, I suppose, and made us put it down to Bunter?"

"I—I—I guess—"

"And fixed up that booby-trap for Smithy?"

"I—I—I guess—" mumbled Fisher T. Fish.

"New and original way of entertaining your guests—what?" asked Harry Wharton. "Or are you tired of our company already?"

"Nope!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "Don't you galoots go off at the deep end. I'm telling you, it's nix agin you. I jest wanted to make things hum a few for that fat piecan, Bunter. I sure did want to put him through a course of sprouts."

The chums of the Remove exchanged glances. They were not at all sure that they wanted to stay with Fisher T. Fish for the holidays. The discovery of his trickery made them feel very much disposed to shake the dust of Portercliffe Hall from their feet.

"Say, it was jest a joke on Bunter!" urged Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say I'll chuck it from now on. Honest Injun! Don't you guys go off on your car and break up the party. Forget it."

"Look at my hat!" hooted Bob.

"I guess I'll buy you a noo hat," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll sure stand you a brand-noo topper, the best that dollars can buy."

"What did you want us to rag Bunter for?" demanded Wharton, with a very keen look at the American junior. "If you don't want him, you can boot him out without making use of us, I suppose?"

"Oh, yep! Nope!" stammered Fisher T. Fish. "Don't I keep on telling you that it was jest a leetle joke? Can't

(Continued on page 28.)

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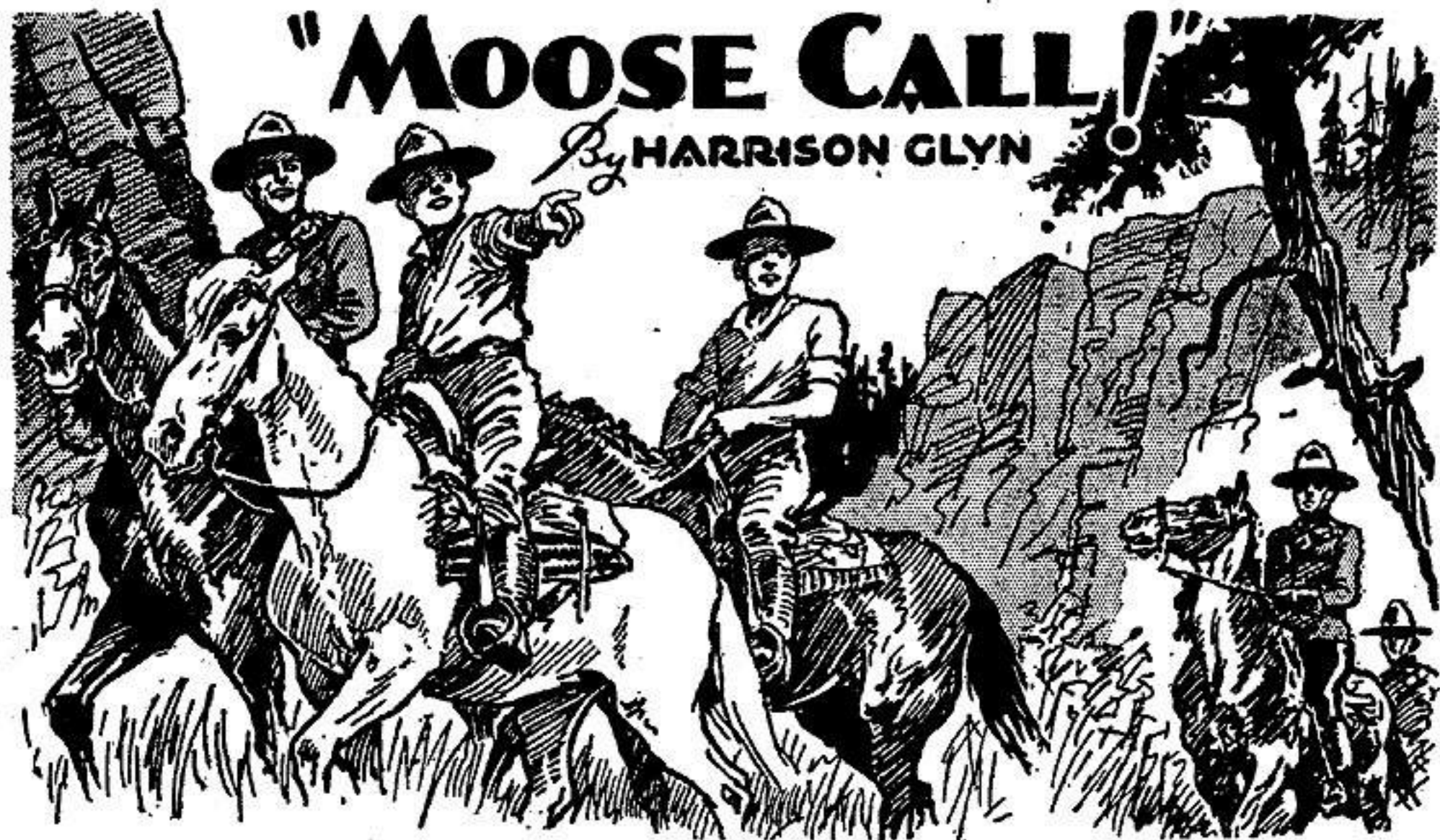
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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,435.

"MOOSE CALL!"

By HARRISON GLYN



WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Selwyn Gore and his brother, Colin, set out for Moose Call to avenge the murder of their Uncle Amyas, a gold prospector. En route, they meet Mountain Lion, a Sioux Indian and friend of Amyas Gore, who leads them to a great natural amphitheatre in the Sunrise Mountains where they learn that a gang of roughnecks led by Majoe and Musty have already registered the claim. The two Brits succeed in trapping the gang in the amphitheatre, and then, leaving Mountain Lion and his Sioux braves on guard, ride into Tomahawk to enlist the services of Sergeant Threfall and his Mounties. Returning, they blow up the entrance to the amphitheatre, and the Sioux Indians together with the Mounties storm the narrow way. "Fools!" shouts Sergeant Threfall. "Take your time! Wanna stop a bullet?"

(Now read on.)

A Cunning Ruse!

SOME of the Mounties and the Sioux leapt down steep places, and got to the level below at some risk. The others went on, pushing, shoulder to shoulder, down the narrow way.

Then what Sergeant Threfall anticipated happened.

From a distance down the amphitheatre, a shot rang out, and one of the Sioux pitched face foremost down the slope, rolled over, and fell to the ground fifteen feet below.

"I knew it!" roared the sergeant of the Mounties. "Aim where that smoke is rolling, boys, and let the skunks have it!"

Evidently the man who had fired at Selwyn had stayed behind to cover the retreat of the other three, for they had already gone some distance.

Selwyn saw three hats and heads bobbing about among the rocks close by the spot where he had buried the board Amyas Gore had set up to mark his claim.

The owners of the hats were apparently making for the rocks, which

Selwyn knew were honeycombed. He had been there and seen. But there was no way out. If Majoe and Musty were to seek shelter there they were doomed. And they were heading for the holes, for Selwyn saw them turn that way.

He fired, as did the sergeant, Mountain Lion and Colin; but the crooks went scrambling on, each man laden with a heavy pack strapped to his broad shoulders.

Selwyn glanced at Mountain Lion and noticed that the Indian's eyes were blazing fiercely.

"White man shoot Young Warrior!" grunted the Sioux. "Fine Indian! Mountain Lion shoot him!"

Next moment he ran out into the open, at a loping, easy gait, speeding after the fleeing men.

The Mounties and the Sioux Indians crowded on to the level, and opened out there. Scattering, the Sioux began to ring in the high cliffs over the top of which lay the Great Chief's Head.

Sergeant Threfall bawled his troopers into line and faced them.

"You lot of dumb geese!" he bawled. "There's only four men left. All we've gotta do is round 'em up. But I don't want all of you shot up over it. March in open order and head for them rocks!"

They advanced swiftly, twenty paces between each man.

Dusky-feathered Sioux had already gained the base of the rocks, and were creeping cautiously from cover to cover, their feathers just showing, their red-brown skins and leathern trousers merging with the natural stone until one could scarcely see them.

Selwyn cast an eye around the place as they went. There were blackened patches where fires had burned, holes where the men had dug. Miners' cradles and implements lay abandoned near the edge of the shallow stream. A short distance away, a low canvas tent was rigged up, and Selwyn reckoned that it belonged to John Majoe.

There were other signs of miners' work about the place, but the area was so vast that an army of men could

have worked on it for months on end and then only have combed the surface.

"Wonder if there is any way out where the stream runs into this place?" said Selwyn.

"Don't know," answered Sergeant Threfall. "But we won't take a chance!"

And straightway he sent six of his men to guard it!

Selwyn glanced along the long irregular line of the cliff, which ran straight on for a quarter of a mile or more and offered a thousand hiding-places, wondering which way Majoe, Musty and the other two crooks would go.

The Indians were chasing them. They would soon drive them out. He ran closer, in advance of Colin and the sergeant. He could see several Sioux working round a spur of rock and up above Mountain Lion creeping along a narrow ledge. He saw the braves making signs to one another, and he knew that one of the gunmen was hiding there, and that the Indians had got him cornered.

Suddenly the young Britisher felt sorry for the man. The four crooks had no chance. And, however bad a man is, it must be terrible for him to see death creeping in upon him and no possible chance of escape.

One of the Indians fired; then all of them, with the exception of Mountain Lion, set up a shrill and deafening whooping.

It was a whoop of triumph.

A second later, something white fluttered from the place where the crook was hiding; it was a dirty, white handkerchief tied to the end of a rifle. The man flourished it, and the Red Indians hesitated.

Sergeant Threfall began to run.

"Hold your fire, Injuns!" he shouted. "It's the white flag! He's given in! Hi, some of you boys go and get him!"

Three of the Mounties started for the rocks at a run, and as they did so, the white handkerchief was drawn in.

Baaang!

Next moment, however, a shot rang out, and one of the red-coated troopers tumbled headlong in the dust.

"The dirty, double-crossing hound!" roared the enraged sergeant. His man had been shot under cover of the white flag.

"Get him, Injuns!" roared Threfall. "I don't care what you do to him now!"

Selwyn, hot with anger, darted for the rocks and began to climb them. Presently he saw the killer creeping away from his hiding-place with the handkerchief still tied to the end of the rifle barrel he carried.

Selwyn thought of shooting him, but as he moved his rifle a shot rang out from where Mountain Lion was watching higher up the hill. The killer went down, rolled over like a shot rabbit, and lay still.

His treachery had not paid him very well.

Selwyn moved up the steep climb to make sure. As he drew close to the man he could see that he had a reddish beard. Then suddenly a loop dropped down over his shoulders, caught tight round his body, tying his arms to his sides, and the next moment he was yanked off his feet and dragged away stumbling, to find himself face to face with the grinning villains, John Majoe and Musty Wilmot!

"Got him!" said Majoe, with a shrill laugh. "That saves our skins, Musty!"

Master of the Situation!

SELWYN cursed his luck when that tightening loop nipped his arms and whipped him off his feet.

He stumbled, regained his balance, and was dragged violently along as John Majoe drew him in, hand over hand, like a trout on a line.

With a surprising exhibition of strength Majoe hauled Selwyn close and stuck his bushy head against the boy's. His eyes were sparkling, and his coarse lips curled in triumph as he gloated.

With his left hand he pointed down the rocky winding way up which Selwyn had climbed.

"They're shootin' down my pals!" he snarled. "But they won't dare to shoot me as long as I've got you with me. If I go, you go. Ran right into the trap, and you thought you were smart!"

Selwyn took a long look at Majoe. He had studied him before, many and many a time, but he had never seen the ugly, bearded face as close as this. It was the ugliest face the young Britisher had ever seen.

The shape of the head seemed all wrong. The man's coarse skin was burnt to a deep copper brown, and was caked with dirt. His hair and beard were matted.

Hideous curling lips ran in a crooked gash through the black bush of hair. The cheekbones were high, the nose crooked, owing to a broken bridge, and the eyes glared over a buttress of bone at the boy he had captured.

"You're Amyas Gore's neevy, eh?"

he growled. "Well, when I've got through with you I'm going to kill you the same's I killed him."

"You murderous villain!" said Selwyn savagely.

Majoe laughed.

"That stings you, don't it?" he snapped. "Yes, I killed Amyas Gore! Serve him right! He wouldn't share the gold he found with me and my mate, Musty! We shot him and flung him over a cliff and pinched his claim. What did you bring the Mounties down on us for, eh?"

"Because I wanted to drive you out of my Uncle Amyas' claim," answered Selwyn defiantly. "And I'm glad. The game's up, Majoe! You haven't long to live!"

This reminder wrung an oath from Majoe's lips, and he dug a gun into the small of Selwyn's back.

"I've a mind to shatter your spine!" he snarled. "But I won't, yet. You've bin in this place before. Where does this climb lead up to?"

"Nowhere," Selwyn answered defiantly. "The mountain drops sheer down from the top. The only way out is down. And the Mounties and Indians are waiting there."

Majoe grinned cunningly, evidently refusing to believe Selwyn.

He swung the rope over his shoulder and began to climb the rugged, stone-strewn, slippery path, dragging Selwyn after him.

"Waal, we're going up," he said, "and you're gonna stop any shots they fire at us from down below."

Majoe climbed sturdily.

Resisting, Selwyn tried to keep him back, but each time he planted his feet firmly and clutched at the rocks which lined the narrow way Majoe jerked him from his hold like a cork out of a bottle.

"Come on!" he yapped. "If it wasn't for the others I'd shoot you where you stand!"

The rocky path was so narrow in places that Majoe and Selwyn had to move sideways to get by. They ducked through small, narrow tunnels and climbed up steps. Lizards and snakes darted or wriggled away from damp, mossy places.

Selwyn came to the conclusion that they were mounting up a channel carved by the rush of mountain water from the cliff top.

Whenever they came to a jagged place where there was danger of Selwyn striking his head against the stone, or damaging his knees in a tumble, Majoe, with a booming laugh, would jerk him on with the rope in the hope of seeing him bruise or cut his head.

Selwyn ducked and dodged most cleverly, however, and disappointed the villain.

At last, after a steep and breathless climb, they were forced to take a rest.

Majoe chose a spot where he could hide behind a wall of rock, leaving Selwyn, at the end of the lariat, in full view of anyone who might come up the path.

Whilst he recovered his breath

Selwyn took another look at Majoe and saw that the black-bearded villain was a walking armoury.

He carried two six-guns in his belt holsters, and a wicked-looking knife with wood handle, set in a sheath, hung at his side. He had a rifle strapped across his shoulder. His side pockets bulged, and he had a pack strapped to his back.

Sticking his black-bearded head out, Majoe caught Selwyn taking stock of him.

"Wonderin' what's in the pack and my pockets, eh?" he jeered. "Waal, I'll tell yer—it's gold—nuggets and dust! And I carry one of these, too, see?" He whipped into view a flat, black automatic. "I'm gonna make it durned hot for the Mounties and the Injuns before I cash in."

His eyes glinted like a madman's.

While they waited Selwyn listened anxiously.

A series of rifle shots rang out from somewhere on the rocky hillside. Then shouting voices echoed distantly. But Selwyn could not make out what was said. A loud, blood-curdling whooping from the Sioux pealed among the boulders. There had been some more fighting, but it was difficult to tell what had happened.

Selwyn wondered what Colin was doing. Where was Sergeant Threfall, and Mountain Lion, the Sioux? Would anybody find his trail and follow it? The Mounties and the Sioux had scattered and gone hurrying in different directions among the rocks. They might never find him.

"Come on!" said Majoe, after a while, giving the lariat a tug that brought Selwyn down upon his face. His arms tethered to his sides, Selwyn could only break his fall with his shoulder, so that he scraped the skin and bruised his forehead. He had lost his hat long ago.

He scrambled up, and was jerked onward. It was a frightfully difficult climb, and the path so steep and slippery in places that he could never have gone up it had not Majoe helped him by hauling on the rope.

Every now and then Selwyn tested the strength of the lariat loop. The hide cut into his flesh and hurt him, and he gave it up at last. Suddenly they saw the blue sky above them, the way opened out, and a minute or two later they found themselves on a steep, shelving ledge that ran right out on the mountain side. Deep down below the chequered level of bush-clad plain and pine forest and open, grassy land stretched as far as the eye could see. A pathway which ran through it, Selwyn knew, must be the road to Tomahawk.

To right and left the steep cliff face jutted out. They were in a pocket between the cliffs, with the steep, dropping bank in front of them promising a death roll should they attempt to set foot on it.

Majoe's black-bearded face darkened as he looked, and he cursed loudly.

"The mountain's bewitched!" he

bellowed, shaking his fist at the slope. "It's a death trap! Curse Amyas Gore for findin' it, curse the gold that lured me hyar, and—"

He broke off suddenly as a voice roared out from somewhere behind him.

"Put your hands up, Majoe! Loose that boy, and put your hands up, or I fire!"

Majoe whipped about with an angry shout, and Selwyn, with a glad cry, swung round.

Sergeant Threfall was standing, braced in the narrow path below, his bright red coat glowing in the semi-darkness.

Selwyn let out a cheer of delight as he saw the stalwart sergeant with his gun trained on Majoe.

"Hurrah! Well done, the Mounties!"

Selwyn wondered why Sergeant Paul did not shoot Majoe, until it suddenly occurred to him that, looked at from below, his own body must be covering most of the black-bearded crook. He leapt aside so that Majoe might show clear.

But Majoe was every bit as quick as the young Britisher, and, gripping him by the shoulders, wrenched him back again, squatting down behind him and keeping the boy's body right in front as a shield.

"No, you don't, sergeant!" roared Majoe. "You'll have to plug the kid first. Stay right where you are. If you and any more try to climb, I'll plug young Gore full of lead! Back down, do you 'ear?"

Sergeant Threfall remained where he was, though he lowered his gun whilst he considered his next move.

Then Selwyn felt Majoe loosening his rifle. Every time the young Britisher tried to move, Majoe gripped and held him tight. In between times he cased off his gun.

Suddenly, Selwyn saw the rifle barrel poke past his chin. Majoe was aiming at the sergeant and about to fire.

Selwyn's arms were gripped to his side by the lariat. He could not use his hands, but he could use his voice.

"Look out, Sergeant Paul!" he yelled, and at the same time he rolled against the rifle barrel.

Braang!

The shot rang out with a deafening roar. But the bullet intended for the sergeant merely scarred the rocks. A moment later, Selwyn saw Mountain Lion's plumed head and a Mountie's felt hat loom up behind Paul Threfall.

With an oath, Majoe struck Selwyn savagely on the side of the head and dropped him.

A black mist swam before Selwyn's eyes and his ears rang. Then Majoe held him tight against his bulky body.

"Shoot if you want to, sergeant!" he roared. "But you can't get me, unless it's through him!"

For an hour or more they sat watching each other, and the position became intolerable to Selwyn.

His arms were numbed; his bruised and scarred head ached abominably. He tried to work his hands to the



"Hold your fire, Injuns!" shouted Sergeant Threfall, as the man flourished a dirty, white handkerchief tied to the end of a rifle. "It's the white flag! He's surrendered!"

front, but could scarcely move them away from the seam of his breeches. If only the lariat had not cut so deeply into coat and flesh!

Majoe began, little by little, to work his way upwards, and, after a while, found a place where he could hide and from which he commanded the narrow path below. Tying Selwyn up to a spur of rock, he began shooting at the sergeant and the Sioux, and quickly swept the path clear.

"They've gone, curse 'em!" he bellowed. "I shot the sergeant, and I think I got the Sioux. Now we're gonna take a chance, kid. We're moving down that slope. Maybe, we'll be able to find a way round the mountains!"

The descent that followed was the craziest, riskiest thing Selwyn had ever known. Majoe led the way down the slippery slope, keeping close to the cliff wall and retaining such a close hold on the lariat that Selwyn was only two paces behind him.

The young Britisher had to cling on with his nailed boots for dear life. Without his arms to help balance himself, he nearly slipped at every step.

Majoe laughed.

"It's up to you, kid!" he yelled. "If you tumble, I let go the rope and you've thousands and thousands of feet to fall before you find toe-hold down below!"

It was a devilish notion. Selwyn had to maintain his balance for his own sake. If he fell, Majoe would not go down with him. If the

sergeant or Mountain Lion reached the gap, his body would be between them and Majoe. Majoe was master of the situation.

"Come on!" grinned the bearded scoundrel

Fooled I

SELWYN never knew how they managed to reach a turn in the cliff wall in safety, but they did. And, incidentally, Selwyn knew, when he looked back up the steep slope to the opening of the path up above, that without alpine-stocks they would never be able to climb back.

Majoe knew it, too, but was unconcerned.

"It don't matter," he said, as if he had read Selwyn's thoughts. "We ain't going back. Think I'm gonna face that mob of killers up thar?"

As he turned the cliff wall, which he intended should protect him from the bullets of his enemies, his grin faded, for he found himself upon a narrow treacherous ledge which lost itself in the cliff face not thirty yards away. Its broadest point was where they stood. It tapered away to nothing. At their backs the cliff face rose sheer up, showing little sign of foothold or handhold, unless the stunted plants and bushes which grew on it were deep-rooted.

Majoe's elation died out, and he uttered a string of foul oaths.

It was Selwyn's turn to smile now. "This means finish, Majoe!" he said.

The bearded brute rapped out another string of oaths, and his eyes blazed madly.

"Waal, if it does, we'll go out together, kid!" he growled. "But I'm not gonna take a dive. A bullet for me. But if I have to go, I shall heave you over the cliff first and watch you drop."

It was no idle threat, Selwyn knew. Majoe would keep his word.

They sat down, Majoe a little farther along the ledge, his body mostly screened by a jutting wall, Selwyn between Majoe and the gap, his numbed and aching arms beginning to swell.

Majoe still held the end of the lariat.

Selwyn could see no way out of it unless he could manage to loosen that imprisoning loop.

As they sat in silence, Majoe took some dried meat and biscuits out of his pocket and ate ravenously.

"None for you!" he jeered, turning to Selwyn. "But then you won't want any food where you're going. I'll find a way out of this somehow; but before I go, you're going over the cliff. You're sitting right in my way, see?"

Selwyn made a silent vow. If Majoe flung him over the cliff, he'd cling on to the bearded brute and make sure that he fell, too. He owed as much, as a duty, to Uncle Amyas Gore.

Later, the shadows began to creep across the mountains, and the miles and miles of plain far down below grew duller and duller until they vanished in mist and gloom.

Majoe had taken to muttering to himself. The man dared not take a nap, for one false move would carry him over the ledge to his death.

Selwyn filled in his time by studying the cliff face, and it seemed to him that it was more broken a little way up the slope down which they had come.

As soon as the stars were up and he could move without being seen, he tried to wriggle his hands round to the front of him. If he could only free his arms from his sides and move them forward a little, he might be able to double them upward from the elbow and pull at the loop with his fingers.

He could have screamed with the pain of the biting cord, but he set his teeth and kept quiet as slowly, imperceptibly, he began to edge his swollen arms in front a little.

Silver stars in the black sky

winked at him encouragingly. Selwyn had always loved stars. He always thought of them helping to guide Drake and his ancestor across the Spanish seas.

Suddenly he felt the loop perceptibly loosen, and in a moment had his right hand free enough to be able to feel for his jack-knife. He found it and, bending his head, managed, after many failures, to wrench open the blade with his teeth. Then, doubling up his right arm, he stuck the sharp blade under the biting loop and sawed at it with the steel until it severed and he was free.

The relief was so great, and the rush of blood through the veins gave him such intolerable agony, that he was forced to cry out and dropped his knife, which rattled on the ledge and plunged over the cliff.

The sounds roused Majoe.

"Hey, what's that?" he yelped. "What game are you playin', kid?"

Selwyn had the presence of mind to seize the loosened lariat and hold it taut so that Majoe felt the usual resistance when he tugged on it to make sure that his prisoner was still tied up.

"I'm in such pain, Majoe," answered Selwyn, which was certainly true. "Come and ease the

Majoe burst into savage laughter. "loop. I won't try to get away!" Selwyn's bluff had worked.

"If you did, I'd plug yer!" snarled Majoe. "Me loose the lariat? Not likely. You'll wear that till you die, kid. We'll wait hyar till sun-up. But say your prayers. Reckon it's the last sun you'll ever see."

"And you, too, Majoe," Selwyn answered brightly, as the pain began to ease. "I wonder what's become of Musty?"

"To the devil with Musty!" roared Majoe. "I don't give a darn whar he is. I blame him for all this. I told him to stick by me. I told him, days ago, we'd got enough gold to make us rich for life and to vamoose before we headed into bad trouble. But he would stay on diggin' and washin' more. He got the boys all sore, too, and made 'em revolt. I never want to see Musty Wilmot again unless it's to plug a bullet through him!"

"A nice pair of pals!" jeered Selwyn, at ease at last, his active brain busy planning escape.

(Don't miss the closing chapters of this great adventure yarn in next Saturday's MAGNET.)

THE MYSTERY OF PORTERCLIFFE HALL!

(Continued from page 24.)

you take a joke? Forget it, big boys, I'm sure going to buy you a noo hat, bo."

"All serene!" said Bob. "We'll take it as a joke. We're rather jokers ourselves, if you come to that. In fact, I've just thought of a jolly good joke—topping! You're going to buy me a new hat?"

"Sure!"

"Then you can have the old one," said Bob.

"I guess—Whoop!" roared Fisher T. Fish as Bob, with a sudden movement, picked up the topper from the table, and slammed it on his head.

A billow of soot descended over Fisher T. Fish. It clothed him as with a garment.

There was a shriek of merriment from the Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

Bob Cherry smote the top of the hat, driving it down hard on Fisher T. Fish's bony head.

"Yaroo! Wake snakes!" spluttered Fisher T. Fish, as the soot streamed over him, smothering him from head to foot. "You pesky piecan! Yurrgh! I'm chook-chook-choking! Gurrgh! I guess—Yurrgh! Wurrgh! I'll tell a man—Burrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess—Grooogh! Googh! Hoogh!"

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

They retreated from the room, yelling. They left Fisher T. Fish standing in the midst of a cloud of soot, clutching frantically at the topper to get it off. Wild howls and gurgles followed them as they went.

Billy Bunter grinned when he saw Fishy again at tea.

Fishy did not grin.

He was red and raw from rubbing and scrubbing, and there were still traces of soot about his hair and his ears. He was not feeling in the least like grinning.

Bunter, however, grinned, from one fat ear to the other. He was sticking to Portercliffe Hall, and he fancied that Fishy was tired of his surreptitious efforts to make him come unstuck. Bunter had come to stay—and that was that!

THE END.

(Now look out for: "THE PHANTOM OF PORTERCLIFFE!" the next yarn in this grand holiday series by Frank Richards. That you'll enjoy every line of it goes without saying. The wise "Magnetite" will make sure of reading it by ordering his copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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EXPLANATION

My recent statement that when I went to Clacton I was going to take my "Holiday Annual" meant that I intended taking a book—NOT a bath!—G. TUBB, Third Form.

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

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Stay at the hotel I found at Brighton. Guaranteed peaceful. They serve up their soup so cold that the guests never come to blows!—"BROWN", Box No. 123, GREYFRIARS HERALD.

ARE YOU UGLY?

Don't despair! Take my postal course in Beachcombing and I'll make you such a dab at spotting valuables in the sand that you'll soon be making money out of your "good looks"!—H. SKINNER, c/o Post Office, Winklessea-on-the-Mud.

HE HAD TO BE A HERO!

By DONALD OGILVY

I knew Coker was mapping out a hero's role for himself the moment I saw him on the cliffs at Brightsea. There was something in the jaunty way he was wearing his panama hat and the way he was sticking out his chest. His first words confirmed my worst fears.

"See that stretch of sand where the cliff juts out, kid?" he asked, pointing downwards. "It's a trap—a regular trap! One of these days, someone's going to get cut off there by the tide!"

"You don't say so!" I ejaculated. "And what's going to happen then, old bean? Will you be rushing in bravely to the rescue?"

"If I'm anywhere near—yes! And not so much of the 'old bean'!" said Coker, with a lofty frown.

Of course, it had to happen, after that. Coker had made up his mind to be a hero, and a hero he had to be, however it was done! So I wasn't a bit surprised a couple of days later at the same spot when it was nearing high tide to see Coker sprinting down the cliff path like mad. Potter and Greene were chasing after him, yelling "Listen, Coker!" and "Stop, you fathead!" But Coker didn't listen and didn't stop; and in the end, his pals gave it up.

Reaching the bottom, Coker flung off his jacket, waded into the sea, and made for the narrow little patch of sand where a couple of boys were standing talking. He reached it in a couple of minutes, crawled out of the water, and went forward to explain to the boys that he had come to rescue them.

As far as one could judge by their gestures, the boys didn't want to be rescued. But Coker insisted. In spite of their resistance, he rushed them into the water and assisted them to terra firma again.

When he arrived, a big crowd was there to greet him. But they didn't cheer. They only laughed! With the exception, that is, of the two boys. If looks could have killed, their looks would have killed Coker on the spot!

Coker couldn't fathom it. But when Potter and Greene explained what they had tried unsuccessfully to explain to him before he raced down the cliff, he began to see daylight.

The fact was that the two boys had never been in danger at all. Although the strip of beach on which they had stood was completely covered at high tide, there was, as all regular visitors to Brightsea knew, a hidden flight of cliff steps leading back to the top of the cliffs. So the boys could have got back quite safely without getting wet over it—but for Coker's wish to be a hero!

M'yes! Coker will think twice before he turns heroic at Brightsea again!

REASSURING NEWS.

Fellows who complained of mice in the School last term will be glad to hear that they have all left.

Bunter went round the House eating up the scraps before leaving for the holiday and the few rodents who remained died of starvation.

"Going for a walk on the peer, boys?"

Dr. Alfred Birchmall, headmaster of St. Sam's, walked out of the breakfast-room of the Seaview Hotel at Pargate, wiping a number of egg and jam smears from his mouth as he did so, and asked that question of three youngsters on the veranda.

"Yes, rather!" corussed Merry and Bright.

"Coming with us, sir?" asked Jolly.

A slyly shifty look seemed to come into the Head's greenish eyes.

"Nunno, Jolly," he said.

"You see, I'm not at liberty to go promenading on the peer like a common-or-garden tripper. As I told you in the train, I'm not here on pleasure, but on a very special mission—a Mission of Mystery, in fact!"

"Oh!"

"Since I can't come with you, however," went on the Head, "I'll give you two bits of advice. The first is this, make sure that the contents of your pockets are not picked!"

"My hat! That wouldn't do at all, sir!" said Bright, in alarm. "We carry a lot of cash about between us—fourpence or fivepence, at least. Is there a pickpocket on the peer, then, sir?"

"There is—a potty purloiner who prowls the peer, picking people's pockets!" said the Head, ponderously.

"So unless you want your pockets picked you'll have to mind your p's and q's!"

"O.K., sir!" grinned Jack Jolly.

"Now what's the second piece of advice?"

"Ah! Tip Number Two



concerns a much more plezzant subject, Jolly," grinned the Head. "It is this: when you go on the peer, whatever you do don't miss paying a visit to Professor Power, the soothsayer!"

"Sus-sus-soothsayer, sir?"

"Proffet and fortune-teller, then," eggplained Dr. Birchmall. "He's a regular marvel, I can tell you!"

"We'll go and see the old buffer if you think we should!" said Jolly, resinedly.

They spent an hour on the beach before going on the peer.

Once on the peer, they soon found Professor Power's keosk. The soothsayer of Pargate Peer proved to be rather a weord-looking old gentleman as far as you could see. That wasn't very far, because he was covered from head to foot in his magician's robes; but the juniors could tell by the way he talked that he was a soothsayer to the finger-tips.

"Professor Power greets you!" he eride, in a funny falsetto voice, when they walked in. "Come to have your fortunes told, yung jents? Step this way, then! Abracadabra! Eeni-meeni-mina-mo!"

For a moment, Jack Jolly & Co. had a feeling that they detected something familiar in Professor Power's voice. But, knowing full well that

they knew no soothsayers, they decided that they must be mistaken.

When Jack Jolly & Co. were seated in the keosk, Professor Power started gazing into a big cristal in front of him. After a minute or two, he began to call out in a weord, chanting

voice what he could see in the cristal—and what he saw was a fare noek-out!

"I see from the magic cristal that you are three skoolboys from St. Sam's Skool for the Sons of Gentle-men!" he eride. "Your names—lemme see, one is Jolly, the second, Merry, and the third, Bright!"

"Grate pip!" breathed Merry, in amazement.

"Fancy seeing all that in a blessed cristal!"

But the professor had hardly started yet. When he got really into his stride, the things he told them were simply staggering. Really, as Bright eggpressed it, he seemed to know more about them than they knew about themselves!

At last the soothsayer's show finished. He rose from his cristal, gripping feintly inside the depths of his hood and held out a somewhat greedy-looking paw.

"That will be all," he said.

"Professor Power thanks you for your esteemed patronage! Sixpence each, please—eightpence the lot!"

Jack Jolly dived his hand into his pocket. The next instant he jumped.

"My munny!" he gasped.

"What about it?" asked Merry and Bright together.

"It's gone!" phattered Jolly. "It was all that I

had, too—sixpence—ha! penny!"

"My hat! It must have been that pickpocket the Head warned us about!" eggclaimed Bright. "I wonder how he manngided to do it without being seen!"

"Look!" ejaculated Professor Power horsely, just then.

The soothsayer was pointing a trembling fourfinger through the winder of his keosk. Following his glance, Jack Jolly & Co. saw a site that made them fairly wistle.

Standing outside the keosk was a smart-looking yung fellow talking to an old gentleman. And while he talked, he was calmly sliding his hand into the old gentleman's coat pocket!

"It's the pickpocket!" gasped Jack Jolly. "The pickpocket of Pargate Peer! Let's nab him!"

Before Jolly could step forward, however, Professor Power had bounded to the fore.

"Stand aside!" he eride. "This is my job—not yours!"

An instant later, he flung out of the keosk and flung himself at the smart yung man—and the Co. notissed, to their sorprize, that he produced a pair of handcuffs from the folds of his robes as he did so!

If the soothsayer eggpected to make the suspected pickpocket his prisoner without trouble, however, he was sadly disappointed. As soon as the smart yung man saw him, he ran for dear life. After that, there was an aggsiting chase around the peer which ended in the fugitive climbing up on to the diving-platform at the peer-head.

Not to be outdone, Professor Power went up after

him. But a shock awaited him at the top, for no sooner had he got there than the suspected sneak-thief grabbed him bodily, carried him, yelling and kicking to the water-shoot, and sent him sliding down the slippery shoot into the water.

Splash!

"Woocooop!" Grooooo!

Gug-gug-gug!" shrieked Professor Power, as he came to the surfiss.

And then Jack Jolly & Co. made an astownding discovery. As they leaned over the rail of the peer, they saw that the professor's headgear had fallen away, revealing beneath a face that they reckernised at once.

I am understudying my friend Herlook Sholmes. Sholmes was asked to solve the mystery of the pocket-picking on Pargate Peer, but couldn't come. He asked me to take his place, and I did so—also adopting his suggestion to pose as a soothsayer! What a pity that villan escaped me just as I was on the point of bringing the case to a close!"

"But I haven't escaped!" eggclaimed a voice just beside them. "I've stayed on to find out why you chased me like you did—and now that I've lerned I'm afraid I've got a disappointment for you. I'm not a pickpocket, but the Pargate representative of the 'Daily Post' engaged in giving away free gifts to readers. When you saw me outside your keosk, I was just giving a reader a present of five shillings—and telling him all about the skeem while I did so!"

"That's quite right, gentlemen!" said the old gentleman the Head thought had been robbed, appearing on the seen. "Here's the five bob, if you doubt it!"

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Dr. Birchmall.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Jolly & Co.

The chums of the Fourth simply couldn't help it. The idea of the Head chasing a Free Gift man under the delosion that he was a pickpocket struck them as funny.

The Head glared at them for an instant. Then he turned on his heel and strode back to his keosk.

And long after he had gone, the peer still echoed to the larfter of the fellows who had solved the Soothsayer's Secret!

(Don't miss "Skoolmaster and Slooth!"—the final yarn of this funny seaside series—in next week's "Herald.")

"The Head!" they yelled. It was Dr. Birchmall himself!

The Co. rushed to the top of the iron ladder up which the Head had begun to climb, and were the first to greet him as he stepped back on to the peer.

"So it was you, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly. "No wonder you knew so much."

"S-sh!" hist the Head. "No need to give the game away, fathead! This, of course, is my mission of mistery."

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

"Nap" Dupont is foils champion of the Remove. When Bolsover Major challenged him to a duel, "Nap" stared to see Bolsover arrive with a huge, two-handled sword which he had borrowed from the school's collection of old armour! The duel was off—but even "Nap" couldn't help laughing. A "two-edged" joke!

Harry Wharton may be called proud, but his icy coolness in a crisis was well exemplified when a hack took fright near Greyfriars, with a girl rider. Wharton leaped in its path and seized the bride, and though dragged some distance, he brought the animal to a standstill. Wharton was flushed—but not with fear!

When Coker, Potter, and Greene went camping up river in a roomy motor cruiser, Coker wanted to "take the helm," as usual. For the sake of peace, Potter and Greene let him steer—till, taking his eyes off his task to stare at the bank, the cruiser collided with a bridge! No damage was done—but Coker, for once, felt quite "sunk!"

When Gosling called at Lori Mauleverer's study to know how many boxes and bags Mauly was taking away this summer, he found the study full almost to the ceiling with them! Mauly likes everything with him when he travels, and the "sky" is the limit! Still, Gosling knows Mauly's tips a-a-high, too!

Dick Rake is an enthusiast for jazz rhythm, and can play all the latest tunes on the piano. With Johnny Bull synecopating on his cornet and Fisher T. Fish performing his American "tap" dancing, Removites were given a treat in the Rag. When they all joined in the vocal chorusses, though, it developed into a real "rag!"

In spite of the fact that he gets more kicks than ha'pence in the Remove, Billy Bunter's life of worry does not affect his weight which remains pretty stationary at 14 stone 12 lbs. During a dormitory raid against the Upper Fourth, Bunter came in useful to sit on the "downed" Temple's chest. Bunter's "weight" told!

ANSWERS to CORRESPONDENTS

"FIFTH-FORMER."—"There's sterling value in Prout's face."

Just fancy! And we never noticed before that he had gold teeth!

C. HOSKINS (Shell).—"The doctor told me if I didn't stop swotting, I'd go off my rooker."

Why didn't you stop?

"ONE OF THE BLADES."—"I tell you Skinner's a fellow of rare honesty."

You're right. It's very rare for him to display it!

"CURIOUS" (Remove).—"The fellow who told you that the Greyfriars Form-masters were being auctioned off at Courtfield was mistaken. The worn-out old buffers that are being sold there belong to the railway."

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



HAROLD SKINNER Describes a— QUIET WEEK-END AT BOLSY'S

Just before Breaking-up, Bolsover said to me: "You're looking pretty pasty and done up, Skinny. What you need is a nice, quiet, restful week-end. Why don't you come down to my place?"

I fell in with it right away. A quiet, restful week-end did seem just what I needed. I'd been having a pretty hectic time, and the prospect of a few days in rural surroundings far from the madding crowd was jolly pleasing.

So when we broke up, I went home with Bolsy for a nice, quiet, restful week-end.

This was the daily programme during that week-end:

- 6.30 a.m. Bathe in river.
- 7 a.m. Wrestling.
- 8 a.m. Club-swinging and Swedish drill.
- 9 a.m. Breakfast.
- 10 a.m. Brisk walk.
- 11.30 a.m. Second bathe in river.
- 1 p.m. Lunch.
- 2 p.m. Exercise.
- 3 p.m. Sprinting.
- 4 p.m. Boxing.
- 5 p.m. Wrestling.
- 7 p.m. Dinner.
- 8 p.m. Punchball.
- 8.30 p.m. Reading boxing publications.
- 9 p.m. Bed.

So you see, it wasn't entirely restful from beginning to end. About the quietude, too, there was a rasping wireless-set bellowing out in the drawing-room right through the week-end. I didn't hear it switched off once.

The only moral I can draw from this story is: If you're feeling seedy and done up, for goodness' sake don't tell Bolsy or he may ask you down to his place for a NICE, QUIET, RESTFUL WEEK-END!

REPLY TO INQUIRERS.

We have asked Coker if he enjoyed his record-breaking motor-bike run from London to Brighton and he tells us he had a "fine" time!

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