

THRILLING HOLIDAY ADVENTURE YARN of HARRY WHARTON & CO.—INSIDE!

The Magnet

2^D



The
Phantom
of
Portercliffe!



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.

DO you remember my paragraph a little while ago regarding curious street names? One of my Sydney, Australia, readers sends me a letter in which he gives several examples of

CURIOUS PLACE NAMES.

In Sydney, he tells me, most of the streets are called after the governors and various public men of the early days, but many of the country towns in New South Wales are very peculiarly named. Have you ever heard of a place called "Howlong"? You'll find it there. And here are a few others, some of them quite large towns, which boast unusual names:

"Nevertire," "Come-by-Chance," "Wait-a-While," "Wilson's Downfall," "Ward's Mistake," "Good-night," and "Guy Fawkes."

It would be most interesting to know how these places came by their curious names. I wonder if there are any MAGNET readers in these towns who can enlighten me?

From K. Knowles, of Wingfield, comes the following query:

WHAT IS A TAPE MACHINE?

It is a telegraphic machine which operates a kind of typewriter. The electrical impulses of the telegraph work the various keys, which then impress their letters upon a paper tape which runs continuously through the machine. Thus the telegram is spelled out, letter by letter and word by word. In this country the tape machine is used mostly by newspaper offices and large clubs, the telegrams being transmitted by various news agencies. Thus the news, printed by the tape machine, is received immediately after it happens.

The paper tape is cut into lengths and stuck upon sheets of paper. Some forms of the machine print direct on sheets of paper. Machines of this type are used more frequently on the Continent, where, in some large cities, almost every cafe or restaurant has one installed so that its customers can learn the latest news as soon as the newspapers themselves get it.

Nowadays, the latest machines can be worked by wireless, and thus greatly speed up the obtaining of news from foreign sources.

HERE'S some information that ought to make Billy Bunter's eyes glisten! From a reader who signs himself "Odorsfelt," of Crosland Moor, comes a letter dealing with

THE WORLD'S LARGEST PIES.

These, he says, with all the pride of a native, come from Denby Dale, in Yorkshire, and are so big that when a man takes one to work with him, his pals chip him about his "Denby Daler." About three or four years ago an extra-large pie

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

was made. My chum doesn't tell me the exact dimensions of it, but I imagine that several hundred people shared in the pie, for portions were served on specially illustrated plates and sold for 1s. and 1s. 6d. What's more, he claims that other places have tried to make "Denby Dalers," but have never had the same success.

Do you know that there is a place in London

WHERE POLICEMEN ARE NOT ALLOWED,

and where they will commit a "crime" if they enter? This is the Tower of London, and the privilege of banning policemen has been jealously guarded for a thousand years. Not long ago, a fire broke out in one of the towers. It was extinguished by the fire picket of the Coldstream Guards. A London policeman, learning of the fire, went in to take particulars—and learned a lesson in history! For, as he came out, he was challenged by the sentries, who informed him that no policeman may enter the Tower. What's more, they took the policeman's number and reported him to the Chief Warder of the Tower!

From several readers come requests for more

SURNAMES AND THEIR MEANINGS,

so I am giving a further selection herewith:

Rex is the Latin word for "King." According to an authority, the name was given not only to those whose ancestors were kings, but also to players in the mediaeval Miracle Plays who acted these particular parts.

Crozier means a carrier of the cross—either one whose duty was to carry the cross in religious processions, or an actor in a play who took that part.

Head might have been bestowed upon its original bearer because of some peculiarity of his head. But it also denotes a dweller by the head (of a valley, hill, etc.).

Rouse comes from two sources. One is a form of Rollo, taken from the name of the famous Viking. It is also derived from "roux," meaning the red. "Rush" is another form of the same name.

Reid meant one who gave advice or counsel. Other forms of the same name are Read, Redd, and Reed. In some cases these names have been derived from a Saxon word meaning red.

Dunn was a surname given to a man with brown hair or beard.

Hunnard is a modern form of "le Hunderd," meaning the man in charge of the hounds.

NOW for a query which comes from John Lambton, of Richmond, Surrey. He asks

WHO OWNS THE RIVER THAMES?

There are two public bodies responsible for the upkeep of the Thames—the Port of London Authority and the Thames Conservancy. The first looks after the river from the Nore as far as Teddington Lock; the second has jurisdiction over the upper part of the river. At one time the Thames Conservancy was the only body responsible. They were formed in 1489, when the conservancy of the whole of the river was given to the Mayors of London. Various changes took place after that until, in 1894, a special act was passed to define their exact responsibility. In 1909, the Port of London Authority was set up, and the lower part of the river transferred to it, while the Thames Conservancy retained the upper part.

That is why, if you wish to take even a rowing boat up the river above Teddington Lock, you must pay a yearly licence for the boat. In addition there are charges for passing through the various locks, and the money received in this way goes for the upkeep of the river.

Strange to say, from a Bridlington reader comes a query regarding the old saying—

"SETTING THE THAMES ON FIRE!"

My chum wants to know what the phrase means, and what was the origin of it. Actually, the main word should be "temse," and not the name of the river. A "temse" was a sieve which was formerly used in the sieving of flour. It was possible for a very vigorous workman to cause so much friction between the temse and the flour-bin that the former actually became ignited—thus setting the temse on fire! Consequently, a slow and inefficient worker was never likely to set the temse on fire, and although the word has been altered to "Thames," the saying is still used to describe any particularly slow worker.

By the way, talking of slow workers reminds me of the splendid free gifts which are being presented with our companion school story paper—the "GEM"—further particulars of which appear on page 21 of this issue. The quick worker will make certain of three topping free gifts by ordering next Wednesday's "GEM" from his newsagent to-day.

And now for next week's programme. How does this strike you?

"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD HUNTER!"

By Frank Richards.

Sounds very exciting, doesn't it? And you'll agree with me that the story is exciting when you read it next Saturday. It is well up to the very high standard the author has set in this magnificent series of Harry Wharton & Co.'s holiday adventures at Porterclyffe Hall. To divulge the plot here would spoil the pleasures of anticipation for you, but I feel sure, when you read the story, that you will agree with me in saying that it is a rattling good one. Look out for this tip-top treat, chums.

And look out, too, for the opening instalment of our grand new serial by Geo. E. Rochester, full particulars of which appear on page 25 of this issue. A real smasher this, chums, believe me. Of course, there will be another rib-tickling issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," not to mention a special contribution by the Greyfriars Rhymester and another cheery chat with

YOUR EDITOR.

The PHANTOM of PORTERCLIFFE!



—Featuring HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, and the Fish Family—"popper" and son.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hidden Wealth!

"CHANDOS!"

"Sir!"

"Any letters for me?"

"None this morning, sir."

Billy Bunter grunted.

"I say, you fellows, my postal order hasn't come!" he said. "Who's going to lend me a quid?"

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles at the Greyfriars fellows gathered in the hall after breakfast at Portercliffe Hall.

Nobody answered.

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled. Smithy shrugged his shoulders. Kipps yawned. Wibley winked at Chandos—a proceeding that made the stately butler of Portercliffe Hall almost jump. Fisher T. Fish stared blankly, as if overcome by the bare idea of lending anybody anything.

"Don't all speak at once!" said Bunter sarcastically.

They didn't! They did not speak at all.

"I say, Fishy——"

"Forget it!" said Fisher T. Fish briefly.

"I'm your guest here!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Sure!" assented Fishy. "But I guess I ain't holding you down, if you want to beat it."

Billy Bunter disdained to reply to that.

"I say, Wharton——"

"As Fishy says, forget it!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Juky, old man——"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned a dusky grin.

"The forgetfulness is the proper caper, as the esteemed and ridiculous Fishy remarks!" he answered.

"Smithy, old chap——"

"Rats!" was the concise reply of Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"I say, Kippers, you're not so mean as these fellows——"

"I am," answered Kipps. "Worse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's Alonzo?" asked Bunter, with another blink round the hall.

Harry Wharton & Co. have explored Portercliffe Hall from cellar to turret hunting for secret passages. But their efforts have proved fruitless. The great discovery is reserved for the one and only BILLY BUNTER!

Alonzo Todd had not yet emerged from the breakfast-room.

"Poor old Alonzo!" sighed Bob Cherry.

Alonzo Todd had a trusting nature, which had proved very useful to Billy Bunter during the holiday of the Greyfriars party at Portercliffe Hall. The only drawback was that Alonzo's cash resources were limited. How much Billy Bunter owed Alonzo he had forgotten. But Alonzo could have told him, for it was the precise amount of cash that Alonzo had brought with him to Portercliffe Hall.

"Well, are we starting for Margate?" asked Johnny Bull. "Alonzo's going botanising this morning, so we needn't wait for him."

"I say, you fellows, hold on! I want to speak to Alonzo before we start."

"Haven't you cleared him out yet?" inquired the Bounder.

"Beast!"

Alonzo Todd's long, slim figure appeared from the doorway of the breakfast-room. Alonzo had a large botanical volume in his hand, and a cheery smile on his kind, simple face.

"Wait for me, you fellows!" said Bunter. "I say, Alonzo old chap, my postal order hasn't come——"

"I am very, very sorry you have been disappointed, my dear William!" answered Alonzo.

"Like to lend me a quid till it comes?" asked Bunter.

"I should like to very, very much——"

"Good!"

Bunter held out a fat hand.

"But," continued Alonzo, "I am unable to do so, my dear Bunter, as I am not, at the moment, in possession of the requisite amount."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

"My dear William——"

"Idiot!"

"I should be very, very pleased——"

"Fathead!" snorted Bunter.

"But I have not a pound note about me, my dear William. I regret it very, very much!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silly chump!" hooted Bunter.

Alonzo Todd's regrets were of no use to him. What Bunter wanted was a pound.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

Kipps broke in.

"Bunter would like a sovereign, just as much as a pound note, Alonzo. Why not lend him a sovereign?"

That question made all the fellows stare at Kipps. If a fellow was short of a pound note he was not likely to be in possession of that much rarer article, a golden sovereign. Alonzo Todd was so amazed that he goggled at Oliver Kipps with his mouth wide open, like a fish out of water.

"A—a—a sovereign, my dear Oliver!" ejaculated Alonzo. "But I have no such coin in my possession. So far from possessing a sovereign, I have very, very seldom seen one."

"Oh, Alonzo!" said Kipps, shaking his head sadly.

"But I assure you—" gasped Alonzo.

"Bet you I'd find one about you," said Kipps.

"I should be very, very pleased if you did, my dear Oliver, as I am excessively short of cash, owing to lending Bunter—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bunter.

"My dear William—"

"Cheese it, fathead!"

"I'll jolly well show you!" said Kipps, and he stepped towards the astounded Alonzo with outstretched hand.

Whereat the other fellows caught on and grinned.

They remembered that Oliver Kipps was a conjurer of weird and wonderful skill. Sometimes he caught the Greyfriars fellows with his weird tricks, well as they knew him. It was much easier to catch the good Alonzo, who did not know him so well, and who seemed to have been born specially to have his innocent leg pulled.

Kipps inserted a thumb and finger into Alonzo's waistcoat pocket. He withdrew them with something between them that gleamed and glistened.

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned. Billy Bunter chuckled a fat chuckle. They had all—except Alonzo—seen Kipps play conjuring tricks before, with a halfpenny gilded with gold-leaf to look like a sovereign.

But Alonzo Todd, to whom that little trick was new, goggled at the golden coin in Kipps' hand, and almost gibbered at it.

"Goodness gracious!" stuttered Alonzo. "It is a—a—a sovereign!"

"He, he, he!"—from Bunter.

"I—I—I assure you that I did not know that it was in my pocket," said Alonzo in bewilderment. "I am very, very much astonished—"

"Got any more?" chuckled Bob.

"Oh! No. I am sure—"

"What's this, then?" asked Kipps, dipping into the pocket again and showing a golden coin between thumb and finger.

"Good gracious!"

Two gilded halfpennies lay in Kipps' palm. Alonzo blinked at them, but Kipps did not give him a very close view. Even Alonzo, at a close view, would have detected halfpennies coated with gold-leaf.

The juniors looked on, grinning. Alonzo stood gaping with amazement. But even more amazed than Alonzo seemed Chandos, the butler.

Chandos had been leaving the hall by the service door when Kipps started that little conjuring trick on Alonzo Todd. He stopped, looking back, and now stood with his eyes fixed on Kipps and Alonzo—those eyes seeming almost to bulge out of his portly face.

He was too far off to see anything but the gleam of golden coins in Kipps' hand, and had not the faintest suspicion that it was a conjuring trick. And the sight of Kipps, apparently extracting

golden sovereigns from Alonzo's pocket seemed to strike the Portercliffe butler all of a heap.

The juniors did not notice him; all their attention was fixed on the Greyfriars conjurer and his astonished victim.

"Why, I believe he's got lots!" exclaimed Kipps. "Look here!"

He dipped into Alonzo's jacket pocket with his right hand. To all appearance Kipps had those two coins in his left, closed.

As a matter of fact, they were concealed in his right palm when he dipped the right hand into the pocket. But the trick was done so neatly that Alonzo had not the faintest suspicion. Neither would any other fellow present have detected the trick had they been unacquainted with Kipps' weird skill.

It was utterly amazing to Alonzo Todd to see Oliver Kipps draw his hand out of the pocket again with two golden coins in the palm.

Alonzo gasped.

"Didn't you know they were there?" grinned Kipps.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Alonzo. "I assure you that I had not the faintest idea—not the slightest—"

"Then they're not yours?" grinned Kipps.

"Certainly not!" Alonzo shook his head decidedly. "I cannot imagine how those sovereigns came into my pocket, my dear Oliver, but assuredly they are not mine! I certainly have no claim to them."

Chandos, with a long, strange look at Alonzo Todd, stepped through the service doorway and disappeared, closing the baize door after him. Alonzo stood blinking at the sovereigns.

"Sure they're not yours?" grinned Kipps.

"Quite, quite sure, my dear Oliver."

"Findings keepings, then!" said Kipps cheerily, and he slipped the gilded halfpennies into his own pocket. "You fellows coming? Time we got off to Margate, if we're going to bathe while the tide's in."

And the Greyfriars fellows, in a smiling crowd, went out—leaving Alonzo Todd standing with quite a dazed expression of astonishment on his face.

As they walked down the drive, Billy Bunter renewed his inquiry as to who was going to lend him a quid! It appeared, however, that nobody was. Only Kipps offered him a golden coin, which—at a safe distance—looked like a sovereign. Which offer Billy Bunter declined with a snort.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Bathe for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Come on!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say! Did you bring my bathing costume?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Fathead! Didn't you bring it?"

"I forgot!" said Bunter with dignity. "I think one of you fellows might have thought of it."

"Go hon!"

The Greyfriars fellows were changing to bathe, in the bathing-hut hired for the party by Mr. Fish on Cliftonville beach. It was a glorious August morning, and all the fellows were keen to get into the sea.

It was like Billy Bunter to discover, at the last moment, that he had forgotten his bathing suit. It was also like him to put it up to the rest of the party as a problem to be solved.

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Bunter, apparently under the impression that nothing whatever could be done until that problem had been solved.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"I know what I'm going to do!" he said. "I'm going to bathe." And Johnny, having changed, marched out of the hut.

"Same here!" grinned Bob Cherry. And he followed Johnny. And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, remarking that the samefulness was terrific, followed Bob.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Say what you like, old fat bean!" said Harry. "You don't mind if I go and bathe while you're saying it, do you?"

Without waiting to ascertain whether Bunter minded, Wharton followed his chums, and Smithy went with him.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. "I say, Nugent, I think I might be able to squeeze into your suit—"

"Think so?" grinned Frank Nugent.

"Well, there isn't much of you," said Bunter. "It will be a bit tight. But I'll try, anyhow. If it bursts, I shall be no worse off."

"And what about me?" inquired Frank.

"If you're going to be a selfish beast, Nugent—"

"I am!" said Frank with emphasis.

"Kipps, old man, will you lend me—"

"A sovereign?" asked Kipps.

"No," roared Bunter, "a bathing-suit, you ass! Look here, you can sit on the sand while I bathe, see? It's jolly sitting on the sand and watching the people, you know."

"Really enjoyable, old bean, do you think?" asked Kipps.

"Yes, rather," said Bunter. "Better than bathing, really."

"Good! Then you do it—"

"Eh?"

"While I bathe—"

"Beast!"

Kipps chuckled and went out with Nugent and Fisher T. Fish. Only Wibley remained in the bathing-hut with Billy Bunter.

Wib was as keen on bathing as the other Greyfriars fellows. But he was occupied at the moment. He was keener on amateur theatricals than anything else, and for some days Wib had been engaged on writing a play, which the Portercliffe party were to perform during the holidays.

Wib carried pencil and paper about him to jot down flashes of inspiration that occurred to him at odd moments. One, evidently, had occurred to him now, for he had sat down on the wooden step in the doorway of the hut, paper on knee and pencil in hand, and a far-away look in his eyes.

Bunter blinked at his back through his big spectacles. Bent over his task, Wib had hardly observed the other fellows going out of the hut—he was, for the moment, forgetful of bathing. His own costume lay in its bundle, so far untouched.

"I say, Wib, old chap—"

Grunt!

Wibley did not like interruptions when he was in the throes of composition. He grunted, and took no other heed of Bunter. The sunny stretch of Margate sands had put a new scene for his play into Wib's mind. A duel on the sands, between the lapping sea and the cliffs, would make a topping scene—and Wibley was too busy getting it down to heed the fat Owl behind him.

"But I say—"

"Knave, thou diest!" said Wibley. Bunter jumped. "Wha-a-t?" he ejaculated. "Die the death of a dog!" continued Wibley. "I—I say——" "Thus perish all traitors!" Bunter blinked at Wibley in amazement and alarm. But Wibley was not addressing him. He was muttering aloud as he scribbled. "Oh, you ass!" gasped Bunter. He realised that Wib was merely reciting to himself the dramatic lines as he wrote them down. "Shurrup!" hissed Wib. "Look here, Wib, if you're going to sit there scribbling that tripe——" "That what?" roared Wib, roused at last.

Wibley being so deep in his scribbling, Bunter considered it feasible to step past him, and carry off that bathing-suit unobserved. If the beast did not happen to look up at the wrong moment it would be all right. After which he could find a tent to change in and join the rest of the party in the briny ocean. Wib, when he wanted to bathe, could look for the missing suit—and look for it as long as he liked! Bunter did not mind how long he looked for it. With a fat grin on his face and the bundle in his hand, Billy Bunter stepped to the doorway! But Bunter had no luck! The beast did look up at the wrong moment! Wibley stared at his bundle in Bunter's hand.

soft sand and remain there till Bunter came and fielded it. Wibley, with his head bent, would not see it fly. He would not hear it plop on soft sand. And he would suspect nothing when Bunter walked out of the hut with empty hands! Bunter grinned. It was quite an astute scheme! The Owl of the Remove stood behind Wibley, the bundle in his hand, and lifted his right arm to hurl it. Before the bathing-hut stretched the wide sands down to the sea, dotted with sun-bathers and other bathers coming and going. In front of the hut, but at a distance of about twenty feet, a plump middle-aged gentleman in a purple-striped bathing-suit was taking the sun. The



Billy Bunter dodged out of the bathing-hut. "Stop!" yelled the infuriated man in purple stripes, following hard on his heels. "Stop, I say!" Bunter was not likely to stop. He flew. There were exclamations and shouts on all sides, as the fat Removite charged along the crowded beach, and the ample gentleman charged after him.

"I—I—I mean that ripping play," said Bunter hastily. "You won't want your bathing suit, see? Can I have it?" "You'd burst it, you podgy porpoise!" "Oh, really, Wibley——" "Shut up!" "Beast!"

Wibley wrinkled his brows over his dramatic works. Billy Bunter glared morosely at the back of his bent head. Then a gleam came into the fat Owl's eyes behind his spectacles. He picked up the little bundle containing Wibley's bathing-suit.

It was very doubtful whether the fat Owl of Greyfriars could have crammed into it. Bunter required double-width. But he was willing to chance it. If the suit split, it did not matter, as it was not Bunter's!

"What the dickens——" he began. "Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I wasn't going to—to—to walk off with this bathing-suit, Wibley! I—I—I——" "You fat villain!" "Oh, really, Wibley——" "Drop it!"

Bunter unwillingly dropped it. Wibley resumed scribbling on the paper on his knee and Bunter resumed glaring at the back of his head. But the fat junior only waited till Wib was deep in his scribbling again. Bunter was not beaten yet.

Stealthily, he picked up the bundle again.

This time he did not attempt to carry it out past the junior sitting on the wooden doorstep. It was easy enough to toss it out of the doorway over Wibley's head.

It would land at a distance on the

back of his head rested on a little hillock of sand, his red face glowing in the sunshine. From his position as he lay he was looking towards the bathing-hut, and his eyes fixed rather curiously on Bunter.

Seeing the fat junior standing behind the fellow sitting in the doorway, he probably wondered what Bunter was at, as he saw him raise the bundle to hurl. He was suddenly enlightened.

He observed Bunter—but Bunter did not observe him. The fat Owl's range of vision was rather limited, even with the aid of his big spectacles.

Bunter's intention was to hurl that bundle over Wibley's head, far out on the beach. It was merely an unfortunate coincidence that the purple-striped sun-bather was sprawling in the spot where it landed.

Thud!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

The bundle landed on the plump sun-bather's features, with what a novelist would have described as a dull, sickening thud! From the purple-striped gentleman there came a sudden roar of surprise and wrath.

It rang along the crowded beach. Wibley started, and looked up.

"What——" he ejaculated.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Up jumped the purple-striped gentleman. That Bunter was merely pinching a bathing-costume, and had landed it on his nose entirely by chance, the purple gentleman was quite unaware. He had been watching Bunter's antics, and his impression was that the fat fellow in specs had hurled a bundle directly and deliberately at him. He came up the beach towards the bathing-hut at a rush.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"What the thump——" gasped Wibley.

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter gave the purple gentleman one terrified blink. The man looked fearfully wrathful—and his looks expressed his feelings.

Bunter forgot all about fielding the bathing-suit. He forgot all about bathing. He dodged out of the hut and ran.

"Stop!" yelled the purple-striped man.

"What the thump——" gasped Wibley.

"Stop!"

Bunter was not likely to stop.

He flew.

After him charged the infuriated man in purple stripes.

Wibley stared after them blankly. So did about five hundred other people. There were exclamations and shouts on all sides as Bunter charged along the crowded beach and the purple gentleman charged after him.

Bunter trampled recklessly over sand fortifications, amid howls of protest from the small people who were building them; he tripped over sun-bathers; he dodged round tents; he panted and puffed; he flew and he blow!

How he escaped from the beach he hardly knew. His breath gave out, and he gurgled to a halt, and blinked back at the beach with a terrified blink! Fortunately for Bunter, the purple gentleman's wind had also given out.

He stood gasping for breath, and shaking an infuriated fist after Bunter.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

And he got going again, turning his back on the beach and hitting the open spaces. He realised that it would be wise to be over the horizon before the purple gentleman got his second wind.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Alonzo is Amazed!

ALONZO TODD jumped. What was happening to him, Alonzo did not, for the moment, know.

It was so very, very surprising.

While Harry Wharton & Co. were gone down to the sea to bathe, Alonzo had been spending happy hours. He had started on a botanical expedition in the Portercliffe Park.

Chandos, the butler, had met him as he started. Chandos had displayed a respectful interest in his botanical pursuits that surprised and pleased Alonzo. He had explained to the attentive Alonzo that rare and wonderful specimens were to be discovered in a certain part of the park, near an old

disused hunting lodge. So it was for that spot that Alonzo had headed.

For quite a long time Alonzo had been rooting about, collecting all sorts of flowers and leaves, carefully placing them between the pages of his book. Now he was seated, resting after his labours, by a fragment of an ancient wall, under the shade of thick branches.

The old lodge in the park was a mere ruin—it had been hit by a shell in the German bombardment of the coast during the War, and never rebuilt. It was overgrown with ferns and grasses and hawthorns, hidden from sight by the oaks and beeches and undergrowth. It was one of the most secluded and solitary spots on the extensive Portercliffe estate.

Alonzo, busy examining his specimens, naturally did not expect to be interrupted in that solitary spot, where anybody hardly ever came.

But he was interrupted—in the most remarkable manner.

There was a rustle in the thickets behind the old fragment of wall against which he was leaning. Alonzo did not heed it—he was too intent on his specimens.

But Alonzo forgot even botany as a sack suddenly descended on his head, shutting out the sunlight that filtered through the foliage over him.

In utter amazement he dropped his book and his botanical specimens and gasped. He hardly realised for the moment what was happening.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Alonzo.

It was a large sack. Its odour hinted that it had once contained flour. Now it contained Alonzo Todd!

Someone behind him had suddenly slipped that sack over Alonzo's head. It descended to his waist, engulfing him, shutting off light and vision.

"Ooogh!" gasped Alonzo.

He wriggled in the sack.

He felt the grasp of hands—large, strong hands. He felt a cord pulled tight round the neck of the sack, which was round his slim waist. His arms were imprisoned, and he was absolutely helpless.

"My d-d-dear fellow——" stuttered Alonzo.

As his confused brain cleared a little, he concluded that this was a playful jape on the part of some other member of the Portercliffe party.

"Please take this sack off, my dear fellow!" gasped Alonzo. "It is very, very hot, and very, very uncomfortable! I really beg you—ooogh!"

Alonzo spluttered as he was rolled over. He was rolled, dragged, and pushed into the interior of the ruined lodge.

His amazement intensified.

Only one pair of hands touched him—there was only one person engaged in these extraordinary proceedings. But the hands were strong, dealing easily with Alonzo. He realised that the person who was handling him was not a boy, but a man.

It was not one of the Greyfriars party. That became clear to Alonzo. But it added to his astonishment. Some trespasser might have got into Portercliffe Park; but why should he bag Alonzo Todd in an empty flour sack?

"Grooogh!" gasped Alonzo, as he came to a stop at last. He was slammed against a lump of old masonry. "I—I say—grooogh! Who—who—why—what—ooogh!"

He could see nothing inside the sack. But he knew that the unknown man was bending over him.

"Silence!" came a sharp voice.

"I—I—I——"

"Silence!"

"Oh dear!"

Alonzo felt a thievish hand groping over him. It groped into pocket after pocket. Apparently his assailant's object was theft! If so, he was out of luck—there was no plunder on Alonzo Todd. A few shillings were all that Bunter had spared of Alonzo's supply of cash.

Those shillings were extracted from his pocket. But it seemed that the unknown man only wanted to look at them, for he put them back again. It was not shillings that he wanted.

He was, apparently, in search of something that was not there. Having searched every pocket, the thievish hand was withdrawn; and nothing had been taken. Alonzo felt him leaning closer over the sack, and heard a harsh voice.

"Where is the gold?"

Alonzo gave a convulsive jump in the sack. He had not known what to expect next, but this question was about the last thing that he would have dreamed of expecting.

"Can you hear me?" hissed the voice.

"Oh dear! Yes, I hear you quite distinctly!" gasped Alonzo. "But I fail to grasp your meaning. Who are you?"

"Never mind that! Where is the gold?"

"What gold?" gasped Alonzo.

"Will you answer me?"

"I should be very, very pleased to do so, but—yaroooooh!" howled Alonzo, as he was grasped, in the sack, and his head knocked on the masonry. "Wow! Please leave off! Ow! Wow!"

"Silence! Will you answer me now?" came the hissing voice. "What you have found you can keep—I care nothing for that! But tell me where you found it!"

"Oh, goodness gracious! Where I found what?" gasped Alonzo.

"The gold!"

"But I have never found any gold!" stammered the bewildered Alonzo. "I assure you—ow!" He howled as his head was knocked again.

"Tell me the truth!" snarled the voice of the man outside the sack. "You have been seen with golden sovereigns in your possession. Where did you find them?"

"Ow!"

"Tell me the truth, or——"

"Oh dear! I shall certainly tell you the truth!" gasped Alonzo. "I have never, never been guilty, I trust, of prevarication! My Uncle Benjamin would be very, very shocked at anything of the kind."

"Where did you find the gold?"

"I—I never found any—— Ow!"

Bang!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You will find it better to tell me the truth!" snarled the voice. "This morning you were seen with gold in your pockets. If you found some of it, you found the rest. Tell me where you found it!"

"Oh, goodness gracious!" gasped Alonzo. He remembered the incident of the morning, when Kipps had so mysteriously extracted golden sovereigns from his pockets.

That incident would have puzzled Alonzo still, but for the circumstance that he had forgotten it. It had not even occurred to him that it had been a conjuring trick.

"You had no sovereigns when you came to Portercliffe Hall!" snarled the voice. "Schoolboys do not carry sovereigns about with them."

"Certainly not!" gasped Alonzo.

"Then where did you find them?"

"I don't know!"

"What?"

"I—I assure you that that is the truth!" gasped Alonzo. "I was quite

unaware that there were sovereigns in my pockets, and I was very, very much surprised when Kipps found them there."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" "I am aware that it sounds very, very improbable," confessed Alonzo Todd. "But I assure you— Ow! Wow!"

His head was knocked on the masonry again.

Evidently the unknown man did not believe his statement. It was, indeed, a very extraordinary statement. Even Alonzo realised that.

That any fellow could have had four golden sovereigns in his pockets, in the days of paper money, without knowing that they were there, did undoubtedly sound awfully steep. It was no wonder that the unknown man refused to believe such a statement.

Bang!
"Oh, good gracious! Ow!"
"Will you answer me now?"

"Wow! I can only tell you the truth!" gasped Alonzo. "I assure you that—"

"Where did you find the sovereigns?" "I—I did not find them! Kipps found them in my pockets!"

"You found them somewhere within the borders of Portercliffe Hall! That I know! Where is the place?" hissed the voice. "Listen to me! How many sovereigns you may have taken from the hiding-place, I do not know—but you may keep them if you tell me where the place itself is, so that I may find the rest. Do you understand me?"

Alonzo could only gasp with astonishment and terror. It seemed to him that he must be in the hands of a lunatic.

The man, it appeared, believed that there was some hiding-place within the precincts of Portercliffe Hall, where sovereigns were to be found in abundance! Having seen Alonzo in possession of sovereigns, he suspected that Alonzo had found the place and helped himself! That was a natural suspicion, in the circumstances. But why should anyone suppose that gold was hidden at Portercliffe Hall? That was a mystery. It was so mysterious and so inexplicable, that it looked to Alonzo like a case of lunacy.

"I am waiting for your answer!" came the hissing voice.

"Oh dear!"
"Listen! Tell me the truth, and I shall leave you here while I go and clear out the hiding-place. Then I shall return and release you. But if you do not tell me the truth, I shall leave you here, tied up in this sack, where you will never be found. I have no time to waste! The truth!"

"I—I assure you—"
"For the last time, where did you find the sovereigns?"

"I never found them!"
"Enough!" came a savage snarl. "You will tell me the truth, I think, when I ask you again! I shall return to-night. You will answer then!"

Again the hapless Alonzo was grasped and dragged. He spluttered and gasped wildly inside the enveloping sack.

He heard a grinding sound, as of a heavy stone moving. Then there was a dull thud. A stone had closed. He felt a cord knotted round his ankles.

Blackness surrounded Alonzo Todd. He struggled to a sitting posture on cold stone flags. He wriggled wildly, but his arms were securely imprisoned in the sack, and he could not loosen the cord that was knotted round him, fastening the neck of the sack round his waist.

"Oh goodness!" gasped Alonzo.
He heard a faint sound of receding

footsteps. Then there was a dead silence. His mysterious captor had gone. He was left alone, in cold and darkness—in some underground recess under the old lodge in the park.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Who Pays?

"JAMES!"
"Sir!"
"Pay the taxi!"
James, the footman, looked at Bunter.

A taxi from Margate stood on the drive, the taximan waiting for his fare. James did not seem eager to hand it over.

"Do you hear me?" snapped Bunter.
"Yes, sir!" said James.

"Well, pay the man! I've left my money in the bathing-hut at Cliftonville!" Bunter condescended to explain.
"Ask me for it later."

"Oh!" said James.
"It's only five shillings," added Bunter.

James did not stir.
The taximan looked up from his cab with a rather impatient expression. In holiday-times there were plenty of fares to be picked up in merry Margate. He did not want to wait.

Bunter had given up the idea of a bathe that morning. He had been only too glad to escape from the beach without falling into the hands of the gentleman in the purple bathing-suit.

Naturally he had taken a taxi back to Portercliffe Hall. He did not see walking a mile when there were taxicabs to be had.

The Owl of Greyfriars had not had a happy morning, and he had not returned in a good temper. His temper was not improved by James' hesitation to trust him for the trifling sum of five shillings.

Bunter would have rolled on and left the matter where it was, but for the certainty that the taximan would soon have been knocking at the door inquiring for his five shillings. The man had to be paid.

"Don't keep the man waiting, James!" snapped Bunter.

"I'm not keeping him waiting, sir!" said James. "I ain't been riding in his taxi, sir!"

Bunter frowned.
This was cheek!
More than once Bunter had had a suspicion that the staff at Portercliffe

Hall did not regard him with the deep respect that was his due. Now it was more than a suspicion. It was a certainty!

"I don't want any impudence, James!" said Bunter crushingly. "Perhaps you'd better call Chandos."

"Very good, sir!" said James.
And he went away by the service door to call the butler Chandos, if he liked, could pay for taxicabs for a fat imago, but James, as he told several other footmen below stairs, was blown if he was going to!

Bunter waited impatiently.
The taximan waited still more impatiently.

He left his cab and came up the steps at last. He touched his cap to Bunter in the doorway quite civilly. He did not suspect that he was dealing with a "bilk" at so magnificent a place as Portercliffe Hall. But he wanted to be off.

"That'll be five shillings, sir!" said the taxi-driver.

"I've nothing smaller than a five-pound note," explained Bunter. "I've sent a servant for some change."

"Very well, sir."
James came back at last. There was
(Continued on next page.)



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no sign of the Portercliffe butler. Bunter glared at him.

"Didn't I tell you to send Chandos?" he snapped.

"Yes, sir!" assented James.

"Well, where is he?"

"I think Mr. Chandos must have gone out, sir, as I can't find him in the 'ouse!" answered James.

Billy Bunter breathed hard. He was depending on Chandos. Chandos, he hoped, at least, was not such a distrustful and suspicious beast as James!

But Chandos was not available!

It was, of course, a fearful cheek on a butler's part not to be available when William George Bunter wanted him! But there it was—he wasn't!

"Is Mr. Fish in?" asked Bunter at length.

"In the library, sir, with Mr. Bosanney!" answered James.

Bunter told the taximan to wait and rolled away to the library. Mr. Hiram K. Fish was not a hopeful subject to "touch" even for so small a sum as five shillings. But it was a case of any port in a storm.

According to Fisher T. Fish, his "popper" was rolling in dollars, and had spent enormous sums on buying Portercliffe Hall. But Billy Bunter happened to be aware that Mr. Fish had not bought Portercliffe Hall at all, but was only a temporary tenant of that palatial abode. The other fellows did not know that—lacking Billy Bunter's masterly gift for finding out things that did not concern him.

Still, though Mr. Fish certainly had not bought the Hall, and though he probably did not roll in dollars, still, he could easily afford to lend Bunter five shillings—which was only a dollar and a quarter—for a taxi fare—if he felt disposed so to do.

Only it was doubtful whether he would feel so disposed.

Whether his dollars were many or few, there was no doubt that Mr. Fish, like his son Fisher, was very keen on looking after them and keeping them in his own pockets.

Still, a fellow could only try. The taximan had to be paid—and Bunter could not pay him, owing to the general meanness of fellows who had refused to lend him a quid that morning.

Bunter rolled into the library of Portercliffe Hall.

Mr. Hiram K. Fish was there, smoking one of his long, thin cigars. He was deep in talk with Mr. Bosanney, his secretary—formerly the secretary of the late Lord Portercliffe.

Both of them ceased to speak suddenly as Bunter came in. Both of them looked at him, with far from welcoming looks.

"I—I say, Mr. Fish—" stammered Bunter.

"Spill it!" said Mr. Fish briefly.

"I've got a taxi to pay at the door—"

"Pay it, then!"

"I haven't received a remittance I was expecting this morning," explained

Bunter. "It was a postal order from one of my titled relations—"

"Shut the door after you!" said Mr. Fish.

"Will you lend me—"

"Nopo."

"But—but the man's waiting—"

"I guess I said shut that door!"

Bunter blinked at him. If this was what Mr. Fish considered good manners in dealing with a guest, Bunter did not agree with him.

He shut the door. But he remained on the hither side of it.

His financial resources were limited to threepence, and it was no use offering that sum to the Margate taximan. It was obvious that he would not be satisfied, and Bunter did not want to enter into a sordid wrangle about money.

"I—I—I say, Mr. Fish—" recommenced Bunter, after shutting the door.

"Pack it up!" said Mr. Fish.

"But, I say—"

"I guess I'm talking business with my secretary. I'll mention that I'm waiting for you to beat it," remarked Mr. Fish.

"As a guest here—" began Bunter, with dignity.

"Throttle it down!" said Mr. Fish.

Bunter turned to Mr. Bosanney, whose hard-featured, sharp face wore a sardonic grin. Bunter did not like the secretary, and the secretary did not like Bunter. He was even less hopeful to "touch" than Mr. Fish! Still, as before, there was no harm in trying it on.

"I say, Mr. Bosanney—" said Bunter.

"Cut it out!" said Mr. Bosanney.

"A mere five shillings—"

The secretary turned his back on Bunter.

Hiram K. Fish removed the long, thin cigar from his mouth and waved it at the fat Owl of Greyfriars.

"Git!" he remarked.

There was no help for it! Bunter "got."

But he did not go back by the door into the hall. There he would have met the waiting taxi-driver—and it was useless, and might have been disagreeable, to meet a cabman who expected to be paid, and who, in the circumstances, couldn't be paid!

Bunter rolled along the library to another door, which opened into the picture gallery of Portercliffe Hall.

He left the library by that door and shut it after him.

Mr. Fish and his secretary, having seen the last of him, resumed their business discussion, and dismissed him from mind.

Billy Bunter decided to remain in the picture gallery till lunch.

He was not in the least interested in pictures. But he was still less interested in taxi-drivers—at the moment!

Whether James paid that driver, whether Chandos turned up and paid him, or whether Mr. Fish paid him, was really a matter of indifference to Bunter. He would, indeed, have paid him himself if he had had any money! As he hadn't, all that Bunter could do was to keep out of sight.

So, for the present, Billy Bunter understudied the shy violet, and, like Brer Fox in the story, he decided to lay low and say "nuffin."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

"MASTER BUNTER!"

Billy Bunter grinned. It was the voice of James, the footman, calling from the door at the lower end of the picture gallery on the hall.

Evidently James had looked into the library for the missing Owl, and had learned from Mr. Fish where Bunter had gone.

There were half a dozen doors to the great gallery, one of them opening from the hall; and it was at this that James stood, calling.

"Master Bunter, please!"

Billy Bunter did not answer.

About half-way down the long gallery there was a deep recess in the high wall. At the back of it was the life-size picture of a dead-and-gone lord of Portercliffe in an immense gilt frame. Bunter was in that alcove, out of sight from the open gallery—and he was going to stay there.

"Master Bunter! Are you here? The taxi-driver is still waiting!"

Bunter backed deeper into the alcove, till he was leaning back against the portrait of the ancient lord.

Unless he came right along the gallery and looked in, James could not see him, and that the footman did not think of doing.

Bunter heard the door shut on the hall again, and once more he had the vast picture gallery to himself.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

James, evidently, had not paid the taximan! Nobody, so far, had paid him. He was still waiting!

Bunter did not mind. It was all right so long as the man did not see him and become unpleasant. There was an ottoman at the side of the deep alcove for the use of visitors who tired and wanted to sit down—which so often happens to visitors in picture galleries. Bunter sat down there.

As he had no desire whatever to look at the pictures, it was as good a spot as any—and it was quite out of sight from the gallery unless someone actually passed the opening of the recess.

It was cool and quiet and shady, quite restful after the glare of the August sun in Margate. And Bunter had a bag of bullseyes in his pocket, so he was not wholly wasting his time.

Sitting at ease, Bunter rested his fat limbs and chewed bullseyes and blinked at the portrait.

Why that portrait had been placed at the back of a recess, ten feet back from the gallery, might have puzzled Bunter if he had thought of it—which he did not. The recess was very dusky, and unless a light was turned on, the picture was very indistinct.

It was, as Bunter knew if he had cared to remember, the picture of the Red Earl—the Portercliffe of Queen Elizabeth's time. He was so called because he had slain so many foes with his good sword—meeting, finally, the same sticky fate himself. He had been killed in the turret-room by a vengeful enemy; and ever since that period his spectre had haunted the turret—according to the legend.

The Red Earl made a handsome, if rather sinister, figure in trunk hose and ruff and cloak, his hand resting on the sword at his side.

Bunter, however, was not much interested in the Red Earl, or any other earl of the long line of Portercliffes. He was not even interested in the historical fact that Good Queen Bess herself had once walked down the very gallery with trailing train.

Bunter was not interested in the past, but in the present—and the present was divided between the enjoyment of the bullseyes, and the uneasiness inspired by the taximan waiting in the hall.

He heard a distant door reopened.

Footsteps!

"Master Bunter!"

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

If Bunter had had any influence with

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Alonzo Todd was seated under the shade of the thick branches, examining his botanical specimens. He did not hear the rustle in the thickets behind, neither did he see a pair of hands holding a sack which was shortly to envelop his head!

Mr. Fish, he would certainly have used it, to induce that transatlantic gentleman to sack James, the footman. The beast was fearfully pertinacious.

Having called Master Bunter in vain, he was coming up the picture gallery to look for him.

Really, it would have been less trouble for James to pay the taximan his five shillings, and have done with it. James, however, did not seem to see it from that viewpoint.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He rose from the ottoman. He was out of sight at present, but as soon as James arrived at the Red Earl's alcove he would be in full view.

It was frightfully undignified—even Bunter felt that—to hunt cover—to dodge a dashed manservant!

But Bunter did not want to see James. It was no use saying to him haughtily, "Pay the man!" James wouldn't. And it was really difficult to know what he was to do when James rooted him out.

Undignified as it was to hide, Bunter decided that it would be better not to let James root him out.

He crawled under the ottoman in the alcove.

A minute later James passed, and, as Bunter expected, glanced into the recess in passing.

But he passed on without seeing the hidden Owl of Greyfriars, and Bunter, having a view of a pair of well-developed calves as James passed, was glad and relieved to see the last of them.

But he did not emerge.

James would be coming back, and he might glance in again.

It was several minutes before James came back. Again Bunter had a view of a pair of plump calves passing the alcove.

James went on towards the door at the lower end of the gallery to the hall,

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

He decided to stay where he was for a time, lest the persistent and pertinacious James should come exploring for him again. If he was not found, somebody evidently would have to pay that taxi-driver.

Click!

Billy Bunter gave quite a start.

It was a faint click, but it was clear and audible in the silence of the great gallery. It came from the wall at the back of the recess, where the great portrait of the Red Earl hung.

From under the ottoman Bunter could see the lower edge of the great gilt frame, about a foot from the floor.

His eyes almost bolted through his spectacles as he saw that it was moving.

Petrified with amazement, Billy Bunter blinked at it.

It was moving, swinging silently out from the wall.

In dizzy amazement, the fat Owl realised that the tall picture was hinged to the wall, forming a door—a secret door—and that it was being pushed open by someone on the other side.

Bunter hardly breathed.

He knew that Mr. Fish believed that there were secret passages in the ancient building, and was very anxious to discover them for some mysterious reason of his own. Now Bunter, quite unexpectedly and inadvertently, had made the discovery.

He knew that it could not be Mr. Fish behind the wall. He had left him in the library talking to his secretary.

It was not one of the Greyfriars juniors; they had not come back from Margate. Was it Alonzo?

Bunter, silent and dumb, watched, from under the ottoman, all his curiosity aroused.

The picture-frame swung silently out, and closed again. Between the ottoman that hid Bunter and the gilt frame,

he had a view of the lower part of a pair of legs in dark trousers.

Those legs walked swiftly away, disappearing into the picture gallery. To whom they belonged, Bunter had not the faintest idea.

He had only seen them as far as the knees, and all he could be sure of was that they were a man's legs, not a boy's. Certainly they were not the spindle-shanks of Alonzo Todd.

Bunter kept very still.

The legs had vanished; but he heard no retreating footsteps. The man, whoever he was, was departing by way of the picture gallery quietly.

For a full five minutes Bunter remained where he was, uncertain that the man had gone. Then a sound of voices floated to his ears.

There were two voices in the picture gallery—one that of James, the footman, the other that of Chandos, the butler.

"Not here, I think, James."

"Mr. Fish said he went into the picture gallery from the library, sir."

"No doubt he left by another door."

"I've been up to his room, Mr. Chandos, and he's not there."

"Is the man still waiting?"

"Yes, Mr. Chandos. He won't go until he's paid," said James. "Speaking with all respect, sir, that there Master Bunter is a young bilk, sir."

"A very unpleasant youth, James."

"Orrid little fat beast, sir!" said James.

"I quite agree," said Chandos.

"I didn't know you'd come in, sir, or I'd have spoken to you before. What about that taxi-driver?"

"I will see him," said Chandos.

Voices and footsteps receded. A door closed in the distance. Billy Bunter, feeling safe at last, crawled out from under the ottoman in the alcove.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoner of the Secret Passage!

"**B**EASTS!" murmured Bunter. He was referring to Chandos and James.

One of them described him as a horrid little beast; the other quite agreed, so both obviously were beasts.

But Bunter dismissed them from his fat mind. He was intensely curious about that picture that served somebody as a secret door.

He blinked at it with intense interest through his big spectacles. It looked firmly clamped on the solid wall as if it had never stirred since first it had been placed there.

But Bunter knew better than that. He had seen it stir, and knew that it was a hidden door.

It had opened on hinges on the right—hidden hinges of which there was not the slightest trace to be seen. That meant that the fastening was on the left.

Bunter blinked at the left side of the thick gilt frame. Somewhere, somehow, there was a means of opening it.

The fat Owl was very keen to discover what was on the other side.

A man, of whom Bunter knew nothing, except that he wore dark trousers, had passed through. It must be one of the occupants of Portercliffe Hall, but which was a mystery to Bunter. There were dozens of them. He had not even seen all the members of the numerous staff controlled by Chandos, the butler.

Whoever he was, he had gone out into the picture gallery and vanished, which was surprising, too, for he might have run into either Chandos or James. Still, if he was a member of the household, they would not be surprised at seeing

him there, not knowing that he had come by the secret door.

Bunter groped over the frame, feeling for a secret spring. He knew that it must exist.

His eyes gleamed through his spectacles. He felt that he was on the track of the mystery of Portercliffe Hall.

He was aware that Mr. Hiram K. Fish was occupying that magnificent mansion for some mysterious business reasons. He had surreptitiously learned that Mr. Fish expected to make a million dollars profit out of his tenancy of Portercliffe Hall.

Which was very puzzling and mystifying. And it was no secret that Mr. Fish was anxious to get on the trail of secret passages that he believed to exist in the building.

He had questioned Chandos about them without getting any information. And he had put it up to the Greyfriars party to explore the place from end to end, and make the discovery if they could—a task that naturally rather appealed to the schoolboys.

Harry Wharton & Co. had rooted all over Portercliffe Hall on a good many occasions during the past week, but without making any discovery. That, as it happened, was reserved for Billy Bunter.

But the secret of the picture-frame was baffling. Bunter groped and groped, and pressed and squeezed and clawed, but the portrait of the Red Earl still remained immovable on the wall.

The frame was thick and massive, and carved in deep relief. Bunter had no doubt that one of the knobs or curls of gilded wood hid a secret spring.

But which?

"Oh!" he gasped suddenly.

His fat hand, by sheer chance, had

landed on the right spot; and there was the faintest of clicks. The great picture opened like a door from the wall, so suddenly that Bunter had to jump back to save his fat little nose.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

An aperture about two feet wide was before him, revealed by the opening of the secret door.

He peered through.

All was deeply dusky within. But he saw a floor, and dim walls, and a small stool. On the stool lay an electric torch—evidently used in those dark recesses, and left there for future use, by the man in the dark trousers.

Bunter stepped cautiously through.

He picked up the torch and flashed on the light. He blinked at the back of the picture door.

On the back of the door, where concealment was not necessary, was a handle, which Bunter could guess worked the hidden spring from the inner side.

He grasped the handle and drew the door shut. It clicked and fastened. That did not worry Bunter; he knew that he could open it again when he liked. He was safe now from discovery by the man in dark trousers if he happened to come along again.

The gleam of the electric torch showed him a narrow landing, and a flight of steps leading downward, evidently cut in the solidity of the ancient wall, which was of immense thickness.

Holding the light before him, Bunter descended the steps.

It was a spiral stair, and it wound on, and on, and on. It seemed to the fat Owl that he was descending into the very heart of the earth.

Going down was not difficult work; but Billy Bunter thought, with some dismay, of clambering up again! Bunter did not like stairs! He had too much weight to carry up.

But the fat junior was determined to follow up—or rather down—the discovery he had made!

This would be startling news for the fellows when they came back from Margate! Even those beasts would have to admit that Bunter was the man who did things!

They had hunted up and down, and round about Portercliffe Hall for a week or more to discover something of this sort! They had failed! And here was Bunter—succeeding!

Certainly, it was by sheer chance—all due to dodging the taxi-man! But Bunter did not choose to think of that!

On and on he went, down the spiral stair. Here and there, from the winding turns, passages opened, leading away into dense darkness.

Bunter did not stop to explore any of them. He kept to the staircase, and reached the bottom at last.

He found himself in a stone-flagged passage—the stone flags reeking with damp and slime. He was deep under the great hall of Portercliffe now.

He held up the light, and followed the subterranean passage.

Whither it led he had not the faintest idea; but it was certain that it had an outlet somewhere. From the distance he covered it seemed that that outlet was beyond the walls of the building.

Indeed, as he tramped on, and on, and on, it seemed to Bunter that the outlet must be at an immense distance from Portercliffe Hall.

No doubt that secret passage had been constructed in ancient days, as a means of escape in times of danger for the lords of Portercliffe. Probably its outlet was at a distance somewhere in the park.

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter

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He was tired! He had not really bargained for this! He felt as if he had walked miles and miles.

The air in the underground tunnel, though fairly fresh, was heavy. Bunter slowed and slowed.

He thought of chucking it, and returning the way he had come. But it was a long, long way back, and there was that awful spiral stair to climb at the end. And the outlet might be near at hand!

Hopefully, Bunter plugged on. The leastly tunnel could not go on for ever.

"Oh crikey!" stuttered Bunter, suddenly coming to a halt. A strange sound came from the darkness ahead.

Hitherto, there had been no sound in the tunnel, save his own footsteps, and his stertorous breathing. Now there were other sounds—strange sounds.

Bunter listened intently; his fat heart thumping! He remembered the ghost of Portercliffe Hall!

Fisher T. Fish had declared that he had seen the ghostly figure of the Red Earl at midnight in the haunted turret! Bunter certainly did not believe that fishy had! Still it did not seem so improbable in these dark and silent recesses below the earth.

What was that sound?

Someone was there—in the darkness ahead of him. He heard a rustling, brushing sound, as of someone struggling; a gasping, gurgling sound, as of someone half-suffocated.

"Wurrrgh! Gurrgh!"

Bunter listened, and shivered.

What was it?

He was not alone, as he had supposed, in those dark, dismal recesses. It had not crossed his mind that there might be any danger to be encountered there. But now—

"Wurrrgh!" came the gurgling sound.

"Oh, jiminy!" gasped Bunter.

He stood, flashing the light before him. Then he gave a startled jump at the sight of an extraordinary object lying on the stone flags of the tunnel floor.

In utter amazement, Bunter stepped nearer to it, and blinked at it through his big spectacles. His alarm gave place to astonishment as he saw what it was.

It was a fellow with a sack inverted over his head, imprisoning his arms, tied tightly round his waist with a knotted cord. Another cord was knotted round his ankles.

Only his legs could be seen; but those skinny legs were rather familiar to Bunter's view. He gazed at them.

"Wurrrgh!" came from the interior of the sack, as the strange figure wriggled, and struggled, and rolled. "Urrgh!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

His startled voice penetrated the sack. The gasping and gurgling ceased, and there was a suffocated howl:

"Ow! Help! Oooh!"

Bunter, almost tottering with amazement, set down the electric torch, and opened his penknife. He cut through the cords, and jerked the sack off the prisoner! The rumpled and ruffled head, and the red, breathless face, of Alonzo Todd were revealed.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Lost in the Dark!

"GROOOH!" gasped Alonzo.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

They stared at one another in mutual amazement.

Bunter's eyes almost popped through

his spectacles. He had not known what discovery he might make at the end of his subterranean explorations. But most assuredly he had never expected to discover Alonzo Todd, headed up in a sack! That was the very last discovery he would have expected to make! He blinked at Alonzo in utter bewilderment.

"Oh, dear!" Alonzo picked himself up and rubbed his cramped limbs. "Oh, good gracious! I am very, very glad to see you, my dear William—oooh! How did you find me here? Oooh!"

"How did you get here?" gurgled the amazed Owl. "What did you tie yourself up in a sack for?"

"My dear William—oooh! I did not tie myself up in that sack! Owl! I was tied up in it by some—groogh—thoroughly unpleasant and vindictive person—oh, dear!"

"Who?" gasped Bunter.

"I am—groogh—unacquainted with his identity, my dear William, as he seized me from behind—ow!—and put the sack over my head! I was very, very much surprised, and disconcerted! Oh, good gracious!"

"But why—" gasped Bunter, feeling as if his fat head was turning round in his astonishment.

"I—I think it was some lunatic," groaned Alonzo. "Whoever he was, he had the very, very extraordinary idea that I had found money hidden somewhere in Portercliffe Hall—he seemed to think that I could tell him where to find—groogh—a lot of sovereigns—oooh—and he refused to believe that I did not know where those sovereigns came from—urrrgh—that Kipps found in my pocket—"

"You silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "There weren't any sovereigns! It was a conjuring trick."

"My dear William—"

"They were gilded ha'pennies, you fathead—Kipps keeps them for conjuring tricks, you dunny—"

"Oh, dear! I wish I had been aware of that!" gasped Alonzo. "I should certainly have told that very, very unpleasant person—"

"Mean to say that somebody collared you, thinking you had a lot of sovereigns because of that conjuring trick!" stuttered Bunter.

"Oh, dear! Yes! And he left me tied up here because I could not tell him where they were found!" groaned Alonzo. "He said that he would come back later, and ask me again. Oooh!"

Bunter jumped, and blinked round in alarm.

"Oh crikey! If—if he comes back while I'm here— Oh lor'!" He grabbed up the electric torch. "I say—"

"He said he would return to-night!"

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter, greatly relieved. "Of—of course, I'm not afraid of the brute. He wouldn't handle me as he did you! But—but I'd rather not meet him here."

"I should be very, very sorry to meet him again!" said Alonzo. "But the two of us, perhaps, could deal with him."

"Let's get out of this!" said Bunter hastily. "I say, how did you get in? You didn't come down the tunnel from the house?"

"I was in the old hunting lodge in the park. We must be just underneath it now," said Alonzo. "There must be some sort of a door—"

"That's the way out, then," said Bunter. "I—I say, did the man go out that way, or did he go up the tunnel—the way I came?"

"He went up the tunnel—I heard him going."

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter. He knew now that the man in the

dark trousers, who had emerged from the secret door in the picture gallery, must have been the man who had "sacked" Alonzo.

Evidently Alonzo's mysterious assailant was a member of the household at Portercliffe Hall.

That, indeed, was clear, from the fact that he had seen the "sovereigns" taken from Alonzo's pocket by the Greyfriars conjurer. That incident had occurred inside the house, and could have been witnessed by no one outside Portercliffe Hall.

"Look here, it's a fearfully long way back to the house," said Bunter. "Let's try to get out the way he bunged you in—see?"

"I shall be very, very—"

"Buck up!" said Bunter.

He moved on past Alonzo, flashing the light of the torch on the stone walls. Alonzo followed him, still rubbing his cramped bones.

It was at the end of the tunnel. And the end was a solid wall of stone blocks.

Bunter blinked at it, stared at it, and groped over it. That there was some secret opening was certain, as Alonzo had been dragged in there by his captor, who had departed in the other direction.

But the secret was well hidden. Bunter groped in vain. Alonzo joined him, and groped and fumbled.

"There must be a moving stone, or something, if you were got in this way," grunted Bunter. "We've got to find it—see?"

"I should be very, very glad to find it, my dear William!" gasped Alonzo. "But I do not seem able to do so."

"Well, you go on looking for it, and I'll sit down and rest a bit!" said the fat Owl.

"But—"

"It's all right if that beast said he wasn't coming back till to-night. Not that I'm afraid of him, of course!"

"But I was going to say—"

"Look here, Alonzo, don't you be jolly lazy!" said Bunter, sitting down. "I'll hold the light, and you get on with it—see?"

"Certainly, my dear William, but—but—"

"Don't waste time jawing, old chap! What a fellow you are to jaw!" said Bunter peevishly. "Just you get on with finding the way out."

"But I was going to say—"

"Oh, shut up, and get on!"

"Very well, my dear William, if you insist," said Alonzo meekly. "I was only going to mention that the light seems to be giving out, and—"

"What!"

Bunter jumped up as suddenly as if the cold stone flags had become red-hot underneath him.

"If we should be left in the dark, my dear William—"

"Oh crikey!"

"It might, perhaps, be better to find our way out the way you came, before the light goes! However, if you wish—"

"You silly idiot!" howled Bunter. "Come on!"

Bunter had not observed till Alonzo pointed it out that the light of the electric torch was weakening.

But he observed it now. That torch had been used by the mystery man to light his way along the tunnel and back again, and Bunter had had it going for more than an hour. The battery was beginning to fail.

The bare thought of being left in the dark in that underground den thrilled the fat Owl of Greyfriars with terror.

He started back along the tunnel at a run. Evidently there was no more time
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

to be lost seeking the hidden outlet into the hunting-lodge.

Bunter wondered, with a spasm of terror, whether too much time had not been lost already. He started back along the tunnel as fast as his fat little legs could go. Alonzo's long, slim ones easily kept pace.

How far it was back to Portercliffe Hall Bunter did not know. But if it was under the old hunting-lodge in the park that he had found Alonzo, he knew that it must be at least a quarter-of a mile.

He panted and puffed and blew on his way, frantically anxious to get back to the spiral stair behind the Red Earl in the picture gallery before the light gave out.

The tunnel seemed endless.

The light was wavering, casting strange shadows on the stone walls. It grew dimmer and dimmer.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter. "We shall get left in the dark——"

"That will be very, very unpleasant, my dear William!" gasped Alonzo. "But even in the dark we shall be able to feel our way along the walls——"

"You silly idiot! There's a lot of other passages branch off under the house. I saw five or six——"

"Oh, goodness gracious!"

"If we get into the wrong passage we——"

"Hurry!" gasped Alonzo.

A last glimmer leaped from the electric torch, and it went out. Darkness rushed on them.

"Oh, jiminy!"

"Goodness gracious!"

"I—I—I say, got any matches, Alonzo?"

"No. Have you?"

"You silly idiot, mean to say you haven't a match-box in your pocket?" howled Bunter.

"But if you have one, my dear William——"

"I haven't!" howled Bunter.

"Then it is surely unjust to characterise me as a silly idiot because I——"

"Oh, shut up, you dummy!"

"We must grope our way, my dear William," said Alonzo mildly. "We must take care not to get separated. Keep up your courage, my dear William!"

"Beast!"

Alonzo grasped a fat arm in the darkness. They groped on together in a darkness like that of ancient Egypt—a darkness that might be felt!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in with good appetites for lunch.

Chandos, as usual, presided over that function, with the assistance of John and James and Peter.

Lunch, being a meal, reminded the juniors of Billy Bunter, whom they had not seen since they had left him in the bathing-hut on Cliftonville beach. Naturally, they expected to see him at lunch. But the fat Owl of the Remove was not there, neither was Alonzo Todd.

Which was surprising. Alonzo, in the earnest pursuit of botanical knowledge, sometimes forgot time and space, and was often late for meals. But when William George Bunter was late for a meal, it was time for the skies to fall! If there was anything in the universe as important as a meal, Billy Bunter had never heard of it.

"Hasn't Bunter come in?" asked Harry Wharton.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

"Yep!" grunted Fisher T. Fish, who had had a few words with Chandos. "He sure hit the shebang in a taxi, and left Chandos to pay the man!"

"Bunter all over!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The all-overfulness is terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Alonzo's late, too!" remarked Frank Nugent. "Still rooting after his jolly old specimens, I suppose. Have you seen Todd, Chandos?"

"Yes, sir; I saw him go out soon after you young gentlemen this morning," answered the butler. "I do not think that he has returned to the house."

It was undoubtedly surprising that Billy Bunter did not turn up prompt to time for a meal. But the Greyfriars fellows did not think of being alarmed, and they disposed of lunch without giving much thought to the matter.

After lunch, Wibley went to his room to get on with his play. The Famous Five went down to the tennis courts. Smithy and Kipps joined Fisher T. Fish in a ramble over Portercliffe Hall—in that hunt for secret doors and passages on which Fishy and his father were extremely keen.

Hunting for secret passages in an ancient building like Portercliffe Hall seemed rather a lark to the schoolboys. They had already explored the old place, from cellars to turrets, and from one end to the other. So far, no discovery had been made, but they were quite eager to make one, if it was possible. But they were rather puzzled to know why Hiram K. Fish was so keen on it.

It was not the sort of thing that they would have expected to interest the hard-headed business man from New York.

But it was certain that both popper and son were very keen on that rather peculiar quest, and their keenness was shared by the secretary, Mr. Bosanney.

Again and again the juniors had come across the little man in black, rooting about in all sorts of unexpected places, tireless in the search.

Although he had been employed by the late Lord Portercliffe, and had formerly lived many years in the mansion, Bosanney did not seem acquainted with its secrets—if any.

It was probable enough that there were secret passages in so ancient a building as Portercliffe Hall, but no one seemed to know anything about them.

Even Chandos, who had been butler at Portercliffe Hall for a quarter of a century, had no information to give. He was questioned a good many times, but he only shook his portly head, and stated that he had never heard of anything of the kind.

The Greyfriars party gathered again to tea on the lawn later in the afternoon, and when neither Billy Bunter nor Alonzo Todd turned up to tea, they began to wonder what had happened.

Alonzo might have forgotten lunch, but even the enthralling pursuit of botany could not have prevented him from getting hungry. As for Bunter, it was clear that only something serious could have caused him to miss two meals in succession.

"What on earth's happened to them?" asked Bob Cherry.

"What could have happened?" said Smithy, shrugging his shoulders.

"Blessed if I know, but——"

"I guess they're O.K.," said Fisher T. Fish carelessly. "Might have wandered off anywhere. They'll sure be back to dinner."

"It's jolly queer!" said Harry.

"The queerfulness is terrific."

"Alonzo's ass enough to tumble into

any hole he happened to come across," remarked Kipps. "Might go round and look for him after tea."

"And Bunter——" said Johnny Bull. "I guess he's feeding out somewhere," said Fisher T. Fish. "If any guy has lent him any money——"

"Has anybody?" asked Frank.

But nobody had.

"And Alonzo hasn't any," remarked the Bounder. "Bunter saw to that! They can't have gone off on any excursion without dibs."

"Better look for them!" said Harry.

And after tea the juniors scattered over the extensive grounds of Portercliffe Hall, to look for the missing pair.

But they looked for them in vain, and when the party gathered again, Alonzo and Bunter were still absent.

By this time it was fairly clear that something must have happened. It would have been like Bunter, if he had a supply of cash, to clear off on his own without caring whether his absence caused alarm or not. But it was well known that the fat Owl was "stony." And Alonzo was not inconsiderate like Bunter—he would not have cleared off for the day without mentioning to anybody that he was going.

Alonzo, as far as could be learned, had intended to stay in the grounds, and Bunter, it was certain, had come back from Margate, and had last been seen going from the library into the picture gallery. Nothing more was known of either of them.

They had not been together, but both were missing. If Alonzo had tumbled into some old chalk pit in a solitary spot in the park, it was clear that Bunter hadn't; he had been in the house when last seen. It was really mysterious.

That he was not in the house now was certain. But where was he—and why? Nobody could begin to guess. Nothing had been seen of either Alonzo or Bunter when the Greyfriars party gathered in the house again.

The Greyfriars party were all very grave now. Something had happened. But what? That was an absolute mystery.

They sat in the hall, discussing the mysterious matter. The Bounder put on the radiogram, but the other fellows paid no attention to the wireless.

They were too worried about the missing pair. It was getting near dinner-time now. If Bunter missed dinner——

"I guess Bunter must have beat it for home," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "He was sure wise to it that I wasn't terribly keen on keeping him here. And if he did, he would jest clear off without a word."

"That's possible, I suppose," said Harry slowly. "But Alonzo——"

"I guess Alonzo has got me beat!" confessed Fisher T. Fish.

"It's just a jolly old mystery!" said Bob Cherry. "But—but—nothing serious can have happened to them, surely. How could it?"

"Then why haven't they come in?" said Nugent.

"Goodness knows!"

"Stop that row, Smithy, old man!" said Kipps as the radio began to thunder out "Pilgercher" from Tannhauser.

"Rot!" answered the Bounder. "What's the good of sitting round like a lot of moultin' hens, doin' nothin'? I dare say they're all right. Anyway, the wireless won't hurt them."

Which was true enough, though it seemed to the other fellows a little unfeeling on Smithy's part.

Unless there had been some sort of an accident, it was impossible to account for the absence of Alonzo and Bunter.

But what sort of an accident could



Bunter, almost tottering with amazement, cut through the cords and jerked the sack off the prisoner. The rumped and ruffled head and the red, breathless face of Alonzo Todd were revealed. "Urrrgh!" gasped Alonzo. "Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

have happened within the walls of Portercliffe Hall, no one could even begin to guess.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

"What—"

"I heard a knock!"

"I believe I did!" exclaimed Wharton, staring round the great oak-panelled hall in amazement. "But what—where—"

"Shut that off, Smithy!" exclaimed Bob. The "Pilgrim's Chorus" was thundering out of the radio, drowning almost every other sound.

"It'll be finished in a minute or two," yawned the Bounder.

"We heard a knocking—"

"Rot!"

"Shut it off, you ass!"

Harry Wharton ran across to the radio and switched it off. In the sudden silence that followed there came a sharp rapping sound.

Knock, knock, knock!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Radio to the Rescue!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Billy Bunter. "Oh dear!" said Alonzo Todd.

They heard each other, but they could not see one another. They were in the blackest darkness.

How long they had been in darkness, hungry, tired, dismal, and almost despairing, they did not know. It seemed like weeks, if not years.

Where were they? They could not tell, except that they were somewhere under the vast edifice of Portercliffe Hall. For hours and hours they had groped by stone walls, hoping and hoping to get back to the spiral stair that led up to the secret door in the

picture gallery. But it was clear that in the darkness they had followed a wrong passage.

Again and again they were stopped by a blank stone wall, and had to turn and grope back. But they came to no stairs.

With a light Bunter could no doubt have picked out the right passage from the wrong ones. In the black darkness it was impossible.

They stopped to rest, worn out with tramping in the darkness, and started again, and stopped to rest again. Both of them were fearfully hungry—especially Bunter.

What time it was they could not guess, whether it was still day or night, or whether another day had come. The rests grew longer and longer, but after each rest they started again. And at long, long last, Billy Bunter uttered a howl as his fat shin struck on a step.

"Ow!" yelled Bunter.

"My dear William!" came Alonzo's faint voice from the darkness.

"Wow! I've barked my shin!"

Alonzo groped.

"Goodness gracious! It is a step!" he gasped. "Oh, my goodness, I hope we have found the stairs at last, Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He forgot even the pain in his shin at the hope of escape. "I say, come on!"

They crawled, groping, up a narrow stair. It ascended in a spiral, as they could feel, though they could not see.

"Thank goodness we've found it!" groaned Bunter. "I say, I'm fearfully hungry, Alonzo! Famished!"

"I am also very, very hungry!" said Alonzo gently.

Grunt from Bunter. He did not want to hear about Alonzo's troubles. His own were enough for him.

It was a long spiral stair, as long as

the one by which Bunter had descended from the picture gallery. It did not occur to the fat junior, for the moment, that it might not be the same stair.

They reached the top at last, weary and exhausted. Billy Bunter groped round in the intense darkness, with eager, fat hands.

He remembered that there had been a small landing, enclosed on all sides by solid stone, except where the spiral stair opened. But now his fat hands met only open space as he groped.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Have you found the door, my dear William?"

"It—it—it's not here!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Oh crikey! We're done for!" groaned Bunter. "There's another staircase—we've got to the wrong one—oh crikey!"

"Oh, my goodness!" mumbled Alonzo.

It was a crushing blow.

Billy Bunter sank down on the stone flags and groaned in utter despair. He leaned back weakly against cold stone.

"I'm done!" he moaned.

"My dear William, we had better try again!" mumbled Alonzo. He groped about him. "I can feel the walls of a passage of some sort—"

"Oh dear!"

"We are, at all events, inside the house, Bunter," said Alonzo, encouragingly. "That is something—"

"Ow!"

"Possibly, if we knock on the walls—"

"You knock!" moaned Bunter.

The fat Owl sat in a state of collapse. Utterly exhausted, he sat leaning on the stone wall. Alonzo began to rap on the wall.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.



(Continued from page 13.)

It was fairly certain that the spiral stair had led them to the level of the inhabited part of the building. No doubt they were on the same level as the picture gallery, though in a different part of the immense house. If that wall adjoined an occupied room, it was possible that knocking might be heard.

But the stone walls were thick and solid. It was a faint hope, and Alonzo gave it up at last.

He groped back to Bunter:

"My dear William—"

Groan!

"We must not give up hope, Bunter!" said Alonzo gently. "It is at such moments as this that a fellow should keep up his courage."

Groan!

"My dear William—"

"Beast!"

Alonzo sighed and sat down beside Bunter. He had to wait till the fat junior had rested before making another effort.

The silence was broken by a succession of groans and moans from Billy Bunter. He was too tired and hungry even to be frightened. He groaned and moaned and moaned and groaned.

Alonzo was silent. Duffer as he was undoubtedly, there was a quiet courage in the good Alonzo, and he was keeping calm. Bunter did all the groaning and the moaning. But he did enough for two.

Suddenly Alonzo Todd gave a violent start. He rubbed his eyes, wondering whether he was asleep and dreaming. The deep, intense silence of the dark passage was broken by strange and unexpected sounds of music! From somewhere in the blackness strains of music reached his ears.

He was not dreaming! He started to his feet, listening! Muffled by thick walls, yet clear to his hearing, came the sound of a band—an amazing sound to hear in such a place.

"My dear Bunter—" gasped Alonzo.

Groan!

"Listen!"

Groan!

"Can you hear nothing, Bunter? Do listen!"

Billy Bunter ceased to groan at last. He dragged himself to his feet. Louder came the blare of music and both of them recognised a familiar tune they had often heard on the wireless—the "Pilgrim's Chorus" from Tannhauser.

"It—it—it's a band!" gasped Bunter. "How—how can there be a band here? I—I say, we're dreaming—"

"It must be the wireless, my dear William," said Alonzo.

"The—the wireless!" gasped Bunter. "What rot!"

"You see, it cannot be anything else," explained Alonzo gently. "We must be near the hall where the other fellows have the radio on."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He understood now. "I—I say, if we can hear the wireless why can't the beasts hear us knocking?"

"The walls are too thick, my dear William, for a knock to be heard from this side—"

"But we can hear the radio, you fat-head!"

"There must be some opening somewhere, or at least a place where the wall is not so thick. That is where it comes through. Let us try to find it."

"How can we find anything in the dark, you idiot?"

"We can move about till we find the place where it is loudest, my dear William!" said Alonzo gently. "That I feel very, very sure, is the spot where there must be an opening of some sort."

"Oh, get on and don't jaw!" said Bunter.

Alonzo ceased to speak and got on. He could not help thinking that dear William was becoming very, very peevish. But Alonzo, on the other hand, was very, very patient.

He groped along the cold stone wall. The sound of the music grew louder to his ears. Evidently he was approaching the spot where the sound penetrated the wall from the radio on the other side.

Louder and louder it grew, till he could have fancied himself quite near the radio. Obviously, only that wall separated them from the hall of Lord Portercliffe's mansion, where the radio was thundering Wagner. Suddenly the cold stone disappeared from under Alonzo's groping hand, and he found himself groping in an orifice in the wall.

"Here it is, Bunter!" he gasped. "Stop here!"

Alonzo groped in the opening of the stone. The wall was nearly two feet thick, of solid blocks. But in that spot a block was missing, leaving a space of about three feet by two. It was closed as Alonzo's groping hand told him, by a wooden wall—evidently a part of the oak-panelling of the hall. At that spot only the oak panels separated them from the room beyond, and that was where the "Pilgrim's Chorus" came thundering through from the radio.

Alonzo packed himself into the orifice in the stone wall, groped over the oak, and knocked. He knocked again and again, hard and fast, with clenched knuckles on the hard oak. Suddenly the music on the other side ceased. The radio had been shut off.

"They hear us, my dear William!" gasped Alonzo.

And he knocked again on the oak panel, and again and again.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret Panel!

KNOCK!

"Good gad!" ejaculated the Bunder. He stood by the silent radio staring.

Knock!

"It—it's somebody!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Listen!"

"I guess—"

Knock, knock, knock!

The juniors with startled faces listened intently. The knocking came from somewhere in the great hall—from one of the walls. They were sure of that. But for the moment they could not "place" it.

"Great John James Brown!" ejaculated Mr. Fish, staring round in amazement. "What the great horned toad is that?"

"I'll buy it!" said Fisher T.

"Can it be—" exclaimed Nugent.

"Alonzo—or Bunter—"

"But how—where—"

"Say, you park it, and listen a few!" exclaimed Mr. Fish.

There was deep silence, and they all listened. Clearly through the silence came the knocking.

Knock, knock!

"Scatter about and listen to it!" rapped Mr. Fish. "I guess we'll sure run it down."

Knock, knock!

Harry Wharton & Co. scattered about the hall. They listened attentively, trying to trace the spot from which the dull knocking came.

Mr. Fish's eyes were gleaming. He tapped Son on a bony shoulder.

"Say, big boy!" murmured Mr. Hiram K. Fish. "I'll say I got the tarantula by the tail! What? That knocking is coming from behind the wall—"

"Sure thing," assented Fisher T. Fish.

"They got on to the secret passages," grinned Mr. Fish. "I'll tell a man it don't mean anything else. They've sure tumbled in and can't tumble out again, and they're trying to put us wise."

"Popper," said Fisher T., "you're sure spry! I'll say you've hit it, square."

"I'll tell a man," said Mr. Fish complacently.

Knock, knock!

"This way!" shouted Bob Cherry.

He stopped at the oak-panelled wall, putting his ear to the dark polished panels; then he shouted, and the other fellows came running across to him.

"Listen here!" breathed Bob.

It was an alcove in the wall of the spacious hall. In that alcove stood a bronze figure of Hercules of heroic size. There was plenty of room to move round the statue, however. Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into the alcove and listened at the panel to which Bob had his ear.

Knock, knock!

It was loud and sharp now. Evidently they had located the panel which was being tapped on the other side.

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Johnny Bull. "The wall's of solid stone behind that oak—"

"Not just here, or we shouldn't hear the tapping," said Harry. "Let's tap back and see what happens."

He knocked sharply on the oak with his knuckles twice. The juniors listened. From the other side came back a double knock in answer.

"The wall's hollow there," said Harry. "It sounded hollow when I knocked; and everywhere else it sounds quite solid. There's an opening in the wall covered by this panel."

"Looks like it," agreed Bob. "But the—"

"I guess it's them young guys!" said Mr. Fish. "They been rooting about and got in somewhere they can't get out of."

The juniors exchanged glances. It seemed a very probable explanation of the mysterious disappearance of Bunter and Alonzo. It was certain, at all events, that there was somebody behind the panel, and they could hardly doubt that it was Bunter or Alonzo—or both.

"Let 'em know we're wise to them," said Fisher T. Fish; and the juniors rapped on the panel again and again. And to every knock came an answering knock from the other side.

Then Mr. Fish put his mouth close to the oak and shouted:

"Say, you hear me toot?"

"Help!"

Faintly it came through the thick oak; but it was audible—a human voice calling for help.

"That fixes it!" said Mr. Fish. "I guess we got to get it open! They know we're wise to them, anyhow, and they won't wander away. Say, where's that guy Bosanne?"

"Here, sir!" said the quiet voice of the secretary.

"You never got wise to a secret door here, Bosanne, when you was living here, his late lordship's secretary?" asked Mr. Fish.

Mr. Bosanne shook his head.

"I never heard of it, sir. But it is clear that there must be an opening of some sort there. A spring, perhaps—"

"I guess I can't spot it. Give it the once-over, Bosanne. And you, son, mosey off and get some tools."

"Sure, pop!" said Fisher T. Fish; and he hurried away for a toolbox.

Mr. Bosanne felt and groped over the panel. It was apparently immovable. No doubt there was a secret spring of some kind, but it was not easy to find.

Fisher T. Fish came back with tools.

"I guess we'll have to break it in," said Mr. Fish. "I'll say it can't be helped none. Wado in Bosanne?"

Mr. Bosanne took hammer and chisel; he drove in the chisel between two ancient panels with hefty blows of the hammer.

The banging and clanging echoed through the hall. The juniors stood looking on with eager, anxious faces.

Bang, bang! Clang! Bang!

The service door opened, and Chandos came into the hall with a startled face. Evidently the banging and clanging had reached the ears of the Porterclyffe butler.

Chandos fairly jumped as he saw how Mr. Bosanne was engaged. Forgetful for the moment of his ponderous dignity, the butler came quickly across the hall to the alcove where the whole party were gathered round the bronze statue.

"Mr. Fish, what—" gasped Chandos.

"I guess them lost guys is on the other side of the wall, Chandos," answered Mr. Fish.

"Impossible, sir!" gasped the butler. "How—"

"There's a secret passage there, Chandos," explained Harry Wharton.

"What?" exclaimed Chandos. "Nonsense!"

Wharton looked at him. It was the first time that the Porterclyffe butler had forgotten his manners since the Greyfriars party had been established in Lord Porterclyffe's mansion.

"I think you forget yourself, Chandos," said Wharton dryly, and he turned his back on the butler.

"Excuse me, sir," Chandos was himself again at once. "But—but it is surely impossible, and—and—"

"I guess it's a cinch, Chandos!" answered Mr. Fish. "And I'll say it's sure queer that you never was wise to anything of the sort after being in the house twenty years and more."

"I had no idea, sir—"

"Waal, I guess you'll have an idea soon!" said Mr. Fish. "We sure are on the track of them secret passages I'm after."

"But, sir, the damage to the panels—priceless old oak—"

"Aw, pack it up!"

"Don't be an ass, Chandos!" snapped

Johnny Bull. "Our friends are behind that panel and can't get out! That's where they've been lost—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob, as the panel suddenly flew open. Evidently the hammering had set the secret spring suddenly into motion.

A large panel on hidden hinges flew open like a door; a deep recess in the stone wall behind was revealed.

The bright electric light from the hall streamed into it and showed up the pale, excited face of Alonzo Todd; farther back a large pair of spectacles caught the light and flashed it back again.

"Alonzo!" roared Bob.

"And Bunter!"

"Oh, thank goodness, my dear friends!" gasped Alonzo, as half a dozen hands reached at him and dragged him out and landed him in the hall.

"I say, you fellows—"

"This way, Bunter, old bean!"

And the fat Owl was dragged through in his turn.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Mystery Man I

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Safe and sound, old chap!"
"I'm hungry!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I'm famished!" roared Bunter. "I've been days and nights without food!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "It's hardly night yet, old fat man, and you've only been missing since this morning."

"Rot!" howled Bunter. "I've been there days and days—nights and nights! I'm famished, starving, ravenous!"

"Chandos, I guess you want to get that guy some eats," said Mr. Fish.

"At once, sir," said Chandos.

"I say, buck up, Chandos!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I'm dying. I think! Buck up, or it may be too late!"

James and John rushed a tray of foodstuffs into the hall. Billy Bunter

(Continued on next page.)



GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Our clever Greyfriars Rhymester has demanded double payment for this week's contribution. We agree that he's every bit entitled to do so, after interviewing

TOM DUTTON.

the deaf junior of the Remove.



(1)

No interview, not even with a bully.
Would I have been more satisfied to miss;
No other prospect's daunted me so fully
Or drawn me so unwillingly as this:
Yet Dutton's quite a decent-hearted fellow,
There's just that single drawback in the way:
He's deaf, that's all! And even though you
bellow,
He never hears a single thing you say!

(3)

But duty must be done, however frightful.
I called on Dutton, Thomas of that ilk.
My smile was bright, my manners were
delightful.
My voice was loud, but quite as smooth as
silk!
He looked good-tempered (that was rather
lucky).
Bawled I: "Good afternoon! A lovely
day!
I know, old chap, you're handsome, brave,
and plucky!
We'll have a tiny pow-wow—what d'you
say?"



(5)
"A talk—A TALK—and now d'you
hear?" I hooted.
"To walk my chalks right out of
here?" he cried.
He rose with such a look I nearly
scooted.
"Nunno! You're quite mistaken,"
I replied:
"I merely want a little conversation!"
"A little compensation!" was his
cry.
"You may be in a state of indignation,
But even so, you ought to tell me
why!"

(6)

"Ye gods," I sighed, "it's useless to
continue:
I needn't take the trouble to stick here!"
But Dutton cried: "What's going on
within you?
I heard you then—you'll give me a thick
ear!
You think I am a little hard of hearing—"
"Nunno!" I answered. "That is quite
imposs!"
"Of course, I'm cross, and you, my lad, are
steering
For trouble. If you want it, I'm your
hoss!"

(7)

I gazed at him and muttered: "Oh, lor'
lumme!"
"A dummy, am I? Right—we'll now
begin!"
He swung his left (it landed in my tummy).
He swung his right (it landed on my
chin):
A nice left-hook made havoc of my
boko—
A pretty right connected with my ear!
I'm now in sanny, drinking watered cocoa.
And here I'll stop till summer-time next
year!



sat in an armchair and gobbled. Fortunately, it was not too late. To judge by the way he parked the foodstuffs, Billy Bunter had quite a lot of life and energy left in him.

"I also am rather hungry," said Alonzo mildly. "I am very, very much surprised to learn that we have been only half a day in that dreadful place. It certainly seemed to me a very, very much more prolonged period. My goodness! How very, very nice these sandwiches are!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round the two rescued wanderers and helped them. Alonzo and Bunter were in a shocking state. Both of them were daubed with slime and grime from the underground passages, and Alonzo still had floury traces on him from the flour sack. Both were very seriously in need of a wash and a change. But a meal came first—and Alonzo gave almost as much attention as Bunter to the foodstuffs.

Mr. Fish stood looking through the broken panel into the gloomy recess beyond. His sharp eyes were gleaming with satisfaction.

For whatever mysterious reason Mr. Fish desired to discover the secret passages of Portercliffe Hall, he had his wish now.

Mr. Bosanney seemed equally pleased. So did Fisher T. Fish. But the Greyfriars fellows for the moment gave their attention to the rescued juniors. They were curious to know how Alonzo and Bunter had got into the secret passage. It was no use asking Bunter; his jaws were too busy for speech. But Alonzo was finished when Bunter had barely started.

"Dear me! I feel very, very much better now," said Alonzo. "Do you not feel better, my dear William?"

Grunt from Bunter! He was too busy to speak.

"Well, here you are again, safe and sound!" said Harry Wharton. "But how the dickens did you get landed like that, Alonzo?"

"I was attacked, my dear Henry—" "Wha-a-at?"

"By a very, very unpleasant person—"

"Great pip!"

"Attacked!" repeated Bob Cherry blankly. "Pulling our leg, Alonzo?"

"Not at all, my dear Robert!"

"But who—what—"

"Say, what's that?" exclaimed Mr. Fish, coming across to the juniors.

"What's that, young Todd?"

"I have no doubt you are very, very much surprised, sir," said Alonzo. "I was very, very much surprised myself. It was really due to Kipps—"

"Little me!" exclaimed Kipps.

"Yes, my dear Oliver! Bunter has told me that it was a conjuring trick you were playing on me this morning, and that the sovereigns you appeared to take from my pockets were not real!"

"What on earth's that got to do with it?" demanded Kipps.

"I was not aware, my dear Oliver, at the time, that it was a conjuring trick, and neither was that disagreeable person who seized me from behind, and enclosed me in the sack!"

"Who?" yelled five or six voices.

Alonzo shook his head.

"I really do not know, my dear friends, as I did not see him. I thought, at the time, that he must be some lunatic, as he demanded that I should show him a place where sovereigns could be found!"

"Mad as a hatter, I should think!" said Harry blankly.

"The madness must have been terrific."

Mr. Fish made a stride at Alonzo Todd and grasped him by the arm. His face was full of angry excitement.

Alonzo gave a squeak as his bony arm almost cracked in Hiram K. Fish's excited grasp.

"Say, you young guy, what's that guff?" exclaimed Mr. Fish. "What's that stuff about hidden sovereigns?"

"Ow!"

"Cough it up!" snapped Mr. Fish. "Pronto!"

"Certainly!" gasped Alonzo. "I am very, very willing to tell you all about it, Mr. Fish, but please do not dislocate my arm!"

And Alonzo told his tale from the beginning; the Greyfriars fellows listening in utter wonder. Mr. Fish listened with avidity to every word. The silence of astonishment followed Alonzo's narrative.

"Well, this beats the band!" said Bob Cherry. "Then it was Bunter who found you—you'd still be there, but for Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, I saved him," said Bunter, with his mouth full. The fat Owl was slackening down in his onslaught on the foodstuffs at last. "I went to the rescue, you know, while you fellows were fooling about—"

"Did you know he was there?"

"Well, perhaps I didn't exactly know," admitted Bunter cautiously. "But I found him, and rescued him, didn't I, Alonzo?"

"You did, indeed, my dear William, and I am very, very grateful!" said Alonzo.

"And how did you find him, Bunter?" demanded Mr. Fish.

Bunter's tale was told in its turn.

It was really more amazing than Alonzo's.

Mr. Fish's face was a study as he listened.

Piecing together the strange adventures of Alonzo and Bunter, it was clear that someone in the house had seen Kipps' conjuring trick in the hall that morning, and, like Alonzo, had supposed that the sovereigns were real.

Why he should have supposed that Alonzo had found them at Portercliffe Hall, was a mystery to the juniors.

But it was clear that he had; and that he had trapped Alonzo in the sack to force information from him. And Bunter had seen him—his legs, at least—when he came back to the house after "sacking" Alonzo and tying him up.

Obviously, the man was a member of the Portercliffe household! It was equally clear that he was well acquainted with the secret doors and passages of the ancient mansion.

"By the great horned toad!" said Mr. Fish. He set his lips hard. "Carry me home to die! I'll say this gets my goat!"

Mr. Fish stalked across the hall to the library, beckoning to his son, and to the secretary, to follow him.

The library door closed behind the three of them.

The Bouncer glanced after them curiously as they went, and grinned.

"Old Fish knows somethin'!" he remarked.

"Blessed if I see what!" said Bob Cherry.

"Same here—but he does!" said Smithy.

"It's a giddy mystery!" said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I can make head or tail of it. Who the dickens was the man who bagged Alonzo?"

"Somebody in the house," said Wibley. "Must have been, or he wouldn't have seen Kipps playing that trick with the dud quids!"

"Any of the servants might have seen it," remarked Kipps. "I remember Chandos was in the hall at the time, but any of them—"

"I suppose he would naturally think they were real quids!" said Frank Nugent thoughtfully. "But why should he fancy that Alonzo had found them here, even if he thought they were real?"

"Goodness knows! I suppose there isn't a jolly old hidden treasure in Portercliffe Hall, is there?" said Johnny Bull.

"Doesn't sound probable," said Harry, laughing. "But it looks as if somebody fancies there is. I suppose you could

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry, as a large panel on hidden hinges flew open like a door, revealing a deep recess in the stone wall behind. The bright electric light from the hall streamed into it—and showed up the pale, excited face of Alonzo Todd. Further back, a large pair of spectacles caught the light and flashed it back again. "Alonzo!" roared Bob. "And Bunter!"

not spot the man if you came across him again, Alonzo?"

"I have not the faintest idea what he is like, my dear Henry, as I did not see him," said Alonzo.

"Bunter seems to have seen part of him," grinned the Bounder. "Think you'd know him again by his legs, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It did not seem probable that the fat Owl would be able to identify the mystery man by his legs!

"But look here," said Bob, "it's a cert that, whoever he is, he belongs to the house. I believe there's about twenty men of one sort or another about this jolly old mansion. Chandos may be able to help us!"

"How?"

"Well, he could spot whether any of his jolly old staff was missing from his duties at the time!" said Bob. "I suppose he keeps a sort of eye on them. If John or James, or Peter or Adolphus was missing from his regular beat at the time——"

"Might be something in that!" agreed the Bounder. "Let's put it up to Chandos."

And Chandos was summoned, and it was put up to him. And, though Chandos looked shocked, indeed, at the bare idea of any member of the staff of Portercliffe Hall having laid hands on a guest at that establishment, he promised to make a rigid inquiry. And the chums of Greyfriars wondered whether anything would come of it. Otherwise there seemed, so far as they could see, no chance whatever of laying hold of the mystery man of Portercliffe Hall.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Who's the Guy?

"STICK 'em up!"

Mr. Bosanne jumped.

"Wha-a-a-t?" he stuttered.

"I guess," said Hiram K. Fish grimly, "that I said stick 'em up! And I sure mean it, a few!"

The secretary stared at Mr. Fish with goggling eyes.

After leaving the Greyfriars party in the hall, Mr. Fish had traversed the library with long strides, and entered a room adjoining it on the other side. It was a small room, that had been used as a study and business-room by the late Lord Portercliffe. Mr. Fish used it for the same purpose; and the roll-top desk was littered with letters, telegrams, financial papers, company reports, and such documents. Son and secretary followed him in; and Mr. Fish closed the door, and, to their surprise, turned the key in it.

Then he turned to Bosanne, with a grim glint in his steely eyes, and a grim set to his lantern jaws.

His bony hand slid to his hip-pocket, and, to the amazement of son and secretary, reappeared with a small automatic revolver in it. Fishy was aware that his popper "packed a gun," but it was rather a startling surprise to Mr. Bosanne.

The secretary's eyes almost popped from his head, as the light gleamed on a levelled, bluish barrel, and Mr. Fish bade him "stick 'em up."

"Say, pop——" gasped Fisher T.

"Can it, son!" snapped Hiram K. "I guess we got to handle this double-crossing scallawag, and I'll mention that I am the guy to handle him, a few,

and then some over! You sticking 'em up, you geck?"

"Sir—Mr. Fish——" gurgled Bosanne.

"I ain't waiting!" said Mr. Fish. "I'd sure pump lead into you, you gink, as soon as look at you. Claw the air, you pesky piecan."

"Are you mad?" gasped the secretary.

"I'll say so!" assented Mr. Fish, taking the word in its American sense. "I'm sure horn mad with you—mad as a hornet. You figure that you can double-cross this baby! Why, you pesky geck, I'd shoot you up sooner'n look at you! Stick 'em up!"

In horror and amazement the secretary lifted his hands over his head.

The long, thin face that looked at him over the levelled revolver was black and bitter with anger. Mr. Fish had handled a "gun" more than once in his own happy country, across the "pond," and he looked fiercely inclined to handle it now. At that moment Hiram K. Fish looked a good deal more like a gangster than a business man.

"You snipe!" said Mr. Fish. "You pesky mugwump! I guess if I had you out in the States I'd fill you so full of holes that you could be used as a colander! Yep—and then some! And I'll mention that you ain't safe here, even in this pesky old island of John Bull's, if you don't come clean. Got that?"

"I—I—I don't understand," stammered the secretary, with a terrified eye on the revolver.

He did not, and could not, believe that Hiram K. Fish would, in any circumstances, pull the trigger. But there was no doubt that it looked very

dangerous, and no doubt that the face behind it was dark and threatening.

"You don't catch on—what?" said Mr. Fish savagely. "Then I guess I'll put you wise, Mister Bosanne. When I took you on, in the Yew-nited States, you put me on to this deal, and I guess I figured that it looked good. You was the old lord's secretary, and you spied on him, and on his papers, and found out that he was hoarding gold in this hyer shebang."

"I—I—" began the secretary. "Can it!" snarled Mr. Fish. "The old lord found you spying, and kicked you out. When he pegged out and the estate went to his nephew the gold never turned up. I guess the present lord has to let the shebang to raise enough dust to keep the roof mended. You let me into the deal because you couldn't get back here on your own, and I take the place, spending my dollars, and bring you here, calling you my secretary, to hunt for the old miser's hoard—and now you turn on me and try double-crossing!"

"I—I—" "Pack it up!" snarled Hiram K. Fish. "By the great horned toad, I don't know why I don't let daylight right through your cabeza now, and no more said. Great John James Brown!"

"But I—" "Ain't I treated you square?" hooted Mr. Fish. "Ain't I stood all the expenses, with my own dollars, not costing you a Continental red cent? Ain't you going to get a quarter of the stuff if we raise it? Ain't that good enough for you, you big stiff?"

"Certainly! I—" "What you want to start double-crossing for, then?" bawled Mr. Fish. "You let on that you never knew anything about them secret passages. I guess you knew all the time!"

"I knew nothing! I—" "Why did you get after that bone-head, Todd, then?" roared Mr. Fish. "Think I ain't wise to it that it was you that sacked him?"

The secretary jumped. "I?" he ejaculated. "Yep!" hooted the enraged Mr. Fish. "You! You spotted them sovereigns that that young guy of a conjurer made out he hooked off young Todd, and you figured that Todd had unearthed the cache, and you got after him. By the great horned toad, if you deny it I'll sure fan you a few!"

"Oh, great gophers!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "I guess that's the how of it, popper! The double-crossing skunk!"

"I'll say so!" snarled Mr. Fish. "I—I—I deny it!" gasped Bosanne. "Nothing of the kind! I never—"

"Ain't I warned you to come clean?" roared Mr. Fish, making a motion with the revolver that caused the wretched secretary to cringe with terror.

"For goodness' sake, sir!" panted Bosanne. "I assure you I—I never—I had no idea—I have been quite faithful to our engagements. I knew nothing of the secret passages. I had nothing to do with the attack on Todd. I was as surprised as anyone—"

"Swallow it!" interrupted Mr. Fish savagely. "Some guy in this hyer shebang saw that kid Kipps at his conjuring trick and fancied they was real sovereigns, and figured from that that young Todd had hit the cache. Who knows that there's a hoard of sovereigns in Portercliffe Hall except you, and me, and Son, here?"

"I guess that's a cinch!" said Fisher T. Fish. "You sure got him by the short hairs, pop!"

Mr. Bosanne stood silent. Evidently he was unable to answer the question put to him by the irate Mr. Fish.

Hiram K. Fish flourished the revolver, and Bosanne gave a squeak of alarm. If the revolver was loaded it was not very safe to flourish it in the air in an angry hand.

"Be careful, sir!" panted Bosanne. "That—that weapon might go off, sir."

"I guess it will go off a few if you don't come clean!" howled Mr. Fish. "Spill it, you piecan! You knew all about the secret passages, and never put me wise. You figured that young Todd had spotted the cache and you got after him for information, aiming to leave me out in the cold. Come clean, I'm telling you. I guess I want the truth out of you!"

"There must be another person in the house who knows!" gasped Bosanne. "Some other, who knows that the late Lord Portercliffe hoarded gold—"

"Aw, can it! Didn't you tell me that nobody knew, except his old lordship himself, and you, what spied it out?" snorted Mr. Fish.

He brandished the revolver. "Turn that thing another way!" shrieked the secretary. "I tell you someone else may have watched his lordship, unknown to me, and made the same discovery. It is a certainty now! Someone else is after the hundred and fifty thousand sovereigns that the old miser hid somewhere about Portercliffe Hall!"

"Who?" snorted Mr. Fish. "How should I know?" asked the secretary. "Someone who knows this building inside out, as he is acquainted with the secret passages."

"You!" snapped Mr. Fish. "You—you fool—"

"What?" roared Mr. Fish. "Have a little sense!" snarled Bosanne. "Ask the boy Todd at what time he was seized this morning, in the park: I was with you all the morning, or most of it. You can compare the times."

Hiram K. Fish appeared to be a little struck by the argument.

He lowered the revolver, much to the relief of Jonas Bosanne. Bosanne was not aware that it was unloaded!

"Son!" rapped Mr. Fish. "Yep, pop!" said Fisher T.

"Go and squeeze out of that gink, Todd, what time it was that bulldozer cinched him in the park."

"Sure!" Fisher T. Fish unlocked the door and went out of the room. Bosanne wiped the perspiration from his brow.

Mr. Fish sat on the revolving chair before the roll-top desk, facing the secretary, the gun resting on his bony knee.

In a few minutes Fisher T. returned. "Waal?" yapped Mr. Fish.

"That geck, Todd, allows that it was between eleven and twelve that he was cinched," said Fisher T. "He don't know exactly—he wouldn't! I'll say he hardly knows enough to go in when it rains!"

Bosanne gasped. "I was with you from half-past ten this morning, Mr. Fish—"

"You sure was," admitted Mr. Fish. "Then you can see—"

"Sure thing!" said Fisher T.

The revolver disappeared into Mr. Fish's hip-pocket. He rose from his chair, his thin lips set in a tight line.

"I guess that lets you out, Bosanne. I figured it was you—who else would know about the hoard? But—"

"There's another guy with a paw in this clam-pie, pop!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"There sure is!" said Hiram K. "By the great horned toad! Who's the guy?"

Who's the pie-can? Who's the scallawag? What? There's a guy in this hyer shebang knows about the hoard, and is after it, same as we are! But who's the guy?"

But that was a question to which no answer could be found. One thing only was clear—Hiram K. Fish had a rival in the hunt for the million dollars that did not belong to him!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were in a buzz of excitement at dinner that evening. The startling happenings of the day were quite a thrilling topic.

Mr. Fish uttered hardly a word. He was deep in worried thought. So were Fisher T. and Bosanne.

But the juniors discussed the strange adventure of Alonzo Todd and the "mystery man" of Portercliffe Hall, greatly intrigued by the strange affair.

Knowing nothing of Mr. Fish's real object at Portercliffe Hall, they were deeply mystified, and could not make head or tail of it.

They were extremely keen to get on with exploring the secret passages. Billy Bunter, by sheer chance, had made the discovery that had beaten the whole party.

Not a trace had hitherto been found of any secret door. Now they had the choice of two—the portrait of the Red Earl in the picture gallery, and the broken panel in the hall.

After dinner they gathered in the hall, the whole party keen to begin the exploration—with the exception of Billy Bunter. Bunter had missed two meals that day—and he had made up for it by packing away six or seven, one after another, at the dinner table. Bunter disposed his fat person in an armchair and went to sleep. Bunter was not keen on exploring secret passages. He had had more than enough of the underground mysteries of Portercliffe Hall.

But all the other fellows were very keen.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he circumnavigated the statue of Hercules to look at the broken panel. "Look here!"

The panel had been screwed up while the Greyfriars party were at dinner. It was closed and immovable.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I say, Fishy—"

But Fisher T. Fish was not there. He had disappeared with his popper and his popper's secretary.

"Dished!" said the Bounder, with a grin.

"The dishfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "The esteemed Fish does not want us to explore the ridiculous mysteries of this absurd mansion."

"Why the dickens not?" said Nugent. "Anyhow, there's the other way in—by the picture gallery."

Harry Wharton looked puzzled.

"If Mr. Fish doesn't want us to barge in I suppose we'd better not," he said. "But—blessed if I see why not! We'd better find out."

Vernon-Smith rang the bell for Chandos. But it was James who answered the bell. The butler did not appear.

"You rang, sir?" asked James.

"I want to speak to Chandos," said the Bounder.

"Mr. Chandos has gone to his room, sir!" said James. "He has one of his headaches."

"Bother his headaches!" granted the (Continued on page 22.)

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Bounder. "Look here, then, do you know why that panel has been screwed up, James?"

"By Mr. Fish's instructions, sir!" said James. "Mr. Fish thinks it may be dangerous to go into the secret passages, sir, and he has forbidden anyone to do so."

"What rot!" grunted the Bounder.

James made no rejoinder to that. He retired to his own regions. The Bounder gave an angry snort.

"Let's try the other way in," he said.

"But if Mr. Fish objects—" said Wharton dubiously.

"If he does he can say so!" grunted Smithy. "He hasn't told us so. Come on—I'm going, anyhow!"

The Bounder left the hall by the door on the picture gallery. The rest of the party followed him in a rather uncertain mood. If Mr. Fish objected, they could not, of course, carry on with the intended exploration in Mr. Fish's mansion. But it was a disappointment.

The electric light was burning in one corner of the great gallery. That was at the alcove where the portrait of the Red Earl hung.

In that alcove Fisher T. Fish was sitting on the ottoman under which Bunter had been hidden when he spotted the legs of the mystery man.

Fishy looked up with a grin on his bony face as the Greyfriars fellows came up. He guessed what they were after.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's open!" exclaimed Bob. The great gilt frame of the Red Earl's portrait jutted from the wall like a door ajar.

"I guess the popper's giving them passages the once-over," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "He's gone with Bosannev."

"Any objection to our going in?" asked Harry.

"Yep!"

"And why?" demanded Vernon-Smith.

"Popper figures there may be all sorts of pitfalls and things," explained Fisher T. Fish airily. "He allows it ain't safe for schoolboys to go rubbering around."

"Rot!" said the Bounder.

Fishy shrugged his bony shoulders.

"I guess what pop says goes!" he answered.

"Bunter and Alonzo came to no harm rooting about there!" said Kipps. "It's safe enough, Fishy."

"Mebbe! Popper reckons not."

"And you're sticking here to see that we don't go in?" demanded the Bounder.

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Sort of!" he admitted.

Vernon-Smith scowled. He was disappointed and annoyed. He had sorted out an electric torch all ready—so had several of the other fellows. Still, Mr. Fish had to be allowed to have his own way in his own establishment. Even the Bounder did not think of penetrating into the secret passage, regardless of Hiram K.'s prohibition. But he was very annoyed.

It was annoying to all the fellows. For a week or more they had put in a lot of their leisure hours hunting for the secret passage, because Mr. Fish desired them to do so. Now that the secret passage was found they were forbidden to enter it!

"Well, that's that!" said Bob Cherry.

"You said it!" agreed Fisher T. Fish.

Vernon Smith flashed his torch through the opening of the secret doorway. It revealed a stone landing and a spiral stair winding down into black depths. Mr. Fish and Bosannev had gone down, carrying lights; but no gleam of their light came from below.

The Magnet Library.—No. 1,436.

The Bounder was strongly tempted to disregard both the Fishes and go ahead. But he refrained.

He turned back, frowning.

"Well, look here, Fishy—" he began angrily.

He was interrupted.

From the secret stair in the stone wall, hitherto as silent as the tomb, there came a sudden wild yell. It rang and echoed through the doorway and into the picture gallery. The Greyfriars fellows jumped—and Fisher T. Fish bounded up from the ottoman.

"What—" he stuttered.

"What the thump—"

Again came that yell—a yell of fear and horror—ringing up from the depths of the earth.

"Good heavens!" gasped Wharton. "What—"

For a moment the Greyfriars fellows looked at one another with pale, startled faces. What did it mean—what was happening to the two men who had gone down into those black depths?

"Come on!" muttered the Bounder.

He rushed through the secret doorway, and the other fellows, in a crowd, rushed after him.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Phantom of Portercliffe!

HIRAM K. FISH held up his electric lamp and flashed the light along the narrow, stone-walled passage.

The air was chill and noisome, and moisture dripped on the walls. Bosannev, at his side, held up another lamp. Beyond the radius of the light the blackness was intense.

"I'll say this ain't a cheerful spot!" remarked Mr. Fish.

"Far from it!" answered the secretary, with a shiver.

"We got to give it the once-over!" said Hiram K. "And I guess it's going to take some time, feller! If the old lord parked his hoard hereabouts I reckon he had plenty of room to choose from."

"The place seems honeycombed with passages!" said Bosannev. "It will take days, or perhaps weeks, to explore the whole of them. But—"

"But I guess Rome wasn't built in a day—and a million dollars don't grow on every bush!" said Mr. Fish. "Anyhow, we got wise to the place owing to that fat gink Bunter! I'm sure glad that son brought him along, after all! We're on the trail, Bosannev, anyhow."

The secretary nodded, but his look was dubious.

"It is certain now that the place has already been searched, sir!" he answered. "The man, whoever he is, who knows the secret has had plenty of time to make the search—years, perhaps—in fact, ever since the old lord died. Yet he has not found the hoard."

"That's a cinch!" admitted Mr. Fish thoughtfully. "I guess that pesky old lord must have parked the stuff in a safe hide-out! But if it ain't down here, where is it? He sure never left it lying about upstairs."

"Buried, no doubt!" said the secretary. He glanced down at the flagstones underfoot. "Any of these flags may conceal it! But—we've got all our work cut out, Mr. Fish! My idea was that once the secret passages were discovered it would be plain sailing. But now we know that someone knows the secret already, and has been searching—perhaps for years—"

"It sure don't look so hopeful!" admitted Mr. Fish. "You reckoned that you had a clue to it, knowing that

there was secret passages here. But, I'll tell a man, it don't look a whole lot of a clue—now! If some guy has been rubbering around here for years without spotting the stuff—"

Mr. Fish pursed his lips.

"Get on!" he said. "Whoever that guy is, he can only be one of the servants, sneaking around the shebang in his spare time. I guess we got the pull on him. We can do what we like with the place—and I'll sure pull it down, brick by brick, and stone by stone, if I can't spot the cache without! I'll tell the world, H. K. Fish ain't easily beat when he's on the trail of a million dollars! No, sir—not so's you'd notice it."

They moved on along the underground passage.

On either side, at intervals, other passages opened, with here and there a large gloomy vault.

That these dark recesses must have been explored, again and again, by the "mystery man" of Portercliffe Hall, was certain, but he had left no trace of his coming and going.

Traces of earlier comers, however, were to be seen here and there. An ancient rusty gauntlet glimmered from the floor, in one spot—and in another a round object rolled from the secretary's foot, and he shivered as he discerned that it was a skull.

And in one of the vaults, rusty chains hung from the wall, showing that the place had been used as a dungeon in ancient days.

"Lively spot!" grunted Mr. Fish. "Give me the Yew-nited States for choice! Jest the spot for a dog-goned ghost to horn in—"

"Oh! Speak of something else, please!" stammered Bosannev. The secretary did not possess Mr. Fish's iron nerve.

Hiram K. chuckled.

"Aw, you bonehead, what's biting you?" he said. "I guess they say there's a family ghost in this hyer mansion—Son sure fancied that he spotted it one night in the turret-room! But I'll tell a man. I'll sure chew up all the ghosts we raise here—"

"Hark!" breathed Bosannev. He clutched the American by the arm, his lamp shaking in his other hand.

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

"Did you hear nothing?"

"Only your teeth chattering. I guess!" answered Mr. Fish, sarcastically.

"I—I thought I heard—"

"Aw, can it!"

"Hark!" gasped Bosannev.

Mr. Fish gave a start! This time he heard a sound—a strange low sound that came from a vaulted opening at the side of the passage. It was the sound of a low groan.

"Great snakes!" ejaculated Mr. Fish.

"I—I—I think perhaps we had better return," stammered Bosannev.

"I—I think—"

"Pack it up!" snapped Mr. Fish.

He shook off the secretary's trembling hand and swung into the vaulted opening, flashing his light in front of him.

"Aw, wake snakes!" he gasped.

There was a deep vaulted space before him. From the darkness of its depths a strange figure appeared—a figure that made Hiram K. Fish wonder whether he was dreaming.

It was the figure of a man in ancient garb—the trunk hose and ruff and cloak and pointed beard of Elizabethan days. A glimmer of a strange



Hiram K. Fish's bony hand slid into his hip-pocket, and reappeared with a small automatic in it. "Stick 'em up, you geek!" he snapped. "Sir—Mr. Fish—" gurgled Mr. Bosanne. "I ain't waiting!" said Mr. Fish. "You figure that you can doublecross this baby! Why, I'd shoot you up sooner'n look at you! Stick 'em up!"

phosphorescent light hung about the form. In the right hand was a sword, glistening in that strange ghostly glimmer.

Mr. Fish stood transfixed.

It was the ghostly figure of the Red Earl, said to haunt Portercliffe Hall; the ghostly figure that Fisher T. Fish had seen, or fancied that he had seen, in the turret-room a week or more ago.

But there was no fancy about it this time; Mr. Fish rubbed his eyes and looked again, and the figure was still there before him. Its hand was raised, the glimmering sword pointing towards him.

"Do—do—do you see anything?" stammered Bosanne. He followed Mr. Fish, and peered into the vault by his side.

The next moment he uttered a howl of terror, and his lamp dropped from his hand, crashed, and went out.

Mr. Fish gritted his teeth.

"Say, it's a fake!" he snapped. "You dog-goned bonehead, you figure there's such things as dog-goned ghosts! Forget it! Follow me, dog-gone you!"

And Hiram, taking his courage in both hands as it were, rushed right across the vault at the ghostly figure.

It vanished instantly behind a massive stone pillar.

Mr. Fish rushed round the pillar. He held up the light in his left hand; in his right he had grabbed his gun, and grasped it by the barrel, clubbed. If he was scared, he was more angry than scared.

But as he came rushing round the stone pillar he halted suddenly with a gasp of amazement.

The ghost had vanished!

Hiram K. Fish staggered back in his astonishment. The lamp sagged in his hand!

"Great John James Brown!" he gasped.

"Let us go!" It was a shriek from Bosanne. "For mercy's sake, get out of this! Bring your light. Oh, come, come!"

"Pack it up!" roared Mr. Fish. "I'm telling you it's a fake! I'll tell a man, it's a dog-goned trick! There's another dog-goned secret door here somewheres, and I'll tell you—"

He broke off with a startled yell. Something flashed from behind him, and the lamp was struck from his hand.

It crashed on the stone floor, and was instantly extinguished.

In sheer terror, Hiram K. Fish groped round him in the sudden darkness. His hand touched something. But it was gone the next moment. With his heart leaping to his throat, he groped in the darkness, seeking to grope his way back into the passage.

"Bosanne!" he gasped.

A wild yell of terror answered.

"Oh, help! It's touching me—" shrieked the secretary.

There was a patter of running feet. Yell after yell of sheer terror rang through the subterranean darkness. Then there was the sound of a heavy fall, and silence. And Mr. Fish, almost as terrified as his secretary, groped and groped in the blackness.

his heels. After Wharton came the Co., all wildly excited and alarmed.

Yell after yell rang from the darkness below.

What was happening was a mystery, but it was clear that something was happening down there in the black depths. Hiram K. Fish and his secretary had struck some sort of trouble in the subterranean recesses under Portercliffe Hall.

The juniors did not hesitate. The Bounder, reckless as usual, led the way, but the other fellows did not need telling to follow. If Mr. Fish was in danger, of whatever sort, the Greyfriars fellows were more than ready to go to his help.

Vernon-Smith fairly raced down the spiral, following the turns of the circling stair with almost giddy swiftness. The black depths, echoing with terrified shrieks, were not attractive, but the Bounder was insensible to fear. Breathlessly, recklessly, he raced down, several times almost losing his footing, but recovering it again with swift activity.

He leaped out into the stone-walled passage at the bottom of the spiral staircase. Wharton was behind him.

Smithy flashed his light round.

No other light was to be seen. Black darkness reigned. But there was silence now as well as darkness. The wild yelling had suddenly ceased.

"Follow on!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

Holding up the light, he ran along the underground passage. After him ran the Famous Five; following them came Kipps and Wibley and Alonzo, with Fisher T. Fish bringing up the rear. Fishy no doubt, was anxious about his popper, but if there was anything unpleasant to run into, Fishy calculated that the other guys

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THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vanished!

"COME on!" panted Smithy. He leaped through the secret doorway across the stone landing and down the spiral stair. Harry Wharton was at

were welcome to run into it. Regardless of such business-like considerations, the Bounder and the Famous Five pelted on fast.

"Oh! Look out!" gasped Smithy. He stumbled over something on the floor, and came to a halt.

"It's Bosanney!" exclaimed Wharton, "as several torches flashed on the still figure stretched on the floor."

"What on earth can have happened?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Wharton dropped on his knees beside the secretary. Bosanney was quite unconscious, his face as white as chalk, his eyes closed. It was clear that he had fainted.

"Not hurt?" asked Nugent, with a shake in his voice.

"I think not—just fainted!" said Harry. "Some of you stay with him—while we find Mr. Fish!"

"Come on!" The Bounder was dashing on again. After him rushed the Famous Five. Kipps and Wibley ran after them, followed by Fisher T. Fish, and the good Alonzo remained with the insensible secretary. He set a lamp on the floor, and lifted the unconscious man's head to his knee to make him more comfortable.

From where Bosanney had been found, it looked as if he had run back towards the stair and fallen in a faint before he reached it. Mr. Fish, apparently, was farther on.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

From the darkness came a yelling voice, recognisable as that of Hiram K. Fish, though husky and cracked with rage and terror.

"Aw! Keep off, you dog-goned pie-can! Help! You Bosanney—oh, great John James Brown!"

The juniors raced on, flashing their lights ahead. Mr. Fish, evidently, had lost his light. Not a glimmer came from the darkness.

On their left a wide vaulted opening yawned in the stone wall. They were passing it at a run when the yell of Mr. Fish reached their ears again, coming from the vault, and they realised that he was there.

"Here!" panted Wharton.

"Hold on, Smithy—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"Oh, look!" shrieked Nugent.

"The ghost!" yelled Fisher T. Fish.

"The gol-darned spook I saw in the turret—oh, great snakes!"

The juniors came to a dead halt in the vaulted opening. They could scarcely believe what they saw.

Across the gloomy vault, picked out from the blackness by glimmering, greenish phosphorescent flickers of light, was the spectral figure of the Red Earl! Mr. Fish crouched against the stone wall, warding off the spectre with both hands outstretched, his face grey with terror.

In the blackness he had failed to grope his way out of the vault into the passage. The terrifying figure of the spectre of Portercliffe Hall glimmered before his eyes in the deep gloom.

Cool-headed business-man as he was, Mr. Fish's nerve was utterly gone. He crouched away from the grisly apparition, shrieking hoarsely.

For a long moment the juniors stood spellbound.

In that thrilling moment they saw the white, deathly face of the phantom turn towards them, and caught the gleam of rolling eyes in the light from their electric lamps.

Then, with a backward leap, the mysterious figure disappeared behind the great stone pillar in the vault.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

Mr. Fish was still shrieking incoherently.

Harry Wharton, with set teeth, rushed into the vault. He dashed round the stone pillar, flashing his light. The spectre had vanished. He fancied he heard a faint thudding sound, but he could not be sure. But the figure was gone. Save for Mr. Fish and the juniors, the vault was empty.

Bob Cherry caught Mr. Fish by the arm.

"Buck up, sir!" said Bob. "We're all here!"

"Aw! I—I—I guess—" stammered Mr. Fish, through his chattering teeth. "I—I guess—oh, great John James Brown! Is—is—is it gone?"

"It's gone!" said Harry, with a deep breath.

"Gone!" repeated Nugent. "But—"

"I guess we want to beat it, pop!" stuttered Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say we want to get out of this, instanter."

"Rot!" snapped the Bounder. "It's a rotten trick—let's get after that blighter—"

"I guess it's sure a spook—"

"Rubbish!"

"Say, you pack it up, son!" said Mr. Fish. In the bright light of the lamps, and in the presence of the crowd of schoolboys, Hiram K. Fish pulled himself together. "I'll say it's jest a trick—and I'll sure make that tricky guy sorry for himself when I get a cinch on him."

"The trickfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But where is the esteemed ghost?"

"I guess only a spook could do the vanishing trick like that!" stammered Fisher T. Fish through his chattering teeth.

"I sure said pack it up, son!" snapped his popper. "By the great horned toad, next time I come down hyer I'll have something in my gun, and then I guess I'll lay that dog-goned ghost a few! Hunt round for him, you ginks!"

The juniors searched through the vault. But there was no sign of the grisly phantom.

Either it was a genuine ghost, able to vanish at will, or there was some secret door in the stone walls through which a trickster had disappeared. The latter theory was taken for granted by the Greyfriars fellows.

"It's a trick, of course," said Johnny Bull. "But—"

"S'arch!" snapped Hiram K. Fish.

But it was useless to search further. The spectre had vanished, and if there was a secret door in the stone walls, it was too carefully concealed to be found.

One of the great stone blocks, probably, moved on a hidden hinge or pivot. But if so, it was fastened by the vanished trickster; every one, as it was rapped and thumped by the searchers, felt as firm and solid as if it had never stirred since the foundations of Portercliffe Hall were laid in the far-off days of the Plantagenets.

"Nothing doing!" said the Bounder, at last.

Mr. Fish gave an angry snort.

"I guess I'll get that guy if I have to pull the shebang into small pieces to get him! But he's sure beaten us to it now! Where's that guy Bosanney?"

"We found him in the passage near the stair," answered Harry. "He had fainted—"

Another snort from Mr. Fish.

"He sure would! He sure got the wind up, a few!"

The juniors grinned. Mr. Fish himself had seemed in a rather "windy" state when they found him in the vault.

"Beat it!" grunted Mr. Fish. "Nothing doing hyer, I reckon."

"If you're going on exploring, sir, perhaps you'd like our company!" suggested the Bounder.

"I guess I ain't going on! I'm sure fed up, a few!" grunted Mr. Fish. "Beat it out of this."

Hiram K. was evidently tired of subterranean passages and ghosts for the present. He stalked out of the vault, and the juniors followed him along the passage.

At the spiral stair they came on Alonzo helping Mr. Bosanney up. The secretary had recovered his senses, but he was white as chalk and trembling in every limb. He gave a jump as he heard the juniors behind him, and stared back with popping eyes.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You! Did you see it?"

"The seefulness was terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It—it touched me!" gasped Bosanney, with a shudder. "In—in the dark—"

"Aw, can it!" growled Mr. Fish. "Don't I keep telling you that it's all a fake? I guess there's somebody in this hyer shebang that don't want us to go rooting about them passages—and I'll say I'm going to spot that somebody and make him sit up and howl a few! Yep!"

The secretary made no answer to that. He tottered out into the picture gallery and tottered away. Jonas Bosanney had been frightened to the marrow of his bones, and he was not in a hurry to recover from the fright.

Mr. Fish snapped the secret door shut, and the Red Earl resumed his place on the wall. The juniors exchanged glances, and Hiram K. gave them rather a grim look.

"I guess I want you young guys to keep above ground!" he said. "You ain't to go rubbering around in them passages. You get me?"

"We aren't afraid of ghosts, Mr. Fish!" said the Bounder, rather stressing the word "we," and the Greyfriars fellows grinned.

Mr. Fish snorted, and, without making any other reply, stalked away. But Hiram K.'s word was law at Portercliffe Hall, and, keen as they were to explore the mysteries of that ancient mansion, Harry Wharton & Co. had to give up the idea.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes Another Discovery!

"W HOSE hat?" inquired Bob Cherry.

It was the following morning, and Billy Bunter had rolled out of the house into the bright August sunshine with his fat face shaded by a handsome straw hat.

That straw hat was so handsome and expensive and clean, that it obviously did not belong to William George Bunter; hence Bob's playful question.

That morning, Harry Wharton & Co. would have been glad to explore the subterranean recesses under Portercliffe Hall. But Hiram K. Fish—for reasons of his own—was adamant on that point. So the juniors were going down to Cliftonville to bathe instead. This time Billy Bunter had not forgotten his bathing-suit, which he had carefully packed and handed to Alonzo to carry. Bunter did not like carrying anything, and the long-suffering Alonzo was always ready to oblige.

"Anybody lost a hat?" went on Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, you fellows, let's clear off!" said Bunter. "What's the good of wasting time?"

"Waiting for Smithy!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, look here, don't wait for Smithy," urged Bunter. "He can follow us, I suppose? The fact is, I'd rather get off without Smithy."

"What the dickens is keeping Smithy all this time?" asked Nugent.

"Perhapsfully he is looking for an esteemed hat!" suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky! I say, you fellows, let's start—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Smithy!" chuckled Bob, as the Bounder came out, in a cap, with a frowning brow. "Waiting for you, Smithy!"

The juniors were waiting under the shady branches of a great oak that grew on the edge of the lawn. That ancient oak of immense girth was one of the sights of Portercliffe Hall, and, according to legend, had been standing longer than the hall itself. As the Bounder appeared Billy Bunter sidled round the thick trunk, which was wide enough even to conceal the fat Owl of the Remove.

Vernon-Smith gave an angry grunt as he joined the juniors.

"I can't find my straw," he growled. "Have any of you silly asses been larking with my hat?"

"Not guilty, my lord!" grinned Bob.

"Perhaps Bunter has taken your hat by mistake, my dear Herbert," suggested Alonzo Todd helpfully.

"Bunter! Has that pilfering porpoise bagged my straw?" roared the Bounder.

He rushed round the oak.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"You fat villain—"

"Ow! I say, you fellows, keep him off!" yelled Bunter. "'Tain't his hat! Besides, I only took it because Nugent was wearing his own hat. I'd rather have had Nugent's. I say, you fellows—yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Herbert," exclaimed Alonzo Todd, in great distress, "I trust that you are not very, very angry with dear William. Please calm yourself, my dear Herbert."

Alonzo caught the angry Bounder by the arm, and dragged him to a halt.

Smithy did not calm himself. Instead of calming himself, as the good Alonzo hoped, he grabbed Alonzo by the neck, and banged his head against the oak.

Bang!

"Oh! Ow!" yelled Alonzo. "My dear Herbert—Yaroooh! Whoop!"

"Hold on, Smithy!" gasped Bob.

"My dear—yaroooh—Herbert—wow!"

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped at the Bounder, and rescued Alonzo. Meanwhile, Billy Bunter had made the most of his respite. While the Bounder was busy with Alonzo, the fat Owl grasped a low branch of the oak, and dragged himself into the tree.

Bunter was not good at climbing. Now he clambered with the activity of a monkey. When the Bounder restarted in pursuit, the fat Owl was out of reach. Straddling a branch eight or nine feet from the ground, close to the trunk, he blinked down at the exasperated Bounder through his big spectacles.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "Keep off, you rotter! You come after me, and I'll jolly well kick you! Yah!"

Vernon-Smith glared up at him.

"By gum, I'll jolly well—"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "You can

have the rotten old hat! I don't want the mouldy old thing! Yah!"

He grabbed the disputed article from his head, and pitched it down. It landed on the Bounder's nose as he glared up, and Vernon-Smith gave a yelp.

The hard edge of a straw hat brim banging on a fellow's nose, was neither grateful nor comforting.

"Ow!" yelled Smithy. "Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling fatheads—"

"Oh, come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You've got your straw—never mind Bunter. Let's get going."

"I'm going to kick that fat rotter all the way to Margate!" roared Vernon-Smith.

"Then we'll start first."

And the Greyfriars party started. Vernon-Smith, rubbing his damaged nose, glared up at the fat Owl in the tree.

"Will you come down?" he hooted.

"Beast!"

The Bounder grasped the rough trunk of the oak, and Bunter, with a yelp of alarm, clambered higher.

Farther up jutting branches on all sides formed what looked, in the shade

of the foliage, like a safe spot, and the fat Owl clambered on to it. But it was not so safe as it looked. It had not occurred to Billy Bunter that that ancient oak was hollow.

But it was.

Bunter, clambering over the top of the main trunk, suddenly found himself dropping into dusky space.

He gave a wild yell.

"Yaroooh!"

Bump!

"Whoop!" Bunter roared, as he sprawled inside the hollow trunk. "I say, you fellows—rescue! I say—yaroooh!—I say, it's hollow! I've fallen in! Oh crikey!"

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

He clambered up and peered into the hollow of the trunk from above. The hollow was only about six feet deep; fortunately for Bunter, it did not extend the whole way to the ground. The fat Owl sat and roared.

"I say, Smithy, you beast, help me out!"

"Wait till I come back from Margate!" grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Good-bye!"

(Continued on page 28.)

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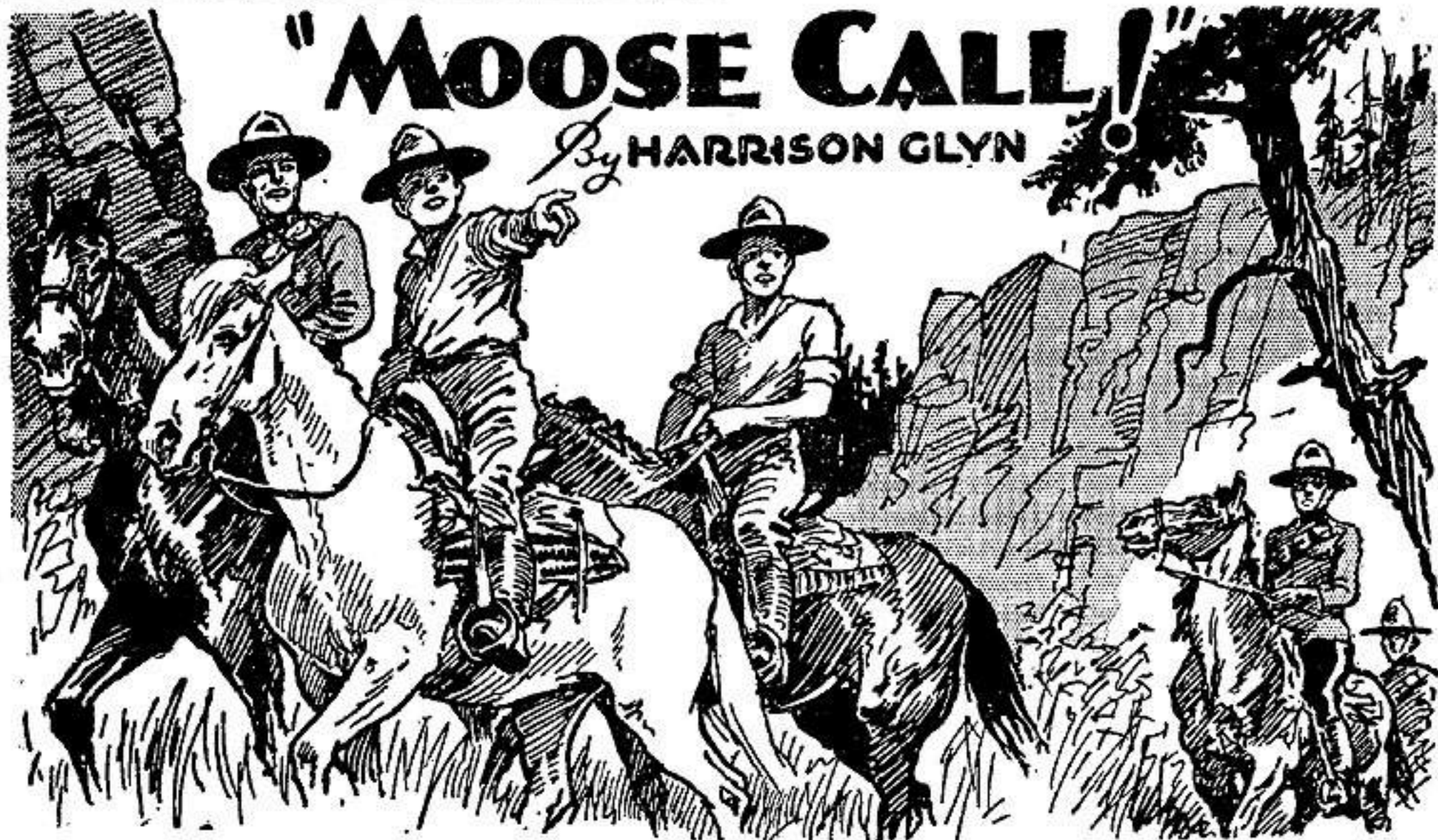
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"MOOSE CALL!"

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, through whom they learn that a gang of roughnecks led by Majoe and Musty have already registered the claim. The two Britishers trap the gang in a natural amphitheatre in the mountains after which, assisted by Sergeant Threfall and his Mounties, they storm the entrance. A fierce fight ensues, and the gang is wiped out with the exception of Majoe and Musty. Selwyn is captured by Majoe, but under cover of darkness, succeeds in severing the lariat which pinioned him.

"I wonder what's become of Musty?" he asks of Majoe, his active brain planning an escape.

(Now read on.)

The Last of Majoe and Musty!

"SHUCKS! Musty never was a pal of mine," Majoe confided, glad perhaps to keep on talking, for his eyes were heavy with sleep, and to sleep would spell danger. "We just got mixed up together in a jam years ago, see, and ever since worked as pardners, share and share alike in what we earned, and—"

"What you stole," said Selwyn.

"Curse it! The same thing. But Musty did the dirty over this Amyas Gore claim. I found him pocketin' the biggest nugget the boys found. I'm through with Musty. When we meet again there's gonna be gun-play."

"When you meet—if you ever meet!" interrupted the young Britisher. "I think you're going to die right here, Majoe."

Selwyn's remark goaded the villain into another burst of loud-voiced

oaths, after which he sank to muttering, and a while later into silence.

Selwyn waited breathlessly under the stars before he dared to move cautiously and silently, in a sitting position, foot by foot, to where Majoe was seated, propped against the cliff.

At last he could see the villain's bulky outline. Majoe was sitting with his feet sprawled out and his bearded head sunk upon his mighty chest. He was fast asleep, and snoring deeply.

The moon was swinging up, and Selwyn could see distinctly. Lying on the ledge, within hand's reach, was Majoe's rifle.

Selwyn seized it by the barrel and tossed it over the ledge. The only sound that floated upwards was a sharp crack from somewhere very far below as the rifle landed.

Next, Selwyn drew one of the revolvers from Majoe's holster. This he slipped into his pocket, Majoe having robbed him of his own gun. Then he reached for and got possession of the second gun and hurled it far into space. This time he heard no sound of a fall.

Majoe kept his automatic in his right-hand pocket, and the pocket was ready to Selwyn's hand. Majoe's arms were folded above the pocket. Selwyn secured the automatic with ease. Last of all, he reached out for and secured Majoe's bowie-knife. And this, too, he hurled out into the dark.

His work done, Selwyn began to crawl noiselessly back to his place, leaving the severed lariat on the ledge. There was no longer any need for him to pretend.

Before very long the dawn broke, and as soon as there was sufficient light Selwyn began to crawl back up the slope. Holding on to the cliff this time, and deciding that it would be quite possible for him to reach a very

promising-looking ledge about a hundred feet above him, he started to climb.

He had climbed up about forty feet, perhaps, when a bellowing roar from the ledge below told him Majoe was awake and had discovered how he had been fooled.

"Come down from that, you yaller-faced climbin' monkey!" Majoe roared from below. "Come down, or I'll shoot you down, you flamin' son of a mountain goat!"

Selwyn glanced back, grinning with delight.

"You can't!" he shouted. "I've got all your guns!"

"But I'll get you!" bawled Majoe, as he began to climb up after the young Britisher. "You can't fool me!"

"But I have!" goaded the boy.

Selwyn had up till now been mad with hunger and thirst, but his escape so thrilled him that he forgot it. He knew, as he tested the plants and stunted bushes which grew out of the holes in the cliff face, that he would be able to get up to that ledge above him all right. The plants gripped as if they formed part of the mountain itself, and one need not trust to them entirely, for there were jutting grips on which to cling.

Selwyn climbed swiftly and surely.

Majoe moved every bit as fast, however. It was surprising to see with what ease and power he hauled himself up that death-trap, weighed down as he was with the heavy pack and pockets full of gold.

Sweat poured down his face as he felt for toe-hold and reached for plants up there.

He raved and shouted as he came. The mountain fairly rang with the noise he made. His shouting was heard, too, for suddenly, when he had

only another twenty feet or so to go, a head and shoulders appeared from the ledge above.

Selwyn was so startled he stopped. This was the second time a man had appeared and barred the way when Selwyn was making a life-and-death climb up a dangerous wall near the Great Chief's Head. But this time it was not the crested head of the Sioux Indian, Mountain Lion—it was the ugly, twisted, evil face of the murderer, Musty Wilmot!

Musty Wilmot was there, waiting for him.

A sense of sickening disappointment made Selwyn's head swim, and he came very near to falling.

Majoe, down below, looking up, bawled with triumph as he recognised his pal in crime and knew that they had got Selwyn trapped between them.

"Atta boy, Musty!" he roared, laughing merrily. "I knew you wouldn't let a guy down. Get him! Use your gun! Drill him full of holes! Bump him off, Musty, and then lend me a helpin' hand as I come up!"

"I'll bump him off, Jack," snarled Musty, looking more evil than ever, "and I'm gonna bump you off, too. The Mounties and the Sioux have got me cornered like a rat, darn their hides! Curse 'em for it, for they'll find me soon. But I ain't gonna let young Gore an' you escape—"

Selwyn saw him draw back the right hand, on which he had been leaning, and then swing it into view again, grasping a gun. But in order to aim at Selwyn, who was clinging close to the cliff face below, Musty had to lean right over and point the gun straight down.

Below him, Selwyn was braced on the cliff face, holding on with both feet and hands. He let go with the right now and pulled the gun he had taken from Majoe out of his pocket. Reaching up, he got a clear aim on the black-hearted, murdering villain who meant to add another crime to the long list of his sinister record.

Selwyn fired at once.

Braang!

The bullet bored clean through Musty's throat, and as his head and shoulders plunged forward and his left hand on which he was supporting himself gave way under him, the right arm shooting outward with the gun, the whole of the crook's body came over the ledge in a somersault and dropped sheer down.

The toe of Musty's boot struck against Selwyn's shoulder as he flashed by, but only lightly, and a second later the whole plunging weight of him hit Majoe fair and square on head and shoulders and fairly brushed him off the cliff.

Selwyn felt his grip loosening and let the revolver fall. As he clung, he looked down and saw two bodies turning over and over, with arms and legs outspread, plunging down into the depths of the mountains until at last the ledge below hid them from view.

Selwyn's hands were getting cramped and tired. His feet were a little bit numbed from the strain of clinging to doubtful points of rock, and his head was a little dizzy. He

managed to reach the ledge, hung there for a second or two, and then managed to hoist himself up and slip a knee over. A few seconds more, and he was lying flat on the ledge, safe and sound.

For several minutes Selwyn lay in blessed relief, for he had kept watch all night, and the strain of the climb had told on him.

Then, rousing himself, he began to crawl along the ledge. It was much safer here, though the rocks were honeycombed with hiding-places and holes. Which way should he go? The point was decided for him as a sudden shout made him look up, and he saw the Sioux, Mountain Lion, and Sergeant Paul Threfall standing on a rock above, waving to him.

They came crawling down, feeling their way cautiously, for a slip would have proved fatal. Within a few minutes they had joined the young Britisher.

The Sioux was grinning, and Threfall looked radiant.

"Shake, boy!" said the Sergeant of the Mounties. "Gee! My heart was sore when I saw that murderin' skunk Majoe haul you along at the end of that rope. But I could do nothing. One false move and Majoe would have shot you."

"I thought he had shot you," answered Selwyn.

"No! The bullets came plenty near, though. The Sioux here thought it wise not to follow you an' goad Majoe. Later, we got on the trail of Musty and hunted him somewhere up hyar, but lost him. What was that shot we heard just now?"

"I shot Musty, and in falling the villain swept Majoe off the mountain-side. They dropped together."

"You killed Musty?" said the

startled sergeant. "Say, how did you manage it, kid?"

"I shot him with Majoe's own revolver."

And then Selwyn told them all what had happened.

The sergeant's bronzed face beamed with admiration as he listened.

"You're a great kid, Sel," he said. "We nailed all the rest. The gang is all wiped out. Now, let's take you a safe way back to Amyas' claim."

The Indian led the way, and within an hour or so they were down in the walled-in place where Amyas Gore had staked his claim. There the Sioux and the Mounties and Colin were waiting.

Colin rushed up to Selwyn, and gripped him by the hand, for he had never expected to see his brother again.

"So you've come back, Sel?" he cried excitedly.

"I'd say he's come back," said the sergeant, "and how! He bumped off Musty and Majoe. He sure has avenged your murdered uncle, boy."

Feeling merry and bright, the party ate, and later rested. Then Selwyn and Colin unearthed the board bearing the inscription: "Amyas Gore—His Claim" and set this proof of their rights up where they had found it.

For a week all the party stayed up there, washing and digging gold, and then, with sacks and bags heavily laden, and every man's pockets bulging gold, they made their way down the mountains.

They retrieved the gold they had cached beside the waterfall, but left the cave of the falls unexplored. That was reserved for exploitation at a later date.

Descending the Sunrise Mountains at their ease, they made for the Sioux

Majoe's eyes gleamed with triumph as, looking up, he recognised his pal in crime and knew that they had got Selwyn Gore trapped between them. "Atta boy, Musty!" he roared, laughing merrily.



camp where they had left their horses.

There the Sioux Indians had a strange tale to report. Some of the braves, whilst out scouting at the foot of the mountains, had come upon the smashed, maimed and broken bodies of two dead white men.

And, stranger still, there was a damaged rifle, a broken revolver, and a bowie-knife, all lying within a little distance around.

Gold had been

drilled from the men's pockets, and they were lying within revolver shot of the place where Amyas Gore had been hurled to his death.

There was no need to ask whose bodies they were; the dead white men were Blackbeard John Majoe and Musty Wilmot.

"It was a close call that of yours, boy, up on the cliff," said Sergeant Threlfall to Selwyn, when the news came. "If you'd hesitated a second, Musty would have got you. But you drilled the ferret-eyed, yellow-maned, cowardly skunk. And he got Majoe for you, too. Who says there ain't any justice in this world?"

Selwyn, Colin and the Mounties started for Tomahawk a day or two later, intending to come back again, properly equipped for another gold hunt.

Before they went, however, they dug up the coffin in which Amyas Gore lay, and the Sioux and the Mounties, forming a funeral procession, bore it up the mountains to the claim beyond the Great Chief's head where the gold prospector had expressed a wish to be buried.

Mountain Lion rode with them back to Tomahawk, and on the way they called for Isaac Snugger.

The old Tomahawk lawyer was full of beans.

He greeted them with outthrust chin and nose turned down, and when he heard the news, he gripped Selwyn and Colin by the hand.

"You've avenged your uncle, boys," he piped, "and you're both rich. In fact, we're all rich."

When the two young Britishers got to Tomahawk, the business of properly registering the claim was seen to. Then the gold was weighed. Every Mountie had his share, and every Indian, too.

The sergeant was given enough to make him independent for life, and Mountain Lion sufficient for him to travel the world round over and over again.

Selwyn and Colin worked the claim until the fall, finding only an ever diminishing store of gold-dust.

Next spring, when the snows break again, they are going back. And Isaac Snugger is going with them, for the Tomahawk solicitor came back with Selwyn and Colin to England, when they broke off for a holiday.

THE END.

(Now look out for the grand opening chapters of Geo. E. Rochester's great new adventure story: "THE FLYING SUBMARINE!"—commencing in next Saturday's issue of the MAGNET!)

THE PHANTOM OF PORTERCLIFFE!

(Continued from page 25.)

"I say—Beast!" roared Bunter. The Bounder, laughing, dropped from the oak and hurried down the drive after the Greyfriars party.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gold!

"BEAST!" groaned Billy Bunter. The Bounder was gone. The other fellows were gone. All of them—excepting Smithy—supposed that Bunter would be following. But the fat Owl was in no state to follow.

He picked himself up, gasping for breath, and blinked round his woody prison.

It was deeply dusky inside the hollow oak. The foliage above shut off the sunlight. But as his eyes became used to the gloom, Billy Bunter observed that two or three articles had fallen from his pockets as he sprawled.

He picked up Kipps' handkerchief and a bag of bullseyes. Then he retrieved a packet of toffee.

Then he groped about in the dusty gloom, to make sure that nothing else was lost. His fat fingers closed on a coin. It felt like a shilling, and it was too dark in the hollow tree to see it clearly.

Bunter was rather puzzled by that find.

As several articles had dropped from his pockets, a shilling, of course, might have dropped as easily as anything else. But the puzzling circumstance was that there had not, so far as he knew, been a shilling in any of his pockets.

His financial resources had been limited to threepence. Feeling in his pocket, he ascertained that the threepence was safe there.

Apparently he had been in possession of a forgotten shilling! Which was remarkable, for Billy Bunter had gone through all his pockets more than once in search of a stray forgotten coin without having any luck.

Anyhow, there the coin was, and if it had not dropped from Bunter's pocket it was difficult to imagine how it had got in the hollow oak. He slipped it into his pocket.

Then he essayed once more to clamber out of his musty prison.

Old rotted wood crumbled in his fat fingers, and he sneezed and coughed in mouldy dust. Panting and puffing, gasping and gurgling, streaming with perspiration, the fat Owl clambered and scrambled, and at long last dragged himself out of the hollow trunk.

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

He wedged himself in the branches and squatted there, to rest after his exertions and gulp in the fresh air. He mopped his streaming brow with Kipps' handkerchief.

He slithered down from the tree at last and rolled away to the house.

He was smothered from head to foot with mouldy dust from the interior of the hollow tree; and even Bunter, though not particular on such points, realised that he needed a wash and a brush down before he started for Margate.

Chandos was in the hall when he went in. He glanced at Bunter, and a faint smile hovered over his plump face.

Rumpled and ruffled, red and perspiring, smothered with dust, Bunter really might have made a stone image smile at that moment. Still, it was like the butler's cheek to smile, in Bunter's opinion, and he gave Chandos a crushing look as he rolled away to the stairs. Chandos, glancing after him, did not seem crushed—in fact, his smile broadened into a grin!

The fat junior rolled into his room.

He washed and brushed, and felt better. Then, feeling the need of refreshment, he felt in his pocket for his bag of bullseyes, and felt at the same time the coin he had found in the hollow oak. He pulled it out along with the bullseyes.

But as he glanced at the coin in his fat hand, Billy Bunter forgot even the bullseyes!

He jumped almost clear of the floor! He stared at the coin as if his little round eyes would pop through his big round spectacles! He seemed unable to believe either his eyes or his spectacles. Indeed, he hardly could!

For the coin in his palm was not a shilling!

It was the gleam of yellow metal that met his eyes as the coin caught the sunlight from the window.

It was a sovereign!

Bunter gazed at it, stupefied. He turned it over in his fat fingers. He blinked at it, and he bit it—assuring himself that it was a good one.

"Oh erikoy!" he gasped.

It was possible that he might have had a forgotten shilling in his pocket. But it was quite impossible that he could have had a forgotten sovereign there! He had had no such coin in his possession.

That coin had not, as he had supposed, fallen from his pocket when he tumbled into the hollow oak! It had been there before he tumbled in!

That was a certainty!

"Oh erikoy!" repeated Billy Bunter, gazing fascinated at the golden coin in his fat palm. It was amazing, stupefying; but he knew what it meant—what it must mean!

Billy Bunter had discovered the clue to the hidden hoard of Portercliffe Hall!

THE END.

(Be sure and read the next story in this rollicking fine holiday series, entitled: "THE GREYFRIARS GOLD HUNTER!" You'll vote it the finest yarn you've ever read. Order your MAGNET to-day!)



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'LONZY WON'T BE STUNG

Says PETER TODD

When I went down into the garden before brekker at Cousin 'Lonzy's place one morning, I got a shock. Standing in the middle of the lawn was the weirdest figure ever seen outside the pages of a comic paper! I fairly blinked, I can tell you. This weird customer looked a mixture of dirt-track rider and medieval knight!

"Wh-what are you doing trespassing on private property?" I gasped. "And anyway, who the dickens are you?"

"Really, Peter, I'm surprised—nay, amazed—that you don't recognise me," replied a very familiar voice. "I am your cousin Alonzo, of course!"

And Cousin Alonzo it was! He was wearing a German steel helmet (someone's souvenir of the War, I suppose), a leather jacket, waterproof dungarees, gaiters, leather gauntlets and butterfly netting round his face!

"But—but why this rig-out, old bean?" I gasped. "You can't be going to a fancy-dress ball at this time of the day!"

"Really, my dear cousin, what an absurd idea!" I'm wearing these unorthodox habiliments as a protection against the attacks of wasps!"

TOM BROWN On—

BALLOON BLOWER'S BALMY BEHAVIOUR

Bulstrode and Russell and I were out for a walk when we ran into Snoop, sitting under a hedge, trying to inflate a toy balloon.

"What's the game, Snoop?" Bulstrode asked. "Blowing up a balloon, what?"

"I wasn't!" was Snoop's answer to that. "I haven't got a balloon! Look here, you chaps, mind if I join you in your walk?"

We looked at each other significantly. The same thought occurred to the three of us together—that Snoop had been affected by the heat!

We let him come with us; and we grew more and more alarmed as we saw that Snoop took every opportunity that came his way of hiding from us for a few ticks and trying to blow up the balloon. Another funny thing he seemed to be doing was tying up a label with the string he had ready to fix round the neck of the balloon. And all the time he strenuously denied that he had a balloon with him!

Then suddenly Snoop made everything as clear as daylight. Emerging from a clump of bushes through which he had walked, he triumphantly held up a half-inflated balloon with a label attached to it. "Funny you chaps should be talking about balloons," he said. "I've found one!"

"Go hon!"

"It's a prize balloon, too!" grinned Snoop. "It must have floated all the way from France because the notice on it is printed in French. It says that the chap whose balloon is found farthest away from Paris gets a thousand francs—and the finder gets a hundred! You fellows will sign your names as witnesses that you saw me pick it up, I suppose?"

The three of us said it together. We saw it at once! By a queer chance, we had met Skinner the previous day, and something had made him mention that Snoop had a cousin who was on holiday in Paris.

How easy for the cousin to post Snoop the balloon and label, and walk away with the prize—always provided, of course, that the required witnesses were available to confirm that it was picked up in the spot Snoop selected!

A neat little frame-up—but it didn't work!



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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HARRY WHARTON On—

AIR MATTRESS' LAST STRAW

A source of wonderment amongst our holiday party at Margate has been the carrying powers of the floating mattress which Fishy's popper gave us to amuse ourselves with in the sea. This super air-cushion surely is one grand sweet song of a mattress—as Fishy himself put it! Nothing less than the biggest ever satisfies Mr. Fish, and if this isn't the biggest air-mattress to be found at any British seaside resort, I'll eat my best bathing-costume!

Quite a crowd collected on the beach when we marched down to the sea to launch it. There was plenty of cheering and a certain amount of ribald comment. One wit asked us if it was a marine landing-ground for aeroplanes!

When we had pushed it out far enough, Bob Cherry climbed aboard it, and had a float. It bore him as it would have borne a sparrow. Inky followed, without appearing to lower it the slightest bit, and even Johnny Bull didn't send it anywhere near the Pimsoli line!

All that morning and the following day and the day after that, we became more and more firmly of the opinion that Mr. Fish's air-mattress was quite unsinkable.

But it wasn't! There came a time when Bunter came down to the water for his annual.

Bunter squeaked: "I say, you fellows, I'd like a float on that thing. Hold it while I get on it, will you?"

We held it for him. Bunter, with much blowing and snorting, climbed on board. And, sad to relate, old pals, the water-mattress met its Waterloo! Folding itself round Bunter like a wholesale collection of nightmarish sausages, it sank like a stone!

The incident convinced Bunter that air-mattresses are no good. The rest of us don't share his view. Our idea about it is that there's a last straw even for unstuffed air-mattresses!

my friend, Herlock Sholmes, and, of course, the ordinary perlice can't be eggpected to follow such brainy methods as his!

"My eye!" ejaculated the officer.

"But whatever the perlice think about it," went on the Head, with a smirk, "the publick will realise my trew worth. My fame as a detective will be noised abroad on the front page of every newspaper worthy of the name! My triumf will be complete! What about giving me three cheers as a send-off, boys?"

But Jack Jolly & Co. were too breathless to respond. Whatever the newspapers mito say about it, their own opinion of Dr. Birchmall was that he was a very defective detective!

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Lonzy."—"Do you think I should be annoyed because Dutton called me a camel?" No, old chap; there's no reason for you to get your back up over it.

"Inquirer."—"Bunter's habit of helping himself to other people's belongings is a disease."

Quite right; and we know for a fact that he's always taking something for it!

"Indignant Fag."—"We were going to have winkles for tea, but Sammy Bunter ate up the lot!"

We've heard before that he's a very selfish chap!

He Made Temple "Pail"!

Temple was so horrified at seeing Scott descending to the childish game of making sand castles at Bognor that he swooned on the spot.

But Scott seems unlikely to give up the pastime. At all events, he told Temple that he was QUITE SATISFIED WITH HIS DIGGINGS!



"Penny a peep through the tellyscope! 'Ave a look out to sea for a penny, young jents!"

Jack Jolly & Co., of the St. Sam's Fourth, pawed in their promenade along the sands at Pargate as these words fell on their ears. Looking round, they perceived that the speaker was a grinning youngster who was in charge of a powerful tellyscope.

"Shall we risk a penny?" asked Merry. "These tellyscopes are supposed to be jolly wonderful things."

"Yes, rather!" said Bright. "My pater said that with the aid of a powerful tellyscope he mite possibly see some good points in my skool report!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Catch, kid!" chuckled Jack Jolly, tossing the youngster a penny. "I'll have a go—though it looks rather a one-eyed apparatus to me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Jolly had a look out to sea through the tellyscope. After looking through it for half-a-minnit, he suddenly gave a low wistle.

"Few! I fancy I can see something suspicious out there, you fellows!"

"Is it smugglers, old chap?" asked Merry, hoapfully. "Or pirates? If it is, we'll have a boat out and take some snaps of them!"

"Nothing so eggsiting as that, I'm afraid!" larfed Jack Jolly. "It's just a man in a motor-boat. He's making for the caves on the other side of the bay!"

"Well, that's not very suspicious, is it?"

"It is, when you see him through the tellyscope," said Jack Jolly grimly. "He keeps on looking over his sholder as though he's afraid of being followed, and the eggspression on his fizz is awfully furtive and sinnister."

"My hat! I wonder if it's that crook the Head's after—the pickpocket of Pargate!"

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Horace Coker can never resist having a shot on a rifle range, though his performances on the school range convulse onlookers. He has never been known to hit his own target—though he often hits those of other fellows! As Blundell says, shooting is too good for Coker!



Blundell and Bland, the "in-separables" of the Fifth, are going on a biking tour together this vac. Both are giants at cricket and football, though as batsmen their styles vary. Blundell is a "hitter," and smote three "sixes" in one over last match. Bland just keeps his end up—for hours "on end"!



David Morgan, the Welsh junior, told Removites what it is like to go down a Welsh coal mine. Morgan has visited several min's while on holiday, and on one occasion he assisted the rescue squad when a slight fall trapped some of the miners. Luckily, the rescuers were in time!



Billy Bunter will long remember when, visiting Hurree Singh in Bhanipur, he awoke to find himself menaced by a hooded cobra! Had not "Inky," coming in silently, shown his skill in playing on a snake-charmer's reed instrument and thus drawing the cobra away, Bunter would not be alive to tell the tale!



Herbert Vernon-Smith's natural desires lie in the direction of billiards more than the sports field. During various vacations, he has acquired uncanny skill with the cue, and can perform tricks with the balls! At Greyfriars, however, Smithy "plays up"—mainly for his chum Redwing's sake—at cricket!



Travelling 1st class with a 3rd class ticket is only one of Bunter's customs on the railway. When caught doing this at Courtfield, the porter sarcastically observed that it was a change to find Bunter had a ticket at all! Bunter is well known locally—but it is doubtful if he will ever "know" better!

Peer!" eggsclaimed Merry. "Perhaps he has hidden the proceeds of his crimes in one of the caves!"

"That's eggactly what I was thinking myself!" said Jack Jolly, eagerly. "Shall we follow him?"

"Yes, rather! Let's hire one of those surf-riding motor-boats over there!"

It was no sooner said than done! Jack Jolly & Co dashed down to the beach and hired a surf-riding motor-boat and, with Jolly at the wheel, they got ready to go.

Scarcely had they left the youngster with the tellyscope before a venerable figger, which had been crouching behind a deck-chair near by, sprang up and darted across to the tellyscope. Dr. Alfred Birchmall—for it was he—pressed a copper coin into the palm of the grinning youngster and applied one eye to the powerful instrument.

"If that suspicious-looking johnny isn't the sneak-thief I'm looking for, I'll eat my Sunday mortar-board!" he muttered. And, ignoring the yung tellyscope attendant who was yelling out: "Hi, guv'nor! You've only given me a ha'penny!" he ran down the beach after Jack Jolly & Co.

"Half-a-minnit, boys!" he yelled. "I'm coming with you!"

Unforchuntly, his voice was drowned by the roar of the engine starting up. The motor-boat began to move away from the shore. Dr. Birchmall saw that unless he went right ahead he would be left behind.

With a desprit burst of speed, he ran down to the water's edge, then sprang. Hoap springs eternal in the yewman breast—and the Head hooped to spring all the way into the boat. But—a lass for his hoaps!—he sprang a little short, and instead of landing in the boat itself, he landed on the surf board. By a stroke of good luck, his hands grabbed the lines as he landed. Before the Head knew quite what was happening, he was surf-riding over the gleaming waves in the wake of Jack Jolly's motor-boat!

"Grate pip! It's the Head, surf-riding at the back of us!" eride Merry, who was the first to look back. "I wonder if he can keep on his feet!"

"He ought to mannidge it!" grinned Bright. "He always boasts that he's a very upright man! And we know for a fact that he never takes anything lying down!"

But it soon seemed that the Head had kept his balance more by luck than judgment,

for, without the slitest warning, his legs suddenly swept off the surf-board and flew into the air. For the rest of the jerney to the caves, Dr. Birchmall, hanging on desperately to the ropes, played at Ins and Outs—five feet in the water one moment and five feet out the next!

At last, they reached the entrance to the cave into which their quarry had by this time vanished, and the grinning juniors hawled the Head aboard.

"Groooo! What a trip!" he gasped, as he gowged water out of his eyes. "I can't help comparing myself with a badly cooked turkey, for I've had all the stuffing nocked out of me!" But let us get on with the work in hand, boys! Shut off your engine, Jolly, and all of you paddle in quietly so that the crook duzzent hear us!"

Dr. Birchmall had to be obeyed, of course, so the boys did as he ordered. Two minnits later, they were inside the cave. When their eyes got used to the dim light, they saw a sight that left them breathless!

There, on a rocky ledge, was the suspicious-looking gentleman they had followed, calmly eggaminig a huge collection of valuables! Munny, gold watches and trinkets galore were piled high before him! It was a staggering site.

"Collar him, boys!" rang out the Head's voice, as they reached the rocky ledge.

The boys sprang on to the ledge and closed with the suspected crook, who struggled fsewriously. But all his struggles were of no avail, and before he could say "Nife!" Dr. Birchmall had him trussed up like a chicken.

"Got you, my bewty!" grinned the Head. "Let's gag him, too—he may have pals he can summon to his aid!"

And the Head tied an oily rag from the motor-boat round his mouth, thus redowsing his yells to meer gurgles.

"What shall we do now, sir?" asked Jack Jolly.

"Go back and fetch the perlice!" was Dr. Birchmall's prompt reply. "I'll stay here, boys, and keep an eye on the raskal! Be as quick as you can—in fakt, quicker than that, if possibul!"

"I, I, sir!"

And the juniors set off in their motor-boat to fetch the perlice.

But they never fetched them. For, before they had reached the mouth of the cave, they saw another motor-boat coming towards them, with an evil-looking customer steering it. Jack Jolly promptly shut off the engine and waited in the shaddoos. It was just as well he did, for they soon realised that the newcomer was none other than the real Pickpocket of Pargate Peer!

"Ha, ha!" they herd him chuckling, as he drew near. "A good hawl from the peer this morning and no mistake! Now that the perlice are on my track, I must collect the lot and go while the going's good!"

But a shock was in store for that crook. No sooner had he reached the mouth of the cave than he bumped into another motor-boat and the three youngsters aboard it jumped over his gunwale and went for him like one-o'clock!

Another instant, and the secondroll was a prisoner!

Dr. Birchmall was grately sorprized to see them returning with a second captive—and more sorprized still when they told him it was the real thief!

"But if this man is the crook, who is the other?" he demanded, when Jack Jolly had finished.

"Better ask him!" grinned Jolly, untying his gag. "Would you mind telling us who and what you are, sir?"

"Grooo! Why didn't you give me the chance before?" snorted Dr. Birchmall's prisoner. "If you want to know, I'm a plain-clothes perlice-man, investigating the case of the Pargate Peer Pickpocket! It's lucky you didn't let him get away, or you'd have got into jolly serious trubble!"

For a moment, the Head's jaw dropped. Then he regained his usual sang froyd and began to grin again.

"Don't worry, officer!" he larfed. "As a matter of fakt, I knew all the time that you wore a perlice-man!"

"Then, in that case," bawled the plain-clothes man, "why did you tie me up?"

"Just to throw the real crook off the scent—that's all!" replied the Head calmly.

"I think I mannidge it very well; but I don't eggpect you to see eye to eye with me in that. You see, I employ the methods of

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



Horace Coker can never resist having a shot on a rifle range, though his performances on the school range convulse onlookers. He has never been known to hit his own target—though he often hits those of other fellows! As Blundell says, shooting is too good for Coker!



Blundell and Bland, the "in-separables" of the Fifth, are going on a biking tour together this vac. Both are giants at cricket and football, though as batsmen their styles vary. Blundell is a "hitter," and smote three "sixes" in one over last match. Bland just keeps his end up—for hours "on end"!



David Morgan, the Welsh junior, told Removites what it is like to go down a Welsh coal mine. Morgan has visited several min's while on holiday, and on one occasion he assisted the rescue squad when a slight fall trapped some of the miners. Luckily, the rescuers were in time!



Billy Bunter will long remember when, visiting Hurree Singh in Bhanipur, he awoke to find himself menaced by a hooded cobra! Had not "Inky," coming in silently, shown his skill in playing on a snake-charmer's reed instrument and thus drawing the cobra away, Bunter would not be alive to tell the tale!



Herbert Vernon-Smith's natural desires lie in the direction of billiards more than the sports field. During various vacations, he has acquired uncanny skill with the cue, and can perform tricks with the balls! At Greyfriars, however, Smithy "plays up"—mainly for his chum Redwing's sake—at cricket!



Travelling 1st class with a 3rd class ticket is only one of Bunter's customs on the railway. When caught doing this at Courtfield, the porter sarcastically observed that it was a change to find Bunter had a ticket at all! Bunter is well known locally—but it is doubtful if he will ever "know" better!