

Extra-SPECIAL Cover-to-Cover Story of "THE SECRET OF THE SMUGGLERS' CAVE!"
HARRY WHARTON & CO., of Greyfriars . .

The Magnet

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HERE'S A ROLICKING FINE STORY OF SCHOOLBOY FUN AND ADVENTURE—

The SECRET of the SMUGGLERS' CAVE!

By FRANK
RICHARDS



—Featuring Your Old Favourites—HARRY WHARTON & CO., of Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Coker Causes a Catastrophe!

BANG!
Coker of the Fifth jumped.
Then he frowned.
It was enough to make any fellow jump.

The November dusk was falling on Greyfriars School. The bell had not yet rung for calling-over, and a good many fellows were still out of the House—among them Horace Coker of the Fifth Form.

Coker, at the moment, was not in a good temper. Tramping along by the old Cloisters, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, Coker was thinking bitterly of the way Prout had "jawed" him in class that afternoon.

They had been doing history in the Fifth. Coker had shown up a paper in which he referred to a celebrated gunpowder conspirator as "Guy Forx."

It was an error that any fellow might have made, Coker thought. Mr. Prout did not think so. He jawed Coker. He jawed him at considerable length.

Thinking of it now, Coker was feeling bitter. And then, from the dusky old Cloisters came that sudden bang that made him jump nearly clear of the ground.

"Those dashed fags!" breathed Coker.

He turned and tramped into the shadowy Cloisters. He heard another bang as he went.

Had the great and glorious Fifth of November arrived, of course, bangs would have been frequent and painful and free so to speak. Fellows rather let themselves go on that famous anniversary. On that date fireworks would be banging and cracking and fizzing and squizzing all over Greyfriars. But it was not yet the Fifth of November, and

fireworks were prohibited on all other dates. It was still a couple of days to the Fifth, until when no fellow was supposed to bring even a single, solitary cracker into the school.

But at Greyfriars, as elsewhere, fellows sometimes did that which they were not supposed to do. At the present moment, it was clear, some exhilarated junior, too impatient to wait for Guy Fawkes Day, was letting off crackers in the Cloisters—a spot sufficiently far from the House for the noise to pass unnoticed by masters and prefects.

Some cheeky fag was breaking the rules! Coker was going to look into it, regardless of the fact that it was no business of his.

A Sixth Form prefect, of course, would have been bound to take note of such an infraction of the rules. Coker was in the Fifth, and was nobody in particular. That, however, made no difference to Coker. Coker had a short way with fags, especially when he was in a cross temper. He had been made to jump, and now he tramped grimly into the Cloisters to make that cheeky fag jump in his turn.

Bang!

A third cracker cracked.

"Chuck it, Bob!" came the voice of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. "If a prefect heard that row—"

"The rowfulness is rather terrific, my esteemed Bob!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "And it is against the absurd rules to let off fireworks before the ridiculous bonfire day."

"Oh, blow the rules!" said Bob cheerily. "There's nobody about. I say, just one squib—"

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"Somebody may have heard that row

already. If we get spotted with this stack of fireworks there'll be trouble."

"Quech might confiscate the lot!" said Frank Nugent. "And he mightn't let us have them back on the Fifth. Chuck it, ass!"

"Oh, rot!" said Bob Cherry. Anything that made a noise rather appealed to Robert Cherry, of the Remove. "Look here—"

"Somebody's coming now!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as Coker's heavy tramp resounded on his ears.

"Oh, my hat!"

Coker gave a snort as he heard the voices among the old stone pillars of the Cloisters.

It was those young rascals of the Remove who were there—Harry Wharton & Co. Breaking rules right and left—like the cheeky young sweeps they were! Coker was the man to stop them!

The chums of the Remove all looked round anxiously. Even the exuberant Bob rather regretted that he had not resisted the temptation to let off a few of the crackers.

For if it was a master or a prefect who was coming, it was serious. "Lines" for breaking the rules did not matter very much. The heroes of the Remove were used to lines, and generally had some on hand. But the fireworks would be confiscated, and that was awfully serious, for the Famous Five had expended no less than ten shillings on that box of fireworks. They had smuggled it into the school, and they were going to conceal it in a safe spot in the old Cloisters till wanted—if they were not spotted.

Really there was no great harm in it. There had been a bargain line in boxes of fireworks at Chunkley's, in Courtfield, and they had got quite a lot for their money. Naturally they had wanted

to bag one of those bargain boxes before they were sold out.

And they weren't going to take the fireworks into the studios, where such things were considered dangerous; they were going to park that box outside the House, where it could come to no possible harm.

All would have been well had not Bob fallen to the temptation to let off a few of the crackers to go on with, as it were. But if a master or a prefect spotted them—

"Oh, only a Fifth Form man!"

There was a general gasp of relief as Coker came into view. It was not, after all, an official tread that they heard. It was only the tread of a Fifth Form man, who did not matter any more than a fag of the Third or the Second.

"Oh," said Bob, "Coker! All serene!"

"The sereneness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Coker of the Fifth gave the chums of the Remove a glare. His look did not indicate that it was all serene. Far from it!

"Oh, you!" he said. "I might have guessed that it was you—breaking the rules, and kicking up a row! You jolly well know, without my telling you, that you're not allowed to bring fireworks into the school before the Fifth."

"Quite!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Buzz off, Coker!"

"You've got a regular cargo there!" said Coker, staring at the box. "What would your beak say, I'd like to know, if he saw it?"

"He isn't going to see it," explained Wharton, "so the question does not arise, old bean."

"Mind minding your own business, Coker?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Run away and play, old man!" suggested Frank Nugent.

"What about another cracker, or a squib?" asked Bob. "Nobody but Coker about, and Coker doesn't matter."

Horace Coker's frown, already dark, grew thunderous. These cheeky fags considered that Coker of the Fifth did not matter! Coker intended to make it clear to them that he mattered very much.

"You cheeky young sweep!" he roared. "Do you think I'm going to allow this? Leave those fireworks alone! Put that matchbox away! You begin letting off fireworks again, you cheeky little swab, and I'll jolly soon stop you!"

That was enough for Bob Cherry—more than enough! If Coker fancied that he could give orders to Remove men, Bob Cherry was the fellow to undeceive him on that point.

He struck a match and bent over to detach one of the fireworks from the stack in the cardboard box.

And that, in turn, was enough for Coker.

He jumped at Bob.

"By gum!" exclaimed Coker. "I'll just—!" He grasped Bob, and the Remove man spun in his hefty hands.

The lighted match dropped from Bob's fingers as he grappled with Coker. His comrades, with one accord, rushed to his aid. None of them noticed, in that moment of excitement, that the match dropped into the box of fireworks!

But a moment or two later they could not help noticing it.

Coker, roaring, staggered in the grasp of the five juniors. Up-ended, he bumped on the old stone flags. Over him rolled the juniors. And then—

Bang! Fizz! Squizz! Squish! Bang, bang! Whooooosh! Bang! Crash! Bang! BANG!

"Oh crikey!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Great pip!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! BANG!

With a terrific roar, and showers of sparks, the whole box of fireworks went off, all together, and the roar of the explosion woke every echo of Greyfriars School from end to end.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Catching Coker!

"I SAY, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter was looking for Harry Wharton & Co.

He found them—suddenly.

Five running figures came sprinting through the November dusk. Behind them the echoes of that terrific explosion boomed in the Cloisters.

Startled voices were heard on all sides. Everybody at Greyfriars, from the headmaster to the boot-boy, had heard that sudden, thunderous roar, and it had caused general alarm.

That there would be a row about it was certain. The fellows who had brought those explosives into the school did not want to be found on the spot when angry and alarmed masters came to inquire. It behoved them to get off the spot as quickly as they knew how, which they promptly did.

Leaving Coker of the Fifth sprawling,

When Harry Wharton & Co. and their girl chums from Cliff House set out to picnic in an old smugglers' cave they little thought they were in for an amazing adventure! It all starts when Bunter and his sister Bessie clear off with the boat and leave them stranded!

the chums of the Remove sprinted, to escape while the coast was clear. It was not likely to remain clear long.

"I say, you fellows— Whoop!" roared Bunter.

The Famous Five were going too fast to stop, even if they had desired to stop, which they did not. Harry Wharton swerved to the right, Frank Nugent to the left, and avoided the fat Owl of the Remove as he planted himself in the way. But Johnny Bull crashed right into him, and sent him spinning, and Billy Bunter roared as he spun.

He roared and rolled, and Johnny Bull, stumbling, rolled over him. Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh, coming on fast behind, rolled over the pair of them. It was quite a mix-up.

"Owl! Oh crumbs! Owl!" gasped Bob.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "My esteemed hat! Owl!"

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter, as he rolled, winded to the wide, under the sprawling juniors. "Wurrrrgh! Grooogh!"

"Quick!" panted Bob.

He scrambled up and ran on after Wharton and Nugent. Swiftly Johnny and the Nabob of Bhanipur scrambled up and darted after him.

Billy Bunter remained where he was. Bunter was winded, and he could only sprawl and gurgle for breath.

The Famous Five vanished into the dusk.

They were only just in time. Already a startled mob was turning in the direc-

tion of the scene of the explosion. Every fellow who was out of the House was starting in that direction; and dozens of fellows who were indoors ran out to see what the dickens was happening. There was a chorus of voices:

"It's fireworks—"

"It's in the Cloisters—"

"Some young ass—"

"My hat! What a row!"

"But who—"

"Come on!"

"Upon my word!" Loud over other voices sounded the boom of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. "An explosion of fireworks! Against the strict rule on the subject! Upon my word!"

Mr. Prout was walking in the quad when the explosion roared out. So he was the first to head for the spot. Mr. Quelch, Capper, Twigg, Hacker, and other masters came quickly out of the House. Wingate, Gwynne, Sykes, Loder, and other prefects ran out in a hurry. But Prout was the man on the spot. Prout, headed for the old Cloisters, whence that terrific roar rang and echoed, in the hope of catching the young rascal, or rascals, responsible for the same.

It was fortunate for the young rascals concerned that Mr. Prout was plump and portly. Had he had a little less weight to carry, he might have arrived before they got clear, swift as they were in retreat.

As it was the five Removeites vanished a moment or two before Prout came trotting up. Squibs were still squibbing, jumping crackers still jumping and cracking among the old stone pillars of the Cloisters, though the worst of it was over. No doubt the showers of dazzling sparks, added to the thickening November gloom, helped to prevent Prout from observing a fat figure that sprawled and gurgled in his path.

He did not see Billy Bunter. He did not know that Bunter was there; but he knew that something was there, when his portly legs tangled over that something, and he pitched forward, sprawling.

"Oh!" gasped Prout. "Ooooooh! Oh!"

He crashed!

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter.

"Upon my word! Oh! Ow! Good gracious! Oh!" spluttered the Fifth Form master. "Who—what—what—Oooogh!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bunter squirmed away in a hurry. Prout sounded as if he was hurt, and as if he was angry.

It was not Bunter's fault, certainly, that Mr. Prout had fallen over him. He had not asked Prout to fall over him. But he realised that it was not safe to remain within Prout's reach, all the same, after that tumble. He squirmed away, gurgling, picked himself up, and flew.

"Urrrrrgh!" Prout was remarking. "Yurrrrgh! Wurrrrgh! Who—what young rascal— Who—what—Upon my—grooogh!—word— Grooogh!" He sat up dizzily.

A minute more, and there was a crowd on the spot.

"Prout—is that you, Prout?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

"Oooooogh!"

"Prout!" exclaimed Mr. Capper, in astonishment. "My dear fellow, what are you sitting down there for? Are you not afraid of damp, Prout?"

"Gooooogh!"

"My dear Prout—"

"I have been—gooogh!—tripped!"

gasped Mr. Prout. "I have been—woooogh!—tripped up! I have fallen—woooogh!—over! Goodness gracious! Oooogh!"

Quelch and Capper gave the Fifth Form master a hand each. They helped him to his feet. Prout tottered between them, spluttering for breath.

"I have been—bless my soul!—tripped up! Some young rascal—Wooogh! I am quite—gurrgh!—breathless!"

"Somebody's there!" exclaimed Wingate of the Sixth.

And the Greyfriars captain rushed on, to capture the shadowy figure in the Cloisters.

"Seize him!" gasped Prout.

"Secure him!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"Here, leggo!" came an indignant hawl, as Wingate grasped Coker of the Fifth. "Wharrer you grabbing me for, you Sixth Form ass? Leggo—see?"

Coker had not been so quick on the uptake as the Famous Five. They had vanished like spectres at dawn before the roar of the explosion died away. Coker had not vanished. In fact, it would have been beneath the dignity of Coker of the Fifth to flee like a startled fag. Besides, Coker was not the guilty man. It was true that he had caused the explosion, but it was inadvertently. Coker had not even thought of scudding off; he was rubbing his head, which the juniors had tapped on the stone flags, hard. Coker was there, rubbing his head, when half Greyfriars arrived on the scene; and Wingate of the Sixth grabbed him, much to his indignation and surprise.

"You," exclaimed Wingate—"you, a Fifth Form man! I thought it was some silly fag—"

"Wharrer you mean?" hooted Coker belligerently. "Leggo! Did you hear me tell you to leggo, Wingate? Are you deaf?"

"Have you caught him, Wingate?" called out Mr. Quelch.

"I've got him, sir!"

"We've got him!" called out Loder of the Sixth, grabbing Coker as he wrenched at Wingate's grip. "Got him all right!"

"Hold him!" boomed Prout. "He must be taken before the Head for this! A terrible explosion—a dangerous explosion! A reckless disregard of strict rules! Some utterly reckless junior—probably a boy of your Form, Quelch."

"I see no reason whatever to suppose so, Prout!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "In fact, I think I recognise a Fifth Form boy's voice."

"Nonsense!" yapped Prout.

"What—what did you say, Prout?"

"I said nonsense, sir!" boomed Prout. "Do you imply, sir, that a Fifth Form boy—a senior—would be so stupid, so reckless, so regardless of authority, sir, as to be guilty of—"

Prout broke off suddenly. They reached the spot before he finished, and he did not finish. The sight of Coker of the Fifth bereft Prout of speech. He gazed at Coker. He almost goggled at him.

Mr. Quelch smiled sarcastically. Mr. Hacker glanced at Mr. Capper—he very nearly winked. This was a "facer" for Prout.

"Will you leggo?" roared Coker. "Leggo my arm, Wingate! Leggo my collar, Loder, you swab! I say leggo!"

"A Fifth Form boy, I think," said Mr. Quelch, with quiet sarcasm.

Prout spluttered.

"Coker—it is Coker! Coker, you utterly stupid and insensate boy, how dare you! I repeat, Coker, how dare you!"

Prout boomed, he roared, he thundered. He had no doubt—nobody, in fact had any doubt—that Coker had been letting off fireworks in the Cloisters. There was Coker, and nobody else, surrounded by fragments of exploded fireworks, and a smell of gunpowder, and still showering sparks. What was any beak to think? It was absolutely exasperating to Prout—especially after what he had just said to Quelch.

Wingate and Loder released Coker as his Form-master arrived. Coker blinked at Mr. Prout.

"I—I say, sir—" he gasped.

"You, a Fifth Form boy—a boy in my Form—a senior!" thundered Prout.

"Upon my word! Go to the House at once, Coker!"

"But, sir!" gasped the bewildered Coker. "I—I—"

"Not a word! Silence, sir! Go to the House! Take five hundred lines, Coker! You will be detained to-morrow afternoon to write them! Go!"

"But, sir—"

"Go!"

"B-b-b-but—" stuttered Coker.

"Go!" roared Prout, in a voice that made Coker jump.

And Coker went.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Enough for Bunter!

"WHAT about grub?"

"Um!"

In Study No. 1 in the Remove, after prep that evening, there were five thoughtful faces. After prep, the Famous Five had gathered there before going down to the Rag—and they seemed to be discussing a knotty problem.

"Must have some grub!" said Bob Cherry.

"Must!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"The mustfulness is terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Billy Bunter, coming along the Remove passage, stopped at the half-open door of Study No. 1. Perhaps the word "grub" had caught his ears. It was a fascinating word to Bunter. It was more harmonious to his fat ears than the music of the spheres. Grub filled Bunter's thoughts—and, indeed, filled Bunter, whenever he could get hold of it.

Grub did not, as a rule, interest Harry Wharton & Co. to the same extent as it did Bunter. Now, however, it was clear that they were seriously concerned about the question of the commissariat.

"We've got the cake!" remarked Frank Nugent. "It's a jolly good cake—and it's jolly lucky that your Aunt Amy sent it, Wharton."

"Jolly lucky, as it looks as if we shan't have much else!" said the captain of the Remove. "Funds seem to be beastly low! I've got fourpence."

"I've got twopence!" said Johnny Bull.

"Threepence here!" said Bob Cherry.

"So far as my esteemed self is concerned, the stonfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh sorrowfully.

"Girls don't eat much," said Bob hopefully. "And it's a jolly big cake!"

"Well, if we ask Marjorie and Clara to a picnic, we shall have to give them something to eat!" said Harry. "And

if they bring Bessie Bunter with them—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I was rather an ass to blow that ten-bob note on the box of fireworks at Chunkley's, as it turns out!" said Harry ruefully. "I never knew that all you men were stony! It's left me with fourpence! Might be something for some of us in break to-morrow morning—"

"Might be!" said Bob dubiously.

"And the dashed fireworks are all gone now, through that blithering idiot Coker, too!" said Harry. "Well, it's no good crying over spilt milk! We've asked the girls to come out in the boat to-morrow, if it's fine—and it looks like being fine. We've had wonderful weather so far for the time of year. After all, it's a jolly big cake."

"Sea air makes you hungry, though," said Bob. "I fancy that after we've had a run across Pegg Bay, and explored the smugglers' cave, I should be able to scoff that cake on my own!"

"Mind you jolly well don't, then!" said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "We'd better all pretend not to have any appetite, and leave the cake for the girls—if nothing else turns up."

"Oh, all right, of course! For goodness' sake, mind that Bunter doesn't join up—there won't be much cake left for the girls if that fat cormorant gets within reach of it!"

"That's all right—Bunter doesn't even know we're having a boat out on the bay to-morrow!" said Harry.

Billy Bunter, in the passage, grinned.

He had not been aware, before, of the plans laid by the Famous Five for the half-holiday on the morrow, but he was quite aware now.

"We jolly well ought to make Coker pay for those fireworks!" said Johnny Bull. "Ten bob would see us through all right."

"Not much good thinking of that! Let's get down to the Rag!" said Harry Wharton. "Wibley's doing some of his theatrical stunts after prep."

Billy Bunter, in the passage, backed swiftly away, as he heard the juniors make a general move towards the door.

He was at a little distance up the passage, with his back to Study No. 1, when they came out.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away up the stairs—all the Co. looking rather thoughtful. The weather being so wonderfully good for the time of year, it had seemed a first-rate idea to the chums of the Remove to plan a boating trip on Pegg Bay for Wednesday afternoon, to ask Marjorie Hazeldeno and Clara Trevlyn to join up for the same; to explore the old smugglers' cave in the rocks of the Shoulder, and to enjoy a picnic there.

Naturally, they wanted it to be a nice picnic; with lady guests, hospitality should be unbounded. So it was rather unfortunate that there was a general shortage of cash.

Harry Wharton had been in possession of a ten-shilling note that day. Unaware of the general stony state, he had expended the same on that box of fireworks—a sheer waste, as it turned out, owing to Coker!

There was only one bright spot on the stony horizon—the big, handsome cake that Harry had received that day from his aunt, Miss Amy Wharton. Never had a parcel from home been more timely.

The Famous Five thanked their

lucky stars that that big cake was reposing in the cupboard of Study No. 1.

So did Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl of the Remove blinked round, over a fat shoulder, as the Co. went down the Remove staircase. He grinned at the backs of their disappearing heads.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

They weren't going to ask Bunter! They weren't even going to let him know that anything was on! They were going to keep that big cake a secret—regardless of Bunter, and of the fact that the fat Owl was seriously in need of a study supper!

Having watched the five juniors out of sight, Billy Bunter rolled back to Study No. 1. He was about to roll into that celebrated apartment when Her-

Mauleverer and Bolsover major, Hazeldene, and some more.

Bunter waited impatiently.

"Coming down, Fatty?" asked Peter Todd, in passing.

"No! Yes! You cut on, old chap!" said Bunter. "I'm coming down in a minute or two."

Toddy went down the stairs with the rest. Bunter blinked up the passage through his big spectacles. Tom Brown came along, then Mark Linley, and little Wun Lung. The fat Owl snorted with impatience.

But the coast was clear at last. All the Remove, at long last, had gone down, excepting William George Bunter.

He opened the door of Study No. 1, popped in, and closed the door after

round, more or less satisfactorily, among a party of seven. There was, at all events, enough for one, even when that one was Billy Bunter!

Guzzle, guzzle, guzzle!

Standing at the study cupboard, Bunter cut slice after slice of the cake—big, fat slices, which, big and fat as they were, went down almost like oysters. His fat face beamed. Slice followed slice on the downward path—till even Billy Bunter slowed down at last.

There was still a wedge of cake remaining, when even William George Bunter had to stop. He blinked at it—but he shook his head. There was no more parking-space inside Bunter—no more room for a single plum or a single crumb.



As Bessie Bunter landed in the boat, she caught a foot in a coil of rope and tripped. "Yaroooooh!" roared Billy Bunter, as his sister landed on him, throwing two plump arms round his neck in a vain effort to save herself. "You fat duffer!" panted Bessie. "Why didn't you catch me?"

bert Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing came out of Study No. 4.

Bunter stopped suddenly. He did not want any Remove fellow to see him going into the study where the cake was.

When the owner of that cake missed it from the study cupboard, Bunter had no doubt that he would kick up a fuss—all the more because it was all he had for the picnic in the sea cave. Bunter was prepared to risk a kicking—but he preferred to avoid the kicking if he could.

So he leaned carelessly on the door of Study No. 1, as if he had just stopped there casually, till the Bunder and Redwing had passed.

Then, as he was about to make a move, Peter Todd and Tom Dutton came along from Study No. 7, followed by Monty Newland and Penfold from Study No. 9. Then some more Removites, having finished prep, came out of the studies—Fisher T. Fish, Morgan, Desmond, and Wibley, Lord

him. The light was off in that study. Bunter turned it on again.

Then he cut across to the study cupboard.

He whipped the door open. Still in its wrappings, as it had arrived from Wharton Lodge, Aunt Amy's cake lay before him. Billy Bunter's little round eyes fairly gloated over it.

Bunter was hungry. That was his usual state. He was also indignant. They were going to leave him out of that picnic. If ever any fellows deserved to have their cake scoffed, those fellows did. Deserved or undeserved, there was going to be no doubt about the scoffing, at any rate. Billy Bunter felt that he was justified in scoffing that cake. But really he was bothering less about the justification, than the cake.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Scrumptious!"

And he started.

Harry Wharton & Co. hoped that that cake, on the morrow, would go

It was not like Billy Bunter to leave anything eatable uneaten. But even Billy Bunter had a limit—and he had reached it. Sadly, regretfully, but inevitably, he had to leave the remnant of that cake.

But he was not going to waste it. If he was not hungry now, he would be hungry again later. He wrapped the last wedge up in part of the packing-paper, put it under a fat arm, and rolled out of the study.

When, a little later, Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag, he was rather shiny, and breathing rather hard. The Famous Five were there, and Bunter caught a few words as he passed them on his way to an armchair. Bob Cherry was speaking:

"After all, it will be all right. It isn't exactly a picnic, you know—you don't picnic in November! Boat trip and light refreshments—that's the idea! That cake will see us through all right."

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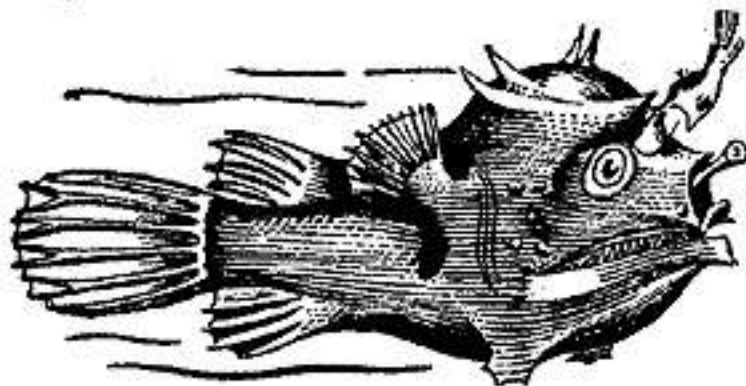
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Billy Bunter grinned as he sat down in the armchair.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Gorgeous !

AND two dozen jam-tarts!"
"Yes, Master Coker!"
"And a jam-roll, and a chocolate-roll!"

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles. Coker of the Fifth seemed to be giving rather a "shipping" order in the school shop.

Of all the good things that Horace Coker was ordering, he was not likely to invite Bunter of the Remove to partake of a single tart or bun. But Bunter was interested, all the same. Foodstuffs had a perennial interest for William George Bunter.

It was "break" in the morning, and Bunter had drifted into the tuckshop, not as a purchaser—his celebrated postal order having, as usual, failed to arrive—but to feast his eyes, as he could not feast his capacious mouth, on Mrs. Mumble's array of tempting goods.

Coker, when he came in, took no notice whatever of Bunter. Probably he did not even observe that the fat junior was there. Lower Fourth fags were miles, if not leagues, beneath Coker's lofty notice.

Coker had an attache-case in his hand. He put it on the counter, and as Mrs. Mumble sorted out the goods Coker packed them in. Billy Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, followed every article as it went.

"And some eclairs—and some doughnuts—say a dozen each!" went on Coker. Bunter's mouth watered as he listened. "And one of those big cakes—two, in fact—a plum cake and a seed cake, ma'am."

Coker was spending money, and no mistake! Money was little to Coker of the Fifth, who had more than he needed of that useful article.

When Coker stood a spread, it was on a lavish scale. There were few things that Coker could do well. But when it came to standing a spread, even his pals Potter and Greene admitted that Coker knew how.

"I—I say, Coker—" gasped Bunter. "I say, old chap—"

Coker gave him a glare. He did not like "old chap" from a fag.

"I—I say, c-c-can I—I carry that bag for you, when you've finished?" asked Bunter. "I'll carry it to your study with—with pleasure, old fellow."

"Did you say old fellow?" asked Coker.

"Yes, old chap—"

"Then take that!" said Coker.

"That" was a cuff, which landed on Bunter's fat ear. The Owl of the Remove yelped as he took it, and backed away out of Coker's reach.

Ignoring his existence further, Coker went on with his purchases. Good thing after good thing was stacked in the attache-case.

Billy Bunter loafed in the doorway, keeping out of Coker's reach, but keeping his eyes on Coker.

Outside in the quad there was a blaze of sunshine. Harry Wharton & Co. and a dozen other Remove fellows were punting about a footer, in break. It was a November day, but amazingly fine and sunny for that usually misty month. No fog—no rain—but a blue sky and a bright sun—almost a summer's day. It looked very promising for the boating trip the chums of the Remove had planned for that afternoon.

Bunter was not thinking of that, however. He did not want to join in that trip. Sailing on the sunny bay, and exploring the ancient smugglers' cave under the rocky Shoulder, did not appeal to Bunter—unless there were refreshments on board the boat. The refreshments for that trip had been limited to a cake—which was now on board Bunter. So he had quite lost his interest in the trip.

Coker packed and packed, till his attache-case was fairly loaded. It was clear that Coker, as well as the juniors, was going to take advantage of that unusually fine spell of weather for some excursion out of gates, which included refreshments. He would not be shopping in morning break for tea or supper—he had something planned for the afternoon. And it was something on a much more extensive scale, as befitted Coker's importance.

Billy Bunter did not like Coker of the Fifth. He did not like his short way with fags. But just then Billy Bunter would have been very glad to pal with Coker—he would have clung closer than a brother!

That, of course, was impossible. Coker would not have been found dead in company with Lower Fourth fags. There was no chance whatever of Bunter joining up for Coker's lavish spread.

But he kept his eyes on Coker and his bag. He blinked very keenly at that attache-case, through his big spectacles. He wanted to make sure of knowing it again when he saw it.

That bag of tuck was likely to be as safe in Coker's study as Aunt Amy's cake had been in Study No. 1, if the grub-raider of the Remove had a chance at it.

Bunter, not usually an observant fellow, observed that attache-case very closely. It was a rather shabby old case, green in colour, which Coker had no doubt sorted out of a box-room for his present purpose. Bunter was sure that he would know it again if he saw it. And he was going to see it if Coker left it in his study—and transported himself elsewhere.

The attache-case was filled. Coker shut it and locked it, and put the key back in his pocket.

He paid his bill—quite an extensive bill—picked up the bag, and walked out of the school shop. Passing Bunter at the doorway, Coker slung the bag round, landing it on the fat junior with a bump.

"Oh!" roared Bunter, as he tottered and sat down.

"Ha, ha!" roared Coker, as he walked on. This, apparently, was Coker's idea of a joke.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

Coker, grinning, walked on to the House.

Billy Bunter picked himself up and rolled after him. That old green attache-case drew him like a magnet.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Join up, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry, as the fat junior passed the Removites in the quad.

Bunter did not heed—even if he heard. He was not likely to waste time punting about a footer at such a moment.

He rolled into the House after Coker. Coker went up to the Fifth. Bunter rolled on his track. Coker's intention, evidently, was to land that bag in his study. If he left it there—

True, it was locked. But Bunter was not worried by that circumstance. He did not want to open it in Coker's

study. His idea was to carry it off bodily if he had a chance. That would serve Coker right, for knocking a fellow over with it. Whether it served Coker right or not, Bunter was going to do it—if he could.

Potter and Greene of the Fifth were talking in the doorway of the games' study, and Coker stopped to speak to them. Bunter hung in the offing.

"I've got the stuff, you men!" said Coker. "Don't forget that we start early."

Potter and Greene glanced at the green attache-case.

"Good!" they said together.

"Ripping weather for a picnic!" said Coker.

"Oh, ripping!" agreed Potter. And Greene nodded a cheery assent.

Coker walked up the Fifth Form passage to his study. He disappeared into that study.

Billy Bunter sauntered past the open doorway a minute later.

He blinked into the study as he passed.

Coker was standing at the cupboard, putting the attache-case inside. He shut the cupboard door, but did not, as Bunter noted, lock it.

Bunter moved on up the passage. Coker came out and walked away to the stairs. Then Bunter moved back to Coker's study.

Clang, clang, clang.

It was the bell for third school.

The door of the next study to Coker's opened, and Hilton and Price of the Fifth came out. Price, as he emerged, was cramming cachous into his mouth—doubtless to dissipate a scent of cigarettes. Hilton, more careless in such matters, threw the stump of a cigarette behind him into the study.

Then they saw Bunter.

The sportsmen of the Fifth had gone to their study for a smoke in break. Bunter saw that—and they knew only too well that he saw it. Neither sportsman desired his manners and customs to be observed by a fag, who had no business whatever in the Fifth Form quarters.

Hilton frowned, Price scowled. Then they kicked Bunter.

"Wow!" roared Bunter, as he bolted down the passage.

Bunter had decided to be a few minutes late for class in the Remove-room. It was rather a risky business, to be late with Quelch, but it was worth the risk, to bag that attache-case and its contents! Bunter, however, changed that decision on the spot as two Fifth Form boots landed on him.

He flew!

Price cut after him, still kicking. Hilton followed on, grinning. Bunter, yelling, reached the landing. Price of the Fifth dribbling him as he went.

"Yow! Ow!" roared Bunter. "Yaroooh!"

He did the stairs two at a time.

Breathless, and wriggling painfully, Bunter joined the rest of the Remove, going in for third school. Coker's gorgeous spread was safe in his study—till after third school, at least!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Stump for Bunter!

"BUNTER!" roared Harry Wharton.

"What—" began Nugent.

"The cake—"

"What about the cake?"

"It's gone!"

"Gone! Oh crumbs!"

After class Wharton and Nugent had

come up to Study No. 1 in the Remove. The juniors were to start immediately after dinner, so the cake had to be packed ready before dinner, and they had come up to pack it.

But a glance into the cupboard in Study No. 1 revealed to the captain of the Remove that there was no packing to be done. That cake had been already packed—only too safely.

Harry Wharton stared, and glared, at the remnants of the packing-paper and a sea of crumbs. That was all that remained of Aunt Amy's cake.

"Bunter!" he gasped. "That fat villain—he must have spotted it, and snaffled it!"

"I—I suppose it would be Bunter—"

"Who else, fathead? Get after him!"

Harry Wharton snatched up a cricket stump as he ran from the study. Half a dozen fellows in the Remove passage looked at him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's the jolly old row?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Anything up?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Bunter's bagged the cake!" gasped Wharton. "I've just missed it! Seen the fat scoundrel?"

"Oh, my hat! The cake!" gasped Bob in dismay. "Gone?"

"All but a few crumbs! Seen Bunter?"

"I saw him on the landing a few minutes ago—hanging about the Fifth Form passage—"

The captain of the Remove rushed away to the landing.

A fat figure was visible there.

Billy Bunter, leaning on the banisters, was watching the Fifth Form passage, like a cat watching a mouse-hole. The door of the games study, at the end of that passage, was open—and five or six Fifth Formers could be seen in the room. Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, was standing in the doorway talking to some fellows within. Obviously, the fat Owl could not approach Coker's study till the coast was a little clearer.

He was waiting for the coast to clear, and wondering impatiently whether the beasts would ever clear off, when Harry Wharton arrived. A lick from the cricket stump apprised Bunter of his arrival.

"Wow!" roared Bunter. He blinked round in indignant surprise. "Ow! Wharrer you pitching into me for, you beast? Ow!"

"Where's that cake?" roared Wharton.

"Eh?"

"The cake, you fat villain!"

"What cake?"

"The cake you've pinched from my study!" roared the captain of the Remove, brandishing the cricket stump.

"Where is it, you fat snooper?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He had forgotten that cake. All his fat thoughts were fixed on the green attache-case in Coker's study. That cake was ancient history to Bunter. But he was reminded of it now.

"Hand it over!" hooted Wharton.

"Do you hear? You can't have scoffed it yet—not the lot of it! Where is it?"

"How should I know where it is?" squeaked the fat Owl. "I don't know anything about your cake! I never knew you had a cake!"

"It's gone!" roared Wharton.

"Beast! I never had it! It's a bit thick, I think, to jump on me as soon as you miss a cake!" hooted Bunter. "Am I the fellow to snaffle a fellow's cake? I ask you!"

Harry Wharton paused.

Any fellow who missed tuck, in the Remove, thought of Billy Bunter at

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once, as a matter of course. If grub was missing, and Bunter wasn't, it was generally a safe bet that the grub was parked in Bunter. In that little matter, Billy Bunter was a dog with a bad name!

Still, there was a sporting chance that Bunter was innocent. The captain of the Remove lowered the cricket stump. The Co. gathered round, as well as a crowd of other fellows. The other fellows were grinning—the Co. were not. The loss of that cake was an absolute disaster—if it could not be recovered. All arrangements were made for the trip—if the weather was fine—and the weather had never been finer. Old Trumper, at Pegg, was to have the boat ready—Marjorie and Clara were to meet the juniors at the boat—and only that cake stood between the trippers and famine. And the cake was gone!

"Must have been Bunter!" said Johnny Bull. "Nobody else in the Remove would pinch a cake!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"He sneaked into the House while we were punting a ball about in break!" said Bob Cherry. "I remember that—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If he got it in break, he can't have scooped the lot yet!" said Harry. "Now then, Bunter—"

"I never had it!" roared Bunter. "I say, Toddy, you stand by a chap in your own study! Keep that beast off!"

Peter Todd grinned.

"Shell out the cake, old fat man!" he said.

"I haven't touched the cake!" shrieked Bunter. "I never knew it was there! As if I'd touch a fellow's cake! I never knew those beasts were going on a boating trip this afternoon! How should I know?"

"You never knew—" gasped Wharton.

"Not the faintest idea."

"Then how do you know now?"

"Eh? I don't!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I don't know anything about it!" declared Bunter. "If you've made any arrangements with the Cliff House girls, I don't know anything about it. How could I, when you've never told me?"

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I never knew anything about it, and I don't know now!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not interested in your silly trips! I've got more important things to think of, I can jolly well tell you."

"He must have heard of the cake when he heard us talking about the trip!" said Frank Nugent.

"I never heard you!" roared Bunter. "Think I'm the fellow to listen to

fellows talking! If you jaw with your study door open, any fellow might hear you."

"That was last night, after prep!" said Bob. "I remember that fat cornucopia was in the passage—"

"Oh crumbs! If he had it last night, there's nothing left of it!" gasped Harry Wharton. "We're done."

"The donefulness is terrific."

"I—I—I'll lam him till he bursts! I'll—"

"You keep off!" howled Bunter. "I keep on telling you I never had it! I don't like plum cake! Never touch it! In fact, I hate it!"

"How do you know it was a plum cake?"

"Oh! I—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's why he was hanging about the Remove studies, after you fellows went down last night!" chuckled Smithy.

"I wasn't!" roared Bunter. "I waited for the fellows to go down because—because—I mean, I didn't wait for the fellows to go down. That's what I meant to say. I never went into the study at all, and the cake wasn't in the cupboard—and I left it there untouched, too, when I went out—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Never touched a crumb of it!" said Bunter. "Never even unwrapped it! I left it there exactly as it was—uncut! Not that I went into the study, you know," added Bunter cautiously. "I was in my own study, doing lines when Smithy passed me in the passage—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"If you can't take a fellow's word, Wharton, I prefer to let the matter drop," said Bunter with dignity. "It's a bit ungentlemanly to doubt a fellow's word."

The Famous Five gazed at him. The other fellows roared.

"If your cake's gone, Wharton, I'm sorry. But I know nothing about it," said Bunter. "It may have been the cat! Mrs. Kebble's cat is always getting into the studies. I believe cakes like cats—I mean, cats like cake—"

"Is there any left?" roared Wharton.

"How should I know, when I never had it? If you think that bit of cake I had in the dorm last night was left out of your cake, it shows you've got a rotten suspicious mind! Besides, you never saw me—I never touched it till after Wingate put lights out! Not that I had any, you know! I haven't tasted cake for weeks."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"It's gone!" he said. "We're fairly done! Take it out of his carcass! Hang him on the banisters, and I'll give him a few with this stump to begin with. After that, kick him every time you see him."

"Hear, hear!"

Evidently there was nothing else to be done. The cake was gone—beyond recovery. All that remained was to give the grub-raider of the Remove a much-needed lesson.

Bunter undoubtedly was in need of a lesson on that subject. But he did not want what he needed. He roared objections as the Co. grasped him and hung him on the banisters. But his roaring was not heeded.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yooo-hooop-wooop! I say, you fellows—yarooooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There!" gasped Wharton. "That's a beginning—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Now all kick him together!"

"Yaroooooop!"

Billy Bunter forgot even the green attache-case in Coker's study. He had more pressing business on hand now. Getting out of reach of five boots was even more urgent than snaffling Coker's gorgeous spread. Billy Bunter fled for his fat life, with the Famous Five in pursuit. For several hectic minutes the Owl of the Remove led the life of a Soccer ball—till he bolted into a study, and slammed and locked the door. And not till the dinner-bell rang did Bunter venture out of that study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Cautious!

"BETTER shove that lot out of sight!" said Coker.

He looked thoughtfully at a little pile of packets, packages, and boxes in his study.

Potter, who was lifting the green attache-case out of the cupboard, glanced carelessly at the pile. Greene looked round.

The stack was on the seat under the window. Some of the packets and boxes had labels and pictures on. Anyone examining them would have been left in no doubt as to the contents. It was a supply of fireworks for the fifth of November—a supply on a lavish scale, in Coker's usual style. Coker was always lavish.

Like Wharton of the Remove, Coker of the Fifth had been shopping in Courtfield the previous day. Like Wharton, he had bought fireworks. Only he had spent three or four times as much of his ample cash on them. That stack of fireworks was positively dazzling to any fellow who desired to kick up a row on bonfire day—as most fellows did!

"Safe there, old chap!" said Potter.

(Continued on next page.)

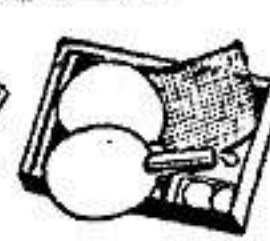
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Billy Bunter rummaged through Coker's attache-case. Squibs and crackers and Roman candles, all sorts of fireworks were there. But of tuck there was not a sign! "Fuf-fuf-fireworks!" he said. "Oh lor!" "Oh, you idiot, Billy!" groaned Bessie. "Did you bring the wrong case, or what? We—we k-k-can't eat crackers and squibs! Oh dear!"

"Well, we shall be out all the afternoon, you know," said Coker thoughtfully.

"Nobody will come here and snaffle your fireworks, old bean!" said Greene.

"I don't suppose anybody will, Greene. Don't be an ass!"

"Well, then——" grunted Greene.

"I'm thinking of Prout!" explained Coker. "Prout's shirty! And—you men would hardly believe it—but he looked as if he didn't half believe me about those fireworks in the Cloisters yesterday."

Potter and Greene grinned. They were not surprised at that hint of distrust on the part of the Fifth Form beak. In point of fact, they only half believed Coker themselves—perhaps rather less than half.

"He was fearfully shirty!" went on Coker. "He gave me five hundred lines and a detention, thinking I had been letting off those fireworks in the Cloisters. Wouldn't listen to a word. Silly old ass, you know. But you know that Prout's always down on me—he even makes out I can't spell when he can't think of anything else!"

"H'm!" murmured Potter and Greene.

"I explained to him afterwards, when he was cool," went on Coker. "He could hardly refuse to take a Fifth Form man's word, of course. He washed out the lines and the detention. But"—Coker shook his head—"he still seemed a bit doubtful whether I really had caught a gang of fags with those fireworks, and stopped them, as I told him. He actually said that, not being a prefect, I had no right to interfere with fags. What do you think of that?"

Potter and Greene did not state what they thought of that.

It was no use stating that Mr. Prout was right and that Coker was a fat-head. It might have endangered their prospects of sharing in the innumerable

good things packed in the green attache-case.

And they knew of old that it was futile to reason with Horace. Sweet reasonableness was not old Horace's long suit.

"Of course, I wasn't going to let cheeky fags break the rules of the school right and left!" said Coker. "That's not to be thought of. I jolly well stopped them, and one of the young asses dropped a match into the box, and there was a bang——"

"We heard it!" murmured Potter.

"Finding me there, the silly asses fancied I'd done it," said Coker. "But, as I've said, I explained to Prout that the fireworks weren't mine, and that I'd caught a mob of juniors with them. Naturally, he had to take my word! But"—Coker shook his head again—"if he spotted a stack of fireworks in my study, he might get suspicious again."

"It would mean a row, anyhow," said Greene. "Nobody's allowed to bring fireworks in before the fifth. Those fags ain't the only ones who have been breaking rules right and left."

Coker looked at him coldly.

"Don't be a dummy, Greene, if you can help it!" he said.

"Well, look here, what the dickens do you mean?" demanded Greene, rather warmly. "You jump on a mob of fags for bringing fireworks into the school—and you did exactly the same thing yourself!"

"I'm in a rather different position. I hope!" said Coker icily. "You're talking like a fool, Greene!"

"Picked it up in this study, if I am!" said Greene.

"Whether you picked it up from Potter or not, you're talking like a fool! If I catch any fags breaking the rules about fireworks, I'll jolly well stop them!" said Coker. "That's up to me."

"But you yourself——"

"For goodness' sake, Greene, shut up if you can't talk sense!" snapped Coker.

Greene breathed hard and shut up. He was strongly tempted to tell Horace Coker what he thought of him and of his intellect. But he remembered the contents of the green attache-case, and refrained.

School rules applied to Fifth Form men as well as juniors. Coker of the Fifth had disregarded the rule precisely as Wharton of the Remove had done. But evidently Coker was completely satisfied with his own proceedings while indignantly dissatisfied with Wharton's. Coker, it appeared, was a law unto himself. There was no doubt that his intellect moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform.

Having silenced William Greene, Coker went on:

"What I mean is, if Prout found that I had fireworks in my study before the fifth, he might fancy that those that went off in the Cloisters yesterday were some of the same lot. Prout's a fool, as you know."

It seemed to Potter and Greene that such a fancy on Prout's part would not be unreasonable. But they did not say so. It was their custom, when Coker was talking, not to argue with him, but to wait till he left off talking. It came easier.

"So they'd better be put safe out of sight," said Coker. "I hardly think Prout would look into a man's study, especially when a man's out. Still, you never know with beaks. If he saw them here, he would make out that I'd been breaking rules, and all sorts of rot, as well as very likely fancying that I had something to do with that row in the Cloisters yesterday. Can't be too careful in dealing with a beak—they're fools!"

"Well, shove 'em in the cupboard and

let's get going!" said Potter. He could not help thinking that it was time Coker left off talking.

"Fat lot of good that would be if Prout looked in!" grunted Coker. "They ought to be locked up in something."

He looked round the study. Then he looked into the cupboard, and from the lower shelf picked out a lunch-basket.

"That will do," he said.

"There's no lock on that," said Greene.

"I know that, Greene."

"Well, you said—"

"I know what I said! Don't be an ass!" Coker sorted out a key and unlocked the green attache-case. "Shove the grub into this basket, Potter, and I'll shove the fireworks into that attache-case and lock it up."

"Look here," said Greene restively, "if we're going—"

"Shut up, Greene!"

"I don't suppose Prout—" began Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. The same thought was in both their minds—of collaring Horace Coker and banging his head on the study table. It was a case of two souls with but a single thought; two hearts that beat as one.

Coker turned out the contents of the attache-case. That saved him.

The sight of that gorgeous collection of good things did it. Banging Coker's head, desirable in itself, was not the way to those good things. Coker never knew what a narrow escape his bullet head had had!

"Lend a hand!" he grunted.

Potter and Greene lent willing hands. Comestibles were packed into the lunch-basket. The basket was filled to overflowing. Odds and ends had to be packed in packets. But all was disposed of at last.

Then Coker packed his packets and boxes of fireworks into the green attache-case. That, in its turn, was filled to the very brim. However, Coker managed to jam it shut, locked it again, and returned the key to his pocket.

"That's that!" he said. "Even if Prout noses into the study, he won't crack a lock; there's a limit, even for a beak. Stick it back into the cupboard, Potter."

Potter put the attache-case back into the cupboard.

"Now let's get off!" said Coker. "You can carry the basket, Potter. Make yourself useful if you can't be ornamental—what? Ha, ha!"

Potter picked up the basket. He refrained—with an effort—from swinging it round with a bang on Coker's head and walked out of the study with it. Coker and Greene followed him. They walked out together into the bright sunshine, walked out of gates, and took the way to the cliffs. It was a steep walk, but it had its advantages. On the rugged slopes Coker needed all his breath for clambering, and had to shut off talking. And silence, proverbially golden, never seemed to Potter and Greene of such pure gold as when Coker left off talking.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sauce for the Gander!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Kick him!"

"Blaught'er him!"

"Scrag him!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had gathered THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,499.

in Study No. 1. It was a council of war—or, rather, a committee of ways and means.

It was getting near time to start for Pegg, to meet the Cliff House girls at the boat. It was impossible to be late, but it seemed almost equally impossible to start without making some commensurate arrangements.

Aunt Amy's cake might have seen them through. That cake was gone from their gaze like a beautiful dream. Something had to be done—but what?

It was, as Bob had said, not exactly a picnic. But a boating trip in the keen sea air would make them hungry. They would be several hours, at least, running out to the sea-cave, exploring the same and sailing back to Pegg. It was understood that there would be refreshments on board the boat—at the very least, a snack. It was quite possible that Bessie Bunter might hook on to the Cliff House girls for the trip, and Bessie, as a scoffer of foodstuffs, was remarkably like her brother Billy. And Bessie could not be told like Billy to go and eat coke.

Discussing that pressing matter, the Famous Five were surprised, and not pleased, to see Billy Bunter's fat face at the door.

They had not expected to see Bunter. Bunter's life had been that of a hunted hare ever since the cake had been found to be missing.

He had locked himself in his study till dinner; but he had to emerge for that meal—and he had been kicked all the way down to Hall. After dinner he had been kicked again, till he escaped into the Remove passage, and turned the key of Study No. 7 again.

He had been there ever since, well aware that if he ventured out before the chums of the Remove started more kickings were due. Yet here he was, blinking into Study No. 1 through his big spectacles.

Five fellows moved at once towards the door. Kicking Bunter did not solve their problem, but it was a consolation for having the problem to solve.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, keep off!" squeaked Bunter. "I—I say, I—I've come to help you out of this fix!"

"Has your postal order come?" inquired Bob Cherry, with withering sarcasm.

"Not yet, old chap. There's been some delay in the post again," said Bunter sadly. "It's odd, too, as it was from one of my titled relations that I was expecting a remittance—"

"Kick him!"

"Burst him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Hold on!" yelled Bunter. "I mean, leggo! I say, you fellows, I've come here as a pall! I'm going to see you through!"

"You fat owl—"

"I mean it," gasped Bunter—"honest Injun! How would you like a bag of jam tarts, and a seed and plum cake, and—"

"Got 'em about you?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"And a jam roll, and chocolate eclairs, and doughnuts—and sausage rolls, and ham patties, and—"

"What does the blithering bloater mean, if he means anything?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I can jolly well tell you that I know where to lay hands on the stuff!"

"You fat villain!" roared Harry Wharton. "Do you think we're going in for grub-raiding? Scrag him!"

"Bump him!"

"I say, you fellows— Yareoooooh!" Bump!

Bunter roared as he sat on the carpet in Study No. 1.

"Give him a few more!"

"Give him a dozen more!"

"Bump him!"

"Burst him!"

"Urrrgh! Beasts—I mean, dear old chaps!" spluttered Bunter. "Will you give a fellow a chance to—gurrgh!—a chance to—wurrgh!—a chance to speak, you silly idiots—I mean, dear old fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrgh! I'm out of breath!" gasped Bunter. "You silly asses! Urrgh! Look here, Coker—"

"Blow Coker!"

"Well, look here, Coker banged off all your fireworks yesterday!" gasped Bunter. "You can bag his spread—see? Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"Oh!" said the Famous Five, all together.

"I—I say, you fellows, that—that's what I came to tell you!" gasped Bunter. "You see, Coker really owes you ten bob for those fireworks! He would only kick you if you asked him for it. Still, he jolly well does, all the same. Well, then, if he can bag your fireworks, you can bag his tuck—see?"

"Right as rain!" said Bob Cherry.

"The rightfulness of the rain is terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Whoever is saucy to the goose may be saucy to the gander, as the esteemed proverb remarks."

There was a general nodding of heads.

The Famous Five, certainly, were not likely to adopt Bunter's resource in hard times—grub-raiding. They were prepared to bump the fat Owl for making such a suggestion. But this was, so to speak, a horse of quite another colour. Coker of the Fifth was fair game.

Coker of the Fifth had barged in and banged off ten shillings' worth of their fireworks. They were entitled to indemnify themselves for that heavy loss.

Coker had asked for it. There was no valid reason why Coker should not have that for which he asked. If Coker had a supply of tuck, and that supply was available, the chums of the Remove were ready to avail themselves of it.

Bunter scrambled to his feet. He grinned. He could see that it was all right now.

"I say, you fellows, there's lots!" he said impressively. "I saw Coker getting the stuff in break. It's packed in an old attache-case in his study cupboard. I saw him pack it in in the tuckshop, and I saw him park the bag in his cupboard. I fancy he's got a picnic or something on this afternoon. One of you fellows cut along to the Fifth—"

Harry Wharton glanced round at his chums.

"That's fair, you men," he said. "Coker had our fireworks; we'll have Coker's grub! As the matter stands, we'd rather have the grub than the fireworks! You're sure it's there, Bunter?"

"I saw him packing it into the attache-case—an old green attache-case. I jolly well saw him."

"But if Coker got it for a picnic this afternoon, he may have gone by this time," said Frank Nugent.

Bunter jumped.

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, hurry up! I say, there may not be a minute to be lost! I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, I—I'll come with you!" gasped Bunter. "If—if the beast's there, you can keep him off, while I get away with the attache-case—see?"

"Come on!" said Harry. "Most of the Fifth are gone down to games practice—the coast's clear! If Coker's there, we can handle Coker."

"I say, buck up!" said Bunter anxiously.

The Famous Five lost no time. This chance, if available, was too good to be lost. They hurried out of the study and cut into the Fifth Form passage—the fat Owl at their heels.

The coast, as Wharton had said, was clear. The Fifth Form men were at games practice on Big Side, and the passage was silent—there seemed to be nobody in the studies. Price might be in his quarters, smoking cigarettes, but Price was not likely to intervene in a raid on Coker—and if he did, they were fully prepared to up-end Stephen Price, and ram his cigarettes down the back of his neck!

But, as it happened, nobody was to be seen; and if Price was in his study, the door was shut, and remained shut.

Coker's study was vacant. Whether Coker & Co. had started on the picnic, if indeed they had a picnic in view, could not be told—at all events, they were not in their study, or in its vicinity.

"Nobody here!" said Bob.

Billy Bunter rolled into the study, and rolled across to the cupboard. He jerked the door open.

His anxiety was intense. If it was a picnic, Coker & Co. might have started—while Bunter had been wasting valuable time, locked in his study, afraid to venture outside, for fear of avenging boots! On the other hand, Coker & Co. might not intend to start till after the games practice. There was no telling; but the doubtful point would be settled by the sight of the green attache-case! If it was still there!

It was!

Billy Bunter gave a squeak of sheer delight, as he spotted it. He jerked it out of the cupboard.

It was evidently full, though it did not seem to weigh so much as Bunter had expected. Still, Bunter knew what was in it—had he not seen Horace Coker pack it to the brim at Mrs. Minble's counter?

"I say, you fellows, here it is!" he gasped. "I—I say, I'll carry it! I say, perhaps one of you fellows has a key to fit—"

"Better leave it locked, if Bunter's going to carry it!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You're sure about the tuck, Bunter, I—"

"I tell you I watched Coker packing it in. I say, you fellows, let's get out of here before some Fifth Form beast barges in."

Bunter rolled to the door, attache-case in hand. The Famous Five followed him from the study.

A slim and handsome figure came up the passage from the stairs. It was Hilton of the Fifth.

He stared at the juniors.

"Here, what are you fags up to?" exclaimed Hilton. "Bagging something from a Fifth Form study, what? You young sweeps! I'll—Yaroooooh!"

Cedric Hilton hardly knew what happened to him. A sudden rush of five fellows sent him spinning; and as he sprawled, five fellows trod over him. Billy Bunter shot past, with the green attache-case, while the Famous Five wiped their boots on Hilton of the Fifth. Then they followed.

Hilton was left gurgling. He had been undecided that afternoon whether to join Blundell and his friends at football, or to smoke a cigarette or two in

the study with Price. He had decided in favour of Price. Now, undoubtedly, he wished that he had decided in favour of Blundell. He sprawled, and gasped, and gurgled, and guggled, on the floor of the Fifth Form passage—what time Harry Wharton & Co. trotted cheerfully out of the House.

Billy Bunter rolled after them with a green attache-case in his fat hand, and a wide grin on his fat face.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Smugglers' Cave!

"I SAY, you girls—"
"Oh, come on, Bessie!"
"I'm not going to run!"
gasped Bessie Bunter.

"We don't want to be late," urged Marjorie Hazeldene, "and we're rather late already, Bessie!"

"Urrrrgh!" said Miss Bunter.

Bessie was a little short of breath. It was actually warm that afternoon, which was remarkable for November, and, of course, very pleasant. But it was not wholly pleasant to a young lady with so much weight to carry as Miss Elizabeth Bunter.

Bessie puffed and blew as she plodded over the sands of Pegg; and Miss Clara and Marjorie had to delay.

"It's all right!" gasped Bessie. "They're not there! Boys never turn

up on time—especially my brother Billy."

"Is your brother Billy coming?" asked Clara.

"Sure to, if they have got any tuck."

"Oh!" Clara smiled at Marjorie, who laughed.

Without being unduly suspicious, the girl chums of Cliff House could not help thinking that it was the prospect of tuck that caused Bessie to honour them with her plump company that afternoon.

"I can't see them!" said Bessie, blinking over Pegg quay through big spectacles that were so like Billy's. "Can you, Clara?"

"No! Boys are always late!" said Clara.

Two or three fishermen in jerseys were to be seen on the old quay, opposite the Anchor at Pegg, but no school-boys were to be observed.

"Lots of time!" said Bessie.

Marjorie and Clara slowed down. Bessie Bunter puffed and blew on the old stone quay. They reached the spot where the steps went down to the water and where Harry Wharton & Co. should have been waiting.

"Just like boys!" said Miss Clara.

"Boys are always late! Isn't it odd that boys are always late?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a cheery roar.

"Oh!" ejaculated Clara.

Owing to Bessie, the Cliff House girls were ten minutes late. As the Greyfriars fellows were not to be seen, they had taken it for granted that the Famous Five were late. But that roar from below apprised them of the fact that the juniors were already there, and in the boat.

"Oh!" repeated Clara, and Marjorie laughed.

"Here we are!" called out Harry Wharton.

The boat was afloat by the old stone steps that were washed by the waters of Pegg Bay. Billy Bunter sat in the stern, with a green attache-case across his fat knees. The Famous Five stood up, and Bob Cherry roared as he sighted a hat over the railings above.

"The herefulness is terrific, esteemed misses!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

Wharton and Bob and Nugent ran up the steps to conduct the girls down to the boat. Marjorie and Clara jumped lightly on board; but Miss Bunter hesitated on the step.

"Hold the boat still," she said. "I don't want to slip into the water!"

(Continued on next page.)

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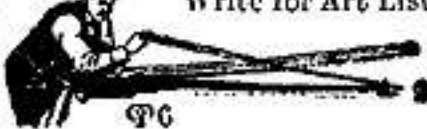
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Mind you don't get my feet wet! Perhaps you had better lift me in, Frank!"

"Oh!" gasped Nugent. He was willing—more than willing—to oblige, but he did not quite see how he was to lift Miss Elizabeth Bunter into the boat. He was no weakling; but he was, on the other hand, no Hercules.

"Lend a hand, Billy!" said Miss Bunter.

"Eh? I'm sitting down!" said Billy Bunter. It did not seem to occur to Bunter that he might get up.

Johnny Bull lent a hand. Two plump arms were taken by Frank and Johnny, and Miss Bunter was swung into the boat. She landed there quite safely; and really it was nobody's fault that she caught a foot in a coil of rope and tripped.

"Ooooh!" gasped Bessie.

"Look out!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Varoooh!" roared Billy Bunter, as Miss Elizabeth landed on him, throwing two plump arms round his neck in a vain effort to save herself.

Billy Bunter went over backwards. The back of his bullet head rapped on the tiller, and Bunter roared.

"Ow! You silly idiot!" roared Bunter.

"You fat duffer, why didn't you catch me?" panted Bessie.

"You silly chump——"

"I've a good mind to smack your head, Billy!"

Helping hands restored Miss Bunter to the perpendicular. She sat in the stern seat beside Billy; and they gave each other a glare through their respective spectacles.

"You fathead, Billy——"

"You chump, Bessie——"

"Off we go!" said Bob. "Shove off, you men!"

The boat slid out on the sunny waters of the bay. Then the mast was stopped, the little lug-sail shaken out, and the wind picked up. There was not much wind, but as much as the boat's crew wanted, and they danced away merrily over the sea.

Old Dave Trumper's boat was big and roomy, and there was plenty of room for a crew of nine, even when two of them were of the tribe of Bunter. The Famous Five handled the boat well. In the summer they often made sea trips on the wide bay, and they were used to handling a sailing-boat.

There were other craft on the water—fishing-yawls and ketches here and there; and anchored farther out was a handsome steam yacht.

Cutting across the bay towards the spot where the mighty Shoulder bulged into the sea in masses of rugged chalk, the juniors passed quite near the yacht, and glanced at it with some interest.

They read the name of the vessel—the Firefly—and noticed two or three men moving about on board.

Leaning on the rail, idly watching the shore, was a boy of about sixteen, or a little over.

His glance turned on the Greyfriars boat, as it came dancing along before the light wind.

Rather to the surprise of the Greyfriars fellows, he waved a hand to them, as if beckoning them to run a little closer for a hail.

Bob Cherry, who was steering, gave the tiller a twist, and the boat ran close under the yacht's quarter.

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

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter. "Mind what you're up to! Don't run into that beastly yacht!"

"Fathead! Shut up!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Anything wanted?" called out Harry Wharton, his eyes on the boyish face looking over the yacht's rail. It was a handsome face, with keen, but very pleasant grey eyes, and Wharton liked the boyish yachtsman's looks, though he wondered what he wanted.

"Look out for the tide!" called the boy on the yacht. "It's on the turn at three, and if you run too far you mayn't find it easy to run back, with the wind off-shore!"

Harry Wharton smiled.

It was a good-natured warning, from a fellow accustomed to the sea, to a boat's crew of schoolboys and school-girls. But the Famous Five of Greyfriars knew all about the tides.

"Thanks!" called back Wharton. "That's all right!"

The boat ran on, the boy on the yacht watching it as it went. A minute more, and it was out of hail.

"Cheeky ass!" said Bunter.

"Jolly good-natured of him, you fat duffer!" said Bob. "You have to be jolly careful of the tides here. That chap doesn't know what jolly good sailors we are. For all he knows, we might all have been silly duffers like you, old fat bean."

"Beast!"

The boat ran merrily on. The shore was a low blur behind now, quay and buildings sinking out of sight as the boat ran on round the base of the Shoulder—a mighty cliff that jutted far into the sea. The bay, and the anchored yacht, were all out of sight as the boat danced round the great cliff.

The tide was running in strongly. Harry Wharton & Co. ran the boat into the channel they well knew, among the great rocks on the Shoulder. The sail was dropped, and the boat glided on the running tide, between high masses of rock.

Ahead loomed a vast opening in the cliff—the smugglers' cave, as it was called. In ancient days it had been the haunt of smugglers, and, according to local legend, desperate affrays between the Revenue officers and the "free-traders," as the smugglers were called, had taken place there. Those days were long past, and the cave was now the haunt of sea-birds, and occasionally of holiday trippers, in the summer.

"Here we are!" said Bob Cherry cheerily, as the boat floated on the tide under the mighty arch of rock.

For a considerable distance the sea flowed into the cavern. Beyond was higher ground, which the tide never reached. How far the cavern extended into the cliff was not precisely known, but it was known to be of immense extent, with fissures in its rocky sides that led into smaller caves. In summer weather Greyfriars fellows often explored the cave, sometimes in search of the secret passage which was said to exist, leading underground as far as Greyfriars School. If that secret passage existed, however, it had not yet been brought to light.

The juniors ran the boat into the cave and tied the painter, at a shelf of rock that made a natural landing place. This was about fifty yards from the mouth of the cavern, which opened like a great doorway on sky and sea.

They landed on the sandy floor of the great cavern. Billy Bunter lifted the green attache-case very carefully ashore.

Bunter was not fearfully interested in caves, or smugglers, or secret passages, or explorations. But he was deeply, intensely, interested in the good things he had seen Coker of the Fifth pack into that attache-case in break that morning. He was still in the happy

belief that those good things were still there.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Come on, old fat bean," said Bob. "You can leave the bag there; it will be quite safe, nobody comes along here in November."

"Well, what about getting it open? If any of you fellows has a key to fit——"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Leave it locked, old bean! We're not going to feed till we've explored the jolly old cave, and we want something left."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come on, Bessie!" said Marjorie Hazeldene.

Bessie shook her head.

Her eyes, and her spectacles, like those of her brother Billy, were fixed on the green attache-case. Like Billy, she was more interested in the spread than in the exploring.

"I'm tired!" announced Bessie. "I'll sit in the boat while you're rooting about in the cave. Don't be long!"

"I'm tired, too!" announced Billy Bunter. "I mean, I'll sit here with Bessie, in case anything happens. You fellows cut off!"

"Lazybones!" said Clara.

"Oh, really, Clara——"

"Oh, let's get a move on!" said Bob. "I've got an electric torch! I say, Ogilvy found the hilt of a cutlass in the sand here, last summer term—left here by some jolly old smuggler. Come on!"

Billy and Bessie sat in the boat. Clambering over rugged rocks and threading ways through dim fissures did not appeal to either Bunter, but the Famous Five and their girl chums had come there to explore—and they went.

Up the deep cavern went footsteps and cheery voices, with the gleam of Bob's torch, till the dim depths of the cave swallowed the explorers from sound and sight.

"I say, Bessie, got any keys about you?" asked Billy Bunter.

"No. Haven't you?"

"No," sighed Bunter.

"Locks can be opened with penknives sometimes," suggested Bessie hopefully.

"Got a penknife?" asked Billy.

"No. Haven't you?"

"No."

And the two Bunters gazed sadly at Coker's attache-case!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not Edible!

"VALENTINE!"

"Yes, uncle!"

"Did you hear something?"

"No."

"There cannot be anyone here, I imagine. I believe the place is often visited in the summer, but in November——"

Billy Bunter and Bessie blinked at one another. They were sitting on the rocky bank, with the green attache-case between them, close by the tied boat. The explorers who had gone up the cavern were long out of sight and sound. Both Bunters were considering, deeply and thoughtfully, how to get that attache-case open—rather a knotty problem, as it was locked, and the key was in Horace Coker's pocket, some miles away. But they started as the two voices came to their ears from the direction of the sea.

Evidently a boat was floating into the dusky cavern. The smugglers' cave had other visitors that afternoon, as well as the schoolboys and schoolgirls.

But the newcomers, it was clear, had not yet perceived the Greyfriars boat, tied up to the rocky ledge, where the two Bunters sat.

"Nobody here, uncle!" said a fresh, boyish, cheery voice. "Not likely, at this time of the year."

"We cannot be too careful, Val."

"Don't I know it?"

"Boys often came to explore this cave in my time at Greyfriars," went on the elder voice. "I had a narrow escape, once, of being caught in the tide here when I was Compton of the Fourth—a long time ago, Val."

"I fancy schoolboys would be keen on a place like this!" said the boyish voice. "Fact is, I'm rather keen on it myself."

"No doubt, Valentine! But if anyone is here—"

"Not likely!"

Billy Bunter grinned, and winked at Bessie. Bessie giggled. Apparently, the newcomers were an old boy of Greyfriars and his nephew; and it seemed that they wanted the smugglers' cave to themselves!

There was a sudden startled exclamation as Bessie's giggle echoed in the silent cavern.

"What—what is that?"

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

Billy and Bessie rose to their feet and blinked through their spectacles towards the mouth of the cave. A small boat was floating in, an elderly man in yachting clothes at the oars, a boy of about sixteen sitting at the lines. Both of them stared blankly at the Bunters, evidently surprised and startled to see them there.

"Oh!" said Bunter. "That chap!"

The boy in the boat, whom his uncle called Valentine, was the boy who had been leaning on the rail of the yacht, and who had called a warning to the Greyfriars party.

Billy Bunter knew that handsome and pleasant face again at once, though it was not looking quite so pleasant now.

Valentine Compton stared at the fat junior, surprised and obviously not pleased to find the smugglers' cave tenanted.

The elder man stared also, with knitted brows.

"Who are you?" he rapped. "What are you doing here?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? I'm a Greyfriars man," he answered. "I suppose I can come here if I like! You haven't bought this cave, have you?"

The yachtman frowned. He was like enough to the handsome boy to make it clear that they were related, but his face had a very different cast. His features were hard, his eyes flinty, and his lips had a grim set to them. He was plainly disconcerted and angry at finding the cavern tenanted, but he controlled his annoyance.

"Oh, I've seen this kid, I think!" said Valentine. "Weren't you in the boat that passed the Firefly, kid? I think that's the boat tied up there."

"That's it," said Bunter.

"You're a young ass to come here on your own, and especially to bring a girl here," said the boy in the yacht's boat. "If you get caught in the tide—"

"Rot!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"Rot!" repeated Bunter cheerfully. "I can take care of myself, I fancy."

The elder man broke in.

"I've shown you the cave, Valentine. We may as well go now; no need to look farther."

"Hold on a minute, uncle! Those kids are not safe here," said the boy. "They seem to have left their friends



Wharton flashed on his torch as he peered over the edge of the rock. The light beamed on an upturned face below. "Hurt, old chap?" called out Harry. "Oh, no!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Shaken a bit! Ow! Sort of bumped! Mind you don't tumble in after me!" "Thank goodness you are not hurt, Bob!" called out Marjorie Hazeldene.

somewhere, and come here on their own. They ought not to stay."

"That is their business," said Captain Compton briefly.

"Hold on, I say! Wait a minute while I speak to the kid!" exclaimed Valentine. "Look here, kid, you'd better get out of this cave. The fellows I saw with you looked as if they could take care of themselves, but you don't."

"Don't you be cheeky!" retorted Bunter.

"You young ass—"

"Yah!" said Bunter independently. Valentine Compton breathed hard.

As the Greyfriars boat had disappeared from his sight when it sailed round the tall Shoulder, he was, of course, unaware that the whole party had arrived in the cavern.

Finding the two Bunters there alone with the boat, he supposed that the rest

of the party had landed somewhere along the cliffs, as might easily have happened, out of his sight on the yacht.

He was, therefore, concerned for the safety of the fat schoolboy and school-girl—who certainly would have been far from safe had they been there, as he supposed, on their own.

"Now, look here, kid," said the younger Compton controlling his annoyance, "you'd better get out of this."

"Want the place to yourself?" grinned Bunter; and Bessie giggled again. From what they had heard the uncle and nephew saying, they knew that the Comptons did not want company in the cavern, though they could not imagine why.

"Never mind that," said the boy, frowning. "I tell you you're not safe here if you stay till the tide turns—"

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Rot!" said Bunter.

"You might be carried out to sea——"

"Bosh!"

"Look here, you young ass," exclaimed Compton, "I tell you you'd better go! Your friends ought not to have let you come here by yourself."

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. The boy from the yacht evidently was unaware that the rest of the party were there, though out of sight and sound at the moment.

"I say——" began Bessie.

But the elder yachtsman interrupted by shoving off with his oar. The boat slid away down the channel between the rocks, and the man settled down to pull out against the tide.

Clearly the younger Compton was concerned for the safety of the two Bunters, but equally clearly the elder man was not troubling himself about the matter.

"Look here, uncle," Billy and Bessie heard the boy's voice, as the boat shot away, "hold on a minute while I——"

The elder man did not answer, but he pulled steadily, and the boat disappeared from sight. The boy's voice died away in the distance as he pulled.

Billy Bunter grinned as the masses of rocks hid the yacht's boat.

"Like his cheek to butt in!" said Bunter. "Making out it wasn't safe here, because he wanted the place to himself! I say, how are we going to get that beastly case open, Bessie?"

"I'm hungry!" said Bessie.

"So am I!"

"Nearly famished!" said Bessie plaintively.

"Same here!"

"They might have left us the key!" said Bessie indignantly.

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, Billy?"

"Oh, nothing! I say, that lock doesn't look very strong. What about banging it open with a rock?" asked Bunter. "Tain't my bag, you know, so it doesn't matter if it's damaged."

Bessie blinked up at the shadowy cavern through her spectacles.

"They don't seem to be coming back," she remarked.

"They won't be back for an hour yet, or more," said Bunter. "I don't see waiting. There's tons of stuff in this bag, Bessie—jam roll and chocolate roll, cream puffs and jam tarts, ham patties and——"

"Bust it open!" said Miss Bunter decidedly.

"I jolly well will!"

"Go it!"

Billy Bunter went it. He sorted out a chunk of rock, gripped it in a fat hand, and banged it on the lock of the attache-case.

It was not, as he had said, a strong lock. Even a strong lock would probably not have resisted long under those hefty bangs. As it was, it flew to pieces at the third bang.

"Done it!" gasped Bunter.

"Good!"

Bunter opened the lid of the attache-case.

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Two pairs of eyes and two pairs of spectacles fixed expectantly on the interior. Billy Bunter had seen that case packed with his own eyes, so, of course, he had no doubt. He had told Bessie what it contained, so, of course, she had no doubts, either. In breathless expectation of beholding a stack of first-class provender, they blinked into Coker's attache-case, and then——

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Bessie.

Billy Bunter gazed at Coker's fireworks like a fellow in a trance.

He turned over packets and packets and boxes with his fat hands. Squibs and crackers and Roman candles—all sorts of fireworks were there. But of tuck there was not a sign! Not a tart, not a bun, not a doughnut, not the ghost of a bullseye!

The fat Owl of the Remove could scarcely believe his eyes, or his spectacles. He gazed and gazed and gazed.

"Fuf-fuf-fuf-fireworks!" he said at last in a hollow voice.

"Fuf-fuf-fireworks!" repeated Bessie, like an echo.

"Oh lor!"

"Oh, you idiot, Billy! Did you bring the wrong case, or what? We—we k-k-can't eat crackers and squibs! Oh dear!"

"Oh crikey! That fool Coker—— Oh lor!" groaned Bunter. "He must have—have taken out the tut-tut-tuck, and—and locked up these rotten fuf-fuf-fireworks in the bag! And I—I never knew, and—and——"

Words failed Bunter.

He sat and gazed at Coker's fireworks.

Bunter could eat almost anything; so could Bessie. But neither of them could eat squibs and crackers and Roman candles and rockers. Hungry as they were, they simply couldn't!

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bessie.

They groaned in chorus.

"Idiot!" said Bessie.

"Cat!" said Bunter.

And they groaned again.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

BOB CHERRY roared.

"Oh!"

Bump!

"Bob!" gasped Marjorie.

"Bob, old chap——" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"What——"

"Oh, Bob!"

There was a flashing and gleaming of electric torches, as the explorers came to a halt. Bob Cherry had disappeared.

The explorers had advanced a considerable distance up the deep, winding cavern, extending far under the mighty cliffs. A dozen times or more they had trod into rugged fissures and side caves opening out of the big cavern, without disaster. Now it had happened suddenly. Every one of the boys and girls carried an electric torch, so there was plenty of light. Bob Cherry stepped into a cavity in the rocky wall of the cavern, flashing his light before him as he went, to see whether it led anywhere.

He found himself treading over an edge, and he flashed his light downward too late. Every other cave or cavity they had entered had a floor of rock as solid as that of the main cavern itself, and Bob, rather thoughtlessly, had taken it for granted that this particular cavity was the same as the rest.

But it wasn't!

The rocky floor fell away suddenly, and Bob stepped over the edge in the dark before he knew what was happening to him. He made a frantic effort to throw himself backwards, failed, and pitched down into blackness.

His startled roar, as he went, awoke a thousand echoes, booming and thundering in the hollows of the cliffs.

Wharton caught Marjorie's arm, and held her back. The girl was treading on the very verge of the pit into which Bob had stumbled.

Bob's light had gone out as he fell. Below was intense blackness.

"Keep back!" breathed Wharton.

The whole party gathered near the edge, and lights were flashed down. Harry Wharton threw himself on hands and knees, and peered over the verge. The edge of rock in front of him fell away as sharply as a wall.

"Bob!" he shouted.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came booming from below.

And that cheery hail made every heart lighter.

For a dreadful moment all had feared that Bob was badly hurt—perhaps worse than that! He had fallen into unknown depths; no one had the faintest idea how deep the pit might have been.

But that cheery roar showed that Bob was not hurt much. Wharton hung his arm over the edge of the rock and flashed his light down.

It beamed on an upturned face below. Bob Cherry was already on his feet. He was standing almost knee-deep in soft sand. That bed of sand had broken his fall. It was not pleasant to think of what might have been the result had he crashed on hard rock.

"Hurt, old chap?" called out Harry.

"Oh, no!" gasped Bob. "Shaken a bit! Owl! Sort of bumped! Mind you don't tumble in after me! Look out, Marjorie!"

"All right!" called back Marjorie. "Thank goodness you're not hurt, Bob! I—I was afraid——"

"Right as rain!" gasped Bob. "My torch is here somewhere—show a glim while I hunt for it!"

Three or four flashlamps overhung the verge, giving him light. Bob groped round him in the sand and found his torch, which had dropped from his hand as he fell. He found that it was not damaged, and he was able to turn it on again.

"Right as rain!" he called out. "Only got to get out!"

"Only!" murmured Nugent.

"The onlyfulness is rather terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Bob!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We shall have to get back to the boat and get a rope, if you can't climb up, Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "Look round first, though!"

Bob Cherry, trampling in soft sand, was flashing his light round the rocky pit. It was not very extensive—only a few yards each way. Bob was shaken and rather breathless, but he was not otherwise damaged, and the sudden shock did not affect his cheery spirits much. Only he wanted to get out. The steep sides of the pit looked impossible to climb—and without a rope it was impossible for his friends to help him from above.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sudden, startled yell from Bob, as he stood flashing his light round.

"What the dickens——"

"There's a doorway here!" roared Bob.

"A which?" gasped Miss Clara.

"A jolly old doorway—at least, an archway in the rock! By gum! I'm not the first chap that's been down here!" exclaimed Bob, in great excitement. "I say, I wonder if this is the secret tunnel we've heard about?"

The juniors, watching from above, suddenly lost sight of Bob Cherry. He passed out of their view, as it appeared, in solid rock.

Evidently there was an opening in the wall of the pit, though hidden from eyes above by the rock that bulged over it.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton. "I wonder——"

"The wonderfulness is terrific!"

"No end of a lark to discover the secret passage!" said Johnny Bull. "They say there's a tunnel leading right up to the school—it used to be used by sportsmen in Dr. Trumpington's time——"

"So they say!" agreed Wharton. "But——"

"Hallo! Here's Bob!"

Bob Cherry emerged into view again in the pit. His face was full of excitement as he looked up.

"Found anything?" asked Harry.

"Yes, rather! There's a tunnel leading away goodness knows where—and a mouldy old sea-chest in it!" said Bob. "I fancy the smugglers used to come this way once upon a time. I say, we'll explore that tunnel some time—might get out at Greyfriars at the other end, what?"

"It's a good step from here," said Harry, laughing. "Just at present, you'd better try to get out this way."

"Show a light, then!"

Lighted from above, Bob Cherry scanned the wall of the rock, looking for a possible place to climb.

To the astonishment of the fellows above, he started clambering up, like a fly up a wall!

But as they stared, in amazement, they saw how he was doing it. A number of iron pegs were jammed in crevices of the rock. Bob had discovered them, and was coming up by their aid, hand over hand.

The succession of jutting pegs gave both handhold and foothold. Evidently they had been placed there in ancient days for that very purpose.

There was no doubt that the Greyfriars party had made a discovery—rather an exciting discovery. True, it had been made entirely by accident—through Bob accidentally tumbling into the dark pit. Certainly, no fellows would have thought of descending into it intentionally.

It was clear that smugglers in olden days had used that route, from the sea-cave inland—obviously, there was some outlet at the other end of the subterranean tunnel. Likely enough, it was at Greyfriars School itself, as the legend told.

In the old days of Greyfriars, so the story ran, the headmaster himself had had a hand in smuggling. That was, at least, one of the tales that were told of Dr. Trumpington, who had been headmaster in the days of George the Third and George the Fourth.

The idea of exploring that secret passage was very exciting to the Famous Five. But it was likely to be a hard and grubby task, and scarcely suitable for the Cliff House girls. That enterprise had to be deferred to a later date.

Bob, rather breathless, reached the top of the pit, and Wharton grasped

him and helped him over. His hands were caked with grime and rust from the iron pegs. But the climb had been easy enough.

"We'll jolly well go through that tunnel some half-holiday!" he said. "Ten to one it's a short cut home, what?"

"The tenfulness to one is preposterous!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But at the present esteemed moment——"

"Better go back," said Harry, glancing at his watch. "It's turned three, and we've got to get started home before four."

"Let's!" agreed Clara.

And the explorers, turning back at that point, made their way down the long, dusky cavern towards the sea.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Asking for It!

"O H lor!" groaned Billy Bunter. "Oh dear!" moaned Bessie. "I'm hungry!"

"Think I'm not?"

"Squibs and crackers—oh crikey!"

"You fathead!" said Miss Bunter.

Elizabeth Bunter had never had a high opinion of the intellect of her brother William George. But that opinion was at its lowest ebb now.

A fellow who brought out a bag of fireworks in mistake for a bag of tuck was, in Elizabeth's opinion, the limit!

Bunter did not see that he was to blame. He had watched Horace Coker pack foodstuffs into that old green attache-case. He had watched him park it in his study cupboard. He had found it there, when the Removites raided Coker's study for it.

How could any fellow have guessed that the contents had been changed? Certainly, it had never crossed Bunter's mind. He had never even known that Coker of the Fifth had any fireworks—till he discovered them in the attache-case!

He realised now why Coker & Co. had been so happily off the scene when the raid took place. They had, of course, already started on their picnic—with the grub in some other receptacle. The fireworks had been stacked in that old attache-case for safety, Coker never dreaming that the grub-raider of the Remove had an eye on it. No doubt Coker & Co., in these very moments, were consuming those good things, somewhere or other. Billy Bunter groaned at the thought.

It was nowhere near tea-time yet. But that made no difference to either Billy or Bessie. Both were hungry. The keen sea-air improved their appetite—not that it needed a lot of improvement. An hour after a meal, Billy Bunter was always ready to begin again.

Now it was two hours since a meal, and he had had a sea-trip in keen air. He was hungry, and ever since walking out of Greyfriars he had been thinking of the contents of Coker's bag, which, naturally, made him hungrier. He groaned.

"Look here, I'm not sticking here!" said Bunter, at last. "They can't expect us to stick here while they root about that mouldy old cave! I'm fed-up with this, Bessie!"

"Same here!" said Bessie. "Think I'd have come here to stick in a cave? I thought there was a picnic!"

"How long are they going to be, blow 'em?" groaned Bunter, blinking up the dusky cave through his big spectacles.

"Hours yet, very likely!" moaned Bessie. "We shall be late for tea!"

"Oh crikey! Look here, we shall have to get back in time for tea!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "Why, I'm famished already!"

"I'm ravenous!" said Bessie.

"Blow 'em!" said Bunter.

"Bother 'em!" said Bessie.

From the bottom of his fat heart Billy Bunter regretted that he had joined the exploring party. Just as deeply did Bessie regret that she had hooked on to Marjorie and Clara. Both had supposed that there was to be a spread. Both had been awfully, fearfully disappointed. Both felt that there was a dreadful peril of being late for tea!

There was no sign yet of the explorers returning. They might be minutes—they might be an hour. They might even be more than an hour, if they forgot the time and went too far—as they were quite likely to do.

"Well, look here, I'm not going to wait!" said Bunter. "Let's clear off, Bessie, and get old Trumper to bring the boat back for them."

"Good!" said Bessie.

"I dare say he'll be back with it before they come back from up the cave," argued Bunter. "We can get to the quay in a quarter of an hour, easy."

"Easy!" agreed Bessie.

"I can leave a note for them!" said Bunter. "That's all right! It's only a short run back to the quay, and you can help me row. They can't expect us to sit here doing nothing, and, fearfully hungry."

"They can't!" agreed Bessie.

Bessie Bunter was as eager to get off as Billy. She stepped into the boat. Billy Bunter found a stump of pencil in his pocket, and he tore a sheet of cardboard from one of Coker's firework boxes to write on. And he wrote:

"We're going back to tee! I'll send the bote back for you."

"W. G. B."

Having stuck that message in a conspicuous spot, to greet the eyes of the explorers when they returned to the cave-mouth, Bunter followed Bessie into the boat, and cast loose the painter.

The boat slid easily down the channel between the high rocks to the sea. The tide had turned, and the outgoing water carried the boat out without an effort from the fat Owl. All he had to do was to steer, which was easy enough even for Bunter.

Once beyond the rocks of the jutting Shoulder, Bessie took the tiller, and Bunter put out the oars. He did not think of attempting to step the mast and hoist the sail, which was rather beyond his powers. But he had no doubt that he could row across the bay to the quay.

Bunter could row, after a fashion. And had the tide still been running in, Bunter would have performed that homeward trip easily enough.

Unfortunately, the tide was now running out.

It was a heavy old boat, and it was doubtful whether even a muscular fellow like Bob Cherry could have pulled it against the pull of the tide.

Billy Bunter had not the remotest chance of doing so.

Billy Bunter pulled, and Bessie steered. It was some minutes before it dawned on Bunter's fat intellect that he was making no headway.

"Can't you row faster than that?"

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demanding Bessie. "We shall be late for tea!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I'm getting tired!"

"Well, we've got a mile to go!" Bessie pointed out. "Looks to me as if we're getting farther off, instead of nearer!"

"Wha-a-t?"

Billy Bunter blinked over a fat shoulder. The shore of the bay was merely a blur. And that blur was growing dimmer.

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter.

"Oh, pull!" said Bessie crossly. "You said you could row back, didn't you? I tell you we shall be late for tea, at this rate!"

"Oh jiminy! The tide——" stuttered Bunter. "I—I say, it's too strong for me! I—I forgot about the tide!"

Bunter blinked at her in horrified silence. His efforts were utterly in vain. He pulled and pulled till his fat arms ached, and the perspiration ran down his face. All the time, the boat drifted farther out. Instead of gaining, he was not even keeping his ground. The pull of the tide was taking the boat out to sea.

"I—I say!" Bessie began to understand. "Oh, you chump, Billy! I say, let's get back to the cave! I wish we hadn't started, now! Oh dear!"

But it was as impossible to get back to the cave as to get to the quay at Pegg. Bunter laid in the oars. He realised that it was useless to pull, and he had not a pull left in his aching fat arms.

"S-s-somebody will see us!" he gasped. "Oh lor'! S-s-somebody's sure to see us, and—and come out and help! Oh crikey!"

He gave a wild blink at the distant, half-seen shore. Then he remembered the yacht, from which the boy had called the warning which Bunter had forgotten. But the yacht was gone. Far away on the sea was a blur of smoke, which might have rolled from the Firefly.

Bunter gave a dismal groan. Had the yacht been still at its anchorage, no doubt some eye on board might have spotted the boat drifting out to sea. But the yacht had sailed, and was out of sight.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bessie.

And the two hapless Bunters gazed at one another in horror as the boat drifted helplessly seaward on the tide.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

THAT chap seems jolly keen on something!" remarked Horace Coker.

"He does," assented Potter.

"Lend me your field-glasses, old man."

"Oh, I'll look!" said Coker.

Coker unslung his field-glasses. He had hooked them on, for the sake of the splendid view that was to be obtained from the Shoulder.

By the time they reached the Shoulder, by the path over the cliffs, they were ready for a rest—a good long rest, and not unready for a whack in the contents of the lunch-basket.

On the rugged slopes on the seaward side of the Shoulder, high above the opening of the sea-cave, they came to a halt on a wide, chalky ledge, and sat down. November as it was, there was bright sunshine on the sea, rolling away shining in the horizon. The fishing village on the bay

was hidden from their sight by bulging cliffs, and the spot looked absolutely solitary.

"I fancy you fellows need a bit of a rest!" Coker remarked, as he sat down. Perhaps Coker did not realise that he needed a bit of a rest himself. At all events he was not going to admit it.

The lunch-basket was opened.

What was packed in it was a reward for the patience and tact Potter and Greene had to exercise. It indemnified them for Coker's company.

It was rather a surprise to the three Fifth Form men to spot a fellow on the cliffs near them, all of a sudden. He appeared from among the rocks lower down.

He had not come along the path over the cliffs, so it looked as if he had landed from a boat. He was a fellow of about their own age, in yachting clothes, with a handsome, pleasant face and keen grey eyes. He was, in fact, the fellow whom Harry Wharton & Co. had seen on the yacht in the bay, and whom Billy and Bessie had seen in the sea-cave; Valentine Compton, by name. But he was a stranger to the eyes of Coker & Co.

In the distance, they could see a yacht, far out at sea, departing, and leaving a blur of smoke behind against the blue sky. Apparently, the youth in the yachting-cap had landed from it: though why he had landed at such a wild and rocky spot, with a steep climb before him, instead of landing at Pegg, was rather odd.

Two or three times the Fifth Formers saw him, and lost sight of him again, as he made his way up the steep cliff. It was not easy to climb from the sea, and every now and then the rugged irregularities of the jutting chalk hid him from view.

He emerged into sight again, at a short distance from the spot where Coker & Co. were camping, and came to a halt.

He stood with his back to the seniors of Greyfriars, looking down at the sea. For several long minutes he stood there, quite still, shading his eyes with his hand, as if intently interested in something out on the waters.

It could hardly be the departing yacht, which was now out of sight, except for the blur of smoke. And no other craft was in sight, so far as the Greyfriars seniors could see.

Yet evidently something fixed the youth's attention very intently. They were rather curious to know what it was.

Coker rose to his feet, and adjusted his field-glasses.

He looked, grinned, and chuckled.

"That fat ass! Ha, ha!"

"There's a boat down there!" said Potter. "Looks like two people in it. What's the joke, Coker?"

"Ha, ha!" chortled Coker. "That fat ass, Bunter of the Remove, and that must be his sister from Cliff House with him. Ha, ha!"

"Yes, it's Bunter!" said Greene. "I can see his specs in the sunshine. But what's the joke, old bean?"

Coker chortled.

"The fat ass looks tired!" he said. "He's given up rowing! Ha, ha! He won't get back to Pegg in a hurry! Silly young ass to take a boat out, when he can't row! Looks as if he will be home with the milk in the morning!"

"Young ass!" said Greene.

"Ha, ha!" chortled Coker.

The youth in the yachting-cap looked round quickly. He had not noticed Coker & Co., higher up the cliff: but he heard them now, and looked round

at them. There was a startled, indeed alarmed, expression on his handsome face.

He came clambering up to where the Fifth Formers stood.

"Lend me those glasses a moment, will you?" he said. "Quick!"

Coker stared at him.

He had never seen the fellow before, and was not in the least disposed to lend him his glasses, especially as the fellow spoke so abruptly.

"Who the dickens are you?" said Coker.

"Never mind that, hand me those glasses, quick!"

Without waiting for Coker to speak again, the boy in the yachting-cap jerked the field-glasses from Coker's hand, and clamped them to his own eyes.

"My hat!" gasped Coker, in angry astonishment. "You cheeky ass, give me my glasses! Do you hear, you cheeky swab?"

Valentine Compton certainly heard, but he did not heed. He adjusted the field-glasses, to watch the boat drifting on the tide. Potter and Greene noticed that his handsome, sunburnt face grew a shade paler, and they knew that he saw something wrong, though they did not know what it was.

Coker, of course, noticed nothing. Coker was only exasperated by the cool cheek of this total stranger grabbing his field-glasses.

"Do you hear?" he roared, and as the youth made no sign, Coker grabbed at him.

Potter pushed him back.

"Hold on, Coker, something's up!" he said hurriedly.

"Don't be a fool, Potter!"

"Let the chap look!" urged Greene.

"Don't be an idiot, Greene!"

Coker shoved Potter aside, and grabbed at the stranger again. Then Horace Coker met with a surprise.

Holding the glasses to his eyes with one hand, the youth from the yacht grasped Coker with the other, and spun him over.

Bump!

Horace Coker hit the hard chalk, and hit it hard! He sprawled, and spluttered. Obviously, the fellow had no time to waste on Coker! He excluded Coker by the shortest and simplest method.

"I say, what's up?" asked Potter anxiously, as Coker sprawled.

"They're in danger!" answered the boy from the yacht. "The young fool, I warned him—oh, the fool!"

He lowered the glasses, as Coker scrambled up, red with wrath.

"Here's your glasses!" he snapped, tossing them back to Coker. "Look here, have you fellows got a boat?"

"No, we walked here!" said Greene. "But what——"

"Look here!" roared Coker in wild wrath, "if you think you can barge a Greyfriars man over, you've got another guess coming, see? I'll jolly well——"

"For goodness' sake shut up!" snapped Compton. "Can't you see that boat's drifting out on the tide? They——"

"I'll smash you!" roared Coker.

He was jumping at the boy yachtsman as he spoke. Again Horace Coker met with a surprise. His intention was to grab that cheeky youth, and mop him all over the chalky cliff. Instead of which, something that felt like the kick of a mule jarred on Coker's chin, and Coker went over backwards, as if he had been shot.

"Urrrrrgh!" gargled Coker, as he landed on his back. He stayed there, too dizzy to move.

Compton seemed to forget his existence the next instant. He cast a glance round him, over the rugged cliffs, as if in search of help of any kind.

"Any chance of getting hold of a boat here?" he exclaimed. "I suppose you know the place—"

"Nothing nearer than Pegg!" said Potter. "But—what—"

"They're drifting out to sea on the tide, that fat fool and the girl! Good Heavens, what's to be done?"

"Urrrrrgh!" came as Coker's contribution to the discussion.

Potter and Greene, understanding now, changed colour.

"That idiot Bunter!" muttered Potter.

"Oh, the awful ass!" said Greene.

For a moment more the boy from the yacht stood, then he started down the cliff steep and rugged as it was, he bounded, with the activity of a mountain goat. In a few seconds, the jutting chalk hid him from sight.

"What the dickens," breathed Potter. "He can't do anything, they're too far off for a shout, if shouting would do any good! Bunter can't get back—he'd get back if he could—"

Coker staggered up.

"Where is he?" he gasped. "I'll smash him! Cutting off like that before a fellow had a chance of getting at him! The rotten cheeky funk—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Greene.

"Wh-a-t?"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake," yelled Greene. "Look!"

Far below, in the shining waters, a dark head appeared. It was the head of a swimmer.

Recognition, at the distance, was impossible, but they knew whose head it was, minus the yachting-cap now.

"He—he's swimming out!" gasped Potter.

"Good heavens!" breathed Greene. Coker stared.

"Is that the chap?" he asked. "What the thump is he swimming for? Not the time of the year for a swim, I should think! What is the silly ass up to?"

"You blithering idiot!" howled Potter. "Can't you see? That boat's going out on the tide, and the chap's trying to get to it. He can't, of course—he'll be jolly well drowned—"

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

Coker's powerful brain was not quick on the uptake. But he realised that the boy from the yacht had not scuttled away to escape his dire wrath.

"Oh!" repeated Coker. "My hat! He can't do it—why, I couldn't!"

Potter and Greene made no reply to that. The strongest swimmer at Greyfriars School—Wingate of the Sixth himself—could not have succeeded in what Valentine Compton had set out to do.

It looked to them as if that handsome lad had gone to his death—to absolutely certain death in the rolling tide, sweeping out into the North Sea, to sink there helplessly when his strength was spent.

"By gum!" breathed Potter. "That chap's got pluck!"

The dark head on the sea was lost to sight. The drifting boat was only a blur now. The three Fifth Formers looked at one another.

"Let's get over to Pegg," said Potter. "Some of the fishermen might get a boat out; the wind's off shore."

"Come on!" said Greene.

"Not much good," said Coker. "You see—"

Potter and Greene started clambering over the cliff without waiting for Coker

to finish. Horace grunted, and clambered after them.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Stranded!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Bunter—"

"Where's Bunter?"

"And the boat—"

"Bessie!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"What the dickens—"

The explorers had returned to the mouth of the cave. There they naturally expected to find Billy Bunter and

Bessie, where they had been left. They rather expected, too, to find that Coker's attache-case had been opened, and to behold the two Bunters enjoying a feast of the gods.

But neither Bunter was to be seen. Neither was the boat.

The attache-case lay on the rocky floor—open. The juniors stared at the stack of fireworks inside it.

That was a surprise. But the disappearance of the boat was a greater surprise—and a very startling and disagreeable one.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look here!"

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

The MAGNET Rhymester is still going strong. The latest victim to rank in this popular feature is

SIR HILTON POPPER,

the short-tempered Governor of Greyfriars.

(1)

Oh, woe is me! Oh, wretched lad!
This task is making me feel sad,
I'm bound to come a cropper!
I shivered when the Editor
Rang up last Tuesday evening for
An interview with Popper.

(2)

Of all the tyrants I have met
Sir Hilton Popper, Baronet
Would fairly take the biscuit!
Short-tempered, snappy, savage, too,
Who'd ask him for an interview?
I hardly dared to risk it.

(3)

The Chairman of the Governing Board
Has often stormed and raved and roared
To Doctor Locke about us;
He'd like to see us all expelled—
As if the school could be upheld
For very long without us!

(4)

At Popper Court his days are spent,
For land, he owns the whole of Kent—
Or so he thinks, the bandit!
Barbed wire he spreads for miles and
miles,
He closes paths and chops up stiles,
Expecting us to stand it!

(5)

What hopes! That's one of his
mistakes!
He finds that every claim he makes
Is constantly disputed;
And so he puts up notice-boards
Which say that trespassers in hordes
Will all be prosecuted!



(6)

We pull the boards down, as a rule,
Then up comes Popper to the school
In purple-featured fury.
He'd dearly love to see us shot—
In fact, he'd execute the lot
Without a judge and jury.

(7)

At Popper Court I found my prey,
And nervously remarked: "Good-day!"
"Well, well!" he snapped. "What
is it?"
Restraining a desire to scoot,
I raised my hat and told the brute
The object of my visit.

(8)

His glare grew fearfully intense.
"Good gad! By Jove! Pure impu-
dence!"
The dashed old fathead hooted.
Then picking up his hunting crop
And waving it, he shouted: "Stop!"—
For I had promptly scooted!

(9)

I tried to tell him as I went:
"I wasn't being impudent—"
My legs were doing thirty!
He followed me in dashing style,
Exclaiming fiercely all the while:
He really sounded shirty!



(10)

I slipped and fell into the lake—
He fell in also, in my wake;
In water cold we wallowed.
I staggered out and sprinted straight
Towards a little wooden gate—
He staggered out and followed!



(11)

The gate was some new-fangled thing
That shut itself upon a spring.
I must have pushed it wrongly,
For back it came, and in a trice
It fixed me firmly like a vice,
And left me wriggling strongly.

(12)

A nice position I was in
For dear old Popper to begin
His work of castigation!
And—well, I've now made up my mind
That it's quite time that I resigned
This Rhymester situation!

Bob Cherry pounced on the sheet of cardboard on which Bunter had scribbled his message. "Look!"

He held it up, and the schoolboys and schoolgirls, with feelings almost too deep for words, read

"We're gowing back to tee. I'll send the bote back for you. W. G. B."

They gazed at that message.

"The fat, frabjous, foozling frump!" breathed Johnny Bull.

"If a fellow was within hitting distance of his nose—" hissed Bob.

"The howling ass!"

"The terrific fat foozler!"

"Oh, won't I kick him up the Remove passage and back again!" said Harry Wharton.

"Bother them!" said Clara.

Marjorie smiled.

"Why did you bring the fireworks?" she asked.

"We—we didn't. It was that ass Bunter!" said Bob, staring at the attache-case blankly. "That fat foozler fancied it was full of tuck, and—and—and it's only fireworks!"

Miss Clara laughed.

"Fancy bringing fireworks in mistake for food!" she remarked. "Who packed the bag?"

The Famous Five did not answer that. Marjorie and Clara were unacquainted with the history of Coker's attache-case. It did not seem necessary to explain to them the rather extraordinary method by which refreshments had been provided for that trip.

And the refreshments, after all, had not been provided. Clearly Bunter had made some sort of an idiotic blunder. As he had stated that he had seen that green attache-case packed with tuck, under his own eyes, in the school shop, the Famous Five, naturally, had no doubts.

Either Coker must have unpacked it and repacked it later, or else Bunter had got hold of the wrong bag.

Not that it mattered much how he had blundered; it was only too clear that he had blundered. And it was clear, too, why the Bunters had departed. As there was nothing to eat, they had naturally seen no reason for staying.

"Oh, that fat ass!" said Harry Wharton. "We—we thought—"

"The thankfulness was terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But the grubfulness is a snare and a delusion!"

"Well, we can't eat squibs and crackers, that's a cert!" said Frank Nugent. "Anybody hungry? After all, it's early for tea."

As a matter of fact, the keen sea air had prepared all the party for something in the nature of refreshments. Coker's tuck or Aunt Amy's cake would have been exceedingly welcome.

But there was nothing doing. The Famous Five could only make up their minds to kick Billy Bunter up and down the Remove passage. But that was a future, not a present, consolation.

"We shall have to wait," said Marjorie Hazeldene. "After all, we shall be in by tea-time. It's all right."

"Anyhow, these jolly old fireworks will come in useful to-morrow," said Bob Cherry. "That's something, as Coker blew up our lot. I wonder whether that fat ass has got back to Pegg yet?"

"It won't take old Trumper long to run the boat across once the fat duffer gets in!" said Frank Nugent. "All right so long as we get back before dark."

Harry Wharton looked out of the

cave-mouth. Now that the tide was out, it was possible to get to the opening of the sea-cave, which had been deep under water when the boat pulled in.

On either side of the cave-mouth great, bulging masses of wet chalk shut off the view. Nothing was to be seen but a strip of sea.

Even at the lowest tide it was impossible to get to the sea-cave on foot. There was deep water all round the steep Shoulder. The stranded party had to wait for the boat to return before they could go.

That did not matter very much if Bunter had lost no time in getting back to Pegg and rousing out old Trumper to sail the boat out again. With the wind off shore, it would not take Trumper long to run the boat across the bay and round the chalk cliff to the cave.

But Harry Wharton's face grew grave as he watched the receding tide. It came into his mind that Bunter would have had no easy task in getting back to Pegg.

With the Famous Five on board and the sail up, it was an easy run, tacking across the wide bay. They were good sailors, and knew how to handle the boat in a wind.

But Bunter, of course, could not have handled the sail. He could not even have hoisted it. Had he contrived to do so, he could not have tacked in the boat; he would simply have been blown out to sea.

Wharton's face grew graver and graver as he thought of the fat and clumsy Owl, labouring with the ears against a running tide in a heavy old boat.

He realised that it would not be a half-hour's pull—or an hour's pull, for that matter. The unpleasant thought struck him that Billy Bunter might never get through that pull at all.

"Oh!" breathed Wharton. "The fool! The silly idiot!"

Bunter, of course, had not given a thought to the tide when he started to return to Pegg. Even if he had thought of it, he was ass enough to fancy that he could pull against it.

What had happened to Bunter?

Harry Wharton turned back and rejoined his friends in the cave. How long Bunter had been gone he did not know. But there was no sign of a boat coming, and he knew that it must be long—very long—before a boat could come. He drove from his mind the idea that a boat might not be coming at all.

"What about letting off a few crackers to pass the time?" Bob Cherry was saying.

"And bringing down a few tons of rock on our head!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Let those fireworks alone, fat-head!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob stared at the grave face of the captain of the Remove. "What's up, Wharton?"

"I'm afraid we shall have to make up our minds for a jolly long wait here," said Harry quietly. "Bunter will take a long time pulling back against the tide."

Bob started, and whistled.

"Oh, my hat! I never thought of that! Phew!"

"We have to get back before dark!" said Clara. "Miss Primrose will get her hair off if we're not!"

"It gets dark jolly early now!" said Harry uneasily. "That fathead getting away with the boat leaves us stranded! We've got to wait!"

Marjorie gave him a quiet look.

She understood.

"Does anyone know we are here?" she asked.

"Well, lots of fellows know we went in a boat, I dare say," said Harry. "But I suppose nobody knows we were coming to this cave. Did you tell anybody at your school?"

"Only that we were going in the boat."

"Then nobody will think of looking for us till that fat chump gets in!" said Bob. "I—I say, it's rather rotten for the girls! Looks as if we shan't be in before dark."

Miss Clara whistled.

"That means a row at Cliff House!" she said.

"I hope it means nothing worse!" said Marjorie quietly. "Harry, do you think that Bessie is—is safe in the boat?"

"Oh!" gasped Clara.

"I—I hope so!" said Harry slowly. "Bunter's no oarsman, and, of course, Bessie would be hopeless. But—"

"Oh!" repeated Clara. Her face paled.

There was silence in the smugglers' cave. Even the exuberant Bob no longer thought of passing the time by letting off crackers.

No one wanted to put the thought into words. But everyone knew that there was danger—terrible danger—of Bunter and Bessie being carried out to sea on the tide.

If that happened, no boat would come out to the sea-cave for the stranded party. That situation was unpleasant enough—but they thought more of the drifting boat and its helpless occupants than of themselves.

They watched the strip of sea visible from the mouth of the cave. The sunshine on the glistening waters was dying away.

The early November dusk was at hand. There was still time to get in before dark, if old Trumper came out in the boat.

But they all knew now that old Trumper would not come out in the boat. They knew—only too well—that it was practically certain that that boat was drifting out on the sea, far from help, carrying Billy and Bessie Bunter farther and farther from the shore. There was no help for them—and no help for the party stranded in the sea-cave!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Rescue!

BILLY BUNTER groaned.

Bessie Bunter moaned.

They huddled in the drifting boat, wet with spray. The wind off the shore was freshening.

Blinking over the gunwale, Billy Bunter could not even see the dim sweep of the circling shore of Pegg Bay. The quay, the fishing village, the Anchor Inn with its red chimney-pots, had dropped from view.

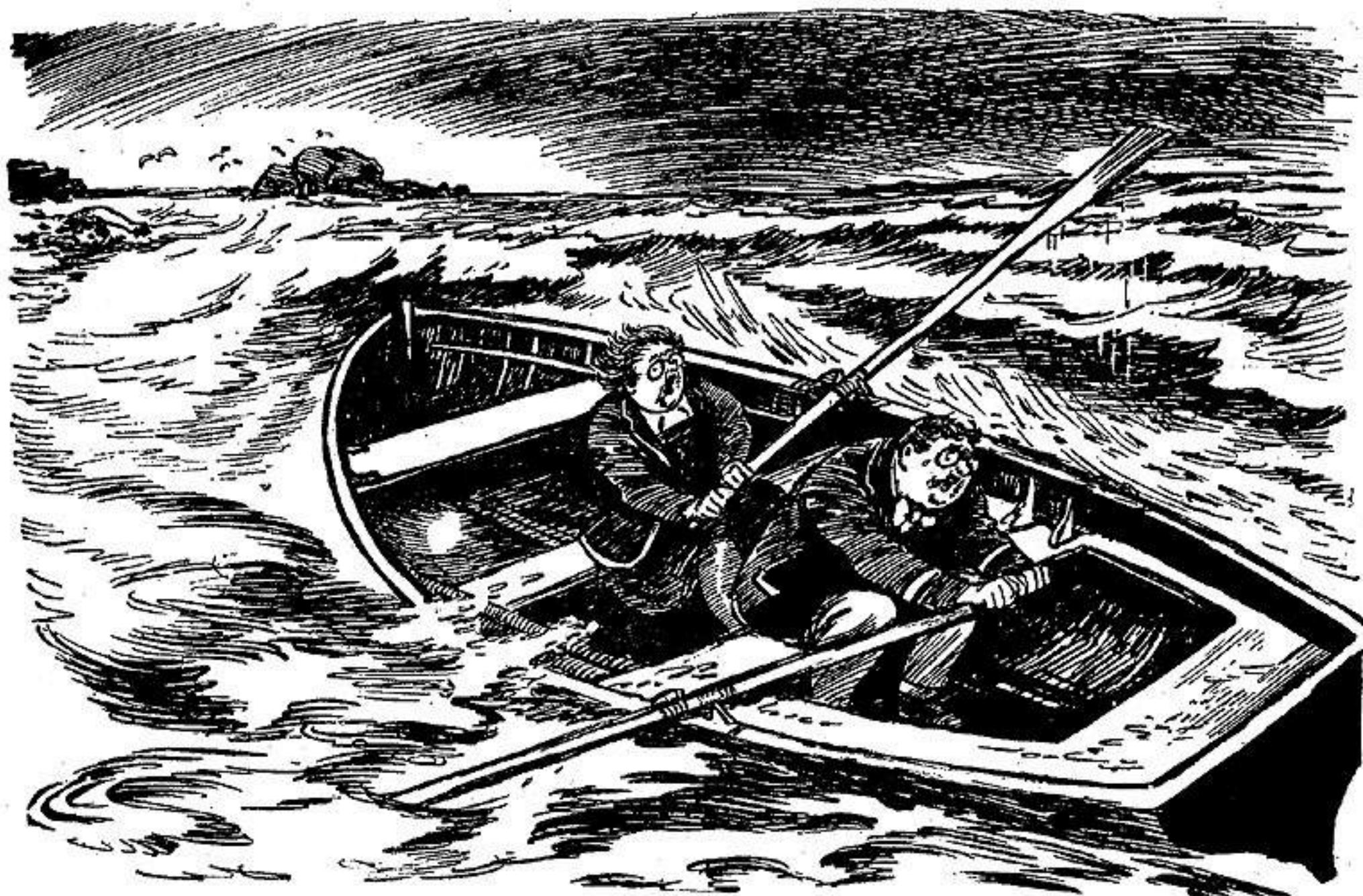
Nearer, jutting far into the sea, was the mighty Shoulder, like a rocky hill rising from the water. Somewhere in that towering mass opened the channel that led into the sea-cave—lost to Bunter's sight now. The draw of the tide was taking the boat farther and farther out.

In despair, the fat junior blinked over the rolling sea. Not a craft was to be seen. Even the blur of smoke from the distant yacht had faded away now into the sky.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter.

"Ow!" moaned Bessie.

Slowly but surely the boat drifted on and on. Before very long, even the great mass of the Shoulder would dip and disappear. And the early dusk of November would be falling. If the



"You take one oar, Billy," gasped Bessie Bunter, "and I'll take the other!" "Go it, then!" said Billy. The two Bunters were unable to make headway against the strong tide. But their efforts slowed down the drift of the boat and gave the swimmer a better chance of reaching them.

drifting boat was not sighted within the next hour, it would not be sighted at all. The thought of drifting out to sea in the dark made Billy Bunter's fat flesh creep.

For once, however, the fat Owl of the Remove was not thinking wholly and solely of himself. He blinked at Bessie's chalky, plump face.

"I—I say, buck up, old girl!" mumbled Bunter. "I—I expect we shall run into a ship or something."

"Oh dear!" moaned Bessie.

It was not easy for Billy to comfort Bessie. He was badly in need of comfort himself.

He watched the massive Shoulder. He became conscious of a dark speck on the sea between the boat and the jutting lines of chalk that ran out from the base of the mighty cliff.

For a good minute, Bunter wondered what it was. He could see that it was not seaweed.

Then he jumped as he realised that it was the head of a swimmer.

He wiped the spray from his spectacles and blinked again. It was a swimmer, coming out on the running tide with long, strong strokes.

Helped by the tide, Valentine Compton was making good speed. Half a mile out from the rocks, he was still swimming strongly and steadily.

Bunter blinked at him in utter amazement. It did not occur to him, for the moment, that the swimmer was attempting to come to the rescue of the drifting boat. He was only amazed to see a swimmer in the sea, so far from the land.

"I—I say, Bessie!" he stuttered.

"Oh, lor!" moaned Bessie.

"I say, there's a swimmer!" gasped Bunter. "I say, he might be able to help! I say, I'll shout to him."

Bessie Bunter blinked round through her spectacles. Billy Bunter rose
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cautiously—very cautiously—to his feet, and waved a fat hand at the face glimmering from the water.

"I say! Help!" yelled Bunter. "Help!"

The wind carried his voice back, and it probably did not reach the swimmer. But Compton was heading for the boat, coming steadily onward. The fat Owl could see that.

He could see, too, that the swimmer was gaining. Compton had had a good deal of leeway to make up, but he was making it up.

Slowly, steadily, he gained on the drifting boat, rocking seaward on the tide. Outside the bay, the water was rougher, and the boat was well beyond the limits of Pegg Bay now, on the open sea.

Bunter blinked hopefully at the face in the water. As he saw it more clearly, he recognised it.

"I say, Bessie, it's that chap who was on the yacht!" he ejaculated. "That chap who came into the cave!"

Bessie waved a plump hand to the swimmer. There were signs of strain in the handsome face, which was set hard.

"I say, Billy, try to row to him!" gasped Bessie. "Look here, you take one oar and I'll take the other."

"Go it!" said Bunter hopefully.

They put out the oars. Bessie Bunter rowed, if possible, a little worse than Billy. They were unable to make headway against the strong tide by their combined efforts. But their efforts slowed down the drift of the boat, and gave the swimmer a better chance of reaching them.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter suddenly. "He—he's gone!"

Bessie shrieked

A wash of the sea passed over the swimmer's head, and he disappeared.

But he reappeared again in a moment, still swimming strongly,

His face was white now, and set hard as iron. Even the short-sighted Owl could see that he was nearly at the end of his resources. But he still came gallantly on.

It was to save the lives of the two in the boat that Valentine Compton had started on that desperate swim out to sea. But his own life was at stake now as much as the others. Unless he gained the boat, he had not the remotest chance of getting back to land.

He fought his way on, through the rough rolling waters. Closer and closer he came, exerting the last ounce of his strength.

A hand shot up and gripped the gunwale.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He laid in his oar, and blinked at the white, strained face looking from the sea. Compton hung on to the boat. He was at the end of his tether, and he waited to recover a little before he clambered in.

"I say, get in!" said Bunter. "Jump in, you know! Why don't you get into the boat now you're here?"

Compton made no answer to that. He had no breath to waste on answering fatuous questions.

For two or three minutes he hung there, breathing hard. Then, slowly and carefully, he climbed in.

He sank down, in a streaming pool of water, panting.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Bessie blinked at him.

"You're wet!" said Bessie.

Compton stared—and then smiled.

"Yes!" he said. "A little! Damp, at any rate!"

"I say, can you row us back to the quay?" asked Billy Bunter. "You can come back with us, you know! Did you fall into the sea?"

"Eh?"

"I suppose you fell out of your boat!"
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said Bunter, blinking at him. "Why didn't your uncle stop and pick you up?"

Compton stared at him blankly. Then he laughed. He was recovering now, severe as the strain on him had been.

"I did not fall out of my boat, you young ass!" he said. "My uncle went back to his yacht in the boat after landing me."

"Eh? Then how did you get into the water?" asked Bunter, puzzled. "This ain't the time of year to go swimming."

Compton laughed again.

"You fathead, Billy!" said Bessie. "Can't you see he came after us? Didn't you?" she added, blinking at the rescuer.

"Exactly."

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Well, look here, now you're here, help me to row back, see? I can't manage it alone, but the two of us—"

"You young ass!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

Compton picked himself up and stood on a firm footing in the rocking boat, gazing shoreward. Even the great mass of the Shoulder was sinking to the sea now, black against the setting sun. The rest of the land was quite out of sight below the sea.

"Help me step the mast, young 'un!" he said.

"Don't you think we could row back?" asked Bunter.

"If you had as much sense as a bunny rabbit, you'd know we couldn't."

"Look here—"

"But if you had as much sense as a bunny rabbit, you wouldn't be here at all!" said Compton. "I warned you—"

"Mean to say we can't get back to Pegg?" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, I—I thought it would be all right if you got on the boat—"

"It will be all right, I hope. Help me with the mast, and don't jaw!"

Billy Bunter's help was not of much use, but the mast was stepped, and the sail hoisted, and Compton handled the sheets. The off-shore wind filled the patched old canvas, and the boat danced on. Billy Bunter knew as much about seamanship as he knew about Sanskrit; but he could see that this young fellow could handle a boat. Which was a great relief to Bunter.

"I say, we ain't getting back, though!" he exclaimed, after a few minutes. "I say, why ain't you getting back to Pegg?"

Apparently Bunter had an impression that, now the sail was up, the boat could sail in the wind's eye.

"You won't see Pegg again to-day," said Compton. "You young ass, can't you feel the wind direct off the shore? This old tub won't lie very close to the wind. We're too far out to tack into the bay—we shall miss the southern headland by a quarter of a mile or more."

"Oh, lor'!"

"We've got to run down the coast!" said Compton. "But don't be alarmed—we shall get ashore somewhere, in a few hours—"

"A few hours!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, it will be dark. I—I say, I shall be late for calling-over at Greyfriars! I—I say—"

"Oh, lor'!" said Bessie.

Compton smiled, and made no rejoinder. He gave all his attention to sailing the boat. There was no chance of getting into Pegg Bay, but he hoped to be able to tack back to land within ten or fifteen miles or so.

"Oh, crikey!" said Bunter.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bessie.

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Valentine Compton was drenched from head to foot, and the wind was sharp and cold. But he did not seem to heed it. In silence he sailed the boat while the sun dipped, and the shadows overspread the sea. And Billy Bunter and Bessie, huddling down from the sharp wind, mumbled in chorus—thinking less of the terrible danger from which the stranger had saved them than of the undoubted fact that it was cold, windy, getting dark, and that they were fearfully, awfully, hungry!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret Passage!

"WE can't stick here!"

Harry Wharton spoke quietly.

Darkness had fallen—thick November darkness. It had been an uncommonly fine and sunny day; but the night closed in densely dark. The strip of sea had vanished from sight at the mouth of the cave.

In the cave a single electric torch glimmered.

"What can we do, Harry?" asked Marjorie quietly.

"The boat's not coming!" said Clara. "We'd better make up our minds to that, now."

"That's what I was thinking!" said Harry. "Goodness knows what's happened to Billy and Bessie—the less we think about that, the better, till we know. But—it's clear that whatever's happened, they've not sent the boat for us. It would have been here long ago."

"We've got to chew on that!" said Bob.

"Of course, there'll be a search if we don't get back," went on the captain of the Remove. "But—who's going to guess where we are? We're booked for a night out if we wait."

"But what can we do?" asked Marjorie.

"If you girls are game to try, there's the passage Bob tumbled into," said Harry Wharton. "Ten to one it's the secret passage we've all heard about, that's supposed to lead to Greyfriars. Anyhow, it's bound to lead somewhere, with an outlet at the other end."

"Oh!" said Marjorie.

"We may as well try our luck as sit here doing nothing!" said the captain of the Remove. "If we have no luck, we can come back. We've got a good many torches—we brought one each—and we can burn them one at a time, to make sure the light will last. If you're game to try—"

There was a brief silence.

The Famous Five were keen enough to try their luck in the secret passage. But so long as there was even a remote hope that the boat might come, they felt bound to wait. But there was no hope of that now.

"I think we'd better try," said Marjorie at last.

"Let's!" said Clara.

And, the decision having been taken, the party turned their backs on the sea and tramped up the hollow winding cavern.

They went in silence.

The dread of what might have happened to Billy Bunter and Bessie was in all their minds. It was better, as Wharton said, not to think of that, if they could help it, till they knew. But it was clear that Billy and Bessie could not have got back to Pegg, or the boat would have come.

Harry Wharton carried a gleaming torch to light the way. Bob Cherry carried Coker's attache-case.

They tramped on, and reached the cavity into which Bob had tumbled that afternoon. It was an easy drop to the bed of soft sand in the pit—though it had not seemed easy to Bob when he went in head-first.

Wharton flashed the light into the arched opening that Bob had discovered there.

It was a natural opening in the rock, but they could see that it had been hacked larger by human hands.

The captain of the Remove led the way.

Ahead lay a long tunnel in chalk rock, black as the inside of a hat. For some distance it was only a few feet wide, and the juniors walked in single file.

Farther on, it broadened out into an underground cave. Again it narrowed. At times the chalky roof was low down over their heads, and again it soared so high as to be beyond the reach of the light.

Here and there they had to scramble over masses of chalk. At one spot, a mouldering old keg lay half-embedded in fallen chalk.

They stopped for a few moments to look at it.

It was proof that, in former days, the passage had been trodden by the old smugglers.

And other proofs met their eyes, from time to time. In various places it was easy to see that an axe had been used on the chalky walls, to widen the passage where it narrowed too closely.

The tunnel was evidently a natural rift, improved by human hands to make more easily passable.

That it had some outlet seemed certain—in fact, it seemed probable that it had many connections with the outer air, by rifts and chinks, for though the atmosphere was heavy and clammy, it was fairly fresh and easy to breathe.

The torch faded, and another was turned on. On and on they tramped, sometimes in single file, sometimes in a bunch, according as the passage narrowed or widened.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry suddenly. "This looks as if we're getting somewhere!"

Hitherto, the tunnel had been a more or less natural rift in the chalk rock. But now the light gleamed on walls of stone.

Harry Wharton flashed the light round.

It was a passago built of stone blocks, with an arched roof, hardly more than four feet wide, and floored with stone flags.

More than one such secret passago existed at Greyfriars, as the juniors knew. There was one that connected the school vaults with the old priory in Friardale Wood. This was a similar one.

That the smugglers had used it, in the days of the Georges, was fairly clear; but it was clear, too, that it dated from many centuries before the first George set foot in England. It belonged to the old days of the Dark Ages, when secret passages were built as a matter of course, to afford a hidden way of escape from castle or mansion in times of danger.

Greyfriars School, in olden days, had been a monastic establishment; but in far earlier days, a Norman baron's castle had stood on the site of which some fragments yet remained in the school buildings. This secret passago had been a hidden way down to the sea, for that old baron and his retainers—probably, also, a way of introducing supplies in times of siege.

The Greyfriars juniors and the Cliff House girls were tramping on old, mossy flags, on which men-at-arms, probably, had tramped, long centuries ago—and at a later date, desperate smugglers, with French silks and brandy.

How far they had tramped they could not tell. It seemed like many weary miles, but it was probably not more than one, if as much, when the stone passage ended suddenly at a spiral stair.

"Way out!" said Bob Cherry, with a faint grin.

"Looks like it," said Harry Wharton. "But I wonder where the dickens we are! Can't tell in what direction the tunnel runs, but we must be under a building of some sort—"

"The school, most likely," said Nugent. "This must be the secret passage we've always heard about."

"Anyhow, we shall find out at the top," said Clara. "Get on!"

"Up we go!" said Bob.

Harry Wharton led the way with the light. The rest followed in single file, for the winding stair was narrow.

Ancient as it was, the stairway was as firm and strong as it was in the days of the old builders who had placed stone on stone.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, went the feet up the damp stone steps, echoing eerily.

The ascent seemed almost endless to the tired schoolboys and schoolgirls; but they were very hopeful now. It could hardly be doubted that at the summit of the spiral stair was an outlet of some kind. Wearily, but hopefully, they tramped up and up.

"Here we are!" came Wharton's voice at last.

He halted, flashing the light round. He was in a small, stone-walled room at the top of the stairs. The rest of the party joined him there, and two or three more torches were turned on to examine the walls in search of an outlet.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Here's the jolly old doorway!"

"Oh, good!"

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Marjorie.

Bob turned his light into an arched doorway in the stone. The party gathered round it. Bob held the light, while Wharton groped into the deep doorway—a foot deep from the surface of the wall. His hands glided over oak. It was a door—so narrow and low that only one person could have passed through at a time, and only by stooping. But it was fast—firm as the solid stone that surrounded it—and no trace of lock or handle, or anything else, could be discovered on the surface.

"Oh!" breathed Wharton.

"Can't you open it?" asked Marjorie.

"It—it seems to be fastened."

"Oh, my hat!" said Clara.

Bob Cherry set down the attache-case, which he had carried all the way from the sea-cave. He put his powerful shoulder to the oaken door and shoved.

He exerted his strength to the limit, but it was in vain. The oak remained immovable.

He stepped back, and Johnny Bull tried his strength. There was room for only one at a time. The sturdy, solid Yorkshire junior put all his beef into it, and Johnny had a lot of beef. But the result was the same.

"It's fastened on the other side, of course!" said Frank. "But—but it it's a building, somebody may be there—if we knock."

"It's a chance, anyhow, and we'll try," said Harry Wharton.

He rapped on the oak with his knuckles.

"Knock, knock, knock!"

The knocking echoed with a hollow sound, through the stone-walled room and down the spiral stair.

Knock knock, knock!

But only the echoes answered, and they looked at one another with dismayed faces.

They had reached the end of the secret passage—they had arrived at the expected outlet—and it was closed against them. It was a heavy blow, as they thought of the long, weary tramp back to the sea-cave, of a bitter November night there, of watching in the grey dawn for the boat that might be long in coming.

"We've got to get through!" said Harry, setting his lips.

"If we had a stick, or something, to knock with—"

"Try this!" said Johnny Bull.

He handed over a pocket-knife, with a solid horn handle. Taking it, the captain of the Remove knocked on the oaken door again, and again, and again.

Load, sharp, the knocking rang, but from the other side of the door came no sound, and it was forced in upon their minds that on the other side there were no ears to hear.

(Continued on next page.)



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THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

MR. QUELCH frowned. He was intensely irritated. The Remove master was calling the roll in Hall. Five fellows in his own Form failed to answer to their names—Wharton, Cherry, Bull, Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh. Quelch compressed his lips as he marked them absent. He had enough worry on his mind that day, without being further worried by members of his Form cutting call-over.

The Bouncer winked at the other fellows as the Remove went out of Hall.

"Dear old Quelch looks as if he will bite when those chaps come in!" he remarked.

"Some fellows do ask for it!" grinned Skinner.

Mr. Quelch's brow was like thunder as he went to his study after roll-call. He had not called Bunter's name at roll. He had had news of Bunter—startling news. Coker & Co. had come in, and told what they had seen from the chalky slopes of the Shoulder.

Billy Bunter was the most troublesome member of Mr. Quelch's Form, but that made no difference to the Remove master's deep anxiety for his safety. The Fifth Formers had seen him drifting out to sea on the tide, helpless to save himself or Bessie.

Had Bunter returned safe and sound, Mr. Quelch would gladly have whopped him for venturing on the sea at all. But so long as the fat Owl was missing, and his fate was in doubt, Mr. Quelch could only feel intense anxiety.

He had learned from the Fifth Formers that a young fellow—a stranger to them—had swum out after the drifting boat. But whether he had reached it and taken control, or whether a brave life had been lost in vain, he did not know, and he could only wait for news. He had already been on the telephone to Cliff House, only to hear that nothing more was known there of Bessie Bunter, than at Greyfriars of Billy.

As Mr. Quelch had learned that Bunter had started out that afternoon with Harry Wharton & Co., he had intended to speak very severely to them when they came in, for having allowed Bunter to go out in the boat on his own. But they had not come in. They had chosen this most inopportune time for cutting call-over.

Mr. Quelch's feelings were a very uncomfortable mixture of anger and anxiety; but anxiety predominated, and when his telephone bell rang, he jumped to the instrument in the hope that it was news.

It was the voice of Miss Penelope Primrose, Principal of Cliff House School, that came through, in its high-pitched tones.

But Miss Primrose had no news to give. She wanted news. It appeared that Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn had not returned to Cliff House. It was supposed that they had been with their Greyfriars friends that afternoon. Did Mr. Quelch know anything of the matter?

Mr. Quelch did not.

Anger and anxiety both intensified after that talk on the telephone. Five schoolboys were missing from roll-call at Greyfriars, and two schoolgirls from Cliff House. What could have happened?

They had not been in the boat with Bunter. Coker, Potter, and Greene had been positive on the point that only Billy and Bessie Bunter had been in the drifting boat. Seven members of the

party must have been left on shore. It seemed improbable, if not impossible, that disaster had happened to them also. But where were they?

Had Mr. Quelch been aware that the party had set out to explore the sea-cave, approachable only by boat, he would have guessed. But he was not aware of that. He had no doubt heard of the smugglers' cave, but if so he had forgotten it, and it did not occur to his mind now. Neither was he likely to guess that the fat and fatuous Owl had cleared off with the boat, unknown to the rest of the party.

He left his study at last, and went to the door of the House and looked out into the November gloom. He hoped every moment to hear the bell at the gate, but there was no sound of a bell.

What had happened?

All Greyfriars was asking that question as the time drew near for prep, and Harry Wharton & Co. had not come in.

It was clear, by this time, that something must have happened. But what?

There was a buzz of excitement in the Rag, where the juniors discussed the matter. In the Prefects' Room, and in the senior studies, there was a buzz. Coker of the Fifth, who had discovered that the bag of fireworks was missing from his study, said hardly a word on the subject. Everybody was anxious. There was no news of Bunter; no news of the Famous Five!

Mr. Prout joined the Remove master in the doorway. Prout's portly face was very grave. He was concerned for the safety of the Greyfriars boys and the Cliff House girls. But Prout was always Prout!

"These reckless and unthinking boys of your Form, Quelch—" said Prout, shaking his head ponderously.

Mr. Quelch set his lips like a vice.

"Such thoughtlessness—" said Mr. Prout.

Quelch breathed hard.

"What is that noise?" he asked, sharply and irritably, as a dull sound came faintly booming, like a distant and muffled explosion of fireworks. Mr. Quelch spun round irritably.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Prout. "Is it possible—I ask, is it possible—that some thoughtless junior is letting off fireworks at such a moment?"

"It certainly sounds like it!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Some foolish Remove boy," suggested Prout.

"Nonsense!" retorted the Remove master, and, leaving the portly Prout staring, he whisked away from the door.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout. "Really—"

"Wingate!" called Mr. Quelch. "What is that noise? Is some boy letting off fireworks inside the House?"

"It sounds like it, sir," said the Greyfriars captain, puzzled. "But I can't imagine where—"

"Hark!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Again came the muffled sound. It was faint, muffled, distant, but it reached scores of listening ears. If it was not an explosion of fireworks, it was difficult to guess what it was—unimaginable as it was that any fellow could be letting off fireworks in the House.

Mr. Quelch, with glinting eyes and compressed lips, whisked away in the direction of the sound. Wingate followed him, and two or three other prefects, and then a crowd of fellows.

Again came the muffled sound, and it led the Remove master into the wide, oak-panelled corridor, on which the House library opened.

The door of the library stood wide open, and in the doorway stood the

Head, looking out with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Mr. Quelch!" said Dr. Locke. "What is that extraordinary noise?"

"I am trying to ascertain, sir. It seems— Listen!"

It came again—unmistakably fireworks.

Mr. Quelch could only gaze round him in amazement. The sound was somewhere close at hand, yet no fireworks, and no fellows with fireworks, were to be seen. If some fellow was celebrating the Fifth of November a day in advance inside the House, it was difficult to see where he was doing it.

Mr. Quelch gazed round him, at the oak-panelled walls, at a crowd of astonished faces, and wondered whether he was dreaming!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

HARRY WHARTON turned from the oaken door, breathing hard.

He knocked, and knocked, and knocked, and there was no result.

"Nothing doing!" he said.

He stepped out of the arched doorway into the little stone room at the top of the spiral stair.

In the glimmer of the electric torches there were dismayed and clouded faces.

"We shall have to go back to the cave," said Marjorie quietly; and Clara nodded dismally.

"No help for it!" said Johnny Bull.

"It's rotten!" said Harry. "There must be a building of some sort on the other side of that door. But—"

"Nobody there, anyhow!" said Bob.

"If it's the school there must be somebody there, but—"

"Looks as if it isn't!"

"Well, yes."

There was a brief silence. The whole party had felt convinced that the secret passage they had discovered was the smugglers' passage of old days, of which every fellow at Greyfriars had heard. It looked now as if they had been mistaken.

"My esteemed chums," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, breaking the painful silence.

"What have you got in your black noddle, Inky?" asked Bob.

"It occurs to my debilitated brain that there may be a passage on the other side of this door, and the distance may be too terrific for the knocking to reach absurd ears—"

"That's likely enough," said Harry, "but it doesn't help us, old chap! If we've got back to Greyfriars underground they can't hear us—"

"But if we could make a louder preposterous noise, my esteemed Wharton, their absurd ears might hear."

"We've knocked as loudly as we can for a good half-hour—"

"Ten to one it's the school on the other side," said Nugent. "But they can't hear the knocking—and that's that!"

"The tenfulness to one is terrific! If that is the esteemed case, all we have to do is to make a preposterous uproar—"

"We can't do more than knock, fat-head!"

Hurree Janset Ram Singh smiled a dusky smile. He pointed to the attache-case lying on the floor.

"It has occurfully flashed to my idiotic brain that the explodefulness of absurd fireworks might be heard, although the knockfulness is not audible to ridiculous ears!" he said.

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

Coker's attache-case had lain where

Bob had dropped it, forgotten and unnoticed, while the juniors hammered at the little oaken door.

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob. "Good old Inky! It's a chance, anyhow!"

"The chancefulness is terrific!"

"By Jove!" said Harry Wharton. "That's a ripping good idea! The bag's stacked with fireworks. A bundle of crackers would make a fearful row and—"

"Good egg!" said Clara.

"Inky, old man, you're a jolly old genius to think of it!" exclaimed Bob. "I wonder we didn't think of it before. I'd forgotten that bag. I say, let's try it on!"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry.

No time was lost now that the nabob had made the suggestion. The supply of fireworks was ample. Bob Cherry gathered bundles of crackers and packed them together in the arched doorway, close to the oak.

Then the party retreated to the spiral stair, to be out of the way of the explosion, carrying the attache-case, with the rest of the fireworks, with them.

Bob "touched off" the bundle at the doorway, and hastily retreated to join his friends on the stair.

Bang!
It was a terrific roar from the bundle of crackers, many of them going off together, others in rapid succession. The sound was deafening in the narrow confines of the stone room and the stair.



"You—you boys have dared to secrete yourselves in this—this spot," thundered Mr. Quelch, "and—and to startle and alarm the whole House by letting off fireworks here!"

"You——" He broke off suddenly at the sight of the Cliff House girls. "We followed the secret passage from the sea-cave, sir," explained Wharton. "We couldn't make ourselves heard by knocking, so we let off fireworks!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Johnny Bull. "If there's anybody about they ought to hear that, by gum!"

Silence followed the roar, as the thundering echoes died away. If there was an inhabited building on the farther side of the oak door, it seemed impossible that that roar had not been heard.

They listened, in the hope of hearing some sound from the farther side. But there was no sound.

"Try again!" said Harry.

"We'll jolly well try so long as the fireworks last!" chuckled Bob. "And Coker wasn't mean with them. He seems to have been jolly pleased to remember the Fifth of November, to judge by that stack."

Again a bundle of crackers and rockets was stacked at the oak in the arch of the low doorway. Again it was touched off, while the schoolboys and schoolgirls kept out of the way, down the spiral stair. Again a fearful roar rumbled like thunder through the subterranean depths.

"That simply must have been heard,

if there's anybody within a mile of that door!" gasped Bob.

"The hearfulness must have been terrific!"

"Can't hear anybody coming," said Johnny Bull.

"Listen!"

They listened—but there was no sound. Was there, after all, any ear to hear on the farther side of the oaken door?

"Looks like a sell!" said Clara.

"But if anyone heard, it might take them some time to find the place!" said Marjorie. "If that is a secret door—and it must be—it will have to be looked for, on the other side, even if they hear——"

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Harry. "We may have been heard already, and there may be somebody looking this very minute——"

"The words of the beauteous miss are the words of idiotic wisdom!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us try againfully and againfully."

"The againfulness is going to be terrific, old black bean!" chuckled Bob.

The stone room was thick with the smell of gunpowder. But they did not heed that. So long as Coker's fireworks lasted they were going to keep up the attempt to make themselves heard—and Coker's supply was nearly inexhaustible.

It was Billy Bunter's mistake about the contents of that attache-case that had caused the fat Owl to leave them stranded in the sea-cave. But it looked now as if that mistake might turn out fortunate for them. It was certain that if there were ears to hear on the other side of the secret door, that series of explosions must be heard.

Again and again, and yet again, bundles of fireworks exploded and roared at the oaken door. After each explosion the juniors listened eagerly and intently for a few minutes before "setting off" the next.

"Hark!" exclaimed Wharton suddenly as the roar died away.

Through the silence that followed came a sound. It was the sound of rusty iron scraping—the withdrawing of a bolt that had not stirred for years. It was a grating and grinding sound, disagreeable enough in itself, but more than welcome to the listening ears than the sweetest of music!

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

And Bob's cheery roar rang almost as loudly as the explosions of Coker's fireworks.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Surprise!

"EXTRAORDINARY!" said Prout. "Amazing!" ejaculated Dr. Locke.

"Beats the jolly old band!" murmured Smithy.

Mr. Quelch seemed too astonished to speak at all. He stood gazing.

Again and again that muffled explosive roar had dinned on the Remove master's ears, and a hundred other ears. It seemed impossible to track it to its source.

Obviously it was within the House—and not very far away. But where?

Mr. Quelch had "placed" the sound at last—as near as it could be placed. He stood gazing at the wall of the corridor, not far from the library door. At that spot the sound had sounded loudest—at that spot he had located it, so far as it could be located. It came—it could only come—from beyond the ancient oak panelling on the ancient wall, yet that seemed impossible.

This was one of the oldest parts of the old school buildings. The walls were known to be of immense thickness, and built of solid stone blocks. Even if exploding fireworks could have been heard through such a thickness of stone, that did not explain it; for it was an outer wall, and nobody was outside the House letting off fireworks. Yet it was through that wall that the muffled roar came.

The only possible explanation dawned on Mr. Quelch at last. He knew that there were secret passages in the ancient parts of the building, and it occurred to him that one must exist at this spot. Some mischievous young rascal had chanced on it, and considered it a safe spot for letting off crackers. That was what it looked like.

Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips

grimly, proceeded to grope over the ancient panels of black oak.

Muffled by the wall, but very audible, came another roar, as of a whole bundle of fireworks going off together.

"It is amazing," said the Head—"amazing! Someone is there, Quelch! It is obvious that someone is there!"

"Exploding fireworks!" said Mr. Prout. "Unmistakably, fireworks! But how, and where—"

Mr. Quelch did not speak. He groped and groped. He knew that there must be some opening in the apparently solid wall, for that was the only possible explanation of what was happening. He was going to find it. And if it turned out that some young rascal had found, as he supposed, a safe and secret spot for letting off crackers in the House, Mr. Quelch was going to make that young rascal exceedingly sorry for himself.

"A secret passage of some sort, sir," said Wingate blankly. "Some young sweep must have found it, and—"

"Extraordinary!" boomed Prout. "Unparalleled!"

Click!

There was a general jump as a tall, thick oaken panel in the wall opened. Groping over every inch of its surface, Mr. Quelch had touched the hidden spring. The panel flew open like a door, and the Remove master jumped back.

A crowd pressed forward in the wide corridor. This was a new and startling discovery to the Greyfriars fellows.

Mr. Quelch stared into a black opening beyond.

"A light!" he said.

"Here, sir!" The Bounder stepped forward, and handed him a flash-lamp.

Mr. Quelch switched on the light, flashed it into the cavity in the wall, and stepped in.

The Head and Mr. Prout looked in after him. Behind them the corridor swarmed with excited fellows.

"A—a—a door!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

At a distance of eight feet from the moving panel—that being the thickness of the ancient wall—was an oaken door. It was fastened by a bar and a rusty bolt—both thick with rust and cobwebs. Evidently it was many a long year since either had been stirred.

Bang! came suddenly from beyond that oaken door, with a suddenness that made Mr. Quelch jump.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "A most interesting discovery, Mr. Quelch. This passage is not shown on the plan of the building in the library, though there are several others. Most interesting."

Mr. Quelch grabbed the old bar out of its sockets. He was less interested in that interesting discovery than in getting to close quarters with the young rascal, or rascals, who were letting off fireworks behind that door.

He dragged back the ancient bolt. It required an effort to move it, embedded in rust as it was.

But it moved.

It grated and scraped and shrieked as it moved; but he got it back at last, and then pulled at the door.

It opened.

Beyond was darkness and a smell of gunpowder. Through the darkness came a sudden, startling roar—not of exploding fireworks this time.

"Hurrah!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Is—is—is that Cherry?"

He flashed the light before him. Several electric torches flashed back. Mr. Quelch stared, or rather glared, at Bob Cherry.

"Cherry, it is you!"

"Yes, sir," said Bob joyfully. "We're all here, sir."

Dim figures emerged from the spiral stair into the little stone-walled room, hidden in the thickness of the ancient wall, and an immense outer buttress.

"Cherry, how dare you!"

"Eh?"

"You—you have dared to secrete yourself in this—this spot, and—and to startle and alarm the whole House by letting off fireworks here!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, my hat! No, sir—yes, sir—I mean—"

"Wharton, Nugent, Bull, Hurrey Singh! I see you are all here! You have secreted yourselves here, and—and—" Mr. Quelch broke off suddenly as he saw Marjorie and Clara.

He stared at them. He almost goggled at them.

"How did you get here?" he gasped.

It dawned on Mr. Quelch that, even if the Greyfriars juniors had found that secret door in the library corridor, the Cliff House girls could not have entered that way.

"We came up from the sea-cave, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"The—the—the sea-cave!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

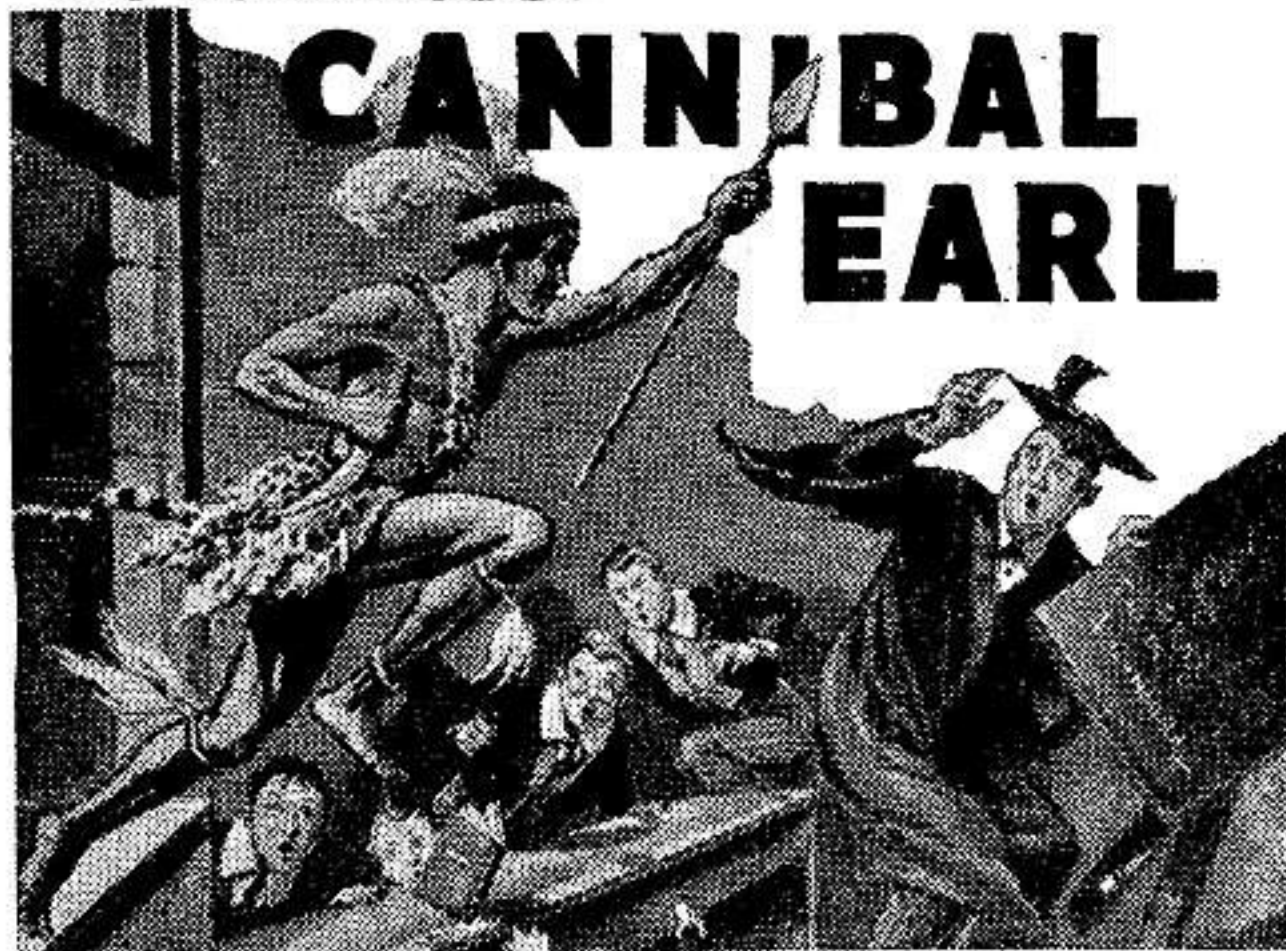
"The smugglers' cave, sir—"

"But how—why—"

"We found the secret passage, sir, and followed it, hoping it might lead here," explained the captain of the

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Remove. "We couldn't make ourselves heard by knocking, so we let off the fireworks, hoping that they might be heard."

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke, over Mr. Quelch's shoulder.

"We were in the sea-cave this afternoon, sir, and Bunter cleared off with the boat, and left us stranded."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I—I sco! I—I understand! I—I thought— But no matter—"

"Has Bunter got back, sir? We were anxious about him—"

"Bunter has not returned, Wharton, and I am very anxious about him, indeed. Some Fifth Form boys saw him adrift in the boat. But you—"

"We're all right, sir!"

"The rightfulness is terrific, honoured sahib!"

"Miss Hazeldene—Miss Trevlyn, please come this way!" said Mr. Quelch. "You are quite safe now. This way—"

The Head stepped out into the library passage—Mr. Quelch after him—and Marjorie and Clara followed. Amazed eyes watched them as they emerged.

"Great pip!" yelled the Bounder.

"I say, Hazel, here's your sister!"

"Marjorie!" exclaimed Hazel.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed the Cliff House girls through the narrow opening, one after another. It was only wide enough for single file.

"The whole happy family," grinned Smithy.

"Here we are again, old bean," chuckled Bob. "Jolly lucky we had Coker's fireworks with us, or we should never have been heard."

"My fireworks!" breathed Coker of the Fifth. "So that's where they went, is it? You young swab—"

"Thank goodness you are all safe!" exclaimed the Head. "Mr. Quelch, perhaps you will ring up Cliff House, and inform Miss Primrose that the girls are safe, and that I will send them back in the car."

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Quelch carefully closed the tunnel in the passage wall. Then he hurried away to his study to telephone.

Marjorie and Clara were taken to the Head's house for a late—very late—tea with Mrs. Locke; and a crowd of fellows marched the Famous Five off to the Remove passage for the same, eager to hear the details of their adventure.

Five missing members of Mr. Quelch's Form had turned up, safe and sound, which was a great satisfaction to the Remove master. But one member was still missing. There was no news of Billy Bunter.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Blows In!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"What?"

"Bunter!"

It was close on bed-time for the lower Forms.

Most of the Remove had gathered in the Rag after prep, and most of them were discussing Bunter. And for once they did not allude to him as a fat owl, a frabjous ass, or a blithering idiot!

The juniors were in a rather subdued mood. The thought of Billy Bunter and Bessie, adrift on the sea on a November night, was more than enough to subdue the cheery spirits of the Remove fellows. Every fellow looked serious and felt anxious.

"Poor old Bunter—" Bob Cherry

was saying, when the door of the Rag opened.

Then every eye fixed on a fat figure and a fat face, adorned by a big pair of spectacles.

Bunter rolled in.

A moment ago every fellow had been feeling anxious about Bunter; he had been "poor old Bunter" and "poor old chap." But at the sight of the fat Owl of the Remove, evidently alive and well, anxiety, naturally, disappeared at once, and Bunter ceased, on the spot, to be a poor old chap, and became a blithering Owl again!

"Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The blithering owl—" said Johnny Bull.

"Turned up like a bad penny!" grinned Skinner. "I fancied he would!"

"Well, thank goodness he has!" said the captain of the Remove. "You silly, fatheaded, howling ass—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What did you strand us in the cave for, you bloated bloater!" roared Johnny Bull. "You pernicious porpoise—"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Glad to see you again, old fat man!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Fancy any man bein' glad to see Bunter, what?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Is Bessie all right?" asked Harry. "Eh? Oh! Yes! I say, I'm hungry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter warmly. "I can tell you, I'm jolly hungry! I've missed tea, and I've missed supper! Quelch says I can go to the House-dame for something; but—"

"You fat frump!" said Bob Cherry. "You ought to be jolly well kicked for going off in the boat—"

"Beast!"

"Coker saw you drifting out to sea," said Frank Nugent. "How did you get back? Glad you did; but how—"

"Oh, never mind that!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I got in only ten minutes ago, and Quelch jawed me. He was looking worried about something—I don't know what—he jolly well didn't care whether I was hungry or not. I told him I was. He jawed me. I say, what about a study supper? Smithy, old chap—"

"No wonder Quelch jawed you, you blithering idiot!" said the Bounder. "How the thump did you get back?"

"I'll tell you in the study, old chap! I say, I'm fearfully hungry—"

"That chap Coker saw must have got to the boat," said Bob. "Is that it, Bunter? Coker says a chap swam out after you—"

"Eh? Oh, yes! That chap you saw on the yacht," said Bunter. "Chap named Compton—rather a silly fat-head—"

"What?"

"I kept on asking him to get back," said Bunter. "He made out that he couldn't, owing to the wind. I was fearfully cold, and fearfully hungry, and so was Bessie! Famished! I can tell you fellows it was awful! I should have thought he'd have got back as fast as he could, you know, as he was drenched to the skin, after swimming. But the silly fathead ran the boat miles and miles down the coast—miles and miles—"

He couldn't have done anything else, you benighted chump, with the wind off-shore!" said Harry Wharton. "He must have been a pretty good sailorman to get back at all."

"Oh rot!" said Bunter. "I know I was jolly cold, and jolly hungry, and so was Bessie. I began to think we'd never get ashore. But it was no use talking to him—he just snapped a fellow's head off. Still, he got in at last—he ran into the cove at Hawks-cliff. Just like the silly fathead to stop at a place where there wasn't a railway station, or a telephone, or a taxi to be had for love or money—"

"Did you tell him so?" grinned Bob.

"All we could get was a carrier's cart to give us a lift," said Bunter. "Miles and miles in a carrier's cart. Think of that. And then we had to stop at Cliff House first, to put Bessie down. I thought I should never get here. And when I got here, all Quelch does is to jaw a chap—as if I missed tea and supper on purpose—as if I would, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, what about a study supper?" asked Bunter hopefully. "I say, there's still time before 'dorm, if you hurry up. Mrs. Kebble will only give me a few sandwiches. I say—"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled. They had been feeling anxious about Bunter, but the fat Owl, evidently, had not been unduly anxious on their account.

The fact that he had stranded them in the sea-cave, where they would still have been, but for the discovery of the secret passage, seemed a trifle light as air to the fat Owl. It did not even occur to him to ask them how they had got away. Bunter was hungry—and when Bunter was hungry there was no room in his fat mind for any other consideration.

"I say, you fellows, don't cackle!" said Bunter peevishly. "I can tell you I've had a rotten time—"

"And what about us in the cave?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Eh? I was going to send the boat back for you, but that silly fool, Compton, went miles along the coast—I've told you so! You seem to have got back, anyhow. Never mind that. I say, what about a study supper? I can tell you I'm fearfully hungry—"

"His name's Compton, is it?" said Harry Wharton.

"Eh? Who? Oh, yes, that chap! Never mind him! I say, about supper—"

"The chap who was on the yacht—" said Bob.

"Yes! Bother him! What about supper?"

"He must have had tons of pluck, to swim out after the boat, with the tide going out!" said Harry. "It must have been touch-and-go for him. I—"

"Will you keep to the subject?" demanded Bunter. "Look here, I keep on telling you that I'm famished—ravenous—and that old cat will only give me a few sandwiches, I jolly well know that. I say, you fellows, have you got anything in the study?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Like a cake?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"A big plum cake—"

"What-ho!" gasped Bunter.

"You told us you never snaffled that cake from my study yesterday—"

"Of course I didn't! I'm not the fellow to snaffle a fellow's cake. I hope!"

"Well, if you didn't—"

"I've said I didn't!" howled Bunter.

"That's all right, then! Nobody else has had it, and if you didn't snaffle it, it's still there—"

"Eh?"

"And you can have it!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"The whole lot of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

And he rolled out of the Rag, and headed for the House-dame's room—to secure what might be going before it was too late!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Coker Comes in Useful!

BANG, bang!
Crack, crack!
"Please to remember the Fifth of November—"
"Here's another guy!" roared Bob Cherry. "Oh! It's Coker! My mistake, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the following day—the great and glorious fifth! After class the Greyfriars fellows were thinking chiefly of celebrating the anniversary of Guy Fawkes' desperate attempt to stop the escape of gas in the House of Commons! As soon as the early November dusk had fallen, crackers began to crack, and squibs to squib, and rockets to whiz, and streams of sparks shot across the dusky sky.

Already the bonfire was blazing in the Cloister field, and ruddy light danced and flickered over swarms of cheery faces.

But there was one frowning face in the merry mob. Coker of the Fifth looked cross. The great Horace was shirty—and his temper was not improved by Bob Cherry mistaking him—perhaps—for a guy. He glared at the cheery Bob. Then he glared at his friends, Potter and Greene.

"What are you grinning at?" he demanded. "If you think there's anything funny in fag cheek, I don't agree. Look here! It was that Remove gang that snooped my fireworks yesterday!"

"Well, you banged off theirs, you know!" said Potter.

"Don't be a silly ass, Potter! They let off a lot yesterday, but they've got a lot left," said Coker. "They're letting them off now. Look at them!"

Potter and Greene looked.

The Remove fellows were parading a "guy"—a fearsome-looking effigy, made of an old coat and trousers stuffed with straw, with a Guy Fawkes

mask for a face, and a disused topper on top. Crackers cracked and squibs squibbed round the procession—and Coker knew who had supplied those crackers and squibs.

"Look at them!" he repeated. "That's my bag that young Wharton's got—handing out my fireworks! The cheek of it—under my very nose, too! Well, you fellows back me up, and I'll jolly soon have that bag off the young sweep! See?"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. Possibly they did not "see."

"Come on!" said Coker. "Follow your leader!"

He rushed.

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Potter and Greene rushed. But they rushed in the opposite direction!

Coker rushed alone.

His rush landed him in the midst of the merry Removeites. He grabbed at the bag from which Harry Wharton was handing out the fireworks—with one hand! With the other, he landed a smack that made the captain of the Remove stagger.

"Ow!" roared Wharton. "That mad ass! Collar him!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coker—bag him!"

"Here's another guy!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Bag him!"

Coker let go the bag. He found that he needed both hands to deal with the swarm of juniors that closed round him. Then he found that both hands were not much use. Innumerable hands grasped Horace on all sides. For two or three minutes there was a terrific struggle. The chair on which the guy was carried went crashing, and Coker went rolling and spluttering, till five or six juniors sat on him, and pinned him down.

"Urrrrrrgh!" came a breathless, winded gurgle from Coker.

"Scrag him!" gasped Bob. "Look at our guy!"

"That jolly old guy's done for!"
"Never mind—we've got Coker!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Stick Coker up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Up went Coker, in the grip of many hands. He was plumped into the chair. Up went the chair, with Coker swaying in it, and clinging on wildly.

"Guy Fawkes guy!" roared the Removeites.

"Stick him up on high!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrrgh! Leggo! Lemme down! Urrrrrrgh!"

The chair swayed high, held up by six or seven fellows. Coker swayed wildly, clutching at it for support. In the midst of a yelling swarm, that now and remarkable guy was borne onwards—spluttering frantically.

Amid yells of laughter, the procession arrived in the Cloister field, and headed for the bonfire. Coker, clinging frantically to the swaying chair, yelled with wrath as he was paraded round the bonfire. A hundred other fellows yelled with merriment.

Crash! Bump!

The chair tipped over, and Coker landed on the hard, unsympathetic earth. He roared as he landed.

"Collar him!"

"Bag him!"

"Don't let that guy get away!"

"Snaffle him!"

But Coker of the Fifth did not stay to be collared, bagged, or snaffled. He barged through the yelling crowd of juniors, and fled for his life. Coker of the Fifth had had enough of the Remove—a little too much, in fact—and he did the Cloister field at about 60 m.p.h., and vanished. A roar of laughter followed him—and a banging of fireworks—Coker's fireworks!

The celebrations proceeded without further assistance from Coker of the Fifth—the only fellow who was not pleased to remember the Fifth of November!

THE END.

(There will be another topping cover-to-cover yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "THEY CALLED HIM A FUNK!" It's brimful of exciting situations, chums, and every "Magnetite" should make a point of ordering his copy EARLY!)

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THE HEAD'S HELPING HAND!

By DICKY NUGENT

Bang! Krack! Boom!
A succession of deafening explosions rang out across the headmaster's bedroom at St. Sam's; and Doctor Birchmell woke up with a wild yell. "Yarooooo! Whatisit? Help!"

It was a truly startling awakening for the old buffer. The room was filled with pungent smoke and the noise was enough to make a fellow jump out of his skin. Doctor Birchmell, who always did things in his own way, jumped out of his bed instead—and landed on the floor with a bump that fairly knocked the puff out of him.

Bump!
"Wooooo! Ow-ow!" Then the Head heard a cheery burst of boyish laughter from the doorway, and, looking up, beheld Jolly and Merry and Bright and Fearless, the heroes of the Fourth.

"What the merry dickens!" he ejaculated. "Please, sir, you asked us to remind you first thing this morning that it's Guy Finks Day to-day," said Jack Jolly. "We thought the best way to do it was to throw a jumping kracker at you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Groooo!" Well, next time you wish to remind me that it's Guy Finks Day, do it in a more respectful manner by following the news through the doorway," growled Doctor Birchmell, as he refully hawled himself to his feet. "This time I'll let you off with a caution. And now, Jolly," he went on, in more eager tones, "what has happened about Mr. Lickham's fireworks? Has he kept his promise?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" grinned Jolly. "He promised that before brekker to-day he'd have fireworks at St. Sam's to the value of the twenty-five pounds we'd collected—and they're on show in Big Hall now!"

"The dickens they are!" ejaculated the Head. "I must say I'm plezzantly surprised." "Same here, sir. I quite thought last nite that he'd nicked the funds."

"Pinched the spondulicks, you mean," corrected Doctor Birchmell, with a frown. "Please avoid slang, Jolly, even when you're discussing fireworks."

"Sorry, sir!" grinned Jolly. "Anyways, I can give you my word he must have spent at least twenty-five pounds to have got

such a fine lot of fireworks. It's a ripping collection." "Good for Lickham!" larfed the Head. "As soon as I have dressed, I'll trot down to have a squint at them."

Five minnits later, he joined Jack Jolly & Co. outside his room and skampered across to the Skool House with them to inspect the fireworks on show in Big Hall. He was as eggstated as any Second Form fag—and certainly Mr. Lickham's collection was enuff to eggstite anyone. There were squibs, krackers, rockets, and katherine wheels galore, not to mention Mines of Serpents, Boy Scout Rowsers, and other specialties.

"Blow me tight!" he remarked, in his refined way to Mr. Lickham, who was hovering rather nervously in the background. "You certainly seem to have done us well this time, Lickham."

"I did my best under difficult circumstances, sir," said Mr. Lickham, with a modest smile. "I hoap we shall have a good time with them to-nite." "There isn't the slightest doubt about that, my dear chap," grinned the Head. "Undoubtedly we shall have a simply topping Guy Finks nite this year."

But the Head's joy was short-lived. Hardly had the words left his lips before a startling thing happened. There was a clumping of heavy, hobnailed boots in Big Hall and a strange voice wrapped out: "Eggscuse me, jents, but do any of you 'appen to know the whereabouts of Alfred Birchmell?"

The Head wheeled round—to find himself face to face with P.-c. Podge, the perlice-constable from Muggleton!

"Alfred B-B-Birchmell?" he phaltered. "Why, that's me!"

"Then, Alfred Birchmell, I arrest you in the name of the law!"

Jack Jolly & Co. gasped in sheer amazement. Mr. Lickham staggered back, livid with fear, and started mopping his perspiring brow.

The calmest of the lot was the Head himself. Apart from turning deadly white and nocking at the neeze and howling with

terror, he showed no signs that the perlice-man's announcement had affected him. He stared almost dazedly at P.-c. Podge. "ME?" he cried horsely. "You've come to arrest ME? For why?"

"For burglary at the fireworks shop at Muggleton!"

"I NEVER DONE IT!" Doctor Birchmell's voice rang out fearlessly across Big Hall. But the perlice-constable merely larfed sinnically.

"That's wot they all say!" he retorted, with a leer. "You can't get away from the clue you left behind you, anyway. Is this cap yours?"

P.-c. Podge thrust a hand into his tunick pocket and brought to light a cap. Doctor Birchmell stared at it, then gave a violent, spasmodic start. "It's mine!" he gasped. "Where did you find it?"

"In the fireworks shop—after the burglary!" grinned P.-c. Podge. "That settles it, I fanny!"

Better come quietly, Birchmell!"

So saying, the portly perlice-man stepped forward and grabbed the Head by the rists. There was a sharp "Klick!" and a pair of handcuffs had pinned the prisoner's hands together! The Head gave a frenzied yell.

"Lemmo go! I'm innersent, I tell you! Reskew, St. Sam's!"

"No no, you don't!" growled the perlice-constable, as Doctor Birchmell began to struggle. "You come quietly, or I may 'ave to tickle you on the top-net with my truncheon. Like this!"

He gave the Head a fearful wallop on the napper that made him fairly dance with pane. "Yarooooo! You've busted my branebox!" "That's nothing to what I'll do if you don't come quietly!" snorted P.-c. Podge. "This way, my lad!"

Then he grabbed the Head by the scruff of the neck and marched him off. A buzzing crowd of egg-sited St. Sam's fellows followed behind.

Jack Jolly & Co. were left staring at each other in blank amazement. Then their gaze turned to the fireworks. Then, slowly, they looked at Mr. Lickham.

"Eggscuse me, sir," said Frank Fearless quietly, "but do you mind telling us where you bought those fireworks last nite?"

Mr. Lickham licked his dry lips. "Er—in the fireworks shop at Muggleton, Fearless. Why do you ask?"

"Because it has just occurred to me that you didn't go out last nite till after the shops were closed!" said Fearless. "I suppose, sir, there's no possibility that the perlice have made a mistake?"

"It isn't possible, I suppose, sir," added Jack Jolly. "That the fireworks for which the Head has been carried off to chokery are these fireworks here?"

Mr. Lickham gave a wild, hunted look around him; and then, to the juniors' embarrassment, he buried his face in his hands and uttered a deep, anguished groan.

"It's troo!" he moaned. "It's only too troo, boys! I am the culprit!"

"My hat!" "I tried to konfess when the perlice-officer arrested the Head, but I hadn't the curridge! I took the fireworks—quite meaning to pay for them later on, of course—and I must have left my cap behind in the shop. Evidently I was wearing the Head's cap by mistake!"

"Grato pip! We must put this right at once!"

gasped Jack Jolly. "Let's catch 'em up, you fellows." And the kaplin of the Fourth led the way out of Big Hall at the dubble. P.-c. Podge and his prisoner were nearly at the gates when Jack Jolly & Co. came galloping up. They both glanced round as they heard the shouts of the eggstated juniors, and the perlice-man looked rather suspicious.

"Wot's all this 'ere?" he demanded, as the breathless juniors drew level with him. "You've got the wrong man, officer—that's what it is!" panted Jack Jolly. "Mr. Lickham, our Form-master, has confessed that it was he who bergled the fireworks shop. He says he must have been wearing Doctor Birchmell's cap by mistake!"

"Lickham!" yelled the Head. "Of course! Why didn't I realise it before? Take these bracelets off my rists, you blockhead, or I'll have you dismissed the Force!"

"Oh! Yessir! Suttlingly, sir!" gasped P.-c. Podge, realising now what a garstly mistake he had made. Amid cheers from the crowds of St. Sam's fellows that had gathered, he removed the handcuffs from Doctor Birchmell's rists.

"What's going to happen about Mr. Lickham now, sir?" asked Jack Jolly anxiously. "I hoap they won't arrest him. I'm sure he intended to pay for all that he took."

"That's troo!" said a tremulous voice from the rear, as Jolly finished speaking. "I was going to pay back every penny—honour bright!"

They all turned round, to find Mr. Lickham himself standing there. The Fourth Form master was shivering and shaking like a jelly, with fear.

P.-c. Podge moved forward, as though it was his intension to arrest him. But Doctor Birchmell took a hand in the game before he could carry out that intension.

"If you take my advice, officer, you'll think twice before doing any more arresting here," he said severely. "You've already made yourself liable to pay heavy dammdiges by wrongfully arresting me.

Take care that you don't make a second mistake in one day!" P.-c. Podge pawed and scratched his head dowieously. "Well, p'raps you're right, sir," he remarked overhenually. "I'd better go back to the fireworks shop for further instructions before I arrest this man. Thanks for the tip, sir!"

"Hop it!" said the Head tersely. And the perlice-man hopped it. Mr. Lickham's breath of relief as he vanished could be heard all over the quad.

"How can I ever repay you, sir?" he cried. "By instalments!" was the Head's serprizing reply. "B-b-by instalments?" The Head grinned and nodded.

"You haven't, of course, spondulicks in hand to pay for the fireworks?" "I'm afraid not, sir. As a matter of fact, I'm making some prophecs for the fireworks fund, I put the munny into my yung brother's bizzness."

"Indeed!" said the Head dryly. "And what sort of bizzness was it, pray?"

"Something to do with greyhounds, I beleave, sir!" "Lickham, you're enuff to make my hare turn grey!" declared the Head. "Anyway, I'll pay the twenty-five pounds out of school funds, and you can pay me back out of your salary by instalments. I'll deduct, say, ten shillings a week for a hundred weeks!"

"Sir, I can never thank you enuff!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "All's well that ends well, sir—thanks to your helping hand!"

So Guy Finks nite at St. Sam's was a grate success after all. And out of all the revellers in the skool, Mr. J. Jollivell Lickham enjoyed himself the most.

It wasn't till some time afterwards, when he sat down to work it out, that he realised what a heavy rate of interest he was paying in return for the Head's Helping Hand!

(Look out for the first instalment of a grand new Dicky Nugent Serial—The Ringmaster of St. Sam's!—in next week's Herald!)



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 213. EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON. November 7th, 1936.



To Be Fashionable— Says DICK RAKE— LET YOUR HAIR FLOP OVER YOUR FOREHEAD!

How do you wear your hair, lads? Brushed well back? Parted in the middle with a little "quiff" on each side? Or just done the same all over with a pair of horse-clippers?

These questions may not strike you as particularly important, but fashionable Greyfriars men are simply palpitating to hear what's the correct thing to answer this season. You see, there are fashions in hair-dressing as well as in clobber, and the smart man-about-school takes good care that he doesn't overlook them either.

I must admit that I didn't realise all this till I ran into Temple the other day. He was lounging about the veranda of the pavilion on Little Side, with his hair hanging right over his eyes.

"What's up, old sport?" I asked him. "Had a wet shampoo and forgotten to dry your hair?"

Temple smiled his lordly smile. "Of course, one would hardly expect a Remove kid to understand, I suppose," he murmured reflectively. "Just to relieve your abysmal ignorance, kid, this is how fashionable fellows wear their hair just at present."

Much to my surprise, Temple then, without warning, threw his head back like a restive horse, so that his hair went right back on top.

"Hi, be careful!" I said in alarm. "You've gone out of fashion now!"

"Not at all," said Temple, with condescending kindness. "That's fashionable, too. It's quite a la mode and

de rigueur to shake back your forelock now and again, providing it settles back gradually on the forehead after an interval."

Well, you live and learn.



I'd never previously suspected anything like that before, but there it was right enough!

After leaving Temple, I kept an eye out to see who was following the fashion at Greyfriars. Quite a number of fellows were doing it! Hobson and Stewart of the Shell, Fry of the Upper Fourth, and Skinner and Hazeldene in the Remove all had yards of loose hair hanging over their chivvies, and they all performed the backwards shako as though they'd been doing it for years.

If you want to be amongst the people who count, dear reader, I advise you to cultivate this hair-tossing bizney without delay. In fact, you'd better start it before to-morrow.

To-morrow, you see, a little gang of us will be going round the school forcibly tying up all forelocks we find with pink ribbon. We don't expect the fashion to last much longer after that!

WHY SUFFER FROM INDIGESTION?

One dose of Todd's Tummy Balm will put you right! W. G. Bunter says: "A mecr three duzen jam-tarts would give me indigestion at one time. But after taking Todd's Tummy Balm I ate a harty meal of roast pork and vegetables, lobsters, pancakes, doughnuts and ico cream, mixed pickles and muffins, and didn't feel a twinge—not even of constance!" Why don't you get like that? It's easy—if you take Todd's Tummy Balm! (If you don't mind us saying so, Toddy, we don't think much of your advertising ideas!—Ed.)

BOB CHERRY Tells— SAD STORY of FISH'S SNACK BAR!

"I guess I got a hunch!" announced our old pal Fisher T. Fish, one bright morning recently. "Why not a snack bar for morning break?"

"A whatter?" "Snack bar—place for quick oats!" explained Fishy. "Time's money, ain't it? Waal, then, why should we waste time moseying along to the school tuckshop? A snack bar right on the spot is jest what this place has been waiting for."

That was the first we heard of Fishy's snack bar. The next thing that happened was that Fish went round all the pastrycooks in the district buying up stale cakes. Then he secured a job lot of ginger-beer that had been saved out of a fire at a factory. After that he found a bargain in chocolates.

Having thus acquired his stock, Fish locked it up in a disused cupboard in the Form-room all ready for the opening of his snack bar.

As soon as Quelchy had cleared off at morning break next day, Fishy stuck up the following sign on his desk:

"QUICK EATS—SERVED PRONTO!"

"C'm on, you guys!" he yelled cheerfully. "Why go to the tuckshop to be swindled? Come to Fish's Snack Bar!"

He rushed off to the cupboard, selected a key from the enormous bunch he always carries, and opened it.

BUT FISHY'S CUPBOARD, LIKE MOTHER HUBBARD'S, WAS BARE! Every ounce of his stock had vanished! Fishy looked. He gasped. Finally he expired!

He had died of a broken heart!

Friends made immediate arrangements for burying him, and at the funeral, which was held five minutes later, many tributes were paid to him. Some said that he was the meanest Removeite in all history. Others said that, unlike his countryman, George Washington, he never told the truth—except, of course, by accident.

The funeral, by the way, had to be abandoned when the "corpse" revived again and raced off looking like an avenging fiend. He was heard to say something about making potato-scrappings of Bunter.

It was afterwards learned that Bunter had gained access to the cupboard by hiring out Fishy's own bunch of keys for an hour.

Seems that, for once in a way, the man who has "got left" is Fishy himself!

Cheers!

EDUCATION UP TO DATE FOR ME!

Says H. VERNON-SMITH

Why the dickens the old fogies who run schools stick to the same old subjects year after year beats me completely!

Latin, Arithmetic, History, Geography—why, they're enough to put years on a chap!

What I should like to try is this new system of education you hear about in which the chaps take up whatever subject interests them most and study it at first hand.

I heard of one chap, for instance, who found an absorbing interest in criticising "movies." So he spent all his school hours at the pictures; and for prop. he morely had to write an essay on what was wrong with them.

I can give you my word, old pals, I myself should

find a lot more interest in studying moving-pictures than in grinding out Latin and maths. in the Remove Form Room!

Not that I should stick to cinemas. Far from it! I believe in a broad and liberal education. If they gave me my choice, I'd take up quite a lot of other subjects.

The Psychology of Football Crowds, for instance. And the Theory and Practice of Horse-racing. And the Science of Speedway Racing. And the History of Ice Hockey. And—but why go on?

However much I talk, I shall never convince the antediluvian Powers That Be at Greyfriars that this sensible method of education is superior to their hoary old system! They're hopeless!