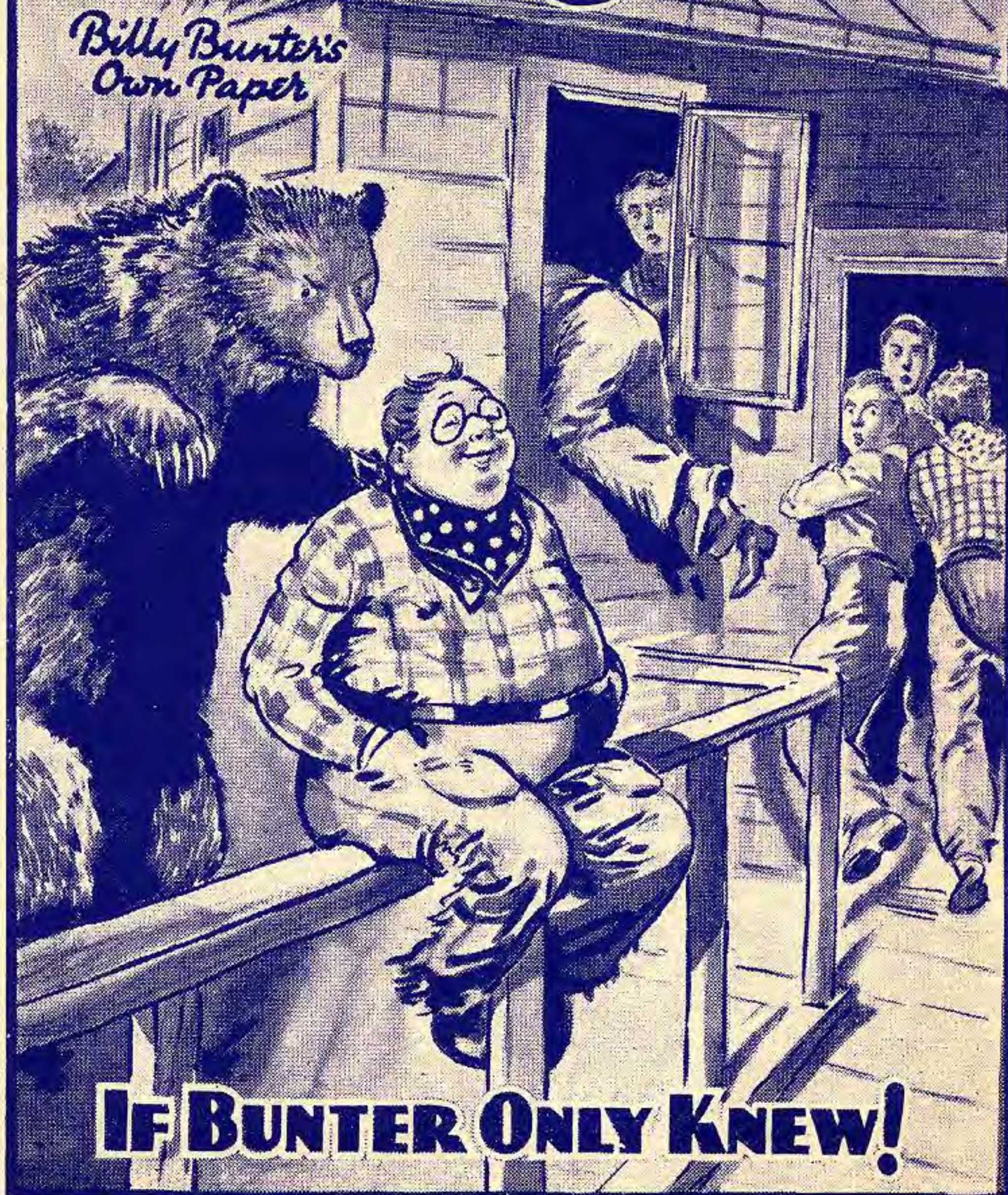


Great "ARMAMENTS" RACE . . . Second Lap! Thousands of PRIZES to be Won!

The Magnet^{2D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



IF BUNTER ONLY KNEW!

THE GREAT 'ARMAMENTS' RACE

10 More First Prizes of New Bikes!

4,000 Other Grand Prizes

Still to be Won FREE

H ALLO, PALS! Are you in the Great Stamp-Collecting Race? It's a wonderful opportunity for you—there are still Ten More "Hercules" Bikes and 4,000 other super Prizes on offer! And this is how:

Every week in MAGNET we are printing "Armaments" Stamps—BATTLESHIPS, SEARCHLIGHTS, GUNS, and so on. There are now six different kinds to be collected. Just cut them out and stick to as many others as you can get hold of. All the stamps you collected last month (except Bombers and Submarines, which we called in) can be used for this month's contest as well.

There are twenty-four more stamps on this page, including FOUR BONUS TANKS. If you also read other popular boys' papers like "Modern Boy" and "Gem" you will find more of these stamps in them to help give you a big total.

At the end of this month we shall again ask you how many of one or more kinds of stamps you've collected. Which stamps we shall ask for will be a close secret until then.

So go all out to get as many of these stamps as you can. Get your pals to do it, too—swap stamps with them if you like, and make the "race" more exciting for everybody.

At the end of June, another Five Bikes and up to 2,000 of the other tip-top prizes will be given away! The remaining prizes will be reserved for the July prize-giving. The biggest collections of stamps called for will win—and readers will be asked to say which prizes they want, too!

No stamps to be sent in yet—we will tell you how and where when the time comes! (The full rules were given last week and will be repeated later.)

OVERSEAS READERS, TOO!—You pals who are far away, you're in this great scheme, also, and special awards will be given for the best collections from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you as well, of course!

(This offer also appears in "Modern Boy," "Gem," "Detective Weekly," "Sports Budget," "Triumph," "Champion," "Thriller," and "Boy's Cinema.")

SAVE ALL THESE STAMPS



OUTLAWED THROUGH NO FAULT OF HIS OWN! Some mysterious marauder, disguised in a flour-bag, has borrowed the Rio Kid's name and stained it with crime. Who is the guy? That's what the Rio Kid wants to know—and Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, help him to find out!

The TRAIL-THIEF'S LAST RIDE!

By FRANK RICHARDS



"You're O.K. here, Kid!" said Vernon-Smith, staring round the cavern. "I guess the sheriff wouldn't find this hideout in a month of Sundays!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

"B'ar!"

"B'AR!" said Bill Buck, tersely. "B'ar?" repeated Bob Cherry.

"Surest thing you know!" said Bill.

Bob looked puzzled. So did the other members of the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove. They did not catch on for the moment to Bill's pronunciation of the word "bear."

It was a sunny morning at Kicking Cayuse Ranch, in the Frio Valley of Texas. Harry Wharton & Co. had come out of the ranch-house to go down to the corral, when they noticed Bill; and wondered what the foreman of the ranch was up to.

Bill's brawny six-feet-six was bent almost double, his stetson hat pushed to the back of his head, his eyes fixed earnestly and intently on the earth near the corral fence.

What it was that interested and absorbed Bill, the juniors had no idea. They fancied for a moment or two that the foreman might have dropped something, and was looking for it. But it was not that—Bill's eyes were fixed on one special and particular spot where there was nothing, so far as the school-boys could see, but sun-baked grass. So they came along to inquire.

Certainly, they were not thinking of bears. Once upon a time, no doubt, bears and other savage animals had roamed at large over the wide ranges where innumerable cows now pastured, and cowpunchers rode herd. But bears, and wolves, and panthers, had given place long ago to cows and cow-

punchers; though a few survivors were said to linger in the remote rocky recesses of Squaw Mountain. Indeed, in the foreman's office at Kicking Cayuse, there was a huge skin of a grizzly, shot by Barney Stone, the former foreman of the ranch—but that, so far, was all that the Greyfriars fellows had seen of the ursine race during their holiday in Texas.

"Yep!" went on Bill. "B'ar! I'll tell a man!"

Bill's brows were knitted, and his face

Concluding the Wild West Adventures of HARRY WHARTON & Co., the World-Famous Chums of GREYFRIARS.

was grimly serious. Following his intent gaze, the juniors could see that there was a mark of some sort on the earth, close by the corral wall. But what it was, and why it interested Bill so deeply, they did not know.

"The cayuses was restless in the night," went on Bill. "They knowed! There's been a b'ar around, you 'uns! See the sign?"

"But how could a bar get here?" asked Bob, puzzled. "There's one at the corral gate—"

That remark had a startling effect on Bill.

He jumped and grabbed the six-gun

from the holster in his belt, swinging round in the direction of the gate farther along the fence.

"You seen it?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Eh? Yes; I saw it as I came along," answered Bob, in astonishment.

"I'll tell a man!" gasped Bill.

He rushed along the fence, revolver in hand. The chums of the Greyfriars Remove stared after him blankly.

"What on earth's got Bill?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Ask me another!" said Frank Nugent. "He must know there's a bar at the corral gate, as the gate's fastened with it at night. What the dickens—"

Bill was shouting as he ran to Cactus, the horse-wrangler, who was in the corral.

"You, Cactus! Watch out! B'ar!"

A stetson hat appeared from the corral gate. Cactus stared at Bill.

"B'ar?" he repeated.

"Sure! I guess I picked up the sign, and one of the boys has seen it!"

"Aw, forget it!" said the horse-wrangler. "There ain't no b'ar around this here corral, Bill! You figure the brones would be quiet, if there was b'ar around?"

"You ain't seed him?" demanded Bill.

"Not by a jugful!"

Bill Buck stared round him suspiciously; and then stared back at the Greyfriars fellows, who were following him along the corral wall.

"You, Cherry!" he barked. "You allowed you'd seen a b'ar at the corral gate. What do you mean? You stringing me along?"

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"Eh? No!" answered Bob. "There it is!"

"What?" roared Bill.

Bob pointed to the pinewood bar that was used to secure the corral gate. Bill stared at it, and Cactus stared at it. Then Bill stared at the juniors again, jamming his six-gun back into its holster.

"You doggoned young geck!" he roared. "You figure that was the sorta b'ar I was chewing the rag about?"

"Isn't it?" asked Bob.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Bill, while Cactus chuckled. "Say, ain't you the prize boob from Boobsville? I'm asking you! Ain't you the biggest bonehead in Texas, and then some?"

"Well, what other sort of bar do you mean, then?" demanded Bob warmly. "I suppose you don't mean a bar like the one in the Red Flare at Packsaddle, do you?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Cactus.

"Search me!" gasped Bill. "I mean a b'ar! I guess I don't mean a corral bar, you young gink, nor yet a whisky bar, or a soda bar! B'ar! Ain't you never heard tell of a b'ar at that school of yours in the old country?"

Bill tramped back along the fence, snorting. Cactus turned back into the corral, chuckling. The juniors followed Bill, who resumed his former occupation of scanning that mark on the earth by the fence.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came down from the ranch-house, and joined the Famous Five.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know!" said Harry Wharton. "Bill's getting fearfully excited about a bar, but we can't make out what sort of a bar. He can't mean a bar of music—"

"What's up, Bill?" called out Vernon-Smith.

"B'ar!" answered Bill, over his brawny shoulder.

He was moving along, bent double, away from the corral wall. His bronzed, bearded face was more serious than ever, and his gun was in his hand again.

"The barfulness seems to be terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But the meaning of the esteemed Bill is a boot on the other leg."

"What sort of a bar?" roared Bob Cherry.

Bill glared round at him.

"How'd I know from the sign?" he snorted. "Jest b'ar! I guess he come down from Squaw Mountain in the night, and he sure has been nosing around the ranch. Mebbe a grizzly!"

The juniors all jumped together. If "b'ar" was a mystery to them, they knew what a grizzly was!

"A bear?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Didn't I say b'ar?" snorted Bill.

"Gitting deaf?"

The juniors grinned. They understood now. It was the sign of a prowling bear that Bill had picked up by the corral wall, though he called it "b'ar."

"By gum!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "There are still bears on Squaw Mountain—I've heard that the sheriff's men came on one the other day when they were hunting for the Rio Kid! Is that really sign of a bear, Bill?"

"Surest thing you know!" grunted Bill. "And I guess I ain't sure he's gone, neither—you 'uns want to watch out."

Bill tramped on, picking up sign that was invisible to the eyes of the schoolboys, into the garden in front of the ranch-house veranda.

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The juniors followed him, keenly scanning the "sign," which, however, would have told them nothing, had not Bill told them that it had been left by a b'ar. Apparently the bear, after prowling round the corral, had crept into the thickly planted garden—and Bill did not seem sure that it had gone. He was going to make sure, at all events.

Billy Bunter, from the veranda, blinked at them through his big spectacles. He wondered what was going on.

"I say, you fellows, what's up?" squeaked Bunter.

"Bear!" called back Bob cheerily.

"Eh? Who's bare?" asked Bunter. "Wharrer you mean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors followed Bill. They expected him to find the spot where the prowling animal had left. The track led through a thicket of bushes under the high fence that barred off the garden from the prairie beyond. It was unlikely that a prowling bear had lingered after daybreak; still, it was possible, if the brute had come down hungry from Squaw Mountain, and had not found a meal.

"Watch out!" roared Bill suddenly. Bang, bang!

He fired twice, and leapt back almost on the juniors. From amid the bushes a gigantic grey hairy figure roared up, and the schoolboys had a glimpse of fiery red eyes and gaping, terrible jaws.

"Beat it, you!" roared Bill.

Harry Wharton & Co. had only that one glimpse of the grizzly bear, lurking in the bushes under the fence. They were unarmed—and the grizzly's grip was sudden death! They "beat it" with promptness and despatch!

Bill was running—a revolver was not of much use against a grizzly bear—Bill was running for a rifle. If Bill ran, it was evidently time for schoolboys to run—and they did run, hard! In a breathless bunch, their feet hardly touching the ground, they tore across the garden, and bolted up the steps into the veranda of the ranch where Billy Bunter stood blinking in astonishment.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Is Not Alarmed!

BILLY BUNTER, seated on the rail of the veranda, stared through his big spectacles, and blinked—and blinked again.

Why the six juniors were scuttling at top speed for the rancho, Bunter did not know—any more than he knew why Bill was rushing off towards the bunkhouse like a runaway bronco.

From where he sat, Bunter could see across the ranch garden—to the bushes under the fence, where the alarm had taken place.

Something big and grey was stirring in those bushes; but Billy Bunter's vision was limited, and he could not make out what it was. Indeed, the Owl of Greyfriars had a vague impression that it was a man in a big grey overcoat, so far as he gave it any attention at all! So the fact that it came lumbering out of the bushes after the juniors did not alarm Bunter or explain their sudden flight to the astonished Owl.

"I say, you fellows!" he exclaimed, as hurried footsteps clattered up the steps from the path below. "I say, what's up? What are you racing about like that for?"

"Cut into the house, quick!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Get a move on, you fat fool!" shouted the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"It's a bear!" roared Johnny Bull. "Run, you fat ass!"

He grabbed Bunter by one fat arm and Frank Nugent grabbed him by the other, and they rushed him to the doorway of the living-room, at the back of the veranda.

Bunter spluttered and resisted.

"Leggo, you beasts! Leggo!"

"Buck up, fathead!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Quick, you thumping ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

Chick, the choreman, appeared in the doorway. He gave a howl of alarm as, looking past the veranda, he saw the terrible figure among the bushes and trees in the garden. The huge animal reared on its hind legs, was glaring round.

There were splashes of crimson on the grey fur—Bill's bullets had gashed the grizzly and roused its fury, without doing it much harm. Chick grasped the door to slam it—then as he saw the hurrying juniors, he held it wide open, and shouted to them.

"Pronto! Pronto, you 'uns!"

"Stoppit!" yelled Bunter, struggling wildly. "Leggo, you beasts! Nugent, you rotter—Bull, you beast—"

"It's a bear!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yah! Leggo!"

The fat Owl of the Remove wrenched himself loose and rolled back to the veranda rail. He snorted with angry indignation as he did so.

Bunter could see no bear. He did not believe that there was any bear. Bears might lurk in the rocky recesses of Squaw Mountain, long miles away to the west—but that a grizzly had crept down to the ranch in the night, and lingered after sunrise, Bunter did not believe—his only idea was that it was a "rag"—and those ragging beasts weren't going to pull his leg—not Bunter's!

While the Famous Five pelted in at the doorway, Bunter rolled in the opposite direction. Chick was about to slam the door with one hand, grabbing a bar with the other, when Harry Wharton stopped him.

"Hold on—Bunter—"

"Bunter!" roared Bob.

"Will you cut in, you fat fool?" shrieked the Bounder. "Do you want that grizzly to chew you up, you bithering idiot?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

He leaned his fat back on the veranda rail, blinked across the veranda at the alarmed group in the doorway, and grinned, from one fat ear to the other.

They stared at him, dumbfounded.

Bunter was the man to run, with or without cause, at the first alarm of danger. Yet there was Bunter, lolling on the front rail, regardless of the dreadful form that was shambling towards the building, and grinning.

"Is he mad?" gasped Frank Nugent.

"Loco!" stuttered Chick. "Plumb loco! I'll say that b'ar will be chewing him up, in about a minute!"

"Bunter!" yelled the Bounder.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "You can't pull my leg! He, he, he!"

"It's a bear—"

"He, he, he!"

"A grizzly bear—"

"He, he, he! That's all right—I'm not afraid of bears!" chuckled Bunter.

"You fellows may be! He, he, he!"

"Look, you fat fool!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

Bunter glanced round carelessly from the veranda rail into the garden below. The big man in the grey overcoat, as Bunter supposed that figure to be, had gone down on all fours. But it had ceased to shamle towards the house.

Bill had got hold of a rifle by that time.

Bang!

Bunter jumped.

"I say, you fellows, that's somebody shooting!" he exclaimed. "What are they firing for?"

There was a sharp, angry snarl from the grizzly, and it swung round in the direction of the shot. A fresh streak of crimson showed on the grey fur, and the little red eyes blazed with rage.

It was rather fortunate for Bunter that Bill weighed in with the rifle just then and caused the grizzly to change its direction. In a few moments more, it would have been near enough for the short-sighted Owl of the Remove to see what it was—and too near, probably, for Bunter to dodge into the house in time—for a grizzly bear can be wonderfully swift in its movements, in spite of its bulk. But the savage brute from Squaw Mountain turned on Bill, and came no nearer to the rancho.

Harry Wharton, deeply anxious for the fatuous fat Owl, ran back across the veranda to grab him and drag him in.

His comrades followed him at once.

Bunter's folly might have placed the whole party in the deadliest peril, but for the fact that Bill had drawn off the attention of the grizzly.

Bang! roared Bill's rifle again: and bang, bang; came from two other directions. Cactus, the horse-wrangler, and Yuba Dick, one of the cowmen, had got hold of rifles and joined in. There was a low but terribly ferocious growl from the savage animal, scored by the bullets, and it made a rush at the foreman of the ranch—Bill leaping back, and catching the top of the corral wall, swinging himself up in time. Yuba Dick and Cactus closed in, both firing—and three or four punchers joined in with six-guns.

So it happened that, as Harry Wharton & Co reached Bunter, ready to collar and drag him headlong into the house by main force, they saw that the danger was over, so far as themselves were concerned.

They had a back view of the grizzly, rearing on his hind legs to grab at Bill on the corral wall. They remained where they were, watching breathlessly.

Bill vanished over that wall, with all his six foot six of brawn and muscle, as actively as a Mexican monkey. Bill knew better than to let the grizzly get to close quarters. One sweeping clutch of that fearful talon-like claw would have torn him down to death.

For a moment it seemed that the bear would essay to clamber the corral wall in pursuit: but the bullets that were now almost raining on it, caused it to turn on other enemies.

The gigantic figure swung round, and came back at Cactus, Yuba Dick and the rest with a rush so swift, that it was amazing to watch the huge body in such rapid motion.

They scattered promptly: and as they scattered, Bill reappeared at the corral gate and opened fire again with the Winchester.

Again the grizzly turned: snarling with pain and fury. But this time it did not charge. Blood was streaking all over the grey fur: and the grizzly, though far from disabled, was damaged—and seemed to have had enough. It

went at a lumbering but rapid run down to the gateway, and scuttled out on the open prairie.

"Kim on!" roared Bill. "Git that grizzly!"

He rushed off in pursuit, loosing off shots as he rushed, and after him rushed the rest.

Savage howls came back from the bear, as it fled, mingled with the banging of rifles and six-guns.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I—I—I say, you fellows!" stuttered Billy Bunter. "W—w—was that a bib-bub-bob-bear?"

It had dawned on the fat junior, at last, that it was not a false alarm: that the juniors had not been pulling his fat leg, and trying to scare him. His little round eyes almost bulged through his big round spectacles, as he realised that that big grey figure really had been a bear—a grizzly bear: an animal more dangerous at close quarters than lion or tiger.

"You blithering owl!" said Bob Cherry. "What did you think it was?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"No danger now, fathead!" grunted the Bunder. "It's gone!"

"Oh crikey!" repeated Bunter faintly.

He leaned on the rail, gasping.

The danger was over—the grizzly in flight, among the rugged folds and thick bunch-grass on the prairie—ringing shots from the distance telling that it was still hunted.

"I—I say, you fellows, suppose—suppose it comes back!" gasped Bunter.

"It won't, fathead!" said Bob.

Billy Bunter did not seem so sure of that. He rolled into the rancho and disappeared. Until he was quite, quite sure that the grizzly had hit the horizon, the fat Owl of the Remove preferred the safe side of a locked door.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

"Hoof It!"

"PULL in, feller!"

Jad Blake, rancher of the Circle O, gave a sudden start, as that cool, drawling voice fell on his ears.

The Circle O lay west of Kicking Cayuse, which it adjoined, on the southern side of Squaw Mountain. Jad Blake was riding by a rugged trail, on the rocky bank of the Squaw River, crossing a great spur of the mighty mountain, on his way to Packsaddle.

It was one of the loneliest trails in the Frio country, and the rancher, as he rode, was on the alert, for it was well known that the Rio Kid, the outlaw, had a hideout somewhere on Squaw Mountain.

For days and days, the sheriff of Packsaddle and his men had hunted the outlaw there, though they had given up the hopeless quest at last. Blake, like other ranchers in the valley, had ridden with the sheriff's men, hunting the outlaw—attracted chiefly by the reward of a thousand dollars that was offered for the Kid. He was thinking of the Kid as he rode by that lonely mountain trail, and was on the alert—but his alertness did not save him from being taken by surprise.

The voice came suddenly to his ears, and he pulled in his bronco. He did not reach for a gun. He had heard that cool, drawling voice before, and knew that it was the Kid's; and, knowing that, he knew that a gun would be on him, before he heard the voice.

Sitting his bronco, on the high rocky bank over the brawling waters of the

Squaw, the young rancher shot a swift glance round him.

On his right, deep in the river-canyon, was a fall of the Squaw—the waters tumbling and splashing and crashing down to a lower level. On his left was a high wall of rock, rising to the sky. The mountain path between the river and the hillside was hardly ten feet wide. For a moment, he did not see the man who had challenged him. Then he spotted a figure in stetson hat and goatskin chaps, in a fissure in the hillside—looking at him with smiling blue eyes over a levelled six-gun.

Blake set his lips, as he looked at the Rio Kid. Under that levelled gun and steady glance he dared not reach for his Colt, but there was a desperate light in his eyes.

"You!" he breathed.

"Jest me!" smiled the Kid cheerily. "Here I am, hombre, if you want me—you sure have been hunting me hard, with the other piecans—waal, I'm telling you now that you've found me, Mister Blake."

"Is this a hold-up?" muttered Blake between his teeth.

The Kid laughed.

"I guess if I was holding up a guy for his dust, you wouldn't be the guy I should pick on!" he answered. "I'll say that all Packsaddle is wise to it that you're on the rocks, Mister Blake. You ain't got a cow left on your ranch, nor I guess a bean in your jeans, you being so keen on the poker-tables at the Red Flare in Packsaddle. Nope—I ain't after your dust, Mister Blake—if you got any."

Blake breathed hard.

All Packsaddle knew, as the Kid remarked, that the rancher of the Circle O was "on the rocks." Even his ranch, all he had left, was for sale—and but for an unexpected happening, would have been sold already to Herbert Vernon-Smith, to be added to the wide ranges of the Kicking Cayuse.

No bushwhacker in the Frio valley would have taken the trouble to "hold up" Jad Blake, unless for his horse; for all the Packsaddle country knew that he had not, as the Kid expressed it, a "bean in his jeans."

But there was relief in his eyes, as he heard the Kid's words. His manner became more easy at once.

"I reckon all the valley knows how I'm fixed!" he said.

"It sure ain't no secret," agreed the Kid, "and mebbe that's the reason why you been so spry getting after this baby! You sure would like to handle the thousand dollars they're offering for me! I'll say that the guy who handles that thousand bucks will sure earn it!"

"What you want, if you ain't aiming to go through a guy?" grunted Blake. "You ain't a hoodlum to shoot a man on sight, from what I've heard of you."

"Not in your lifetime!" said the Kid. "Didn't I have the sheriff of Packsaddle under my gun, and did I hurt that old guy? I jest tied him backwards on his bronc and sent him home." The Kid chuckled. "I guess he was madder'n if I'd let daylight through him! But I wouldn't shoot up a guy, unless I was crowded—and I ain't been crowded yet."

"You'll be crowded, good and hard, if you hang on in this country!" snapped Blake. "You ain't wanted in this valley, Kid."

"Nope!" assented the Kid. "I sure ain't—but I ain't pulling out yet, feller. I hit this locality to get a rest from the Rangers, but I sure would have pulled out afore this, only I ain't riding till I've found a galoot I want! There's a hoodlum in the Frio valley that moseys

around with a flour-bag over his face, and calls himself by my name—and I reckon I'm going to find that guy and put paid to him afore I saddle up and ride."

Jad Blake's hand made a movement towards the butt of his Colt.

"Don't!" said the Kid softly.

The movement stopped at once.

"I guess," said the Kid, "I'll borrow your hardware, feller, 'case you figure on starting something, and making a guy spill your juice."

The Kid stepped out of the fissure, his gun still up. With his left hand he jerked the Colt from the holster at Blake's belt, and tossed it down into the foaming waters of the Squaw.

Blake's eyes blazed, but he made no movement.

"I guess you're safer without that, hombre!" drawled the Kid. "I ain't shot up no guy in the Packsaddle country since I horned in, and I sure do not want to begin! Git off'n that cayuse."

"You rustling my horse?" asked Blake between his teeth.

The Kid coloured.

"I ain't never rustled a hoss or a cow," he said, "no more than I stopped the hack from Prairie Bend and shot up the bank messenger, that all Packsaddle hones to lynch me for. Light down."

The rancher dismounted.

A gesture from the outlaw's revolver backed him up against the wall of rock at the side of the mountain path.

The Kid turned the horse on the trail, and gave it a smart slap. The bronco went clattering back down the rocky trail, with a jingle of loose stirrups, and disappeared from sight round a bend farther on.

Blake gritted his teeth. But he was helpless, and he could only submit, in silent rage.

"I guess that cayuse knows his way home, feller!" smiled the Kid. "You ain't losing your critter, but you got a long pasear afore you. I'll mention that I'm tired of guys rooting after me on this here mountain. I guess I'm going to make them guys tired. You get me?"

"Doggone you," muttered Blake. "I got business in Packsaddle—"

"I guess the poker sharps at the Red Flare can wait!" grinned the Kid. "I'll say I'm wise to your business in Packsaddle, Mister Blake. You got to chew on it that this baby is tired of bein' hunted on Squaw Mountain. I'll say the sheriff has had all he wants, since I sent him home tied with his frontspiece to his bronco's tail—and mebbe you'll have had all you want by the time you hit your ranch agin, hoofin' it with your fins tied! What you figure?"

He jerked off the rancher's neck-scarf.

"Turn round, and put your paws behind you!" he rapped.

Blake hesitated a moment. Then, with a face of fury, he obeyed. The Kid knotted the neck-scarf round his wrists, behind his back.

"Now I guess you can beat it!" he remarked. "I ain't spilling your juice, feller; I'm jest giving you a warning to ride clear of my trail. Your best guess is to put Squaw Mountain off'n your map while I'm around. Git!"

Jad Blake gave him one glare of concentrated fury, and then he tramped away down the mountain path, the way the bronco had gone. But he stopped, and looked back at the smiling Kid, with black and bitter malevolence in his face.

"You doggoned outlaw and firebug!" he hissed, his voice husky with rage. "I guess—"

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Bang!

The six-gun roared, and the bullet splintered the rock at the rancher's feet. He jumped clear of the ground.

"Beat it, you!" called out the Kid. "I guess I'm fanning you, hombre, till you get round the next bend! Jump for it!"

Bang, bang!

The bullets clipped the rancher's riding boots.

Blake, choking with rage, turned again and ran for it.

Bang, bang, bang!

The six-gun roared behind him, the bullets smashing on the rock close to his running feet.

The young rancher was an active man; but, with his arms tied at his back, he ran awkwardly, but he ran fast as the lead spattered round him on the rocky path. The Kid was only "fanning" him, but the bullets crashed terribly close, and Blake was anxious to get out of range. He ran hard till he rounded the next bend in the mountain trail and was sheltered from the fire.

Then—panting, stumbling, gritting his teeth with rage—he set off at a walk to cover the long, weary miles that lay between him and his ranch, leaving the outlaw Kid grinning on the mountain path.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Sticking to Smithy!

"W HITHER bound?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Squaw Mountain," answered Herbert Vernon-Smith briefly.

"Anything special?"

"Yes."

"Say, you young guys!" called out Bill, as the Bounder and the Famous Five mounted their broncos at the gateway; the foreman of Kicking Cayuse came hurrying towards them.

The Bounder glanced round at him.

"Shoot!" he said. Smithy had picked up the language of the country since he had been at Kicking Cayuse.

"Say, you watch out for that dog-goned grizzly if you're riding the prairie," said Bill anxiously. "That all-fired critter got away this morning—and I'll say he had a few ounces of lead in him. And I'm telling you a wounded grizzly is the grasshopper's whiskers, and then some!"

"O.K., Bill!" answered the Bounder carelessly.

And he rode out on the prairie trail, the Famous Five following him in a bunch. Harry Wharton & Co. were a little puzzled. All that morning the Bounder had been in a deeply thoughtful mood, but he had not confided to them the subject of his thoughts; and for what special reason he was going to ride to Squaw Mountain was rather a mystery to them.

Herbert Vernon-Smith rode on for some time in silence towards the great mountain that barred the blue sky in the west.

"Penny for 'em, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry at last.

The Bounder glanced round at his companions.

"You fellows had better go and punch cows with Bill this afternoon," he said abruptly. "I'd better leave you out of this."

"Out of what?" asked Harry Wharton. "If you're thinking of hunting for that grizzly, you're not going alone."

"Bother the grizzly! The brute's

back in its den on the mountain long ago. I'm not thinking of that, you ass!"

"Then what—"

"The Rio Kid," said Smithy.

All the Famous Five stared at him. They knew, as all Packsaddle knew, that the outlaw of the Rio Grande was somewhere on Squaw Mountain. But his hideout on the mountain was too deep for the sheriff and his men to get track of it, and it did not seem probable that they would have any better luck; neither, assuredly, had they any wish or intention to take a hand in the game against the boy outlaw who had saved Smithy's life in the mountain torrent.

"You're going after the Rio Kid!" exclaimed Bob blankly. "The sportsman who got you out of the Squaw on his lasso when you were going over the fall!"

"Not as an enemy, you fathead! We know that he's not the man who held up the hack and bagged the twenty thousand dollars from the bank if that old fool Lick doesn't!" snapped the Bounder. "We know who it was, and I think the Kid can help us."

"But—"

"It's his game, as well as ours," said Smithy. "That villain in the flour-bag called himself by the Kid's name to keep himself unsuspected, and all Packsaddle is wild to lynch the Kid for shooting-up the bank messenger. I fancy the Kid will be glad to hear that we know the man."

"Oh," said Bob, "I see! But how the dickens are you going to find him, Smithy? Old Lick's been after him like Bunter after a doughnut, but he hasn't spotted his hideout."

"I've been thinking that out," said the Bounder quietly. "You fellows haven't forgotten when I fell into the Squaw and the Kid turned up and got me out with his rope—"

"We're not likely to forget," said Harry Wharton. "You owe that chap your life, Smithy; and, outlaw or not, I hope they'll never get him."

"Well, how did he happen to turn up on that spot?" asked the Bounder.

"Blessed if I know! He happened to be there, I suppose—"

"Jolly lucky for me he did!" said Vernon-Smith. "Squaw Mountain covers a dozen square miles, but the chap happened to be just on that spot. I've been thinking that out, and it looks to me as if that hideout of his may be somewhere near that place—the fall on the Squaw River."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"By gum!" said Bob Cherry. "It's possible. Better not mention that outside the family; we don't want to give old Lick a clue to get the wrong man for that hold-up."

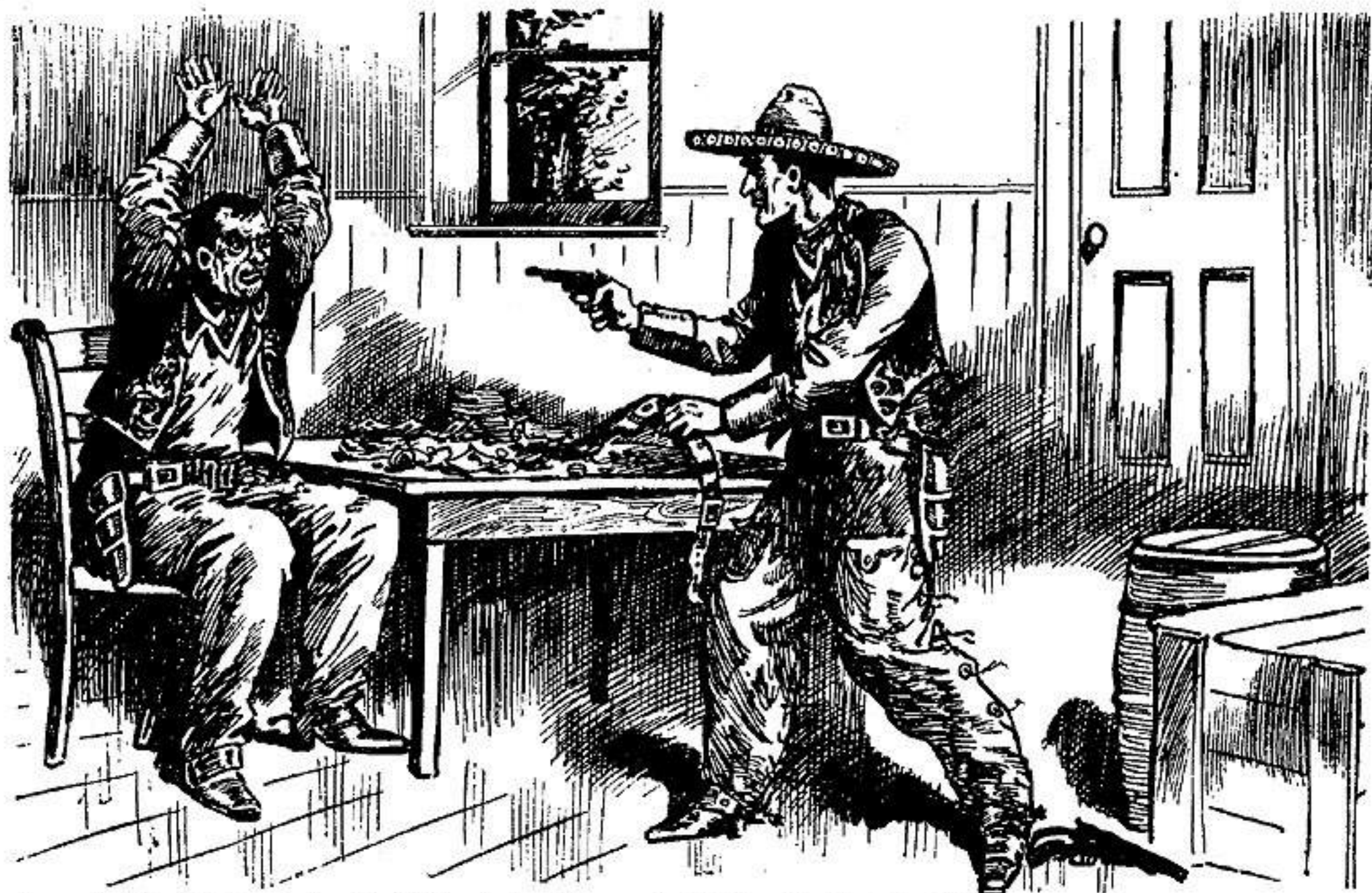
"Well, that's where I'm going to look for him," said Vernon-Smith. "It's a jolly good chance, I think. Anyhow, I'm trying it on."

"A hunted outlaw mayn't be keen on seeing visitors, Smithy," grinned Bob. "He seems a very good-tempered sort of chap, from what we've seen of him, but—"

"Rot!" said the Bounder.

"Look here, Smithy," said Johnny Bull, "you'd better keep clear of that chap! He saved your life, and he seems pretty decent; and he told us that he was made an outlaw by no fault of his own, and I believe him. But he is an outlaw, all the same, with a reward on him, and you can't disregard the law."

"Can't I?" said the Bounder, with a careless shrug of his shoulders.



A gun in his right hand, the Rio Kid sorted out the wads of bills with his left. His face grew grimmer as he counted. "Eighteen thousand dollars, Mister Blake," he said at last, "and there was twenty thousand cinched from the hack. I guess you been playing poker!"

"No!" grunted Johnny gruffly. "The law doesn't cut much ice here," said Vernon-Smith. "Old Lick's the law at Packsaddle; and he's hunting the wrong man for that hold-up, though we've pointed out the right man to him. Blow the law!"

Johnny Bull grunted and made no further remark; but all the Famous Five were looking serious as they rode on with Smithy.

They had seen the cheery, breezy Kid several times, and they liked him. He had saved Smithy from going to his death in the fall of the Squaw; but, as Johnny Bull pointed out, the Kid was an outlaw, hunted by all the law there was in the Rio valley. Seeking out the hunted man to hold communication with him was a serious matter—a very serious one. Certainly they hoped that the Kid would keep clear of his pursuers, and they would gladly have done him any good turn; but they could not help thinking that it was only sensible not to get in touch with him.

The Bounder smiled sarcastically. There was a lawless strain in Smithy's nature, and it had been a good deal in evidence since he had come out to Texas. The fact that his present proceeding was a reckless one only added to its appeal to Smithy.

The juniors rode on in silence for a time.

Then the Bounder spoke abruptly. "You fellows turn back here; I'm hitting Squaw Mountain alone."

"Oh rot!" said Harry Wharton uneasily. "If you're going to hunt for the Kid, we'll come."

"We'll stick to you, Smithy," said Bob.

"The stickfulness will be terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Smithy," declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Herbert Vernon-Smith pulled in his horse.

"Cut all that out!" he said. "I'm breaking the law, such as it is here, by getting in touch with the man the sheriff is after. You fellows are not going to do anything of the kind."

The Famous Five, at a halt, looked at one another rather uncertainly. They did not like the idea of the reckless Bounder riding into the mountain to get in touch with an outlaw whom the whole section was hunting, but it was useless to think of arguing with Smithy on that point; the Bounder's mind was made up, and argument would have been a waste of breath.

"After all, Smithy will never find him," said Bob Cherry. "Might as well look for a needle in a haystack."

Harry Wharton laughed. "That's so," he agreed. "Even if his hideout is anywhere near that waterfall, it will want some finding. It's all rot, Smithy!"

"Bosh!" said Johnny Bull. "Just one of your fatheaded stunts, Smithy; nothing in it!"

"Thanks!" said the Bounder sarcastically. "Now cut!"

Harry Wharton shook his head. "We're not going to cut, Smithy!" he said.

"The cutfulness will not be terrific, my esteemed and pig-headed Smithy!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Look here—" exclaimed the Bounder impatiently. "There may be trouble over this—"

"Quite likely, I should think!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Keep out of it, then!"

"Rats!"

"I tell you—"

"Come on!" said Bob.

He shook out his reins and started towards the mountain, and his friends followed him.

The Bounder frowned and rode after them. Nothing would have induced

him to give up his idea, and the Famous Five were determined that he should not go alone. So that settled it.

No doubt the Bounder, though he was ready and willing to ride a lone trail, was glad of the cheery company of the Famous Five, all the same.

Anyhow, his brow cleared as they rode onward, and it was a cheery bunch that struck the lower rocky slopes of Squaw Mountain and rode up the rugged rocky trail by the winding river.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Secret!

"HOT!" murmured Bob. "Beastly hot!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"Why didn't you bring a fan?" grunted the Bounder.

Bob Cherry winked cheerily at his friends, and they grinned. Herbert Vernon-Smith's temper, never very reliable, seemed to be suffering.

That, perhaps, was not surprising.

It was hot on Squaw Mountain—the rocks hot to the touch, from the blaze of the semi-tropical sun of Texas. And for hours—long, tiring hours—the juniors had been hunting, searching, questing, in vain.

They had ridden up the mountain trail, by the bank of the torrent, as far as the fall. There they dismounted, tethered their horses in a gully in the rocky wall by the path, and commenced the search.

Whether the sheriff and his men had combed that particular spot in the hunt for the outlaw, they did not know. But they knew that Mr. Lick had combed Squaw Mountain day after day without success. The Famous Five had no expectation of succeeding where the

sheriff had failed. Neither were they quite sure that they wanted Smithy to succeed in getting into touch with the Rio Kid. Much as they liked that youth personally, he was an outlaw. Like Ishmael of old, his hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him.

But as they had joined up with Smithy they did their best, backing up the Bounder in the search, and for long hours they scrambled over rugged rocks, peered into gullies, and crevices, and fissures, dragged aside tangled creepers and patches of bush that grew here and there, till even the Bounder began to lose hope.

It was a wild and lonely spot—quite the spot that a hunted man might have chosen for the location of his hideout. The Squaw, which spread into a river lower down on the plains, was here a brawling torrent, foaming down a deep rocky bed, and falling, at one spot, with a thundering crash of waters. All round, shutting in the horizon, were the rugged rocky hillsides, pile on pile—deserted, lifeless.

By the fall of the Squaw the trail descended steeply to the lower bank. Standing there, the juniors were splashed with spray from the foaming, thundering fall—a sheet of water against the rock of the river-bed. Splashes of spray were rather welcome on their heated faces. They were getting tired, and had stopped for a rest, gathering by the side of the waterfall. For a great distance, all round that wild spot, they had searched—and found nothing.

Here and there, it was true, they picked up sign of a horse, but the rocky trail by the Squaw was used by all who rode between Packsaddle and the

Circle O, and the ranches farther west, so such sign told them nothing.

But the trail was seldom ridden, and during all the time the search had lasted they had not seen a soul.

The Bounder would not admit that he was tired, and he would not give up hope. He scowled. It began to look as if the Kid's hideout was not at that spot, probable as it had seemed at first. Anyhow, if it were there, they could discover no trace of it.

The sun was sloping westward now, a rich red glow falling on the mountain and on the foaming waters of the Squaw. The spray from the falling water seemed to be turned to flashing jewels in the air.

"Nothing doing, Smithy!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, rats!" snapped the Bounder.

"Making a night of it here?" inquired Johnny sarcastically.

"I'm not giving in!" growled Vernon-Smith. "You fellows can get back to the ranch as soon as you like. I never asked you to come."

"Oh, we're sticking to you, old man!" said Bob. "You're so nice!"

And the Co. grinned again.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped the Bounder.

"Leave that to you, partner!" said Bob, still affable.

The Bounder was about to make an angry reply; but the words were checked on his lips as a sound reached his ears, and he started, and stared round eagerly.

It was a brushing sound, from a deep cavity in the rocky wall by the path. The Bounder's eyes flashed.

"Hear that?" he breathed.

"We've searched that place," said Bob, staring across the path at the open-

ing in the rock. "I've been over it—"

"You can hear something coming! If it's the Kid—"

The juniors waited and watched. They had already searched that gully in the rocky wall, and found nothing there but rocks and stones and a few stunted bushes. An active climber might have descended into it from the higher hillside at the back, and the sound they now heard seemed to indicate that some climber had done so. Then, as a huge, shambling, grey-furred figure lumbered out of the opening on to the mountain path, they knew.

"The grizzly!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Standing on the bank at the foot of the fall, the Greyfriars fellows were hardly ten feet from the awful figure that emerged from the rock wall on the other side of the path.

For a second they stared, spellbound.

They had quite forgotten the grizzly that had escaped at the ranch that morning. They had no doubt that the animal had crept back to its den on the mountain, and they had dismissed it from their minds.

The grizzly seemed as surprised by the sudden and unexpected encounter as the schoolboys. It stared at them with its red eyes, then, with a low but deep and horribly ferocious growl, it came at them.

"The rifles!" panted Harry Wharton.

The juniors dashed down the bank. The rifles had been left in their leather cases, on the horses, tethered a little distance below the fall. Only the Bounder was armed. Ever since he had been at Kicking Cayuse Smithy had "packed" a gun. He grabbed the revolver from his belt as he rushed after the Famous Five, and, turning, fired twice at the huge bear shambling in pursuit. A deep-toned growl answered the shots.

The grizzly came on with flaming eyes and open jaws. But though the wounds it had received that morning exasperated its savage temper, it was fortunate for the juniors that it was wounded. One of its hind legs dragged heavily and impeded its speed, or they would hardly have escaped from the clutches of the fearful claws.

In a panting bunch the juniors reached the tethered horses, and grasped their rifles. The grizzly, hungry and ferocious, was almost at their heels, and the Bounder emptied his revolver at point-blank range into the savage face. But that spatter of lead would not have stopped the huge brute.

But the Famous Five were quick with the rifles. Harry Wharton fired first, sending a bullet crashing into the hairy chest; and a moment later the Co. pulled trigger.

At short range, every bullet tore through and through the massive body, and the volley stopped the grizzly. It came to a halt, growling horribly, and the juniors scrambled hurriedly farther down the mountain path, firing again from a safer distance.

Bullet after bullet smashed into the grey fur, patched with crimson in a dozen places. But a grizzly bear is hard to kill.

The brute was hard hit, growling with pain and fury. But it was not disabled, though, to the relief of the juniors, it did not seek to come to closer quarters. Swinging round, the huge animal scrambled away up the path and halted again by the edge of the fall, splashed by the water that tumbled from above.

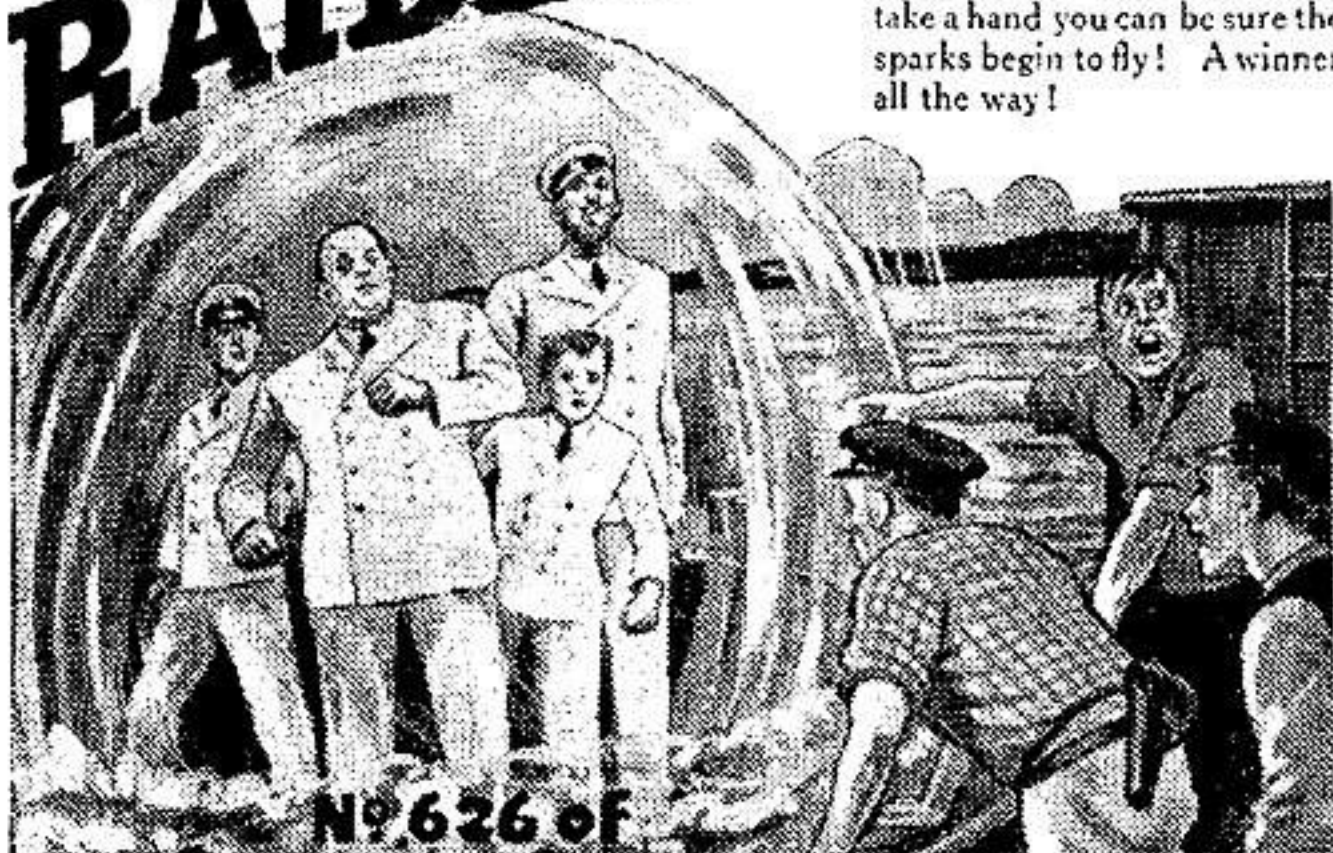
There it turned on them, snarling with blood-curdling ferocity, as they followed it up the bank.

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a rush, the juniors fired, and fired again, and every bullet struck. The savage brute glared round, as if seeking a way of escape, and then suddenly plunged over the bank and disappeared under the screen of falling water.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

The juniors, gathered on the bank by the fall, stared blankly. The grizzly had disappeared. For some seconds they were spellbound with astonishment. There was no sign of the huge animal to be seen in the waters of the Squaw. They knew that a bear, hard-driven, will take to the water and swim. But the grizzly was not swimming—it was not to be seen at all. It had vanished utterly after plunging under the screen of water that fell down a height of thirty feet, over apparently solid rock. It seemed to them for the moment like magic, and they could hardly believe their eyes when they failed to spot a sign of the grizzly in the water.

Then, to their further amazement, came the sharp, ringing report of a rifle. Bang!

"Are we dreaming this?" gasped Bob Cherry.

Really, it seemed like it for the moment, for, unless their ears deceived them, that rifle-shot came from under the falling water—from the solid rock at the back of the fall!

Bang!

It was a second shot—unmistakably from behind the screen of falling water. Then they realised what it meant—what it could only mean! The high rock over which the Squaw fell was not solid, there was, and must be, a cavern in it, hidden by the falling water—and it was into that cavern that the grizzly had escaped! And the sharp shots told that it had found an enemy there—that water-screened cavern was not unoccupied!

The Bounder was the first to guess.

"By gad!" he gasped. "We've found it!"

"What—"

"The Kid!"

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.

It dawned on them all at once. That was the Rio Kid's mysterious hideout, and it was no wonder that the Sheriff of Packsaddle had never spotted it. No one could have dreamed that it was there. But the firing from the other side of the screen of falling water told its own tale!

Harry Wharton & Co.—or, rather, the fleeing grizzly—had discovered the Rio Kid's hideout, and found him at home.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Cavern Under The Fall!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH shouted.

"Kid!"

There was no answer.

As there was no further firing it seemed that those two rapid shots had finished the grizzly. The Kid, if he were there, must have heard the Bounder's voice, he must have heard the rifle-shots—indeed, he must have heard the juniors scrambling over the rocks about the fall for a long time past. But he had given no sign, and he gave no sign now.

"Kid!" the Bounder shouted again. "We're friends—it's Vernon-Smith calling, the fellow whose life you saved!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "All friends here, Mr. Kid!"

Then a surprised voice was heard:

"Carry me home to die!"

They could see nothing of the Kid: he could see nothing of them. The falling water in front of the cave in the rock made an impenetrable screen. But they knew the Kid's voice, and knew, now,

that he understood who they were—guessing that, until that moment, he had taken them for searching enemies.

A figure appeared suddenly at the spot where the grizzly had plunged under the fall. A blanket was over its head to keep off the splashing water; goatskin chaps and riding boots with silver spurs showed under it. The blanket was thrown aside, revealing the handsome, sunburnt, surprised face of the boy outlaw. He shot a swift glance up and down the mountain path, and then grinned at the schoolboys.

"You 'uns!" he ejaculated.

"Us 'uns!" said Bob cheerily.

"We've been hunting you," said Vernon-Smith.

The Kid laughed.

"You ain't after that thousand bucks, like Mr. Blake, of the Circle O, I reckon!" he remarked.

"Not in your lifetime," said the Bounder. "Your secret's safe with us. Are you asking us in?"

"I sure don't want to stand here chewing the rag, feller," said the Kid. "But you'll get splashed if you horn into my shebang. I guess one blanket won't go round."

"That's all right—show the way!"

"You said it!" said the Kid cheerily. "Keep close to the rock; I guess the ledge ain't more'n a foot wide. If you step off I reckon you'll go a long way down the Squaw afore you pull out."

The Kid replaced the blanket over his head and stepped back the way he had come. He vanished behind the falling water, as the grizzly had vanished.

The Bounder followed him without hesitation.

For a moment he was blinded by spray. Then he was inside a cavern that hollowed the rock under the fall.

It was reached by a ledge hardly more than a foot wide and three or four feet long. On the left, was hard rock; on the right, the water below the fall—above and around, the falling torrent.

Heedless of heavy splashes, the Bounder reached the cavern, disappearing from the eyes of the Famous Five on the bank.

They followed him one at a time.

Through the falling water the sunlight gleamed. Overhead the high rock over which the Squaw fell overhung the ledge, which thus escaped the fall, though it was incessantly drenched with spray.

But it took only a moment or two to pass along the narrow ledge and turn into the cavern.

In a few minutes the Famous Five had followed the Bounder in, the Kid watching them, with an amused grin, as they joined up one by one.

Just within the cavern a gigantic form lay still. It was the grizzly, shot dead by the Kid as it scrambled in.

"By gum!" said Bob Cherry, staring round him. "Who'd have thought it!"

The cavern extended deep into the rock. The opening was quite light, from the sunlight through the falling water. Farther back it was deeply dark, and the juniors could not see the full extent.

The Kid's camp was just out of reach of the spray from the fall. They saw the embers of a fire and cooking utensils, a slicker roll and a bed of grass and ferns. Farther, they could see a grey mustang with a black muzzle—the well-known steed of the boy outlaw. A saddle and bridle hung on a projection of the rugged rocky wall.

"I guess you're O.K. here, Kid!" said the Bounder, laughing. "Sheriff Lick won't drop on this for a month of Sundays."

"I guess not!" agreed the Kid, with a cheery grin. "But I sure did figure that some guys was getting wise to it when I heard you 'uns scrambling

around on the bank. I'll say I been keeping a gun ready."

"We should never have spotted it but for the grizzly!" said Frank Nugent. "How the dickens did you ever find it out?"

"I guess I got the secret from an Injun that knows this country," answered the Kid. "I knowed it afore I hit Squaw Mountain, and only had to look for it. Say, you lend me a hand with Brer Bear—I guess he's heavy to move, and I sure do not want his company."

The dead bear lay almost on the edge of the cavern floor under the fall. The juniors lent their assistance, and the huge carcass was tipped over into the water, to be swept away by the Squaw.

"You allow you been looking for me?" asked the Kid, scanning the Greyfriars juniors curiously. "I'll mention that I ain't company for you 'uns—me being an outlaw with a thousand dollars to my cabeza. What's your game?"

"My idea," said the Bounder. He sat down on one of the boulders with which the cavern floor was strewn. "We'd nearly chucked it when the grizzly showed us your front door. I'm jolly glad to have found you."

"I'll say the same, sir!" said the Kid politely. But he was evidently puzzled.

"I've got news for you," said the Bounder quietly. "I believe you've seen Jad Blake—Poker Blake, they call him at Packsaddle—the owner of the Circle O Ranch."

"Sure!" assented the Kid. "I guess I met up with that guy this morning, and sent him walking home after his horse, with his fins tied behind his back—jest as a warning to ride clear."

"I don't think he would have walked off so easily if you'd known what I'm going to tell you!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Shoot!" said the Kid tersely.

"You know there's a trail-thief in this quarter who covers his face with a flour-bag and calls himself by your name!" said Vernon-Smith. "He held up the hack from Prairie Bend, shot the bank messenger, and nobbled twenty thousand dollars that my father had sent to pay for buying the Circle O."

"I'm sure wise to that!" said the Kid. "I reckon that's why I'm staying around, now the rangers have gone. I sure do want to meet up with the guy that's making so free with my name."

"It's Blake!"

The Kid's eyes narrowed.

"How'd you know?" he asked.

"Because his face was seen when he took off the flour-bag, the day he held up the hack," said Vernon-Smith. "He got away with twenty thousand dollars belonging to my father, and I am going to make him shell out every cent, somehow. We can't get any help from the sheriff—and I thought of you."

"Me!" said the Kid.

"You," said Vernon-Smith. "I want you to help."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Kid Takes A Hand!

THE Rio Kid stood silent, leaning on the rocky wall of the cavern, a thoughtful shade on his face, his eyes curiously on the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. sat down on the boulders, glad to rest their tired limbs, and were silent. It was a strange enough experience to the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove to find themselves in a hidden cave, in company with a hunted out-

law, on whose head a price had been placed.

Yet, looking at the Kid's handsome, boyish face, they found it hard to believe that he was what he was called. Only too willingly they believed what he had told them—that it was on a false charge that he had been driven into outlawry. And they believed nothing of the wild tales they had heard about him—of hold-ups, and ranch-raiding, and shootings. Many a wild deed had been placed to the Kid's account, of which he knew nothing—as the juniors had proof. For they knew that the man in the flour-bag, who had cunningly called himself by the Kid's name, was not the Kid.

All Packsaddle was wild to lynch the Rio Kid for that desperate hold-up on the trail from Prairie Bend. And of that, as the juniors knew, the Kid had never heard, till after it had happened.

At the same time, they were rather startled by Smithy's idea of getting help from a hunted outlaw. But it was Smithy's business, and they could only let him get on with it.

"I guess," said the Kid, breaking his silence at last, "that I've given that guy Blake the once-over, and I wouldn't put it past him. But—"

"We've got proof," said Vernon-Smith. "I tell you his face was seen."

"Who seen it?"

"Bunter. You remember, that fat ass in the specs that you found lost on the prairie, and gave a lift to the ranch?"

The Kid smiled.

"I sure do remember, that guy," he assented. "How come that galoot seen the bushwhacker in the flour-bag? I'll say he ain't the infant to horn into that sorta trouble."

"He was hidden in a spot of chaparral, a mile off the stage trail, when the hold-up man hunted cover there, to take off his disguise and hide it," explained Vernon-Smith. "He kept out of sight, you can bet, and the man never knew he was there. But he saw his face, and when he met Blake, he identified him as the man."

"Ain't you put the sheriff wise?" asked the Kid. "I guess that galoot Lick is some bonehead, but he sure would jump to get a cinch on that hold-up man."

"Lick's a fool!" grunted the Bounder.

The Kid laughed.

"Mebbe," he said. "But—"

"We've put him wise. We got Blake to his office in Packsaddle, and Bunter pointed him out to the sheriff as the flour-bag man," said Vernon-Smith. "But—he gave an angry grunt—old Lick didn't stand for it. Bunter's a fool—the biggest fool ever—and Lick fancies that he made a mistake."

"I'll say he's the guy to do it, from what I've seen of him," remarked the Kid.

"Yes, yes, I know; but he wasn't mistaken. It was Blake that he saw," said the Bounder impatiently. "I'd fixed it up that day to meet Blake in the lawyer's office at Packsaddle, and hand over the money for his ranch. He was selling the Circle O to my father, and he knew the money was coming by Andy Jones' hack. He laid for the hack, with the flour-bag over his face, shot up Carter, the man who was bringing the dollars from Prairie Bend, and got away with them. The sheriff won't believe a word of it; but

we're all sure that Bunter made no mistake."

The Kid glanced round at the Co.

"That is so," said Harry Wharton. "We've got no doubt at all about it. The man was Jad Blake."

"If the sheriff would have had him searched in his office the dollars would have proved it," went on Vernon-Smith. "Everybody knows that Blake is on the rocks. He's selling what's left of his ranch for that reason. They'd have found a stack of dollars on him, and I guess he couldn't have accounted for them. My father's dollars," added the Bounder savagely.

"That sure is tough," said the Kid slowly. "I'll say it's tough. But you got nothing on Poker Blake, 'cept what that fat gink saw, or fancied that he saw?"

The Bounder knitted his brows, but the Famous Five smiled a little. They could see that the Rio Kid, like the sheriff of Packsaddle, was not disposed to attach a great deal of weight to evidence supplied by Billy Bunter.

Sheriff Lick had pooh-poohed the whole story. He had snorted with contempt at Bunter's evidence. The Kid did not go so far as that, but it was clear that he had doubts.

"I tell you it's certain," said Vernon-Smith.

"Waal," said the Kid, "I reckon that guy Blake is jest the guy that might have played that game. I'll say he's a tough guy, and he sure is hard fixed for money. And if that fat geck figures that it was Blake's face he saw, when the flour-bag guy took the bag off, it looks like it. But I guess old Lick is a bonehead; but I ain't blaming him a lot for not banking on what that fat geck spilled—nope!"

Vernon-Smith bit his lip.

He was assured—and the Famous Five were assured—that Bunter, duffer as he was, and scared as he had been at the time, had made no mistake. The trail-thief in the flour-bag was Jad Blake of the Circle O. But the Kid, though he thought it likely, did not look on it as a certainty.

"You don't believe it, then?" grunted Vernon-Smith.

"Not far enough to bank on it, feller," said the Kid. "But, s'posing I did, how you reckon I'd help you?"

"I'm going to get the dollars off Jad Blake. I know he's got my father's dollars, and he's not keeping them!" said Vernon-Smith, setting his teeth. "I've tried the law—all there is in this benighted country. That's let me down. I'm going to make Jad Blake shell out, if I have to hold him up at the end of a gun!"

"Carry me home to Jane!" gasped the Kid.

"Smithy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"My esteemed Smithy—"

"Oh, cut it out, you fellows!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "We're in a country where gun law is the law, and if that's the only law to see me through, I'm going for my gun. Jad Blake's not going to throw my father's dollars on the poker-tables at the Red Flare, I know that!"

The Famous Five were silent. There was justice in what Smithy said, but "gun law" was not quite in accordance with Greyfriars ideas. Smithy seemed to have forgotten, by this time, that he ever had been a Greyfriars fellow.

The Rio Kid eyed the Bounder very curiously. He was silent for a long moment, and then he spoke, very quietly.

"You want to forget that, feller.

Mebbe it ain't for an outlaw to talk law to you, but I'm saying, forget it!"

Smithy gave an angry grunt.

"If you won't help, you won't!" he said. "I've wasted my time." He rose from the boulder.

"You don't want to go off on your ear, feller," said the Kid. "I ain't said that I won't help. And, if that's your game, I'll say that it's better in my hands than yours. You figure that Jad Blake has got a stack of dollars on him that he cinched from Andy Jones' hack?"

"Not the same bills. He had a trip up the railroad, and I guess it was to change the bills where he wasn't known. But he's got the money."

"If that guy, who's known to be broke to the wide, has got thousands of dollars on him, that's a cinch," said the Kid. "They ain't his'n, and that's sure. I'm advising you, Mr. Vernon-Smith, to leave that gun of yours jest where it is, and leave this to me."

"If you'll take a hand—" said the Bounder eagerly.

"You said it," smiled the Kid. "You 'uns mosey back to your ranch, and leave it to this baby. I sure will see it through!"

"But how—"

"Feller," said the Kid, "the less you get mixed up with a guy of my heft, the better for you. I'm telling you that you can leave it in my hands. Ain't that good enough for you?"

"Yes," said Smithy, "but—"

"I guess I'll be seeing you again," said the Kid. "You don't want to horn into this shebang no more—you ride clear of this spot, feller. I'll mention that I don't want no guys to get a squint at this hideout, and mebbe an eye might drop on you. You want to see me, you ride down to the big timber island on the Packsaddle trail at sundown to-morrow. I guess I'll have noos for you."

"Done!" said the Bounder.

Little more was said.

The Kid slipped out of the cavern under the fall, to scout and ascertain that the mountain path was clear before the juniors left. Then, one by one, they trod along the ledge to the bank, and quitted the outlaw's cave.

The Kid disappeared again before they were in the saddle.

The Greyfriars fellows rode home to Kicking Cayuse Ranch in a thoughtful mood. The Famous Five, much as they liked the Kid and wished him well, could not help having doubts as to the wisdom of calling in the aid of a hunted outlaw. But the Bounder, at least, was quite satisfied, and looking forward keenly to a "show-down" with the rancher of the Circle O.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Rubbing It In!

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

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob Cherry cheerily, as he tramped into the veranda at the rancho.

"Got over it?" asked Bunter.

"Over what?"

"Fright."

The Famous Five looked at Bunter.

Bunter evidently had got over his fright of the morning. He was sprawling in his rocker in the veranda when the juniors came in, his fat thoughts equally and happily divided between

his last meal, dinner, and his next meal, supper, which was almost due.

He grinned a fat grin at the surprised juniors.

"What do you mean, you fat ass, if you mean anything?" inquired Johnny Bull.

Bunter chuckled.

"You needn't have cleared off like that," he said. "That bear was gone. It never came back. If that's why you've stayed out all this while, you needn't have been afraid."

"You howling ass——"

"I say, you fellows, you looked a funky lot, scooting away from that bear this morning," went on Bunter cheerfully. "If I'd known it was a bear, and had had a rifle handy, I'd have shot it. I'd rather like to take a bear-skin home to stick in the study at Greyfriars. I mean, I did know it was a bear——"

"What?"

"I spotted it at once; but I wasn't funky, like you fellows!" explained Bunter. "I didn't think it was a man in a grey overcoat when I first saw it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" said Bunter scornfully. "But you jolly well bolted from that bear, and I jolly well didn't! Falling over one another to cram in at that door. He, he, he!"

"You blithering, blethering bloated bloater!" said Bob. "What could we do, when we were unarmed——"

"Well, I didn't," said Bunter, "did I?"

The Greyfriars fellows looked at William George Bunter rather as if they could have bitten him.

They had almost forgotten the episode of the morning in the garden. Billy Bunter evidently hadn't.

It was certainly true that Bunter had remained out on the open veranda while the other fellows scrambled in at the doorway. That was because he had not known that the grizzly was there.

But Bunter, having thought it over, apparently preferred to take the view that it was because of his superior pluck and presence of mind.

This was a chance for Bunter to be, so to speak, Bunterish; and Bunter was not the fellow to let such chances like the sunbeams pass him by. Bunter, having been in happy ignorance of that grizzly's existence, had not joined in the run for cover: he had, indeed, resisted the effort of the juniors to drag him to safety. They had bundled in headlong, leaving Bunter out, with the grizzly in close and terrible proximity. Bunter hadn't turned a hair!

If that didn't prove that Billy Bunter, the fat ornament of the Greyfriars Remove, was the pluckiest member of the party at Kicking Cayuse, Billy Bunter would have liked to know what did, or would, or could.

Bunter was going to rub this in.

"You fat, frowsy, foozling frump!" hissed Johnny Bull. "If you'd known the grizzly was there you'd have been howling with funk——"

"And scuttling like a rabbit!" said Frank Nugent.

"The scuttlefulness would have been terrific!"

"Well, did I?" demanded Bunter. "You fellows did—bolting like rabbits! Did I?"

"Oh, boot him!" grunted Vernon-Smith.

"You fellows have called me funky more than once," said Bunter, in a tone of lofty scorn. "You needn't deny it—you have. You made out that I was frightened of that man in the flour-bag——"

"So you were!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Frightened out of your silly wits, you fat funk!"

"Well, I jolly well spotted him and told Sheriff Lick, who he was, and chance it!" sneered Bunter.

"And nearly fainted at the sight of him when he turned up in the sheriff's office at Packsaddle!" hooted Nugent.

"Well, I wasn't frightened of that grizzly bear, anyhow!" retorted Bunter. "I just stayed here as cool as a cucumber—I mean, as cool as a cucumber—that is, a cucumber—while you fellows were falling over one another to scoot. I must say I felt ashamed of you."

"Why, you—you—you——" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Not Greyfriars style!" said Bunter firmly. "Bit of a disgrace to the old school, you know. I feel bound to mention it. What would the fellows have thought if they'd seen you? What would Toddy say, or Mauly, or Ogilvy—or any of them? I mean to say, you had my example to follow——"

"Your example!" stuttered Bob.

"Yes, my example. Here was I, cool as you please, never turning a hair, setting you an example of pluck and presence of mind. And you bolted like a lot of rabbits! Some of you grabbed me and tried to make me run, too. Bunters don't run from danger," said the Owl of the Remove, with ineffable scorn. "All very well for you fellows—not my style!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith made a step towards the ineffable Owl.

Bunter was Smithy's guest at the ranch that belonged to Smithy's father; but that circumstance had not saved him from several bootings from the Bounder, and it looked as if the Bounder's boot was going to see active service again.

But Bob Cherry caught the angry Bounder by the arm.

"Hold on, Smithy!" he said.

"Let go, you fathead!" roared Smithy. "I'm going to boot him all over the ranch! Think I'm going to have that fat funky frog calling me a funk?"

"So you are a funk!" hooted Bunter. "The only fellow here who ain't a funk is me! Did I run when you all ran? Yah!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "I'm disgusted with the lot of you! Contemptuous! Yah!"

"Come on, Smithy!" said Bob cheerfully. "I want to speak to you in the office, old bean."

"Wait till I've kicked Bunter, fathead!"

"Never mind Bunter! Come on, you fellows!" called out Bob, and he propelled Vernon-Smith along the veranda to the doorway of the foreman's office.

The other fellows followed, leaving Billy Bunter sitting in the rocker, with a fat and scornful grin on his face.

"What's the game?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Come and listen to your Uncle Robert," answered Bob. "It's a jape, old beans—a jape!"

He pushed the angry Bounder in at the door of the office, which opened from the veranda. The rest of the Co., in surprise, followed him in.

A squeak from Billy Bunter followed them.

"I say, you fellows, no need to hide! There ain't any bears about! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter was enjoying this.

Bob Cherry closed the office door when the juniors were inside. There was a cheery grin on Bob's face, and a happy glimmer in his blue eyes. The rest of

the Co. regarded him inquiringly—the Bounder with a scowl.

"What are you up to, you fathead?" he demanded.

"Look!" answered Bob.

He pointed to the big bearskin on the floor of the office.

The juniors looked at it.

"What about that?" snapped the Bounder. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"Suppose that grizzly came back and tackled Bunter?" suggested Bob. "Think he would still be bursting with pluck?"

"The grizzly! What the dickens do you mean?" snapped Smithy.

"Think Bunter would look at it very closely to see whether it was the same grizzly?" grinned Bob. "That skin looks much the same."

"Oh!" Smithy grinned, as he caught on to the idea. "One of us——"

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

The Bounder, grinning, picked up the big bearskin from the office door. It had once clothed a grizzly bear that might have been twin to the one that had prowled at the ranch that morning, and that the Rio Kid had shot on Squaw Mountain.

That the grizzly bear had been shot, Bunter was not aware—all he knew was, that it had been driven away from the ranch, and was gone.

Certainly, the same grizzly was, in the circumstances, very unlikely indeed to return to Kicking Cayuse. But it was quite as unlikely that Billy Bunter would stay for a close view of a grizzly if he saw one.

It was probable that the pluck which now filled William George Bunter almost to bursting-point, would disappear with startling suddenness at the first glimpse of a grizzly! And it was certain that Bunter himself would disappear with the same suddenness.

The juniors chuckled.

"Lend me a hand with it!" said Bob Cherry, and the grinning juniors draped him in the huge bearskin, and adjusted the head, which was stuffed, over his head. "How's that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Right as rain!"

"Topping!"

Bob, on a close inspection, looked like what he was—a schoolboy draped in the skin of a grizzly bear! But there was no close inspection to be expected, in the circumstances.

"Now you fellows go out, and get Bunter looking the other way!" said Bob. "I'll crawl along behind him——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And when he hears me growl, he will have a chance to show exactly how fearfully plucky he is!"

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

They returned to the veranda, leaving the door of the foreman's office open for the "grizzly" to crawl out.

Bunter was still grinning—but he no longer had the grins to himself—the other fellows were grinning, too.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter and the Bear!

HE, he he!" cackled Bunter. The fat Owl of the Remove was feeling quite merry and bright.

Bunter was going to rub this in! He was by no means tired of that process, yet! He was going to make the very most of it!

"I say, you fellows, why did you scuttle in just now?" he asked. "Think

there was another bear coming? He, he, he!"

"Fathead!"

"Where's Cherry?" asked Bunter. "Hiding?"

"You blithering ass——"

"Oh, go it!" said Bunter scornfully. "Call a fellow names! If you knew what a funky lot you looked this morning—he, he, he!"

The juniors stood in a group at the head of the veranda steps. This placed Bunter between them and the foreman's office along the veranda.

Bunter kept his eyes and his spectacles on them. The back of his fat head was, in consequence, turned towards the door of the foreman's office.

Having no eyes in the back of that fat head, Bunter did not see a fearsome form that crept out of the office.

The juniors, looking past Bunter, could see it: the fat Owl remained happily unaware of it.

Bunter rattled on brightly.

"I wish I'd had a camera! I'd have liked to take you this morning—falling over one another to get away from that bear! He, he, he!"

"You wouldn't have cut?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Well, did I?" asked Bunter. "My dear chap, I'm not frightened of bears! I've got nerve, you know!"

"Suppose it came back?" suggested Nugent.

"He, he, he! You can't pull my leg, Nugent! If it comes back, you fellows get behind me—I'll protect you."

"Well, that looks to me jolly like a grizzly bear behind you now, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

Bunter chortled! His fat leg was not to be pulled so easily as all that! He did not trouble to turn his head.

Had he done so, he could certainly have seen something "jolly like" a grizzly bear!

Bob, in the bearskin, was drawing near, crawling behind Bunter's rocker on all fours.

"I'd be jolly glad if that grizzly turned up again!" went on the fat Owl.

"I'd jolly well show you fellows how—Wha-a-at's that?"

It was a deep growl.

Billy Bunter broke off quite suddenly. Growl!

The fat junior's head almost spun round at that dreadful sound behind him.

He gave a gasping gurgle.

Within six or seven feet of him, crawling along the veranda was a fearful-looking grizzly bear.

Bunter's eyes nearly popped through his spectacles.

"Ooooh!" he gasped.

Billy Bunter had a lot of weight to lift. But he lifted it at that moment as if it had been a featherweight! He bounded!

The swiftness with which Bunter bounded out of that rocker, and leaped for the doorway of the living-room was really amazing.

But the fat junior was not to escape so easily. Johnny Bull grabbed a fat arm, and stopped him in transit.

"Hold on, Bunter—save us!" he howled.

"Save us, Bunter!" yelled Nugent.

"Rescue, Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "It's the bib-bub-bear! Leggo, you beast! Run! Run for your lives! Leggo! Yaroooh!"

Growl!

"Save us, Bunter!"

"Let's get behind you, Bunter!"

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"Back up, Bunter!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Help! Oh crikey! Yoo-hooop!" In sheer desperation Billy Bunter hit out with a fat fist, catching Johnny Bull on the nose.

"Oh!" gasped Johnny, and he let go, staggering back, clapping a hand to his nose. "Why, you potty porpoise——"

Bunter did not stay to listen.

He shot through the open doorway, into the living-room, and shot across that room, to the hallway beyond.

Hurried footsteps were heard, scuttling up the stairs! Bunter was bolting for cover, and he was losing no time about it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of merriment on the veranda! The grizzly bear was joining in it, laughing as loudly as the rest.

"Say, you young guys!" Chick, the choreman, looked out of the doorway. "What—oh, search me!"

Chick's eyes almost popped out of their sockets at the sight of Bob in the bearskin.

As Bob's laughing face showed under the bear's jaws, Chick was not alarmed.

"Say, you stringing that fat guy along?" gasped Chick. "I'll say he's just levanted, like he was sent for."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going after him!" grinned Bob. "Bunter isn't through with this grizzly yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob walked into the living-room, the juniors following him, howling with laughter. He did not look much like a grizzly bear, as he walked, with the skin hanging round him. But, reaching the stairs, he crawled again—and looked very life-like to a fat, terrified Owl who was casting a backward blink over the banisters.

"Ooooh!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter gave only that one backward blink! One blink was enough for Bunter—more than enough!

He bolted across the landing into his room, grabbed the door to slam it, and grabbed at the key.

Growl!

"Oh crikey! Ooooh!"

Slam!

Click!

Billy Bunter reeled across his room, and plumped down on the edge of the bed, gasping for breath. Perspiration ran in streams down his fat face. He gasped, and gasped, and gasped.

There was a locked door now between him and that awful grizzly. But he did not feel safe! He heard a sound of scratching and growling outside the locked door!

If that bear got in——

"Help!" yelled Bunter, frantically. "Help! I say, you fellows, get your guns—call Bill—call everybody—shoot that bear—help!"

There was a deep, deep growl outside the door—the deepest that Bob Cherry could produce. Then, to his immense relief, Bunter heard the fearful brute shambling away from the door.

But he did not hear it descend the stairs. Apparently, it was staying on the landing.

Bunter listened with palpitating heart. He expected to hear excited voices, shouts of alarm, and the roar of rifles. But he heard nothing of the kind. The only sound that reached his ears from the distance, through the locked door, was a ripple of laughter. It sounded, at least, like laughter—though what anybody saw to laugh at, in these dreadful and terrifying circumstances, Bunter did not know.

"I say, you fellows!" he yelled.

"Help! I say— Oh crikey! Why don't you shoot that bear? I say! Help!"

But answer there came none! The bear, while Bunter yelled and howled, was engaged in the extraordinary task of skinning itself!

Having taken off the heavy, furry skin, Bob Cherry pulled a stool from the wall, set it in the middle of the landing, and dropped the bearskin over it, with the head towards Bunter's door.

It was getting very dusky on the landing, and the bearskin draped on the stool looked, in the dusk, remarkably like a bear—and the stuffed head, with its glass eyes, was really terrifying to look at.

Leaving it there, Bob Cherry tiptoed down the stairs.

He joined his chums in the hallway, and they went chuckling into the living-room, where Chick was bringing in supper. From above came a series of wild and frantic howls.

"I say, you fellows! Help! I say, that bear's just outside my door! I say, will you come and help me, you beasts?"

There was no answer for Bunter. He listened in vain for voices or rifle-shots. He wondered whether the invading grizzly had frightened everybody out of the house. Really, it seemed like it.

Or had it gone? It was some time since Bunter had heard it growling! He dared not open the door to ascertain—but he stooped, and applied his eye to the keyhole.

It was dusky outside—but a slanting ray of the red sunset came in at the window over the stairs and fell across the landing—and shone on two bright watching eyes! It gleamed all the more brightly on those eyes, because they were made of glass, but Bunter, unfortunately, was unaware of that circumstance!

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

He could see the bear's gleaming eyes! He made out its terrible jaws! Dimly he discerned the huge furry body! He jumped back from the keyhole—really as if he feared that the grizzly might get through it!

The bear was there—watching! It was past supper-time—but a dozen suppers would not have tempted Billy Bunter to unlock his door. He was hungry—but he had no doubt that the bear was, also; and he did not want—very much indeed he did not want—to furnish a supper for that bear!

Bunter was a prisoner till the bear went away of its own accord—and considering the exact nature of that bear, it was not likely to go away of its own accord!

Downstairs, in the living-room, the Greyfriars fellows had supper. Bunter was missing it—a thing he seldom did! Still, Bunter had stated that he was not, like the other fellows, afraid of bears! If he wasn't afraid of bears, all he had to do was to come down to supper, if he wanted any!

But he did not come down!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Not Dangerous!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
A shutter had flown open. At the window appeared a fat face and a big pair of spectacles, reflecting the last gleam of the setting sun! After supper, the Famous Five were taking a stroll out of the rancho; but they came to a cheery and smiling halt as Bunter



"Hands up, Kid!" said Sheriff Lick, levelling his gun at the stetson that showed over the thick low bush. "I got you covered, Kid! Hands up, or by thunder you get yours!" Next moment a figure appeared from behind a near-by tree. It was the Kid! The sheriff did not stir for a moment, so utterly astonished was he. But the fact that the Kid's head was bare put him wise!

hailed them from the window. They looked up with smiling faces.

Bunter blinked at them, amazed. He had got the shutters open in the hope of getting help from outside, as there seemed none available inside the rancho. It astonished him to see the juniors strolling cheerfully in the pleasant and balmy evening, as if nothing whatever was the matter.

"Anything up, Bunter?" called out Bob.

"That bear——" roared Bunter.

"What bear?"

"You silly idiots!" yelled Bunter. "It chased me up to my room, and it's sticking on the landing now, watching my door!"

"Well, you're not afraid of bears!" said Bob cheerily. "Go out and tackle it!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I've had a fearfully narrow escape already! It snapped at me, and might have had my leg off——"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob. "Did it?"

"Yes!" gasped Bunter. "Its fearful jaws snapped just behind me when I shut my door on it! I hardly escaped!"

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

"What are you cackling at?" shrieked Bunter. "I tell you, its jaws barely missed my leg! Don't you believe me, you beasts?"

The Famous Five were not likely to believe that Bob Cherry's jaws had barely missed Bunter's fat leg! They yelled.

"It's there still!" howled Bunter. "I tell you it's on the landing—watching my door! I tell you it's there still!"

"Well, so long as it keeps still, you're all right!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you beasts! Will you get your

rifles and shoot it? If you're afraid of it, call Bill! He ain't afraid of bears!"

"If you'd had a rifle this morning, old fat man, you'd have shot that bear to take the skin back to Greyfriars. You said so. Well, look here, let down a string and pull up a rifle, and go out and tackle that bear."

"Beast!"

That offer did not seem of any use to Bunter. He seemed to have quite forgotten his desire to bag a bearskin for the study at Greyfriars.

"Will you come in and shoot that bear?" he roared.

"No fear! We're afraid of bears, you know, and you're not!" grinned Johnny Bull. "You can handle that bear, old fat bean!"

"Help!" yelled Bunter. "I say! Help! Bill! Bill Buck! I say, help! Bears! Help! Help!"

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

Bunter's frantic yells echoed far and wide; and there was no doubt that he would soon be getting attention. The idea of getting help to deal with a bearskin draped over a stool, made the chums of the Remove shriek.

"Help!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I can hear it growling—it's growling horribly——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help, help, help!" roared Bunter.

Bill Buck, who was smoking a pipe on a bench outside the bunkhouse, detached himself from the bench and came towards the rancho.

"What's this here rookus?" he asked. "That fat geck gone loco?"

"I say, help!" yelled Bunter, greatly relieved by Bill's arrival. "I say, there's a bear on the landing——"

Bill jumped.

"B'ar!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, that grizzly!" howled Bunter,

"It's been watching my door for hours and hours and hours——"

Bill stared up at the terrified face at the window. Then he looked round at the laughing faces of the Famous Five.

"What's got the fat geck?" he asked.

"There ain't no b'ar around! I guess Chick wouldn't be washing dishes in his kitchen if there was a b'ar in the rancho! I'll tell a man, that gink is plumb loco!"

"Bring your rifle!" yelled Bunter. "I say, help! It—it's growling, and—and scratching at the door——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was highly improbable that the bearskin was either growling or scratching at Bunter's door. But the Owl's terrified imagination was at work. Every sound he heard came from that bear!

"There ain't no b'ar, you locoed gink!" hooted Bill.

"There is!" yelled back Bunter. "I tell you it's on the landing—it nearly bit me! It's watching my door! I saw it through the keyhole——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you come up?" howled Bunter.

"I guess I'll come!" grunted Bill.

"But I'll sure eat all the b'ars I see in that rancho."

Bill tramped away to the door and went into the rancho, leaving the Famous Five chortling.

Bunter gave them a glare, and disappeared from the window.

With his eyes and spectacles fixed on the door outside which the bear was watching, Bunter listened for the sounds of fearful conflict—the roar of Bill's six-gun, and the fierce growling of the bear! But he heard no such sounds. He heard the heavy tramp of Bill's boots

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(Continued from page 13.)

on the stairs, and then on the landing, and then, to his surprise, he heard a roar of laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Bill did not seem alarmed by the bear. He seemed amused.

Bunter could hardly believe his fat ears!

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bill.

"I—I—I say, is—isn't it there?" squeaked Bunter.

"I'll tell a man!" gasped Bill.

"Haw, haw, haw! You can open that door, you locoed gink! This here bear won't hurt you. Haw, haw, haw!"

Even Bunter realised that with a dangerous grizzly on hand the foreman of Kicking Cayuse would not be roaring with laughter. He unlocked the door, opened it a few inches, and blinked out.

"Is it gone?" he gasped. "Is it—Oh crikey! There it is! Help!"

There was the bear, just as Bunter had seen it through the keyhole. By its side stood Bill, with tears of merriment running down his bronzed cheeks. Why that grizzly did not turn on Bill and rend him Bunter did not know. But Bunter was not taking chances himself. He grabbed the door, to slam it again.

But he stopped as Bill, gurgling, picked up the bearskin from the stool and slung it over his arm.

Bunter did not slam the door. He stood transfixed.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bill.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Now it was over Bill's brawny arm, Bunter could see that it was a bearskin—not occupied by its former tenant. He could see the stool over which it had been draped. He realised that it was a bearskin, and not a bear—and the truth, at last, dawned on his fat mind.

"Beasts!" he gasped.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bill, and he tramped down the stairs with the bearskin to take it back to the foreman's office, where it belonged.

Billy Bunter, red with wrath, rolled across to the window again. He shook a fat fist at five grinning faces below.

"You rotters!" he gasped. "Playing a trick like that on a fellow!"

"You said you weren't afraid of bears!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has Bill killed that bear?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Rotters! Beasts!" roared Bunter. "Pulling a fellow's leg! Yah! Cads! Swabs! I've missed my supper and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave the yelling juniors a glare that almost cracked his spectacles, and rolled away in search of a late supper, after which, nothing more was heard from Bunter about bears. He seemed to have grown tired of the subject.

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Kid At The Circle O!

"DIEGO!"

Jad Blake shouted the name in angry tones. It was the third time that he had called, and the Mexican choreman at Circle O had neither answered nor come to his call.

Blake was in the living-room at his ranch.

Darkness lay on the Texan prairies. The last glimmer of the sun was gone.

The rancher's rather handsome face was clouded. Blake had been in a savage temper all that day. His encounter with the Rio Kid on Squaw Mountain had "got his goat" sorely. Considering that the Kid was an outlaw, and reputed, at least, to be a firebug and a hold-up man, Blake had escaped cheaply, for "broke to the wide" as he was supposed to be, he carried a very large sum in bills hidden in his belt. He was glad, at least, that he had escaped with that large sum intact.

He might have been glad, too, that the Kid had dealt with him playfully, instead of "shooting him up," for he had hunted the Kid, and hunted him hard, in the hope of handling the reward that was offered for the outlaw of the Rio Grande. But he had had a far from pleasant time getting back to his ranch, with his hands tied behind his back, stumbling weary miles in a hot sun and sinking with fatigue by the time he finished "hoofing" it over rugged trails.

The Kid had given him that playful lesson to warn him off—perhaps not without effect, though Jad would have given much to pull a gun on the outlaw who had defeated and humiliated him.

The trip he had planned to Pack-saddle had been washed out, owing to that meeting with the Kid. The hours he had intended to spend at the poker table at the Red Flare had been spent in aching fatigue, after he had "hoofed" it home from Squaw Mountain.

But he was going to ride over in the evening and tempt fortune once more with the supply of cash the man in the flour-bag had obtained. Wild and reckless as the young rancher was, descending to trail robbery to repair his shattered fortunes, he had not ventured to dispose locally of any of the bills he had lifted from Andy Jones' hack on the day of the hold-up. He had spent a couple of days away from the section, getting rid of his plunder at a town far up the railroad. What he had now could never be traced to the bank at Prairie Bend.

Some of it had already gone—the way all Jad's money went—but he still had the sum of eighteen thousand dollars, and long and bitter experience had not taught him that he never would retrieve his bad fortune at the poker table or the faro layout.

But for the Kid's intervention that day, probably some thousands more of the dollars would have gone, for Jad was not only a desperate gambler, but an extremely unlucky one.

That, however, was going to be set right in the evening. He was going to ride over to the cow town, now that he had recovered from his painful experience earlier in the day, and he called to Diego to bring his horse.

The Mexican peon was the only man left on Circle O. Cows had been sold off long ago, the outfit "fired." Not a cowman remained. Outlying ranges had been sold, and the home ranges—what was left of the ranch—let to Kicking Cayuse for grazing. And that

remnant was up for sale, and would have been bought by Vernon-Smith, on his father's account, to add to Kicking Cayuse, had not the man in the flour-bag intercepted the money on its way to the lawyer's office at Packsaddle.

Since Vernon-Smith, on Bunter's evidence, had accused Blake of being the trail-thief, that "deal" was off.

Blake was not sure now that he wanted to sell his ranch! With so much cash in hand, he fancied that he might win back the sums he had lost at the Red Flare, stock his ranch once more, and be again a prosperous rancher. That delusive hope was not likely to be realised. A spot of common sense might have told him that his plunder would follow his own money on the gaming-tables. But he did not, or would not, think of that!

He threw away a half-smoked cigar and rose to his feet. Three times he had called Diego, and the peon had not come. He concluded that the choreman must have left the house.

He stepped towards the door—and it opened before he reached it.

"Diego, you big stiff!" he snapped. "Get my critter—"

He broke off.

It was not the swarthy, frowsy Mexican choreman who appeared from the doorway. It was a handsome figure in stetson, and goatskin chaps, and silver spurs. And as he stepped in the Rio Kid whipped up a six-gun and smiled over it.

"Put 'em up, hombre!" murmured the Kid.

Blake stood as if transfixed.

"You!" he stuttered.

"Sure thing!" smiled the Kid. "You needn't worry to squeal for Diego. I guess I seen to that greaser! He sure is tied up with his own neckscarf, and I'll say that he never raised no sort of objection when he saw my gun! You puttin' 'em up?"

With a deep breath of rage, Blake raised his hands above his head. He had to obey, desperately infuriated as he was, with the Kid's gun at a level and the Kid's clear blue eyes gleaming over the barrel.

With his left hand the Kid threw the door shut. Then he stepped to Blake, and, keeping him covered, jerked away his Colt, dropped it to the floor, and set his heel on it.

"I guess you can squat, feller!" said the Kid amiably.

"What do you want here?" Blake's voice came hoarse with rage. "What you horning into my ranch for, you doggoned firebug?"

"Jest to chew the rag with you a piece," answered the Kid. "I sure am going to talk turkey with you, Mister Blake. Squat!"

Blake, breathing fury, sat down.

The Kid sat on the edge of the table, facing him, lowering his gun and resting it on his chaperejos. But it was ready to lift for instant use, if wanted. Jad Blake did not need telling that.

Enraged as he was, he was puzzled. All the Frio valley knew that there was nothing worth a hold-up man's while at the Circle O. Even the frowsy Mexican peon did not get his wages regularly.

Nobody knew, so far as Blake was aware, of the stack of paper money in his belt. So the outlaw's object in paying this unexpected and surprising visit was hard to guess.

That bunch of schoolboys from the old country had accused him, certainly, but the sheriff of Packsaddle had laughed at the accusation, and Blake did not expect to hear anything more of that. He was more puzzled than angry at being "held up" by the outlaw.

of the Rio Grande under his own roof.

The Kid eyed him curiously.

He was not sure that those young guys had it right, that Blake was the man who had worn the flour-bag and committed a desperate crime that was laid to his account. He was not sure—but he was going to be sure.

"Mebbe I've surprised you a few, Mister Blake!" he said amiably. "But I'm sure going to put you wise."

"Spill it!" snarled Blake.

"I got to get after that guy in the flour-bag what held up the hack and shot a man and put it down to me!" explained the Kid. "I sure ain't allowing no galoot to make so free with my name."

Blake caught his breath for a second.

It had been a cunning trick, to borrow the name of a well-known outlaw, known and hunted by half the sheriffs of Texas, to divert all possible suspicion from himself. That trick had served him well, for all Packsaddle believed that the guilty man was the Rio Kid, the sheriff as firmly as any other man, and nothing that the schoolboys had said had been able to shake that fixed belief.

But if the Kid got wise to the identity of the trail-thief who had used his name—That thought gave Blake a cold chill, as he sat in front of the Kid's gun!

"I guess," went on the Kid, "that I got enough on me, without having another guy's hold-ups piled on the top, Mister Blake! I'll mention that this game has been played more'n once, and it sure has got me a reputation in Texas that you could cut with the back of a bowie-knife! Yep! But I ain't standing for it, nohow!"

Blake did not lose his nerve. He knew that he needed it all now—now that the Kid plainly suspected him. How, and why, Blake could not begin to guess—he had never been near the Kid while he had the trail-thief's flour-bag on. But it was plain that the outlaw suspected him—that was why he was here.

"You allow you wasn't the guy in the flour-bag?" he asked, with assumed carelessness.

"Sure!" said the Kid.

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess the whole section's made up its mind about that!" he said. "But I ain't arguing with you, while you got the gun! What you horned in to tell me for—you figure that I'm interested?"

"I reckon!" said the Kid. "I want to know if you was that guy in the flour-bag, Mister Blake, and if you was, you got it coming to you."

And the Kid's revolver lifted, and his eyes glinted over it, with a glint of cold steel.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Loot!

JAD BLAKE breathed hard.

He was suspected! Why, he did not know, for he could think of no clue by which the Kid could connect him up with the man in the flour-bag. But if the Kid suspected, he couldn't be sure, and the rancher had only to bluff. His heart was beating unpleasantly, but he answered calmly.

"Me! I guess you're fooling!"

"I ain't fooling none!" said the Kid. "I've come here to be put wise, and I'll say you're going to put me wise, Mister Blake. I'm asking you, if you was the guy that stopped the hack from Prairie Bend, and cinched twenty thousand dollars from the bank galoot."

"Hardly!" Blake forced a laugh. "If it wasn't you, Kid, I guess you got to look further for that guy."

"I'll look fur enough till I cinch him!" said the Kid. "But jest at present, I'm asking you. There's twenty thousand dollars missing, that belongs to that young guy at the Kickin' Cayuse—and all Packsaddle, I reckon, figures that I've got them dollars packed in my slicker! Them dollars will tell the tale, when they show up—they sure will fix it on the guy that cinched them! You got them dollars, Mister Blake?"

In spite of his nerve, Blake paled.

Except the evidence of Billy Bunter, which the sheriff of Packsaddle had contemptuously disregarded, there was nothing to connect him with the man in the flour-bag. But in the secret pockets inside his belt were packed wads of paper money—the proceeds of the robbery. That stack of dollars, if found, would connect him with the robbery—with a vengeance!

The Kid's face grew grimmer.

"I guess I want to know, Mister Blake!" he said quietly. "You sure ain't walking off with that young guy's dollars and putting it down to this infant! Nope! Where you got them?"

Blake did not speak. A hunted look was growing in his eyes. Had the gun still been in his belt, he would have taken all risks, to pull it. But his gun lay on the floor, crunched by the heel of a riding-boot.

"I'm going through you, Mister Blake!" went on the Kid. "I ain't no hold-up man, like that scallawag in the flour-bag, and I guess I ain't the guy to touch what don't belong to me! But I sure am going to touch them dollars, and put them back where they belong. Where'd you park them?"

Blake sat panting.

"I guess," said the Kid softly, "that you got to spill it, feller! I ain't quitting without them dollars, and that's a cinch! If you want me to give you the butt of this gun and go through your rags, I ain't got no objection. But mebbe you'd rather hand over peaceable."

Blake found his voice.

The money had to come to light; he knew that. The Kid was not going to quit Circle O until he had searched for it, and found it if it was there—and it was there, packed in a hidden money-belt, easy enough to find if he was searched. Blake had only one hope now—the bills were not the same bills that he had stolen from the Prairie Bend hack. In that, there was a chance—or the ghost of a chance.

"I got money of my own, Kid," he said hoarsely, "and from what I've heard of you, you ain't the guy to lift it."

"Not in your lifetime!" said the Kid. "I'm after money that ain't your own, Mister Blake, and you can take my word, or not, that it's going to be handed over to the sheriff, to go back to the owner. Hand over."

There was no help for it. Slowly, savagely, the rancher drew out the hidden money-belt which he wore concealed under his clothes. The Kid's eyes glinted as he took it with his left hand.

On the inner side of the belt were a number of buttoned compartments. They bulged with bills. The Kid jerked them open in turn—Blake watching him like a wolf.

He was calculating the chances of a sudden spring. But the Kid gave him no chance.

The gun was in his right hand, as he sorted out the wads of bills with his left, on the table, and made a stack of them.

His face grew grimmer and grimmer, as he counted.

"Eighteen thousand dollars, Mister

Blake," he said at last, "and there was twenty thousand cinched from the hack! I guess you've been playing poker."

"My own money!" muttered Blake hoarsely.

The Kid gave a grim laugh.

"Where'd you raise it?" he asked.

"You give me one word that'll make out it's your own, Mister Blake, and I'll sure leave it here on your table. You been selling cows, at a good figure?"

Blake hesitated a moment. He wondered whether the Kid knew that he had, long since, sold every cow off the Circle O, and almost every horse. It was likely enough that the Kid knew what had long been the talk of the section.

"Nope!" he breathed.

"You ain't sold this here ranch yet?"

Blake paused again, but he had little doubt that the Kid knew that the Circle O was yet unsold, since the deal with Vernon-Smith had fallen through.

"Nope!"

"How'd you pick up eighteen thousand dollars?" asked the Kid. "You found it lying around on the prairie, promiscuous-like?"

"I—I have had some luck at poker!" muttered Blake. "I got in with a poker party at Red Bluffs, and cleaned them out."

It was a falsehood, and a fairly palpable one, but it was one that the Kid could not disprove from his own knowledge.

The Kid shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"I guess I've heard some thin stories, Mister Blake," he remarked, "but I'll say that that's the thinnest. Ain't you lost all you had, playing poker at the Red Flare, and ain't it the talk of the section? Now you want me to figure that you won eighteen thousand dollars at a poker game, jest about the same time the money was taken from the Prairie Bend hack? You better guess agin, Mister Blake."

"It's the truth!" breathed Blake. It was not only the dollars he was thinking of now, but the Kid's vengeance, if he was satisfied that he had discovered the man who had borrowed his name and stained it with crime. The fear of death was heavy on him.

The Kid shook his head.

"It ain't the truth, hombre," he answered. "Not by a jugful! This here stack of dollars belongs to Mister Vernon-Smith, and you was the guy that lifted it from the hack, and shot a man to get it."

Blake was pale to the lips.

"But if there's a hole you can crawl out of, hombre, I'm sure letting you crawl out of it!" said the Kid. "I guess I got it coming for the guy that used my name, but it ain't coming to you, if there's a dog's chance that you ain't the guy!"

The rancher breathed again.

"This dust is going to the sheriff of Packsaddle," went on the Kid. "If it's yourn, Mister Blake, you can claim it from him and put him wise jest how you got it—mebbe you can give him the names of those poker sharps at Red Bluffs that you won it from. Sheriff Lick knows that you ain't got five hundred dollars to call your own, and he sure will want to know."

Blake did not answer.

If the money was handed over to the sheriff he dared lay no claim to it. Sheriff Lick had disregarded Bunter's story, but the discovery of a large sum of money in the rancher's possession would have settled the matter. His flimsy falsehood of a successful poker

game at Red Bluffs would not hold water for a moment.

So far from claiming the money from the sheriff, Blake would not dare to let the sheriff know, if he could help it, that it had ever been in his hands.

If the sheriff knew that, he would know that the "fat gink" had, indeed, seen Blake's face when the trail-thief took off the flour-bag.

The Kid quietly packed the bills back into the belt and slipped the money belt into the pocket of his chaps.

Blake's eyes followed it as it disappeared.

For those dollars he had played the trail-thief and shot a man who lay sorely wounded at Packsaddle. Now the dollars were going!

The Kid looked at him long and hard.

"I guess," he said slowly, "that you're the guy I want, Mister Blake, but I'm going to prove it up. You money along to Packsaddle and claim this here money from the sheriff, and that lets you out. I don't reckon you dare. But if you do not, Mister Blake, I guess I'll know the reason why. And as soon as I know for sure, Mister Blake, you look out for the guy whose name you borrowed to come a-shooting."

With that the Kid strode out, taking no further heed of the enraged rancher.

When the door was shut on him Blake bounded to his feet.

In less than a minute a rifle was in his hands. But much less than a minute was enough for the Rio Kid. The thud of galloping hoofs came back from the darkness; the Kid was gone.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Wants To Know!

"I SAY, you fellows, what's on?"

Billy Bunter wanted to know. That something was "on."

Bunter felt sure. He had felt sure of that all day. Several times he had come on the juniors talking together, and they had shut up like oysters when Bunter appeared in the offing.

Now, late in the afternoon, they were preparing to go riding. Where and why, Bunter did not know.

Certainly they were not likely to confide to Billy Bunter the arrangement Herbert Vernon-Smith had made with the Rio Kid.

They were to see the Kid in the timber island on the Packsaddle trail that day and learn from him what move he had made and what had come of it. But as the Kid's liberty—and perhaps his life—might be in the balance, it was a secret that could not be too carefully kept. Billy Bunter was about the last person in Texas to whom they would have thought of saying a word on the subject.

Bunter, naturally, was curious. Bunter always wanted to know, especially about matters that did not concern him.

He rolled after the juniors when they went down to the corral for their horses. He blinked at them inquisitively, wrathfully, and reproachfully.

"I jolly well know you've got something on!" he said. "You jolly well can't make a fool of me!"

"Of course we can't!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Nature did that a long time ago, old fat bean."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Buzz off, Bunter!" snapped the Bounder.

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"Shan't!" retorted Bunter independently. "If you're going on the razzle at Packsaddle I don't mind coming."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I haven't been in the Red Flare yet," said Bunter. "They have a game there called something-or-other, or what-do-you-call-it, and I shouldn't mind trying my luck. You fellows can lend me some money, and I'll whack out the winnings. What about that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! If you're going on the ran-dan with Smithy—"

"You howling ass," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Smithy isn't going on the ran-dan!"

"Well, I know he has sometimes," said Bunter. "I jolly well saw him coming out of the Red Flare the other day. Jolly lucky for him that old Quelch ain't in Texas! But, if it ain't that, what is it?"

"The whatfulness is terrific, my esteemed, inquisitive Bunter."

"I know you've got something on!" said Bunter. "I say, Bob, old chap, tell a fellow what you've got on, will you?"

"Certainly," answered Bob, "if you really want to know."

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter eagerly.

"You silly ass, shut up!" exclaimed the Bounder angrily. "Do you want it talked all over the ranch and all over Texas?"

"You shut up, Smithy!" snapped Bunter. "Go on, Bob. You ain't a cad like Smithy, keeping secrets from a fellow. You'll tell me what you've got on, old chap, won't you?"

"Like a bird!" answered Bob.

"You gabbling ass—" said Vernon-Smith.

"Same to you, Smithy, with knobs on!" answered Bob affably. "If Bunter wants to know what I've got on I'm jolly well going to tell him! Stick your ear this way, Bunter, and I'll whisper it."

Billy Bunter extended a fat ear with great eagerness. Bob Cherry whispered—a stage whisper that was heard by all other ears:

"Sure you want to know what I've got on, Bunter?"

"Yes, old chap! Go it!"

"My stetson!" whispered Bob.

"Eh?"

"And my riding boots," went on Bob, whispering.

"Wha-a-at?"

"And my necktie—"

"You silly ass!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—" Bob was going on with the list.

"Shut up, you silly cuckoo!" hooted Bunter. "I say, Franky, old chap, you tell a chap what you've got on, will you?"

"Certainly!" chuckled Nugent. "My stetson—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And my boots—"

"Shut up!" yelled Bunter. "I wasn't asking for a lot of rotten jokes! Will you tell a chap what you're going out for?"

"I will if you like!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Well, what are you going out for, then?"

"For a couple of hours," answered Johnny.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you silly chump!" hissed Bunter. "Keep your rotten secrets! Think I want to know? Yah! I say, Cactus, gimme my horse!"

Harry Wharton & Co. mounted their broncos, and Billy Bunter followed their example. Bunter was going to know! If the other fellows were going, Bunter was going; and, whatever mysterious thing it was they were up to, Bunter was going to spot it with his own eyes and his own spectacles.

Inquisitiveness was Billy Bunter's besetting sin; and really this was quite mysterious.

He had made a dozen attempts during the day to catch some stray word from the juniors which would have put him wise; he had caught the word "timber-island," but that did not enlighten him.

He knew the timber-island on the Packsaddle trail; it was a landmark over the whole valley of the Frio; but that the juniors intended to ride there and back with no special object did not seem probable.

But the more Bunter did not know, the more he was going to know if he could; and he mounted the specially tame and quiet horse that Bill had considerably selected for him and rode out after the party.

Vernon-Smith gave him a scowl and gripped his quirt.

Smithy's manners as a host were really deplorable towards that particular guest. Billy Bunter had not expected to establish contact with a quirt when he had hooked on to the party for Texas, but he had done so more than once—and now history looked like repeating itself.

"I say, you fellows, keep that beast off!" roared Bunter, as the Bounder wheeled his bronco to ride towards the fat Owl.

"Hold on, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hastily.

"Don't be an ass!" snapped the Bounder. "That prying fat fool can stick at the ranch!"

"That's how Smithy talks to a guest!" said Bunter. "Not the way I talk to guests at Bunter Court!"

"He's going back!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Shan't!" roared Bunter.

"My dear chap, keep your temper!" said Bob Cherry. "If Bunter wants to come for a gallop, why not?"

"Oh!" The angry Bounder's frowning brow cleared, and he grinned. "O.K.! Come on, Bunter!"

"I'm jolly well coming, and you ain't stopping me, you beast!" snorted Bunter. And he came.

Really the quirt was not necessary. A gallop was quite as efficacious as a quirt. Billy Bunter was able to stick on a horse, so long as that horse went to slow time. If the horse put on speed, Bunter's only resource was to cling round its neck, and hope that it would stop.

The Famous Five swept down on the trail at a gallop.

"I say, you fellows, don't race!" roared Bunter.

Bunter, if asked, would have declared unhesitatingly that he could ride the other fellows' heads off. But a series of discomforting experiences had imbued his fat mind with a lingering doubt.

"Come on!" grinned the Bounder, and he gave Bunter's bronco a smart cut with his quirt.

"Stop it!" roared Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

Bunter's bronco galloped with the Bounder's after the Famous Five. That did it!

Stirrups and reins departed from Bunter's keeping. His fat arms were

(Continued on page 20.)



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flung round a tossing, hairy neck. He hung on and yelled:

"Ow! Stoppin! Yaroooh!"

The Bounder, grinning, reached over and caught Bunter's reins. He wheeled his bronco and wheeled Bunter's steed round, setting its nose back towards the ranch. Then, releasing the reins, he gave it another cut.

Off went the bronco, galloping for the ranch, with Bunter clinging to its neck.

At the gateway half a dozen punchers gathered, to watch Bunter coming back, loaded on the bronco's neck, and they greeted him with roars of laughter.

Vernon-Smith galloped after the Famous Five. The bunch of juniors, going strong, disappeared down the trail, heading for the distant timber island. But Billy Bunter was not giving them any attention now. All Bunter's attention was concentrated on keeping hold of his horse's neck.

Luckily he kept hold till the bronco, dropping into a trot, ambled in at the gate, and Bill, grinning from ear to ear, lifted the fat junior off.

"I'll say you're some rider, Mr. Bunter," remarked the foreman of Kicking Cayuse. "I'll tell a man."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the punchers.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled away to the rancho, leaving Bill and the punchers chortling. Bunter still wanted to know; but he did not want to mount that bronco again, and gallop after the Greyfriars fellows. Much as he wanted to know, it looked as if the fat Owl, after all, was not going to know.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Sheriff!

SHERIFF LICK, standing at the door of his office on the plaza at Packsaddle, frowned at a bunch of riders who came in from the prairie under the red sunset.

Mr. Lick did not look pleased to see Harry Wharton & Co.

The last time he had seen them they had accused Jad Blake, in his office, of being the man in the flour-bag—an accusation that Mr. Lick laughed to scorn—or rather, snorted to scorn.

Mr. Lick had no use for evidence from a fat gink like Billy Bunter, who struck him as the world's prize boob, and some over. The outcome of that interview in the sheriff's office had been an order to quit.

Frowning, the sheriff of Packsaddle stared at the bunch of riders, dusty from the prairie. He frowned still more grimly as they reined in opposite his office, and dismounted. This looked as if they were paying him another visit, and Mr. Lick was prepared to state, in the plainest possible language, that he had no use for visits from a bunch of young scallawags, who accused a rancher of the Frio valley of being a hold-up man, on no better evidence than that of the world's prize boob.

The juniors hitched their horses, and saluted the sheriff very politely, receiving a grim stare in exchange.

"Message for you, Mr. Lick," said Vernon-Smith.

"Can it!" answered Mr. Lick briefly.

"From the Rio Kid."

Mr. Lick forgot his intention to tell the young scallawags in the plainest language, what he thought of them. He jumped.

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"The Kid!" he repeated. "You seen that firebug?"

"We've seen the Kid," said Harry Wharton.

"Search me!" Mr. Lick was alert at once. "Where you seen him? Put me wise! Spill it—quick! Around Packsaddle?"

The juniors smiled. Irritated as he was with them, the sheriff would have been very glad to hear what they had to say, if they could have given him a "line" on the outlaw of Texas.

"We've not got information for you, Mr. Lick," said the Bounder. "We've got a message. We've seen the Kid—never mind where—and he hit for Squaw Mountain, when we hit for Packsaddle. Do you want his message?"

"I guess you can spill it," grunted Mr. Lick.

"We've told you," said the Bounder, "that the man who held up the hack and took the dollars was not the Kid."

Mr. Lick snorted.

"You spill that over agin, and I'll sure take my quirt to you!" he snapped. "I'll say I've heard all I want of that bunk, and some more."

"He's ready to prove it."

"I guess I'd be plumb glad to see him ride into town, and start!" growled Mr. Lick.

The Bounder laughed.

"Packsaddle's rather too hot for the Kid, since the last time he rode in," he answered. "You won't see the Kid here, Mr. Lick. But you can see him to-morrow, out of town, if you like."

"Meaning?" asked the sheriff, staring.

Vernon-Smith put his hand into his pocket, and drew out a folded note. He handed it to the sheriff of Packsaddle. Mr. Lick stared at it blankly.

"Not from the Kid?" he ejaculated.

"Sure!" answered Smithy.

"Carry me home to die!" said Mr. Lick.

He unfolded the paper, and stared at what was written thereon. The message was written in pencil, on a sheet torn from a pocket-book. In a small, neat hand the Kid's calligraphy was quite good.

It ran:

"Mister Lick.—I got the dollars back from the guy that cinched them, and I am jest honing to hand them over to the law, meaning you.

"You mosey along to the timber on the Packsaddle trail to-morrow at sundown and you touch the dollars, and I'll sure spill the name of the guy that roped them in.

"Come alone. If I see more'n one galoot, I guess you won't see me.—THE RIO KID."

Sheriff Lick read that missive, and read it again, and then stared at the waiting juniors.

He was too astonished to speak, for some moments.

Perhaps a suspicion crossed his mind that this might be a practical joke on the part of the schoolboys. If so, he dismissed it at once.

He knew that they had been in touch with the Kid on more than one occasion, and it was not surprising that they had been in touch with him again. That message came from the Kid.

Another suspicion, perhaps, crossed his mind—that it might be a trick of the outlaw to "get him." If so, that suspicion had to be dismissed, also. He had been under the Kid's gun during the hunting on Squaw Mountain, and the Kid had not burned powder. Twice his life had been at the outlaw's mercy,

the Kid's to take if he had chosen. It was not horse-sense to figure that the Kid intended to do by treachery what he could easily have done on two separate occasions, had he chosen to pull trigger.

Mr. Lick was at a loss what to make of that message, unless, indeed, the Kid was in earnest, in which case, he had been hunting the wrong man for the hold-up on the stage trail.

The sheriff was not going to believe that, unless he had to.

He stared at the juniors, and he stared at the letter.

"Search me," he muttered, quite puzzled. "You young guys wise to what's wrote in this here billy-doo?"

"We saw the Kid write it, Mr. Lick," answered Bob Cherry. "You'll go?"

"Mebbe," said Mr. Lick slowly.

A gleam came into his eyes.

If he kept that appointment made by the Kid, he had to go alone, and the Kid would be wary. But there might be a chance of getting the Kid, all the same, or of trailing him to his mysterious hideout in the mountain. The Kid was making this appointment of his own accord; the sheriff was making no promises. It was for the outlaw to take his chance.

"You figure the Kid will be around if I ride out to the timber to-morrow?" he asked slowly.

"Sure, if you play fair," answered the Bounder. "If you lay a trap for him, you won't see him, Mr. Lick."

Mr. Lick grunted. He did not need Vernon-Smith to tell him that. But he guessed that he would be packing a gun when he met up with the Kid, and he figured that there was a chance of pulling first.

"I guess I'll chew on it!" he said at last, and he went into his office and shut the door.

Harry Wharton & Co. remounted and rode out of Packsaddle. It was rather late when they got back to Kicking Cayuse—to be greeted with indignant and disdainful blinks from Billy Bunter, which, however, did not seem to disturb their equanimity in the very least.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Trail-Thief's Chance!

JAD BLAKE rode into Packsaddle the following morning, and hitched his bronco at the sheriff's office.

The door was open, and there was a sound of voices within—those of Mr. Lick and his chief deputy, Mike Hilligan. They seemed to be having an argument.

Blake paused for a moment or two on the threshold, and as he paused he hitched his belt to draw the butt of a Colt nearer to his hand.

He did not figure that he was likely to want a gun when he saw Mr. Lick, but he did not feel sure.

A day had passed since his strange interview with the Rio Kid at Circle O, and now another day had come. They had been anxious hours for Poker Blake—uncertain of what was coming to him.

He did not wholly believe that the outlaw intended to hand over the wad of dollars to the sheriff, and he could not guess what the result might be if the Kid did. Would the sheriff believe an outlaw's story, backed up by the handing over of a great sum of money? Was he already an object of suspicion? He had wondered whether he would hear from the sheriff, but he had heard nothing. Now he had come to ascertain

for himself how matters stood; but that was not all.

His thoughts were on the stack of dollars that the Kid had cinched. If they were indeed in the sheriff's keeping, and if there was the remotest chance of getting at them, Mr. Lick was due to meet up with the man in the flour-bag. If the sheriff was as friendly as usual, the rascally rancher hoped to "get wise" on that subject.

He was desperate for money, and he would have taken a good many risks to recapture the stack of dollars that the Kid had lifted at Circle O—if, indeed, the Kid had passed them on, and there was a chance.

It was in a very uncertain frame of mind that Jad Blake stepped into the sheriff's office from the sunny plaza. His hand, as if casually, was quite near the butt of his gun.

But he was reassured the next moment.

Mr. Lick and his deputy glanced round and nodded. There was no trace of doubt or suspicion in either face.

"Mornin', sheriff!" said the rancher, breathing more freely.

"Mornin', old-timer!" said Mr. Lick. "Mike, I guess you spilled enough; you can beat it, feller."

"I guess," said Mike, "that you are the orneriest bonehead in Packsaddle, sheriff, and I got a hunch to ride after you and see you safe this afternoon, whether you stand for it or not."

"Aw, forget it!" said the sheriff. "I guess if your frontispiece was within a mile I shouldn't see hide nor hair of the Kid. And I sure do want to see him, a whole lot."

Mike grunted and tramped out of the office. Blake glanced after him, and then glanced at the sheriff.

"You after the Kid agin?" he asked. "You want a guy to back you up, sheriff, you only got to say so. I guess I'd ride a hundred miles, and then some, to get a chance at that firebug from the Rio Grande."

The words came viciously through Blake's teeth.

"I guess I wouldn't want a better man, old-timer," answered the sheriff; "but I got to go this on my lonesome."

"How come?" asked Blake.

Sheriff Lick picked up a paper that lay on his desk and threw it across to the rancher.

"Give that billy-doo the once-over," he answered.

Blake, in astonishment, glanced at the Rio Kid's message. His gaze became fixed on the neat, clear handwriting. He drew a deep, deep breath.

"You got that from the Kid?" he asked.

He had no doubt of it, and he had no doubt now that the outlaw intended to keep his word in the disposal of the eighteen thousand dollars. The Kid had needed time to fix it up. He could not ride into the cow town with the dollars. And this was how he had fixed it up.

"Yep!" said Mr. Lick. "That's from the Kid, and it sure has got me beat. If the Kid ain't the guy that cinched the dollars, I sure have made one big mistake, and I guess I don't make a heap of mistakes. But if he cinched them dollars, and shot up the bank galoot to do it, it ain't hoss-sense to hand them over to me."

The sheriff shook his head.

"You figure he means business?" asked Blake.

"I guess so. He sure ain't asking me to meet up with him jest for the pleasure of seeing my frontispiece," answered Mr. Lick. "That bonehead

Mike figures that he might be looking for a chance to shoot me up; but that's all bunk! He could have shot me up, if he wanted, here in this office, and again on Squaw Mountain. That ain't his game."

Mr. Lick shook his head again.

"That ain't it," he said. "If he don't mean a straight game, he's got some other game on that I ain't wise to. But I sure am going to see him. I'll tell all Texas I ain't losing a chance of getting a line on the Kid. And if he means straight about the dollars, I guess it's my duty to take them over."

"Sure!" assented Blake.

"That big stiff Mike figures it's a chance to surround him," went on Mr. Lick. "But there ain't a dog's chance of that! That Kid is as wary as a painter. He sure wouldn't be found in that timber if I went with a bunch to look for him. Not by a jugful."

Blake nodded.

"That's a cinch, I guess," he agreed. "But I don't get this any more'n you do, sheriff. He allows he's going to spill the name of the guy he got the dollars from. Mebbe he's got a grinch agin some hombre that's been hunting him, and that's the name he's going to spill."

"I wouldn't put it past him!" grunted the sheriff. "You can bet that I ain't taking in no news from that firebug—no more than I was from that fat gink who spilled a hatful of bunk in this here office the other day."

Blake's eyes glimmered for a moment.

He knew, though the sheriff did not, the name that the outlaw was going to "spill"—the same name that the "fat gink" had spilled! His cunning suggestion that the outlaw might be aiming to blacken the name of one of his hunters was intended to ward off suspicion in advance.

If the sheriff took no more notice of the Kid's statement than he had taken of the "fat gink's," Blake was satisfied.

Certainly had he laid claim to the dollars after the Kid handed them over to the sheriff, his claim would have proved the Kid's words, and Bunter's. But he had no idea of laying any such claim. His cue was to deny the story and disclaim any knowledge whatever of the dollars.

At the same time he had a strong hope that those dollars might yet fall into his hands. His thoughts were busy while he was talking to the sheriff.

"You're going, then?" he asked.

"Bet your life!" answered Mr. Lick. "I sure am going, and alone, jest as the Kid wants. I shouldn't see him if I wasn't alone. But if I get a dog's chance to pull a gun, I guess I shan't be coming back alone. I'll say that the Kid will come back with me."

Blake laughed.

"I get you!" he said. "But you want to watch out, sheriff; that Kid sure is bad medicine."

"You said it!" agreed the sheriff. "I guess I shall be watching out a whole lot, Blake. I sure would be glad to have you along, old-timer; but I got to go it alone, like I said. But if you're hanging on in Packsaddle, mebbe you'll see me ride in with the Kid at sundown."

The rancher shook his head.

"I got to hit Hard Tack to-day," he answered. "That deal over my ranch has dropped through the floor. I ain't dealing with that pesky young pieceen at Kicking Cayuse agin. I got to see a guy at Hard Tack who figures that he might buy the Circle O. I jest dropped in to see if there was any news of the Kid."

"Mebbe there'll be news if you drop in again to-morrow," said Mr. Lick. "I sure do hope to get a chance of cinching that firebug."

"I'll be around to-night and ask you for the news," said Blake; and, with a nod to the sheriff, he left the office.

The sheriff was left thinking over his coming interview with the outlaw, and what he hoped would come of it. He little guessed the thoughts that were in the mind of the man who had just left.

Blake had learned more than he had dreamed of learning in that office. The sheriff was riding out at sundown to take the wad of dollars from the Kid—alone. He would be riding back alone by a lonely trail at falling dusk, with eighteen thousand dollars on him. Blake did not reckon that he would bring back the Kid, a prisoner. Mr. Lick's own hope of that was probably slight. But he knew that the sheriff would be bringing back the dollars—alone, at dusk, on a solitary trail!

The man in the flour-bag was destined to ride the trails again that day!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not A Success!

BILLY BUNTER grinned—one of those sardonic grins.

After dinner, the Greyfriars party were getting ready for a ride.

Bunter did not on this occasion follow their example. His gallop the previous day had been enough for him. Bunter was standing by the gateway—his fat hand was behind him; in that fat hand was gripped a coiled lasso.

Bunter was on the warpath.

He was as inquisitive as ever, and more annoyed than ever. Those beasts had gone out on some mysterious expedition the previous afternoon, keeping Bunter in the dark. Now they were going out again—still keeping Bunter in the dark! It was intensely irritating to a fat and inquisitive Owl who wanted to know!

Where they were going, why they were going, Bunter could not begin to guess. It did not, as a matter of fact, matter to Bunter. He was too lazy to undertake a long ride; and had his company been wanted, he would have declined without thanks. But he wanted to know. It was useless to ride after the beasts, because they would gallop, and Bunter would fall off if he followed suit. He did not want to return to the ranch again clinging to the tossing neck of a bronco. Still less did he want to bump down on Texas.

Bunter was left out of this—whatever it was; and he had to stay left out. But he was, at least, going to make that unspeakable beast, Herbert Vernon-Smith, sit up—or, to be more accurate, he was going to make him bump down!

That was the idea that was working in Billy Bunter's powerful brain—that was why he lurked at the gate with the lasso in his fat hand behind him.

Smithy had sent him home yesterday, clinging to a bronco's neck! Smithy was going to get it! He would not even have a chance of clinging to his bronco's neck! He was going to land on the prairie, with a terrific bump—when Bunter's lariat jerked him off his horse.

The fat Owl had calculated very astutely.

He was going to get back at Smithy in that masterly manner. Smithy, of course, would be fearfully enraged; but that bump on the prairie would give

Bunter plenty of time to hunt cover before the Bounder could get at him with his quirt.

Grimacing a sardonic grin, Bunter watched and waited. There was a surprise in store for the Bounder when he started.

Unaware of the fat Owl's deadly intentions, indeed, forgetful of his podgy existence, the Famous Five and Smithy saddled and bridled their horses and led them down to the gate.

Bill Buck was standing near the gate giving directions to a couple of punchers. The juniors led their horses past the spot where the foreman of Kicking Cayuse was standing, and arrived in the gateway, where they became aware once more of Billy Bunter's existence.

"Coming for a gallop, Bunter?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a grin.

"Beast!" was Bunter's reply. "You just wait a bit!"

"Eh? Wait for what?"

"That's telling!" said Bunter. "Perhaps you're going to get a surprise, you beast! He, he, ha!"

The Bounder stared at him.

"What do you mean, you howling ass, if you mean anything?" he inquired.

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter hastily. "Get going, can't you? I don't want to stand here for ever!"

"Waiting to see us off?" asked Bob Cherry, puzzled.

"He, he, he! I'm waiting to see Smithy off!" chuckled Bunter. "He, he, he! You'll see him off soon, I expect. He, he, ha!"

"What's that you've got behind you?" asked Bob, staring.

"Oh, nothing! It isn't a lasso!" said Bunter hastily.

"It isn't a lasso?" ejaculated Bob.

"Oh, no! I'm not waiting here to lasso anybody, or anything of that sort," said Bunter. "Nothing of the kind, you know."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't stand there cackling! Why don't you get on your gees and clear?"

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

They got on their "gees." Bunter's deadly intentions were clear enough now, but they were not alarmed.

Bunter was not a pastmaster in the use of the "rope." True, he had lassoed the Bounder once, but that was by mistake, having intended to rope in quite a different object.

Whichever member of the party was to be Bunter's target now, he was in little danger. Indeed, any of the party would have been quite willing to stand still, within easy reach of the rope, and take his chance of being roped in by Bunter—quite certain that wherever the rope went, it would go nowhere near the target.

So far from being alarmed, the juniors mounted their broncos, and rode out at the gate—not even hurrying, but giving the fat Owl a chance, if he wanted to get busy with the rope.

The moment their backs were turned, Bunter got busy.

Out came the lasso from behind his fat back, and he whirled it in the air, and let fly.

His eyes and his spectacles were fixed on Vernon-Smith. Smithy was still within easy reach.

As soon as the loop settled over the Bounder, Bunter was going to rush back with the rope, and drag him off his bronco—that drag, added to the motion of the horse, would do the trick infallibly.

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The rope whirled in the air, uncoiling. The loop settled. Unfortunately for Bunter's masterly scheme, it did not settle anywhere near any of the riders outside the gate.

It settled down in exactly the opposite direction, dropping inside the gateway instead of outside!

But every bullet has its billet! The same applied to Bunter's lasso! The loop dropped, by a happy chance, clean over the surprised head of Bill Buck, foreman of the Kicking Cayuse.

Bill was a wary guy. Seldom was he taken by surprise. But he was taken quite by surprise now.

A ranch foreman, giving directions to his punchers, was naturally not on the look-out for a lassoer.

The loop of the lasso dropped over Bill's stetson, and circled round his broad shoulders.

Bunter dragged. He dragged before he noticed that the lasso had landed on the wrong man.

That sudden drag tautened the loop round Bill's brawny neck, and it closed under his chin, nearly throttling him.

"Urrrgh!" came a wild and startled splutter from Bill.

Taken by surprise, half-suffocated by the tightening noose, Bill Buck went over backwards under the sudden drag of the rope.

He smote Texas with a heavy smite.

Crash!

His brawny shoulders landed hard, and the back of his head landed harder; his stetson hat rolled off, and Bill, gurgling frantically, clutched at the lasso with both hands.

"Gurrgh!" came a horrible gurgle from Bill.

The punchers stared, amazed. Why Bunter had roped in the foreman of the ranch, they did not know, any more than Bill did. They did not guess that Bunter hadn't—and that the rope had done it of its own accord.

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

"Oh crikey!"

"Bill—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bill gripped the choking noose and dragged it loose. He sat up, spluttering.

"Urrgh! Ourgh! What—who—urrgh!" gurgled Bill.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crumbs!" He blinked at Bill, his eyes bulging through his spectacles. "I—I say—Oh scissors!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That expert lassoer hadn't got Smithy. He had got Bill! And the next moment Bill had got Bunter!

Bill was a good-tempered guy. But he had been half-throttled and bumped hard on the earth, and, so far as Bill could see, this was an utterly idiotic and unwarranted practical joke on the part of Billy Bunter.

Bill made a jump at Bunter, and gripped him in a mighty hand.

"You doggoned young piecan!" roared Bill. "You figure you can lynch a guy that-a-way?"

"Ow! Leggo! I—Ow!"

Bill did not let go. With one mighty hand, he jerked Bunter across the gate. With the other he smote!

Spank, spank, spank!

"Yarooop!"

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

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

"Ow! Oh crikey! Leggo! Leave off! Help!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Spank, spank, spank!

The spans rang like pistol shots.

Louder still rang the yells of the fat

Owl. He wriggled and roared under the spanking hand.

"There!" gasped Bill. "Mebbe you won't play them dog-goned tricks with a riata agin in a hurry, you pesky moss-head!"

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Wow!" roared Bunter. "I didn't mean to lasso you, you silly idiot—ow! I meant to lasso Smithy—wow! Oh! Ow! Wow!"

"Search me!" gasped Bill.

"I never meant—ow! I never—wow!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bill.

"Ow! Beast! Wow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. rode away on the Packsaddle trail, howling with merriment as they went. Bunter was left howling at the gate—not with merriment.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

"JOLLY old Lick!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"All serene!" said Nugent.

"We're going to make sure!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"The surefulness will be terrific," agreed Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed sheriff seems to be on his absurd own!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were a good many miles from Kicking Cayuse. They had ridden on the Packsaddle trail towards the cow town, and passed through the big timber island where the Kid was to meet the sheriff at sundown.

Half way between the timber island and the cow town they came to a halt, at a spot selected with care.

At this spot there was a big shed, used at a shelter for cattle in bad weather. At some distance from it, away from the trail, there was a clump of thicket.

They led their horses off the trail, and tethered them out of sight in the thicket, a distance of a couple of hundred yards. Then they walked back to the shed, which was a lasso's length off the trail.

It was a large timber building, with only three sides—one side being open towards the prairie. The back wall was towards the trail.

Better cover for watching the trail, they could not have desired. All they had to do was to park themselves in the shed and watch, through apertures in the timber wall, of which there were plenty. Their horses, tethered at a distance, were out of sight and sound.

If, by any chance, a guy came off the trail, round the shed to look in at the open side, there was cover: a clump of post-oaks and pecans, tangled with creeping vines that grew close at hand. It was too small a clump to cover the horses, but there was ample cover for the schoolboys, if they needed it.

Vernon-Smith had noted the spot, and selected it: and the other fellows endorsed the Bounder's judgment.

They were there to watch the trail between Packsaddle and the timber island.

That Sheriff Lick would ride out towards sundown to keep the appointment with the Rio Kid, they had little doubt. What they doubted was, whether he would ride alone as directed by the Kid.

The sheriff was free to do as he chose—he had made no promises: it was the Kid's own "funeral" what transpired from his own arrangement. It was very probable that the sheriff might look on this as a chance for "cinching" the outlaw he had hunted so hard, and failed to capture. That was why Vernon-Smith was on the watch, and his friends with him.



"Can it, and pony up!" drawled the voice under the flour-bag. The sheriff, red with rage, unbuckled the money-belt and handed it over. As the hold-up man received it, there was a sudden rush of feet in the grass beside the trail, and a voice rang out. "Hands up, Jad Blake!" Harry Wharton & Co. came rushing on the scene.

If the sheriff went alone he would pass within full view of their cover, and they would see him—and ascertain that he was alone. In which case, all was well.

But if he rode with a force at his back, it was a different matter. The Bounder was not going to leave the Kid to take his chance, in that case. As soon as he saw danger for the Kid, a volley of rifle shots, fired in the air, would give warning.

The juniors had been on the watch for over an hour, when a horseman came cantering along the trail from the direction of Packsaddle.

As he drew nearer, they recognised Sheriff Lick.

Mr. Lick was on his way to the timber: and he was riding alone. He rode past the cattle shed—little dreaming that six pairs of eyes were fixed on him from apertures in the old wooden wall as he passed.

The juniors followed him with their eyes. He rode on towards the distant timber, and they had a view of his burly back.

"All serene!" said Harry Wharton.

"Looks like it!" said Vernon-Smith. "But—we can't be too careful. You fellows know as well as I do, that old Lick would give one of his ears to lay hands on the Kid."

"But he's gone alone, Smithy!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, sure; and we're going to make sure that a bunch of his men don't follow on while he's holding the Kid in talk."

"We'll soon see!" said Bob.

They waited and watched.

The sheriff disappeared westward, towards the timber island.

The juniors gazed eastward towards Packsaddle. It was from that direction that the sheriff's men would come, if they were following.

"Look!" breathed the Bounder suddenly.

Ten minutes after the sheriff had disappeared, a stetson hat came in sight from the direction of the cow town.

"Only one man!" said Bob. "Might be anybody on this trail, Smithy."

"We shall see!"

They watched, and made out the horseman as he drew nearer. Something familiar about him struck them before he was in full view: and as he came nearer, there was no doubt.

"Blake!" muttered Smithy.

"Jad Blake!"

It was the rancher of the Circle O. Vernon-Smith's brow darkened.

"Blake's in this!" he said. "That fool Lick doesn't know, but we know, that Blake's the trail-thief, and that the Kid got the dollars off him at his ranch. Old Lick's after the Kid, because it's his duty—Blake's after him, for nothing of the sort. But he's after him."

"I suppose it's not by chance that he left town just after the sheriff?" said Harry Wharton, slowly.

"Not by a hatful! He's after the Kid—to back up Lick in handling him at the timber island."

The Famous Five nodded. It looked as if the Bounder was right—yet, if it was so, they could not understand why Blake came alone. They would have expected him to have force with him.

"He's going to the timber island!" said Vernon-Smith. "This trail leads nowhere else, till you pass the timber. He may be ahead of a party—more to follow him, perhaps. He's looking back."

The rancher was quite near now, and they saw him turn his head and stare hard the way he had come, evidently to see whether any other rider was on his way from Packsaddle.

The juniors could see no sign of any-

one. Save for Jad Blake, the trail was clear.

He came on again, at a slower pace. His eyes were fixed, as he came on, on the cattle shed off the trail, which sheltered the Greyfriars party. Why he looked at it instead of looking the way he was riding, the juniors did not know.

"He can't guess we're here, on the watch!" muttered Bob.

"I wonder!" said the Bounder. "He's sharp as a razor, and he knows well enough that we're standing for the Kid. But—"

He shook his head.

Blake knew nothing, and could know nothing, of the fact that the Greyfriars fellows were in cover in the cattle-shed. Yet it was clear that he was interested in that building for some reason of his own.

His horse swerved off the trail.

"He's coming here!" breathed Bob.

"What on earth's his game?" muttered the puzzled Bounder. "He can't know anybody's here—but—"

It was quite a puzzle. From the fact that Blake had swerved off the direct well-marked trail towards the shed, it was clear that he was coming there—but why, was a mystery.

The only explanation seemed to be, that he suspected that friends of the Kid might be on the watch, to give the outlaw warning if a party rode the trail—and that he was going to scout, to see whether that shed concealed watchers.

Whether that was the explanation or not, his intention was plain. But the juniors had already laid their plans in such an eventuality.

They backed quietly out of the open shed into the little clump of trees behind, and were quickly hidden in cover there.

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Hidden from sight, they waited and watched: wondering what Jad Blake was up to, but safe from discovery while they watched.

They could hear his horse's hoofbeats now. In a few minutes, they sighted his stetson again, passing between the cattle shed, and the clump of small trees that hid them.

Having placed the shed between him and the trail, the rancher dismounted. The whole of the long front of the cattle shed being open, they were able to watch every movement he made, and they saw him lead his horse into the shed and tether it there.

That did not look like scouting. It was obvious, from his manner, that he was not looking for anyone there; he had expected to find that shed empty, and he found it empty.

Leaving his horse, he stepped out, and scanned the prairie that extended for endless miles. He was not twenty feet from the juniors hidden in the clump, and they read every expression that passed over his hard, reckless face.

There was keen watchfulness and a trace of anxiety to be read there. He was, clearly, scanning the plains to ascertain whether, by chance, some range-riding puncher might be in sight. He did not even glance towards the little clump of pecans and post-oaks, tangled with lianas. He did not suspect, for a moment, that anyone was hidden there—there was no reason why he should.

Satisfied with his scrutiny of the open plains, he turned back into the shed. In breathless surprise, they watched him place an eye to one of the apertures in the back wooden wall, to look out on the trail—as they themselves had been doing ten minutes ago.

Then, after a long minute, he stepped to his horse, and drew a bundle from the saddle-bags.

The Bounder suppressed an exclamation.

His eyes blazed, as he suddenly knew!

With fascinated eyes, from their cover, the juniors watched; and Blake, opening the bundle, shook out a long, dark horseman's cloak, and a flour-bag.

perforated with eye-holes and a slit for the mouth.

They knew, now!

"By gad!" whispered the Bounder. "You get it? Lick must have told him—do you get it? He knows where Lick is gone, and why—he's not following him to help him get the Kid—he's laying for him on the trail, to get the dollars as he comes back!"

"Oh!" breathed Harry Wharton.

Startling as it was, there could be no doubt of it.

Fairly under their watching eyes, the rancher of the Circle O draped himself in the horseman's cloak, belted it round him, removed his stetson, and drew the flour-bag over his head, fastening it under his chin. He replaced the stetson and, under its brim, only his eyes could be seen, gleaming from the eyeholes of the flour-bag.

Jad Blake, of the Circle O, had vanished. In his place stood the trail-thief in the flour-bag—whom any Pack-saddle man, had he seen him then, would have believed was the Rio Kid!

The man in the flour-bag, the trail-thief who had robbed the hack from Prairie Bend and shot the bank messenger, was on the trail again—and the breathless juniors could not doubt why.

He did not leave the cattle-shed. His back was turned to them, as he watched the trail again through a slit in the wall. He was watching, and waiting, for whom, and for what?

For whom, but the sheriff, when he came riding back, with the dollars handed over by the Rio Kid?

He knew the sheriff's errand—he had followed him from the cow town, and he had selected this spot to make the change in his appearance, and to lie in wait, for precisely the same reason that the Bounder had selected it—because it was the best spot of cover between Pack-saddle and the timber island.

It was clear enough to the watching juniors. There was hardly room for a doubt.

Bob Cherry made a movement, but Vernon-Smith caught his shoulder.

"Quiet!" he breathed.

"We've got him," breathed Bob.

"Not yet! We're going to catch him in the act—let him get on with it." The Bounder's eyes danced. "By gum, let him get on with it, and we'll see whether even old Lick will fancy that the man in the flour-bag is the Rio Kid! Don't stir!"

And the juniors, breathless, silent, watched the man in the flour-bag—while the man in the flour-bag watched the trail!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not A Catch!

SHERIFF LICK rode into the timber island, passing from the red glare of the sun, into the dusky shade of immense branches.

Great cottonwood-trees grew on either side of the trail, their branches arching and meeting overhead. Red shafts of the setting sun came through the interstices in the foliage.

The sheriff dropped into a walk, as he followed the trail in the timber.

He was six miles from Packsaddle—three from the cattle-shed where the Greyfriars juniors had watched him go, and where the man in the flour-bag watched for his return. But Mr. Lick was not thinking of the juniors—he had forgotten their existence. Neither was he thinking of the man who had worn the flour-bag—he was thinking of the man he believed had worn it—the Rio Kid. His eyes were watchful, as he walked his horse under the dusky branches.

The Kid had fixed the timber island for the meeting place—but it was an extensive spot; the trail ran for more than half a mile through it. Exactly where he would see the Kid, the sheriff did not know, but he knew that when he saw him he was going, if he could, to get him covered with a gun and ride him back to the cow town a prisoner.

It was a lonely trail, especially at the fall of dusk, and so, when the sheriff sighted a stetson hat, he had little doubt that it was on the head of the outlaw he had come there to see. He had no doubt at all, at the second glance, for he saw the band of silver nuggets on the hat—distinctive of the Rio Kid. His heart beat a little faster as he saw it.

He pulled in his horse, his eyes fixed on that stetson.

It showed over a low bush, between two mighty cottonwood trunks beside the trail. Only the stetson was to be seen—the bush hid the rest. It looked as if the Kid had sat down there, in the deep shade on the moss, to rest, while he waited for the sheriff to arrive from Packsaddle. Mr. Lick's horse made little sound on the grassy earth, but he wondered that, slight as the sound was, it had not reached the Kid and caused him to turn his head. The boy outlaw did not seem in his usual wary mood.

Possibly he did not guess that the sheriff meant war. If so, he was going to learn it very quickly. What the Kid's game was, the sheriff was uncertain, but he knew that he was going to "get" the Kid if he could, whatever his game was.

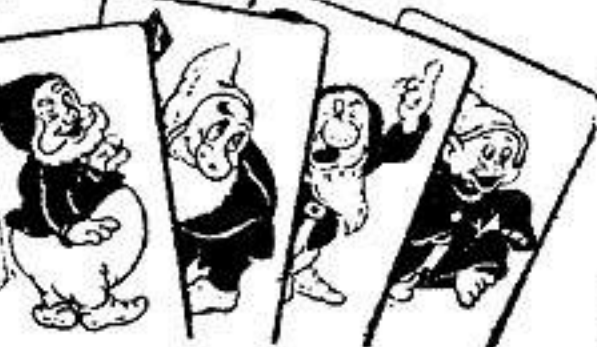
With great caution for so bulky a man, Sheriff Lick dismounted from his bronco. Leaving it standing in the trail, he whipped a six-gun from a holster, and stepped towards the bush over which the silver-banded hat showed.

Silently, with gleaming eyes, he stepped nearer and nearer, till he reached the low bush, and his gun, aimed over it, touched the stetson.

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

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Then he spoke:

"Hands up, Kid! I got you covered! Hands up, or by thunder, you get yours!"

The stetson did not stir. No hands came up! But from behind one of the big cottonwoods, a figure in goatskin chaps and silver spurs stepped—hatless, and smiled at the sheriff over a levelled Colt.

"Drop that gun, Lick!"

The Kid's voice came in a drawl.

Sheriff Lick gave a convulsive start.

The muzzle of his gun was pressed to the stetson that showed over the thick, low bush; he had had no doubt that he had only to press the trigger, to send a bullet crashing through the hat, and the Kid's head inside it!

And there was the Kid—not six feet from him, to the left—smiling over a levelled gun!

The sheriff did not stir for a moment, so utterly astonished was he. But the fact that the Kid's head was bare put him wise. He realised that there was no head in the hat to which he jammed his gun.

His rugged face reddened with rage, and, for a second, he seemed about to swing the gun round towards the Kid!

But he did not. It was death to move that gun a fraction of an inch in the Kid's direction, and the sheriff knew when he was beaten.

Only for a moment did he hesitate! Then the Colt dropped from his hand into the bush.

The Kid nodded approval, with a cheery grin.

"I guess I should hate to have you spoil my hat, old-timer!" he said amiably. "I sure fixed it up on the end of a stick to catch your eye, but you got no call to take pot-shots at it, Lick."

Sheriff Lick almost trembled with rage and chagrin.

The Kid had known quite well that he would come "a-shooting," if he had a chance, and had fixed up that playful little trap for him to walk into—and he had walked into it. This was the outcome of his hope of catching the wary Kid! He stood disarmed in front of the outlaw.

The Kid, smiling, stepped nearer. With his left hand, he reached over the low bush, picked the hat off the stick, and put it on his head. The stick that had supported the stetson was left in the sheriff's view!

"Now, old-timer, mebbo you'd step off the trail, while I chew the rag with you a few!" suggested the Kid. "I sure don't want to meet up with any other guys who might be riding this way."

Mr. Lick, breathing hard and deep, stepped into the trees. The Kid followed him, holstering his gun. The timber was thick, and at a dozen paces they were out of sight from the trail.

"You sure are an ornery guy, Lick," drawled the cheery Kid. "I ask you to amble along, friendly and sociable like, to take over a stack of dollars what I cinched from a trail-thief, and you come a-gunning after me! I sure don't take that kindly, Lick."

"Aw, can it!" snapped the sheriff. "I guess I'd get you, Kid, if I had a doggoned chance, and you knowed it when you fixed this up."

"I sure did," assented the Kid, "and I ain't going to spill your juice, Lick, though I'll tell all Texas you're the guy to ask for it. Me, I'm a peaceable galoot, when I ain't crowded—and you ain't the guy to crowd me, I reckon."

He laughed.

"Can it!" repeated the sheriff savagely. "What's your game, Kid?"

What you got me here for, doggone you?"

"Didn't I put you wise in that bit of writing I sent you?" demanded the Kid. "I got back the dollars that was cinched from Andy Jones' hack, and I'm going to hand them over to the sheriff, according to law, and give him the name of the guy that cinched them."

Lick shrugged his broad shoulders.

"You ain't believing all that?" asked the Kid patiently.

"Not so's you'd notice it," grunted the sheriff. "I guess you was that guy in the flour-bag, Kid, and I'll sure believe that you're going to hand over them dollars when I see them."

"You said it!" grinned the Kid.

He dropped a hand into the pocket of his chaps, drew out a folded money-belt, and tossed it to the sheriff.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Flour-Bag Man!

THE Kid Kid grinned cheerfully at the expression on the sheriff's face.

Sheriff Lick stood with the money-belt in his hand, staring at it blankly. Then he opened the pockets in it and stared harder at the wads of bills.

Then he stared at the Kid.

Exactly what the Kid's game was, the sheriff had not known—but he had to know now, whether he wanted to or not. The Kid's game was exactly as he had stated in his message—to hand over the stolen dollars. And there they were, in the hands of the Sheriff of Packsaddle.

"Count up the dust, sheriff!" drawled the Kid. "I guess you'll find eighteen thousand dollars there. I'll say that guy spilt the rest at poker; and sure that heap would have followed if this baby hadn't horned in. That's the lot I cinched at the Circle O."

"At the Circle O!" breathed the sheriff.

"Sure! Jad Blake handed them over, like a good little man, when I asked him, with a gat in my grip!"

"Jad Blake!"

"That identical scallawag!"

The sheriff gave him a long look. Then silently he counted the rolls of bills. The total was eighteen thousand dollars—nine-tenths of the sum that had been lifted from Andy Jones' hack.

"I guess you can buckle on that belt under your coat-tails, Lick!" drawled the Kid. "It sure is a safe way of carrying a heap of money—like that guy Blake knowed, I reckon."

In silence the sheriff buckled on the money-belt, under his coat. Then he stared at the Kid. Lick was an obstinate man, and slow to give up a fixed belief, and he was sore from his defeats at the hands of the outlaw of the Rio Grande. He stood in doubt.

"I don't get this," said the sheriff slowly. "What you playing this here game for, Kid—and you a firebug, and a hold-up man?"

"I never was a hold-up man, sheriff, nor yet a firebug!" said the Kid. "And I guess I ain't standing for another guy putting it on me. That's my game, sheriff."

"You got me beat!" said Mr. Lick. "I'll say I got to guess, Kid. You sure have got me beat to a frazzle."

Sheriff Lick shook his head. Perhaps his belief that the hold-up man was the Rio Kid was staggering a little. It did not seem horse-sense for the outlaw to hand over to the law the dollars for which he had shot up the bank mes-

senger; but the sheriff could not get it down! He was not taking the outlaw's word against the rancher of the Circle O.

The Kid looked at him, half-angry, and half-amused.

"Ain't I put you wise where I cinched them dollars, and the name of the pesky scallawag I got them from?" he demanded.

"Sez you?" answered Mr. Lick.

The Kid coloured a little. Outlaw he was, gunman he might be; but his word was as good as gold, and he did not like having it doubted.

"You pesky bonehead!" he said. "I'll say they picked out the biggest boob in the Frio valley when they made you sheriff, Lick. What'd I hand you the dollars for if I'd held up the hack to cinch them?"

"You got me guessing!" answered Mr. Lick. "You got some game on, I reckon, but I allow I don't get it."

"You ain't believing I got them dollars at the Circle O?"

"Not a lot," said Mr. Lick.

"Nor that Jad Blake had the money-belt on him when I got it from him?"

"Forget it!" said the sheriff.

The Kid laughed.

"Well, it ain't no good chewing the rag with a prize goob!" he said. "You got the dollars, sheriff, and I guess they'll go back where they belong."

"You said it," agreed the sheriff, "but—"

"That's all I want," said the Kid, "except just this—that guy Blake allowed that the dollars was his'n, and I put him wise that I was handing them over to you, sheriff. If they're his'n, you'll hear from him."

The sheriff shrugged his broad shoulders.

"If he don't claim them I guess I'll get wise to it," said the Kid. "Then I reckon I'll know for sure that he was the guy in the flour-bag that used my name. And I will sure let him know that it ain't a safe game to borrow my name to go on the trails under. That's where I come in, sheriff!"

"I guess you got a grouch agin that guy Blake—mebbe because he hunted you so hard," said the sheriff. "Forget it, Kid. I ain't taking it in!"

"You sure are asking to have your juice spattered over these here trees," said the Kid, laughing, "but I wouldn't waste a cartridge on a bonehead like youn, Lick! Get back to the trail, you goob, and beat it!"

Sheriff Lick turned, and tramped away through the trees.

The Kid watched him go with a shrug of the shoulders. Then he threaded his way through the timber, in another direction, to the spot where he had left his mustang.

He had not convinced the sheriff; he had only puzzled him. But he cared little. The dollars were going back where they belonged, and he was going to have proof that Jad Blake was the man who had used his name and stained it with reckless crime. That, as the Kid said, was where he came in, and he was content. Under the setting sun he mounted the grey mustang and galloped away cheerfully for Squaw Mountain.

Mr. Lick remounted his horse in the trail and rode slowly and thoughtfully out of the timber on his way back to Packsaddle.

But he was the most puzzled sheriff in Texas as he rode.

It was fixed in his mind that the Rio Kid was the flour-bag man. He had a grouch against Jad Blake. But why had he handed back the dollars? That had the sheriff guessing. Mr. Lick was

puzzled, perplexed, quite at a loss; but he had not changed his belief that the Kid was the hold-up man, and he was not going to change it.

But he puzzled, and puzzled as he rode for the cow town.

Half-way to Packsaddle, in the falling dusk, the long cattle-shed loomed beside the trail. The sheriff did not glance at it. He did not know—yet—that a pair of keen eyes watched him from the shed as he came.

He was almost abreast of the spot when a horseman suddenly pulled out and pushed into the trail.

Sheriff Lick gave a jump in the saddle.

The horseman was covered by a long, belted cloak, and a flour-bag was inverted over his head. Through the eyeholes cut in it a pair of keen eyes gleamed, over a levelled revolver.

"Hands up!"

Sheriff Lick pulled in his horse.

He gazed at the flour-bag man dumb-founded.

His hands went up mechanically. He sat in his saddle, his hands above his stetson, gazing with astonished and almost unbelieving eyes at the man in the flour-bag.

He had left the Rio Kid behind him in the timber. True, he had ridden back slowly. The outlaw, on his swift mustang, could easily have made a detour on the prairie, and got ahead of him. But why? If this was the Rio Kid, what was his mysterious game? And if it was not, who was the man in the flour-bag?

The masked robber rode closer.

"The Kid!" breathed the sheriff.

"You said it!" came a snap from under the flour-bag.

"You doggoned, pesky piccan, what you mean?" muttered the sheriff. "What you holding me up for, you boncheaded firebug?"

"I guess I want them dollars, sheriff!"

"By the great horned toad!" roared the sheriff. "You ain't the Kid! Not by a jugful, you ain't! You doggoned piccan! You're using his name, jest like that guy allowed, but you sure ain't the Kid!"

That palpable truth had dawned at last on the sheriff's obstinate mind. Whoever the man in the flour-bag was, he was not the Rio Kid, and could not be.

"Aw, can it, sheriff!" drawled the voice under the flour-bag. "I guess I've changed my mind about letting you cinch them dollars. Pony up, pronto!"

"You ain't the Kid—" hissed the sheriff.

"Can it and pony up!"

The eyes from the flour-bag glinted through the slits over the Colt. And the sheriff, red with rage, unbuckled the money-belt under his coat and handed it over. And as the man in the flour-bag received it there was a sudden rush of feet in the grass beside the trail, and a voice rang out:

"Hands up, Jad Blake!"

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Face in the Flour-bag!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. rushed into the trail.

Every one of the juniors had a gun in his hand; every gun was aimed at the horseman in the flour-bag.

The Bounder's eyes flashed over his six-gun as he shouted:

"Hands up, Jad Blake! Drop that gun!"

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Sheriff Lick, staring in blank amazement at the bunch of schoolboys who had so suddenly appeared from nowhere.

The man in the flour-bag gave a startled bound in his saddle. No more than the sheriff had he dreamed that anyone else was at hand.

His back was to the juniors as they came, his face twirled round towards them, his eyes, wildly startled, flashing through the eyeholes in the flour-bag, his hand lifting with the revolver in it.

He did not obey the command to put his hands up, though six revolvers were all aimed at him.

His intention was clear—to fight desperately; and in a split second more the Bounder would have fired before he could bring his gun to bear.

But in that second Sheriff Lick acted promptly. The sheriff's gun was lying somewhere in the bushes in the timber island, but his quirt was in his hand, and he slashed with it.

That swift and prompt slash crashed on the trail-thief's gun arm, smashing it down. The revolver whirled away in the air and dropped into the trail.

Almost in the same instant the desperate man was dashing spurs to his horse.

But he had no chance.

Harry Wharton was at the horse's head, grabbing the reins; Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry laid hold of the man himself; the Bounder jammed a revolver at him, his eyes blazing over it. And the sheriff's heavy and sinewy hand grasped at him and fastened on him.

The horse pranced wildly as the man in the flour-bag was dragged from the saddle, crashing on the earth.

His resistance was hopeless, for, though the juniors hesitated to shoot, if they could avoid it, they certainly would have pulled trigger had he broken loose and got clear. But he did not break loose—he could not! He struggled wildly, desperately, madly—but in vain! Sheriff Lick alone was more than a match for him in a struggle, and the six juniors all had hold of him, and he had not the ghost of a chance. But he resisted wildly to the last gasp.

His horse and the sheriff's horse were left unregarded in the trail. For several minutes there was a struggling heap on the earth.

Then the struggle ended, as it had to end. The man in the flour-bag, spent and exhausted, grasped by every limb, lay helpless in the hands of his captors.

Vernon-Smith whipped off the belt that fastened the cloak, the hold-up man's arms were wrenched behind him, and the Bounder buckled the belt round them, making him a helpless prisoner.

He lay panting.

"By the great horned toad!" gasped Sheriff Lick, his eyes dancing. "I'll say we got that hoodlum! I'll tell all Texas we got him!"

"Do you still think he's the Rio Kid?" gasped Bob Cherry, with a breathless grin.

"I guess I want to see his frontispiece!" said the sheriff.

He stooped over the panting man and dragged off the flour-bag over his head. A hard, reckless face, crimson with rage and exertion, was revealed. The sheriff gazed at it.

"Jad Blake!" he breathed.

Blake spat out curses!

"You got me!" he said in tones of savage rancour. "You got me, dog-

gone you!" He panted with breathless rage.

"Blake!" repeated the sheriff. "Poker Blake!" He stared at the bound man, panting in the grass. "Jad Blake, like that fat gink allowed—and I never listened to him! Jad Blake, like the Rio Kid allowed back there in the timber, and I figured that he was stringing me along! Blake, you pesky piccan—"

There was a curse from the panting rancher.

"Carry me home to die!" said Mr. Lick. "I reckoned it wasn't the Kid, and couldn't be after what he did back there in the timber—but I sure did not figure that it was you, Jad Blake! A guy I've knowed and rode with—Why, you doggoned scallawag, you've rode with me, hunting the Kid and shouting out that he was the flour-bag man! And I never suspicioned you."

"I guess you never would, but for them young geeks!" said Blake, with a glare of bitter hatred at the schoolboys.

"Nope!" said the sheriff slowly. "Mebbe not! But I'll say, Jad Blake, you sure are some scallawag! You shot up Bud Carter for them dollars—and you put it on the Rio Kid, using his name! I'll say you get my goat, Blake!"

Only a savage oath answered him, and the sheriff turned away in disgust.

"Stick that guy on his cayuse, you 'uns," he said. "I reckoned I wanted to take the Kid back to Packsaddle with me—but I sure am taking the guy in the flour-bag that used his name! You got it coming to you, Blake, you doggoned piccan!"

Harry Wharton & Co. lifted the rancher to his feet and packed him on his horse. The Bounder tied his feet to the stirrups with a length of trail rope.

The sheriff mounted and took his reins.

The Bounder grinned.

"Our win!" he remarked. "Get the horses and we'll see them safe to Packsaddle."

The juniors ran for their horses and led them out of the thicket. They mounted and dashed after the sheriff and his prisoner.

Blake, bound to his horse, rode in grim silence, his chin sunk on his breast in savage and bitter despair. His crimes had come home to him at last; his trickery and duplicity were at an end; the game was up for the rancher of the Circle O. He had played a reckless and desperate game; but it was up at last and retribution was at hand. In black and bitter silence he rode into the cow town, the sheriff leading his horse.

There was a buzz of surprised voices in the street of Packsaddle as they rode in, followed by the schoolboys. A buzzing crowd gathered and followed to the calaboose.

Harry Wharton & Co. stayed to see the door of the calaboose close on Jad Blake, and then they rode on the homeward trail. They rode back to Kicking Cayuse in a very cheery bunch.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Homeward Bound!

I SAY, you fellows!"

"Buck up, Bunter!"

"I can't!"

"Why can't you, you fat ass?"

"I'm ill," said Bunter sadly.

It was the last day at Kicking Cayuse. Bright and early that morning the Grey-
(Continued on page 28.)

Gather Round, Chums, for Another Interesting Tour with—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE

THE DAILY ROUND. 5.30 p.m. TIME for TEA.

(1)

Where shall Bunter go for tea?
That is most important!
He is pretty sure to be
Somewhere where he oughtn't.
Though the tuckshop, opened wide,
Flows with milk and honey,
He can never go inside,
Since he has no money.

(2)

Wharton's lot have gone to pay
Highcliffe School a visit;
Mauly's also gone away—
That's not pally, is it?
From the feed in Study 4
Bunter soon departed;
Smithy hoofed him through the door
Just before it started.

(3)

Squiff has gone to Chunkley's lounge,
So, alas, has Toddy!
Bunter doubts if he can scrounge
Tea from anybody!
Fellows kick him one and all,
Never was such slaughter,
Till he goes to tea in Hall—
Doorsteps and dishwater!



A WEEKLY BUDGET
OF FACT AND FUN

By
THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER



THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET

Mr. PAUL PONTIFEX
PROUT,

Master of the Fifth.

P is for PROUT—Paul Pontifex,
To whom we pay our best respects!
His stately stroll is full of swank
Just like a galleon—or a tank!
They call him "Pompous" on the sly,
But not when he is passing by.



He's often fussy, and no doubt
He likes to throw his weight about.
But still we think, upon the whole,
He's really not a bad old soul.
High in the Rockies, years ago,
He slaughtered bears, or tells us so,
And his beloved rifle still
He keeps and treasures with a will;
Though time has touched his form and
face
Alas, to somewhat riper grace!

ANSWER to PUZZLE

Sight travels quicker than sound.
Rake would be first, then Kipps, then
Redwing.

GREYFRIARS GRINS

We are hoping to hold a Six-Day
Bicycle Race at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch
will bike behind the class during lessons
on the track. Fortunately the scholars
will be all bending over conveniently.

A runaway horse knocked Carne into
a duck-pond last Friday. And yet they
say animals have no intelligence.

When Fisher T. Fish is a prefect (if
ever), he will sentence fags to a fine of
two shillings or six on the bags.

Dicky Nugent is taking up kite-flying.
We hope the kite won't take up Dicky
Nugent.

PUZZLE PAR

Redwing took Rake and Vivian
for a sail in his boat. They
watched Redclyff Fort firing big
guns at a distant target. At each
shot Redwing heard the report,
Rake saw the flash, and Kipps
saw the shell hit the water. Who
first knew the gun had fired?

Answer at foot of column 2.

Mr. Mimble wants to know how to
get rid of snails in his garden. Has he
ever tried Wun Lung?

Don Ogilvy, training for the school
sports, put up a splendid trial perform-
ance. He did the 100 yards in 7
seconds, and cleared a high jump of
22 feet. Unfortunately, he won't have
Farmer Cobb's bull to help him at the
sports.

In Chunkley's Stores the eggs are put
into various boxes labelled with the day
on which they were laid. At Mrs.
Mimble's the labels show the year, of
course.

Mauly was awake in class this morn-
ing. He said he was too tired to go to
sleep.

AFTER SCHOOL HOURS The Laws of Cricket as played in the Second Form

1. THE GAME shall be between two
sides
Of six—or less—or more.
You don't count no-balls, byes, or
wides,
And each man keeps his score.
2. THE UMPIRE—next man in, of
course—
Must be prepared to shout,
And always takes the bat by force
If batsmen won't go out.
3. THE OVER is as short or long
As it may be required,
The bowler often going strong
Until his arm is tired.
4. THE BATSMAN starts when he
succeeds
In collaring the bat;
To get him out one only needs
A voice to shout "How zat?"
5. THE BOWLER may refuse to bowl
If "cads" don't play the game!
And if he keeps his self-control
He seldom gets the blame.
6. THE FIELDSMEN gather in a
crowd
To have a private fight,
In which some kicking is allowed,
But fieldsmen shouldn't bite!
7. THE INNINGS ends when all the
men
Have joined the fight and said:
"Yah! Cads! Cheats! Rotten
brutes!"—and then
Play something else instead!

friars fellows had turned out—with the exception of Billy Bunter.

Bill and the punchers had gathered to give them a send off. All was ready—excepting Bunter!

Harry Wharton & Co. had enjoyed their long holiday in Texas. They were sorry to leave the ranch; sorry to say good-bye to Bill and the punchers; sorry to say a last farewell to the Rio Kid, whom they had visited once more in his hideout on Squaw Mountain to give him the news of the capture of the flour-bag man. But, on the whole, they were rather glad of the prospect of getting back to the old school, greeting the fellows in the old quad, and ragging in the Remove passage. It had been a great time. Still, they were looking forward to England, home, and beauty! But Bunter, it seemed, wasn't.

The Rio Kid was gone from his hideout on the mountain. Perhaps it was just as well for Jād Blake that he had fallen into the hands of the law, as otherwise he certainly would have had to reckon with the Kid. Before the day came for the Greyfriars party to hit the home trail the Kid was gone, and they did not expect ever to see him again, though they were not likely to forget him.

Now the day of departure had dawned, and they were ready to start—the buck-board was ready, the horses were ready, the Famous Five were ready, the Bunder was ready—everything and everybody was ready, excepting William George Bunter. Bunter, when they looked for him, was discovered in bed, apparently with no intention of turning out.

"Mind, I'm really ill," said Bunter. "I'm not gammoning, just because I'd rather not go back to school, you know. I fancy I've caught a chill. I've got a touch of pneumonia in my leg."

"Oh crikey!"

"I'm not the fellow to slack in bed if there's nothing the matter with me, as you fellows know."

"Help!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Well, you see how it stands," said Bunter. "I can't travel—I really can't! I can't even get up."

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "If you're really too weak to get out of bed, Bunter—"

"Yes, old chap?"

"We'll tip over the bed."

"Wha-a-t?"

"All hands on deck!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, leggo that bed!"

Bump!

"Ow! Wow!" roared Bunter, as he rolled on the floor. "I say, you beasts! Oh crikey! I say—yarooop! I say, I can't get dressed, and—Wharrer you going to do with that pillow, Smithy, you beast?"

"Wallop you till you're dressed!"

"I tell you I'm ill—yarooop! Fearfully ill! I can't—yarooop! I mean, I'm going to get dressed! Beasts! Yah! Rotter! Steppit! I'm dressing, ain't I?" yelled Bunter.

Billy Bunter found that he was able to dress, after all. In fact, he dressed quite quickly. Ill as he was, he seemed

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him. Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

ONE of the many letters I have received this week comes from Albert Richings (Stoneham). Albert tells me that he is seven years old, and wonders if he is the youngest reader of the MAGNET. I don't think there are many readers younger than you, chum, anyway. Nevertheless, you write an excellent letter for your age, and if I'm any judge, you've got a great future ahead of you. I hope you will be a reader of the MAGNET for many years to come!

The next letter comes from W. J. Kidd (Lanes), who tells me how eagerly he looks forward to reading the MAGNET every Saturday morning. This particular chum has a "grouse," however. "Why not put the illustrations in the MAGNET opposite the reading matter they depict?" he asks. I'm afraid this could not be done, chum, for obvious reasons. When Mr. Frank Richards writes a Greyfriars yarn, he doesn't interest himself particularly in the illustrative side of it, or at what intervals passages for illustrations should be worked in. Were he to do this, he would, naturally enough, rather lose interest in the plot. You must remember that the "making-up" of a paper is an art in itself. Whatever would the old paper look like, for instance, if there were two illustrations facing each other and then a gap of about ten pages, or all the

illustrations in the first half of the paper? As a matter of fact, your complaint brings to my mind an incident that happened only a week or two back. A lad boarded a bus on which I was a passenger. As soon as he had settled himself comfortably in his seat, out came a copy of the MAGNET. What the lad did first, was to glance through the paper, look at all the illustrations, read the descriptive matter underneath each picture, and then commence reading the school story. When I pick up a paper, I do likewise, and I think most people do the same. No, chum, I do not think your complaint quite holds water. Still, as you say yourself, there's no paper to equal the MAGNET for quality—so why worry?

About next week's story? I know you are all anxious to know, so I am coming to that now!

"BUNTER THE HYPNOTIST!"

Sounds good, doesn't it? It is good, too, you can take it from me! Power is a thing that has never yet come Bunter's way. With power in his hands he visualises himself in the position of dictator—able to make his schoolfellows jump to his bidding. And what wonderful prospects this promises for a fellow like Bunter—a free feed here and a loan there! And the secret of it all can be obtained for the price of a few coppers! Laugh? You'll be tickled to death when you read this amusing and amazing yarn in next Saturday's MAGNET. You cannot afford to miss it—it's the scream of the week! As for the shorter features in this issue—well, that goes without saying—they're good!

YOUR EDITOR.

to recover sufficiently to pack away a remarkably good breakfast. He seemed unwilling to start from the rancho, but the sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith lifting his right boot seemed to banish his unwillingness, and he started.

"Beasts!" he yapped, as he took his seat in the buckboard.

But there was a box of candy in the buckboard, and Bunter took comfort.

The buckboard rolled away; the juniors rode with it, and Bill rode with the juniors, to see them as far as Pack-saddle—"riding herd" over the Greyfriars party for the last time.

Cracking quirts, and the roar of six-guns fired in the air gave them a send off from the Kicking Cayuse outfit.

At Packsaddle they said good-bye to Bill, who wrung their hands in turn, with a wring that bade fair to wring them off. And Andy Jones' hack rolled away with them for Prairie Bend.

The next morning they were on the

cars, and as the train pulled out, they looked back on the cow country they were leaving. And then Bob Cherry gave a sudden shout:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"The Kid!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

They waved and shouted at the horse-man, who rode in the grass by the railroad track—handsome, sunburnt, in goatskin chaps, and a stetson hat encircled by silver nuggets. And the Kid, pulling in the black-muzzled mustang, waved his stetson, and shouted:

"Adios, hombres!"

"Good-bye, Kid!"

The Kid, grinning cheerily, waved, and the Greyfriars fellows waved back. The train rushed on, and the Kid was lost to sight. The cars boomed on, carrying the chums of the Remove swiftly on their long journey to home, and Greyfriars.

THE END.

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When Answering Advertisements Please Mention This Paper.

For Molly Birchmall's Sake!

An Amusing and Amazing School Story of Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's.

By DICKY NUGENT

"We shall have to put on our best manners for Miss Molly!"

Frank Fearless, of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, made that remark; and Jolly and Merry and Bright expressed their agreement with a hearty "Yes, rather!"

It was Wednesday—a half-holiday at St. Sam's—and the heroes of the Fourth had assembled at the school boathouse. It was a hot day, and in the bathing-pool nearby many St. Sam's fellows were sporting themselves in the water. But Jack Jolly & Co. had other plans. They proposed to pole a punt to a pleasant place where they could partake of a peaceful picknick.

They had invited Doctor Birchmall's charming dawter to

join them in their outing, and Miss Molly had consented to join.

Fearless glanced at his watch rather anxiously.

"Time's getting short," he said. "I hope she won't be long."

"Here she comes," said Jack Jolly, at that moment. Then his joy gave place to a wisp of dismay. "Few! Look who's with her!"

"The Head!" gasped Merry and Bright.

Frank Fearless' jaw dropped.

"I wonder why she's bringing the old josses here?" he mused.

Fearless did not have to speculate long on that point. Doctor Birchmall explained his presence as soon as he reached the landing-stage.

"Good-afternoon,

boys!" he grinned. "My dawter, Miss Molly, tells me that you have invited her to a picknick up the river, so I have come along to look after her."

"Oh crums!"

"Personally, I am not particularly partial to picknicks," went on the Head, with a leer. "I prefer to do my eating indoors if I am given the choice. But I am willing on this occasion to eat in the open for Miss Molly's sake!"

"Oh crikey!"

The chums of the Fourth looked at each other in sheer dismay.

"It's awfully kind of you and all that, sir," said Jack Jolly. "But

we wouldn't dream of spoiling your afternoon for you."

"Oh, that's all right, Jolly," grinned Doctor Birchmall, who was dressed for the occasion in a spotless pair of white flannel trousers. "I have quite reconciled myself to it now."

Miss Molly, whose shapely brow was slightly puckered, tossed her pretty head.

"You shouldn't have troubled to come, pop," she trilled. "I am sure your time is much too valuable to be wasted in picknicks on the river."

"It's quite true what you say, my dear," replied Doctor Birchmall. "But valu-

able or not, I am quite willing to waste it for your sake. Is everything ready, boys?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

The Head's hawk-like eyes fixed on the hamper that stood on the landing-stage.

"I sincerely hope you have brought enough grub to go round," he said, with a frown.

"All serene, sir!" sighed Fearless. "We've brought enough for a dozen. So if we eat enough for six between us, there ought to be just sufficient left to satisfy you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, then, let us make a start," said the Head, discreetly ignoring Frank's pointed remark.

"Seeing that I am the oldest, I will step in first. I must take care not to soil my trousers."

With these words, the Head carefully stepped down into the punt and sought out the most comfortable seat.

While he was doing so, Jack Jolly, who had been gazing across at the

bathing-pool, gave a low whistle, eagerly seeking some for getting rid of the Head, he had had a sudden brainstorm.

With eyes gleaming, the kaptin of the Fourth fitted away from the boathouse and hurried across to Tubby Barrell, of the Fourth, who was standing on the edge of the bathing-pool in his swimming costume, reflectively gazing into the water as though undecided whether to plunge in or not.

To whisper something in Tubby's ear was the work of a moment. Then Jolly returned to the landing-stage, looking a little more optimistic.

Doctor Birchmall had settled himself down amongst the cushions to his satisfaction at last.

"This will do for me, my boys," he grinned. "Molly, my dear! It's your turn to step in!"

"Right you are, pop!"

But before Molly Birchmall had time to set her dainty foot in the punt, a very surprising thing happened.

Suddenly, with a roar like thunder, a tremendous tidal wave appeared from the direction of the bathing-pool and a grate mountain of water raced towards the boathouse!

There was no time to do anything in this amazing crisis. Long before anyone could go to the rescue, the tidal

"Ow-ow-ow! My trowsis!"

It was a wild shriek from Doctor Birchmall—a shriek of despair.

As the tidal wave rushed on, the Head was revealed still seated in the punt, but looking more like a drowned rat than a headmaster of St. Sam's!



wave came crashing against the side of the river and poured a grate torrent of water over the punt in which the Head was sitting!

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

"My trowsis!" he cried, in hart-broken accents. "My brand new white flannel trowsis! Look at 'em! They will never be the same again!"

"Were they a very expensive pair, sir?" asked Jolly.

"Expensive? I should think they were!" groaned the Head. "They cost me seven-and-six-pence at a jumble sale. And now they are damaged almost beyond repair!"

"It's hard cheese, sir,"

and no mistake," said Fearless with a wink at his pals. "I suppose you won't be able to come to the picknick now, sir?"

"Impossible, Fearless—quite impossible, I fear," answered the Head decidedly. "I am sorry to disappoint you."

"Oh, don't mention it, sir!"

"I am sure pop won't mind me going on my own," tinkled Miss Molly, with a sly smile at her father. "Will you, pop?"

"Oh, all right, then!" growled the Head. And he climbed back on to the landing-stage and galloped away at top speed in the direction of St. Sam's.

While Fearless and Merry and Bright were getting out another punt from the boathouse, Jolly hopped across to the bathing-pool. There he found Tubby splashing about in the water.

"Thanks awfully for helping us, Tubby," he grinned. "Your high dive did just what I thought it would do. It made a proper tidal wave and it fairly soaked the Head's trowsis! Would you care to accept a small cash gift in reckonition of your signal service?"

"No, thanks, old chap!" was Tubby's reply. "It was a pleasure to do it—for Molly Birchmall's sake!"

YOUR EDITOR CALLING

"Why don't you get a new lot of masters?" asked an anonymous reader, in a letter I have just received. "In my opinion," he adds, "the Greyfriars masters are a frowsty, old-fashioned set of frumps who ought to have been pensioned off years ago. Take my tip and get rid of them!"

Rather a tall order for a Remove chap, what? The Temporary Editor of the "Greyfriars Herald" wields a lot of power; but his power does not extend to deciding the fate of the beaks that reign over him!

In any case, I am not altogether sure that I should be willing to take my correspondent's tip and get rid of them even if it did lie in my power!

Taken as a whole, the masters at Greyfriars do admittedly lag a little behind the times. I decline to go all the way with my reader in calling them a "frowsty, old-fashioned set of frumps"; but when I consider Prout, Capper, Quelch, and Twigg, for instance, I can hardly deny that they are of a somewhat antique vintage.

But is that any reason for getting rid of them? I very much doubt it!

Old-fashioned as they may be, they possess solid virtues that would probably be lacking in the 1938 breed. They frown a little on new ideas in education and they have a deep distrust of introducing fancy subjects into the curriculum—and they don't believe in making lessons a light-hearted rag. But if they insist on sticking to the old subjects, they do at least teach them thoroughly. And many quite brainy people still believe that this is better than merely dipping into a wider range of modern subjects!

From the point of view of personal comfort, I should much prefer a breezy, up-to-date master to Quelch. It would be an agreeable change to be taught by a chap who called us by our Christian names and livened up the lesson with frequent jokes and wisecracks, and perhaps an occasional cinema film. But in fairness to Quelch, I must admit that he does get results which he could hardly hope to attain by the new methods.

Apart from which, strange as it may seem, I like Quelch! Most of the Remove would say the same. We should be sorry to see him go. A good many fellows in other Forms feel the same about their own beaks.

So, while thanking my correspondent for his suggestion, I can have no hand in getting a new lot of masters at Greyfriars to replace the existing staff.

Meet you all again next week, chums!

DICK RAKE.

Since joining an organisation known as the Blueshirts Hiking Club, Peter Todd has had three of his shirts changed to the club colour. His loyalty is such that he is willing to "dye" for the cause!

OLD-STYLE SCRAP REVIVES MEMORIES

Wingate Recalls Stirring Times

The rare and refreshing prospect of a slogging match brought a huge crowd to the old fighting-ground behind the chapel after school last Tuesday. Bulstrode and Russell, the principals, had agreed to settle a difference in the time-honoured way without troubling about gloves, and everybody was very excited about it. What the difference was nobody knew, but Bulstrode and Russell seemed full of loathing for each other and there was every chance of a gory battle before honour was satisfied.

The arrangement was supposed to be a secret, shared only by Bulstrode and Russell, their respective seconds, Bol-sover major and Ogilvy, and Lord Mauleverer, who had been asked to see fair play and generally act as M.C. and head cook and bottle-washer. But the secret leaked out, as secrets do. When Bulstrode and Russell arrived at the battlefield, it was to find half the school already in attendance with newcomers still trickling in steadily.

No sooner had Bulstrode punched Russell on the nose and Russell punched Bulstrode on the chin than there was a commotion in the crowd and Wingate appeared. And the next blows the principals received were at the rear—from Wingate's ashplant.

Needless to say, the affair came to a sudden end at that moment; and Bulstrode and



Russell were so disgusted that they didn't even arrange for a further meeting in the gym under proper rules.

Later, in his study, Wingate admitted to a "Greyfriars Herald" reporter that in a way he would have liked to let the scrap go on for a little while just to see what happened.

"It wouldn't have done really, of course," he said. "Bare knuckles are frowned on nowadays, and quite rightly, too. All the same, fellows used to fight without gloves in the old days, and it didn't seem to do them much harm."

"When I was a kid in the Second, there was a regular epidemic of blood-thirsty bare-knuckle fights behind the chapel. I saw one myself that lasted a good quarter of an hour without a single break. Two Fifth Formers they were—Thompson major and Pettigrew. They must have been pretty tough specimens, for although they slogged each other all that time, they both looked as fresh as paint the following day!"

"On another occasion an Upper Fourth man gave a Shell chap such a battering that he had to be carried away on a stretcher. Even so, the Shell chap turned up in his place in the Form-room next morning—looking rather the worse for wear, but quite cheery about it!"

"Great days! Still, on the whole, I think it's just as well they changed. One can be manly without being brutal about it, after all!"

Quite a philosopher at times, is old Wingate!

While he was doing so, Jack Jolly, who had been gazing across at the

HAVE YOU GOT AN INFERIORITY COMPLEX?

Asks TOM BROWN

It's very important to find out whether or not you have an Inferiorty Complex.

An Inferiorty Complex, in case you don't know it, is a lack of self-confidence brought about by the feeling that you're not half so good as other fellows. If you have one, the best thing is to get rid of it. To do this, you have to see a Psycho-analyst. It's no good asking me what a Psycho-analyst is because I haven't found out myself yet. Probably he gets rid of your Inferiorty Complex with a fly-swatter; but don't take this as authentic!

The first thing to do, anyway, is to find out if you are suffering from the wretched thing. After studying lots of magazine articles on the subject, I have devised

a test to enable Remove chaps to detect it easily. Here it is. All that you have to do is answer all of the following questions with a straightforward "yes" or "no."

1. When Quelch calls on you to construe, do you hold on to your desk for support?
2. When you are in the loo, and the spectators yell "Catch!" do you usually let the ball slip through your fingers?
3. Do you blush to the roots of your hair and stammer out inarticulate sounds on meeting girls from Cliff House School?
4. If a prefect greets you with "Half-a-minute, kid!" do you turn deadly white and sway in your tracks?
5. On hearing catcalls from village boys, do

you cringe and hope for an earthquake to give them something else but yourself to think about?

6. Do you often shoot peas at prefects from a secret hiding-place?

7. When the Head tells the school "I want to make a personal appeal to every boy—" do your knees knock and beads of perspiration stand out on your brow?

8. Do you gnash your teeth with shame when you have to introduce other fellows to your people?

If the answer to the above questions is "yes" four times or more, you can bank on it that you are suffering from a bad dose of Inferiorty Complex. Rush off and get it swatted at once!

If you answer "yes" only two times, there's hope for you yet.

If you answer "no" eight times, you're not playing fair!

That will be all about your Inferiorty Complex this week.

(And next week, too, and a good many weeks after that!—Ed.)

GREYFRIARS FROM FRESH ANGLES

16. From the Housekeeper's Sanctum

By MRS. KEBBLE

The Greyfriars that I see most of the time is a Greyfriars of aches and ailments, torn clothing and socks in need of repair!

From morn till night a seemingly endless procession passes in and out of my little room. Even while classes are on, I get a number who have been sent to me by their Form-masters to have their temperature taken or to be treated for some minor accident or indisposition.

I suppose there are many folk who would not look on mine as an entertaining job. But I

get quite a lot of quiet amusement out of it myself. Being responsible for the emergency clothing repairs brings me into touch with the biggest scapegraces of the school, and many of the laugh I've had over their mishaps and misadventures.

My most frequent visitors are Third and Second Form boys. It's a rare thing indeed for a day to pass without Tubb and Bolter and Nugent minor and Bunter minor looking in for something or other. Remove boys call less often. They have reached the age when it is looked on as rather childish to haunt

the housekeeper's room. Upper Fourth and Shell boys I see more rarely still. As for the big fellow of the Fifth and Sixth—well, I declare it's quite an event to have one of them come to see me!

It's all a matter of custom. Like so many other things at Greyfriars, I think they all like me just the same, and sometimes I fancy that the older boys would be glad to call for a gossip with me and to tease my cat like they used to do when they were in the lower Forms—if they could do it without loss of prestige!

I still look on them all with the same affection, anyhow—young or old. And it gives me a lot of satisfaction to know that my long hours of work do something to the health and happiness of the boys of Greyfriars.