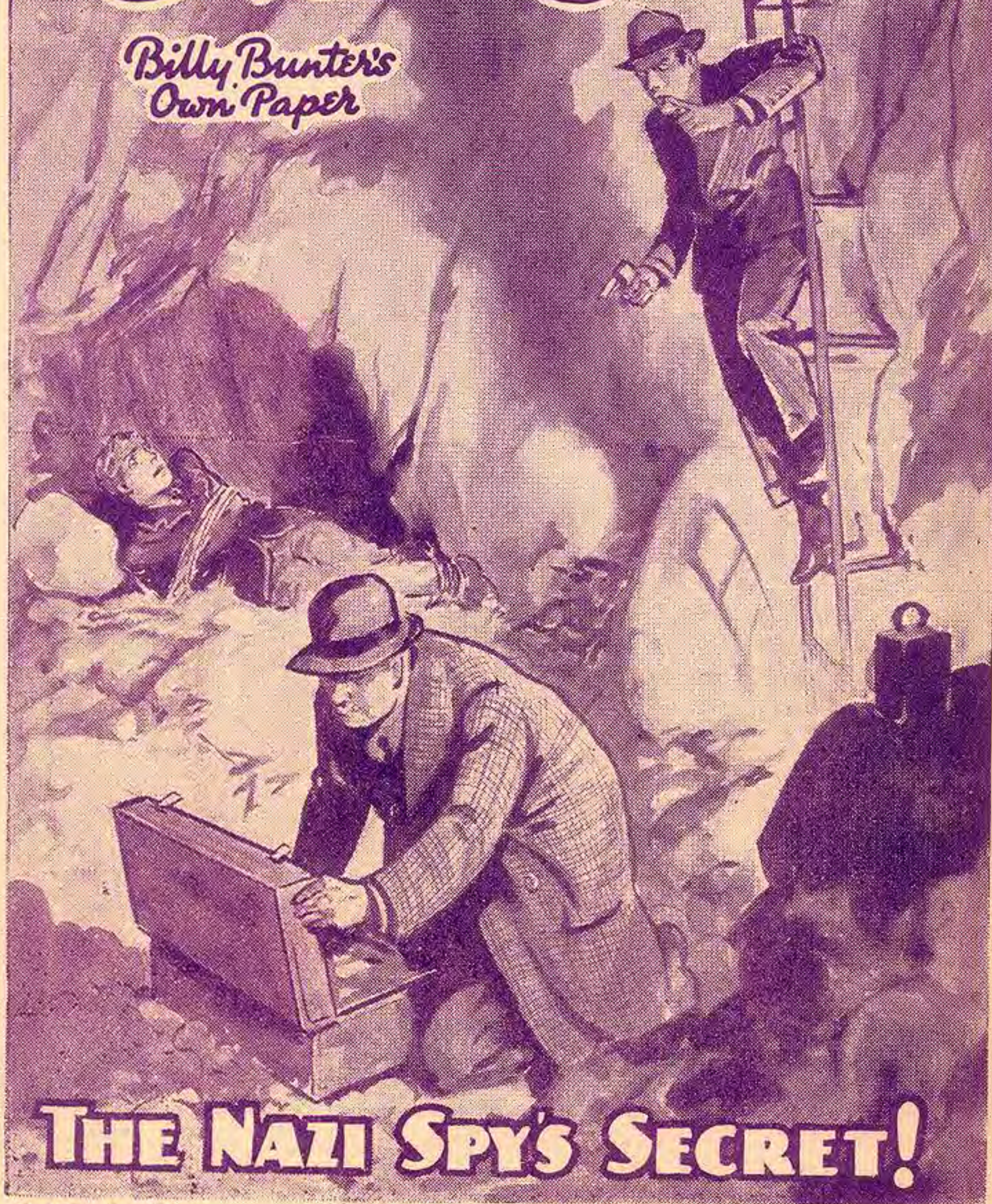


THE
MAGNET

Thrill-Packed Adventure Yarn of Greyfriars—Inside!

The Magnet^{2D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



THE NAZI SPY'S SECRET!

By B-B CH.-Y!

PASSED BY THE CENSOR!

I RECENTLY received a letter from my father, who is doing military service Somewhere in England. He cannot tell me where he is or what he's doing; but he says he is billeted in a village which he calls X, and shares his quarters with a colonel named B.

"Sorry I cannot go into details, Robert," he says, "but we mustn't give the censor a lot of unnecessary work, you know."

He's quite right, and in my reply to his letter, I remembered the hint. This is what I wrote:

"G. College,
Near F.,
Somewhere in England.

"Dear P.,—Thanks very much for your letter, and I am glad to hear you are at X, as I believe that is a very pretty place. I am getting along pretty well, and Mr. Q., my Form-master, is pleased with my work—at times. I also have a place Somewhere in the Footer Team, and was lucky enough to score a goal against S. J. last week.

"The cake the mater sent on my birthday was snaffled by a burglar named W. G. B., but he tells me it was a very good one, so the mater will be pleased to hear it. I have just spent my last bob at a shop kept by Uncle C., Somewhere in England, so if you can spare any more, it will be thankfully received.

The Greyfriars Herald

"I have given your kind regards to my chums, whom I will call W. and N. and B. and H. S. (who is also known as I.). They send their best respects, and hope they may have a future opportunity of spending another holiday at our home, Somewhere in Dorset.

"I am sorry to say that I have just been caught sliding down the banisters, and have been whopped by a bully named L., of the Sixth, who gave me six Somewhere on my Anatomy. I must now hurry off to balance a pan of ink on his study door.

"Your affectionate son,
"R."

There! I hope the censor won't find fault with that!

Comic Comments!

An article on sound-waves talks about the curious high-pitched note of a thin cane swishing through the air.

There's usually another curious high-pitched note when it lands!

Peter Todd says. "I should think it makes a fellow feel wealthy to ride a horse."

Well, it makes him feel he's better off!

POETS' PARADE**SARCASM
From BOLSOVER!**

(Bolsy has actually burst into rhyme about our footer eleven. Such an event deserves to be immortalised in print.—ED.)

A PART from Field and Bull and Brown,
Our footer team's defence is good;
Each one of these is a silly clown,
And be left out of it they should!

Apart from Cherry, Penfold, Todd,
The half-back line is pretty strong;
And other fellows think it odd
That they can play the fool so long.

Apart from Wharton, Hurree Singh,
Linley, Smithy, and Ogilvy,
Our forward line is just the thing,
And gives a lot of fun to we!

With hearty laughter they make us yell,
As we their curious antics note.
They cannot play the game very well,
But, crikey, how they play the goat!

We have no captain; that's the trouble!
There's Wharton, but he's all gas!
His views would make a fellow blub,
For he is just a silly ass!

Of course, they sometimes win a match,
And give the chaps a fit.
Oh, take me off to Colney Hatch,
(Treasure!—ED.)
I cannot bear to think of it!

BITE, BUDDIES, BITE! A Laughable Story in Picture Form

"Try your luck!" squeaks Bunter
"Bite the apple and it's yours!"

Two unsuspecting Babes of the Second Form
fall for the "bait."

"Ow!" wail the youngsters, as their
heads meet with a sickening thud.



"He, he, he!" cackles Bunter. "This is funny!" But the Babes think otherwise.

What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander! They duck Bunter in return!

To complete the good work, they give Bunter the apple—in the neck!

BATTLE OF WITS BETWEEN A GREYFRIARS JUNIOR AND A DESPERATE
GESTAPO AGENT!

The NAZI SPY'S SECRET!

By FRANK
RICHARDS



NOT LEGAL TENDER!

"ANY for me?"

"Nix!"

Grunt, from Billy Bunter.

Five fellows were picking up letters from the hall table at East-cliff Lodge that sunny morning.

There was, as it happened, a letter each for Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh.

There was none for Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter blinked over the hall table as eagerly as he was wont to blink over the letter-rack at Greyfriars School in morning break.

Bunter had been expecting a postal order when the school broke up for Easter. It hadn't come! No doubt he hoped that it had followed him on. If it had, it had had plenty of time to reach him, even allowing for the delays of war-time; for the Easter holidays were now near their end. But still, it seemed it hadn't come!

Blinking over the hall table was in vain. Neither Bunter's little round eyes, nor his big round spectacles, could spot a letter that was not there!

He blinked round at the Famous Five.

"Anything good in your letters, you fellows?" he asked.

By which Bunter meant cash!

Other good things, of course, might come by post. But cash was rather an urgent consideration to a fellow who depended financially on what he could borrow from his pals.

"Yes, rather!" answered Harry Wharton. "This is from my Aunt Amy!"

"What's in it?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"She says this fine spring weather is doing her good."

"You—you—you silly ass!" hissed Bunter. "Is there a tip in it? Is there a tip in yours, Nugent?"

"Yes!" answered Frank.

Billy Bunter stared, as if paralysed, as the German sprang at Sir William, the loaded stick upraised to strike!

"Oh, good! How much?"

"The mater advises me to change my shoes and socks, if I get my feet wet on the beach!"

"You thumping chump, is that a tip?" howled Bunter.

"Yes, and a jolly good one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snort from Bunter! He was not interested in tips on the subject of health.

"What's in yours, Johnny?" he asked. "Is that a pound note? By gum! I say, how would you like to lend me ten bob, and take my postal order when it comes?"

"Just as you like!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Remind me—when the postal order comes. Mind you don't forget."

"You silly idiot! Have you got a note, Bob?"

"Yes! Anybody like a walk to Ramsgate this morning?" asked Bob Cherry. "I'm going there now I've got this note."

"How much is it for?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Ten shillings."

"Well, look here, that ain't much to go to Ramsgate on!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm expecting a postal order for ten shillings. What about lending it to me, and I'll let you have my postal order this afternoon?"

"Well, after all, I'm in no hurry to go to Ramsgate!" said Bob thoughtfully. "If you really want the note—"

Billy Bunter stretched out a fat hand.

"Here you are then!" said Bob cheerily.

He laid a paper in the outstretched fat hand.

Billy Bunter blinked at it.

He blinked in astonishment. On that paper appeared the totally uninteresting communication:

"J. SHORT,
HIGH STREET, RAMSGATE.
BOOTS AND SHOES Repaired.
To Soling and Heeling One Pair
Shoes 10s.
The Shoes are now ready."

Billy Bunter blinked, and blinked, at that note from the shoe repairer in Ramsgate! Then he blinked at Bob Cherry.

"What's this?" he hooted.

"The note I had!" explained Bob affably. "It's a note from the shoe-maker in Ramsgate—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"It's for ten shillings, as I said! And you're more than welcome to it, old fat man!" said Bob heartily. "The fact is, I'd rather have a postal order—"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Billy Bunter had no use for that note! He crumpled it in a fat hand and hurled it at Bob Cherry. Then he rolled away, snorting!

Bob caught the crumpled missile as it whizzed. He uncrumpled it, and slipped it into his pocket.

"I thought Bunter would let me have that note back!" he said.

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

"And he has! He doesn't often settle up so quickly as this—"

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HARRY WHARTON & CO.
in Another Exciting School-
boy Adventure.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As Bunter doesn't want the note I'll trot over to Ramsgate and get those shoes. Sure you don't want it, Bunter?"

"Yah!"

Bunter was sure that he did not want that note!

The Famous Five took it with them on a walk to Ramsgate—leaving the Owl of the Remove glaring after them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

THE MAN ON THE CLIFF!

CRACK!

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

Loud and sharp, and seemingly quite close at hand, sounded the report of a firearm.

Harry Wharton & Co. halted and looked round them in surprise.

In the war days the sound of firing was far from uncommon. Eastcliff Lodge, where the chums of Greyfriars were putting in the Easter holidays, being on the south-east coast, echoed almost every day to the sound of gunfire—and almost as often the windows rattled to an explosion out at sea. Many a time the juniors had heard the spitting of machine-guns in the clouds over their heads.

But this sudden report was nothing of the kind. It was a pistol-shot, coming like the crack of a whip.

Looking round them, the juniors could see nobody.

They were on the road between the estate of Sir William Bird and the cliffs that overhung the beach far below. No one was to be seen on the road or on the steep grass verge that lay between it and the precipitous edge of the cliffs.

"Who the dickens is potting at what?" asked Bob, as he stared round him. "That was a jolly old gun—"

"Some ass down on the beach, potting at seagulls, perhaps," said Johnny Bull.

"It sounded closer than that," said Harry Wharton, puzzled. "The beach is a long way down here."

Crack!

The sharp report sounded again.

This time the Famous Five were able to place it. It came ringing up from under the edge of the cliffs, but so sharply that it was clear that the marksman was not so far away as the beach deep below.

Apparently, it was someone clinging to the face of the steep cliff, out of their sight, who was indulging in pistol practice. It could hardly have been some unthinking person potting at seagulls, for there was not a gull to be seen near the land.

Bob Cherry, leaving the road, clambered on the grass verge, which extended at that point about six yards to the cliff-edge. He threw himself on his hands and knees in the grass and crawled to the edge to look over.

"Don't do a nose-dive, old man!" called out Johnny.

"Fathead!" answered Bob, over his shoulder.

It required a little nerve to crawl to the steep edge and look over into yawning space, where the cliff dropped away almost as steeply as the wall of a house. But Bob had ample nerve, and so long as a fellow did not lose his nerve there was no danger.

His chums watched him from the road.

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A few moments later Bob raised his head and looked round at them, his face full of excitement. Evidently he had seen something that startled him.

The Co. lost no time in crawling over the grassy cliff to join him.

"What is it, Bob?" asked Frank Nugent, as they drew near.

"Soames!" breathed Bob.

"Oh!"

"That rascal!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

He looked over the edge. Below his face as he looked the cliff dropped sheer. A stone could have been dropped to the beach far below.

But the face of the cliff, almost perpendicular as it was, was broken into fittle gullies and ledges which afforded hold for a hardy climber, though a climber needed a nerve of tempered steel to climb there.

James Soames, as the juniors well knew, had nerves of steel. The man, who had been so many things from valet to South Sea freebooter, had never lacked nerve, and they knew that he could climb like a cat. They had seen much of Soames in the South Seas trip, in which he had started as valet to Smithy's father and finished as mutineer and pirate.

He was hardly a dozen feet below the juniors as they looked over.

On a jutting ledge, not more than two feet wide, the sea-lawyer lay, resting on his left elbow, with an automatic pistol in his right hand.

His face was towards the beach, but they all knew that it was Soames. He did not look up or think of looking up, and remained unconscious of five faces looking down at him.

They watched him, wondering why he was there and at what target he had fired, not at all sure that it might not be a human one.

The beach, far below, glimmered in the sunshine, utterly deserted, to all appearance. It was a private beach at this point, belonging to Eastcliff Lodge. The tide was out, leaving a vast stretch of ribbed sea sand, dotted with rugged chalk boulders and tangles of seaweed. Not a living figure could be seen between the cliffs and the sea.

"What the thump is he up to?" muttered Harry Wharton. "He was firing at something—or somebody."

Crack!

A third shot rang sharply.

The schoolboys, from above, watched breathlessly. They saw smashed chalk spatter from a boulder far down across the beach.

Why Soames had fired at a chalk boulder, of which there were dozens in sight, was for a moment a mystery. But the next moment the juniors saw a figure dart from behind that boulder.

"Oh!" breathed Harry.

They understood now.

The shots had been fired at a man on the beach. That man had dodged into cover behind the boulder. Soames had spattered him with chips from the boulder to scare him out of cover.

He had leaped out, and was running.

The schoolboys gazed, spellbound.

There was something familiar to their eyes in the running figure on the beach; they had seen the man before somewhere. But his face could not be seen; they did not know who he was.

Whoever he was, obviously Soames was his enemy. Having startled him out of his cover, the sea-lawyer on the cliff-edge was taking careful aim, resting his firearm on a point of rock and calculating the shot.

It was a difficult shot for a pistol, but the Famous Five, who had seen Soames handle an automatic on that

South Seas cruise, knew his deadly aim. And they knew that when Soames fired, the man running on the beach would pitch over like a shot rabbit now that he was in the open.

That fact was borne in at once on Harry Wharton's mind, and he acted promptly.

Soames was dwelling on his aim to bring off that difficult shot, and that gave the captain of the Greyfriars Remove time to act. He tore up a chunk of grass, with chalky earth adhering to the roots, from the cliff-edge and tossed it down.

Quickly as he acted, his aim was accurate, and the missile had only a dozen feet to fall. It fell with a sudden crash on the automatic in the sea-lawyer's hand, knocking it from Soames' grasp even as he was about to fire.

There was a sharp, startled exclamation from the man on the ledge below.

The pistol, slipping down the steep cliff, clattered from rocky ledge to ledge and crashed far below in soft sand.

Soames, as he made a sudden startled movement, almost slipped after it; but he steadied himself, turned on the ledge, and stared upward, with a face of fury.

The man on the beach, running like a deer, disappeared. Whoever he was, the captain of the Remove had saved him from Soames' automatic.

SOAMES' SECRET!

"YOU!"

Soames hissed out that word as he recognised the faces above him. His eyes blazed up at the Greyfriars juniors.

Not often did the cool-headed adventurer give his temper rein. What the man was the juniors knew only too well, yet they had seldom seen him looking otherwise than cool and impassive—the smooth, sleek, deferential valet as they had first known him.

Now, however, his face blazed with rage. He looked for the moment as if he might have used the automatic had it still been in his hand. Fortunately, it lay harmless at the foot of the high, steep cliff.

"You!" repeated the sea-lawyer, between his teeth.

"Little us!" answered Bob Cherry affably.

"You rascal!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, his eyes gleaming at the man below. "You were firing on that man, and—"

"Is that your business, you meddling young fool?" snarled Soames.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "Do you fancy you're still in the Pacific Islands, Soames—forgotten that there's a spot of difference between the North Sea and the South Seas?"

"Fool!"

"Get back!" said Harry, and the juniors drew back from the verge of the cliff.

Soames, on the ledge below, was lost to sight.

Harry Wharton's brows were knitted. He stood in the grass between the road and the cliff-edge, and his chums stopped with him. Harry glanced round at them.

"We can't let that villain rip," he said slowly. "You know what he was going to do if I hadn't dropped that clod and stopped him. But—" The captain of the Remove paused. "It's as likely as not that we owe our lives to Soames," he went on. "He came to warn us on the night of the air raid,

when that scoundrel who calls himself Brown set a light on the tower to draw the German bomber. But—"

"But—" said Bob. "He ought to be run in!" said Johnny Bull. "But—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" said Bob, as a head and a hat appeared over the grassy verge of the cliff.

Soames was climbing up. The schoolboys gazed at him as he came. The vast space that yawned below him, the fact that a slip meant terrible death, did not affect the nerve of the sea-lawyer. He clambered up over the rugged edge as coolly as he had ever climbed the rigging of a ship in the Pacific.

His spasm of fury had passed—or, at least, had been got under control. His manner, as he stood on the summit of the cliff, was calm and suave—he was the perfect manservant again. There was even a faint smile on his smooth, sleek face as he came towards the group of schoolboys.

They eyed him uncertainly.

They had not seen Soames since the night of the German air raid. On that night it was likely enough that he had saved their lives by giving warning of the treachery of the man from the Gestapo. He had done that, though the juniors had been the means of getting him kicked out of Eastcliff Lodge, where they had found him employed as Sir William Bird's valet, under the name of Jermyn. Unscrupulous schemer and rascal as he was, he had done that at a good deal of risk to himself. It was with mixed feelings that they looked at the smooth, mockingly deferential face of the man who had played so many strange parts.

"You are still here?" said Soames ironically. "Did you wait to see me safe before you went on your way? I trust that you did not linger with hostile intentions, young gentlemen?"

"We jolly well ought to snaffle you and run you into the police station!" grunted Johnny Bull gruffly. "But—"

"You have been sworn in as special constables for the duration?" asked Soames respectfully.

Bob Cherry grinned, and Johnny Bull snorted.

"We could collar you easily enough, Soames!" said Harry Wharton abruptly. "There are enough of us here to handle you, and you know it."

"Quite!" agreed Soames. "My weapon lies at the foot of the cliff, and I am in your hands, sir! Indeed, if I were still armed, I should hardly think of turning a deadly weapon upon young gentlemen whom I esteem so highly—if I may say so with due respect."

"Oh, cut it out!" said Johnny Bull. "We've jolly well stopped your game, anyhow—that man on the beach has got away."

"Quite so, sir—probably the worst morning's work you have ever done," said Soames. "I have been watching for that very elusive gentleman for weeks—and this was my chance, at last, which you have spoiled. I sighted him from the cliff, and started to descend to the beach—but unfortunately he caught sight of me, and I had to resort to the automatic. But for you—"

"Do you think we could have let you carry on, Soames?" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly. "Are you mad?"

"Not at all, sir, I hope! Perhaps I may be permitted to explain that I was going to drop the man on the beach with a bullet in the leg. I had no intention whatever of using South Seas methods here—my methods are always

carefully calculated according to my geographical location at the moment," said Soames calmly. "Now do you understand? That scoundrel—"

"If he's a scoundrel, what have you got against him?" said the captain of the Remove scornfully. "Birds of a feather flock together, according to the proverb. You've consorted with some precious scoundrels in your time."

"Circumstances alter cases, sir!" said Soames. "I have, I regret to admit, sometimes erred from the straight and narrow path, as you young gentlemen are aware—but I have my limit; and I do not think that I could ever fall to the level of a spy! There are degrees even in scoundrelism, sir."

"A spy!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"You did not recognise him?" asked Soames. "That man on the beach in his own country is Herr Braun—here he calls himself Mr. Brown."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

"The man who is watching Eastcliff Lodge, keeping watch and ward on Sir William Bird," said Soames. "The man who set a light on the tower, a week ago, to draw bombs from a Heinkel raider. The man who has been hunted by detectives all through Easter—and who has eluded them—but who would not have eluded me if you had not intervened."

"Oh!" repeated Harry. "If it was that villain—"

"It was that villain!" said Soames.

"All the same, you had no right to fire on him—no right and no authority to do anything of the kind!" said Harry. "I'm glad I stopped you, viper as that man is."

"You take a schoolboy view of such matters!" said Soames. "I can assure you that the authorities would be very glad to lay hands on the man—even with a bullet in his leg."

"You've no right—"

Soames shrugged his shoulders.

"It is over now, at all events," he said. "The chance is gone! It is time that I was gone also—if you young gentlemen will excuse me for taking my leave!"

Soames raised his hat very respectfully, and walked away down the road.

The juniors looked after him—but they were not thinking now of raising a hand to stop him. The fact that the man against whom he had aimed the automatic was the man with the blond eyebrows—the spy of the Gestapo—made a difference. And they could hardly forget that he had run risks to save Eastcliff Lodge from the bombs of the Heinkel.

They noticed that he took the direction of Eastcliff Lodge—doubtless to descend to the beach by way of the gully to recover his lost weapon—perhaps to hunt for Mr. Brown! They watched him out of sight, and then resumed their way to Ramsgate.

"A queer customer, and no mistake!" said Bob.

"The queerfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"I suppose even that rogue has a spot of patriotism in his own way!" said Harry Wharton slowly. "But his South Seas methods won't do here. I can't make out what his game is. He was playing valet at Eastcliff Lodge when we came here—but he had something else up his sleeve, of course. Now he's hanging on in this quarter—but why?"

"After Brown!" said Nugent.

"Yes, we know that—but, again, why? I dare say he has his spot of patriotism, but that isn't the only

reason—or the chief reason. He is on the make—but I can't make out where he comes in."

And that had to remain a mystery to the chums of the Remove.

MR. BROWN MAKES AN APPOINTMENT!

B UZZZZZZZZZZZZ! William Wibley of the Greyfriars Remove sat up.

Wibley was sprawling on an ottoman, in Sir William Bird's apartment at Eastcliff Lodge. He had one knee drawn up, and a "Modern Boy's Annual" resting on that knee, and was perusing the same, when the telephone-bell buzzed in the room.

Wibley was sprawling—but he was not sprawling carelessly. A fellow who wore a head of hair not his own had to be careful how he sprawled.

The most observant eye could never have detected a schoolboy in the figure that sprawled on the ottoman. Harry Wharton & Co. knew that it was Wibley—but had Blump, the butler, looked in, he would not have doubted for a moment that it was his master, Sir William Bird.

Sitting up on the ottoman, Wibley reached out and hooked the receiver off the telephone.

"Hallo!" he said, in the throaty voice he used in his part as Sir William Bird—very different from his natural voice.

"Sir William Bird?" asked the voice.

"Speaking!" answered Wibley cheerfully.

Wibley was so accustomed, by this time, to playing the part of the old Bird that he almost believed that he was the old Bird. He answered automatically as Sir William.

"Mr. Thompson, speaking from the A.R.P. office!" came the husky voice over the wires.

"Carry on!" said Wibley. "Hem! Pray proceed, Mr. Thompson!"

"There are some further particulars we should like to have, Sir William, in connection with the air raid at your mansion last week," said the husky voice.

"Very good! Proceed!" said Sir William Wibley.

"The matter is hardly one that can be discussed over the telephone, sir. It is connected with the activities of the man who passes by the name of Brown. You remember the name?"

"Don't I, just!" said Wibley.

Wibley was not likely to forget Mr. Brown, alias Herr Braun, the spy who had watched Eastcliff Lodge, and who, so far had succeeded in eluding the keen search that was made for him.

Herr Braun, in some mysterious way, had succeeded in gaining admittance to the mansion on the night of the air raid, and in placing a light on the tower as a signal to the Heinkel bomber in the clouds. He was quite fresh in the schoolboy actor's memory.

"What—what did you say, Sir William?" came the husky voice, in slightly surprised tones.

Wibley coughed.

Well as he played the part, every now and then he made a little slip, and spoke rather more like a Lower Fourth Form fellow of Greyfriars than a venerable baronet.

"I—I mean, I remember the man perfectly, Mr. Thompson!" he answered. "What about him? I mean, what have you to tell me about him?"

"I should prefer to see you person—
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ally, Sir William, if you can spare me half an hour to-morrow," said the voice over the wires. "Perhaps if I call at Eastcliff Lodge in the morning—"

"Oh, certainly!" answered Wibley.

"With your permission, Sir William, I will call at ten in the morning, if that time will be suitable."

"Right as rain! That is, the time you mention will be quite convenient, Mr. Thompson," said Wibley.

"Then, Sir William, I will call at Eastcliff Lodge at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. Thank you very much!"

"Not at all," answered Wibley politely. "I shall expect you, Mr. Thompson. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

William Wibley hung up, and returned to the ottoman and "Modern Boy."

That brief talk with Mr. Thompson of the A.R.P. did not linger in his mind. Sir William had had a good many interviews on the subject of the air raid in which Eastcliff Lodge had so narrowly escaped destruction. One more interview with an A.R.P. official on that subject was not a matter of much moment.

In a few minutes, in fact, Wibley quite forgot Mr. Thompson of the A.R.P.

Probably he would have given him a little more thought, however, if he could have seen the man who rang off at the other end—in a call-box, and nowhere near the local A.R.P. headquarters!

That man—a man with a stubby nose, blond eyebrows, and light blue eyes—grinned sourly as he left the call-box.

Had the genuine Sir William been, as Mr. Brown believed, at home at Eastcliff Lodge, perhaps he would have been more on his guard than the schoolboy actor who was carrying on in his place. Wibley, at all events, had no suspicion.

Wibley remained happily unconscious that he was booked in the morning for an interview with the mysterious Mr. Brown—otherwise Herr Braun, of the German Gestapo.

TIT FOR TAT!

BILLY BUNTER grinned.

The ancient clock in the hall at Eastcliff Lodge was chiming the half-hour—half-past nine—when the Owl of the Remove came down to breakfast in the sunny spring morning.

Long before that hour, Harry Wharton & Co. had breakfasted and gone out. Sir William was in the music-room, where Wibley was busy on a play for the Remove Dramatic Society next term. There was nobody in the hall when Billy Bunter came down, and the fat Owl rolled over to the hall table, where the letters were laid out, and blinked through his big spectacles in search of one addressed to W. G. Bunter.

There was always a possibility, if not a probability, of the arrival of that postal order that Billy Bunter had been so long expecting.

But if that celebrated postal order was on its way, it had not yet arrived.

The fat Owl frowned as he blinked over the table. There was no letter for W. G. Bunter. Then he grinned.

Evidently the Famous Five had gone out before the post came, for there was a letter addressed to Bob Cherry lying on the table, waiting for Bob to take when he came in.

Wherefore did Billy Bunter grin?

Billy Bunter had not forgotten the

note that Bob had so generously let him have the previous day, and which he did not want. It seemed to Billy Bunter quite a bright idea to annex that letter, which Bob certainly did want, as it was addressed to him in his father's hand.

This would be tit for tat—a Roland for an Oliver—one back at the beast who had pulled his podgy leg!

Bob could wait for that letter, and be blowed to him! Evidently he did not know that it was there, as he must have gone out before the postman arrived.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter.

This was the sort of jape that struck Billy Bunter's benighted brain as funny.

He would let Bob have that letter in a day or two—perhaps two or three days. Bob, he knew, was expecting a letter from Major Cherry. He could go on expecting!

The fat Owl cast a cautious blink round. There was no sign of the Famous Five coming in.

Grinning, the fat Owl stretched out a podgy paw and annexed the letter. He gave a fat chuckle as he slipped it into his pocket. That was that!

"Hem!" came a cough.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

The fat Owl spun round. A few moments ago, when he had blinked cautiously round the hall had been vacant, save for his fat and fatuous self. Now the portly figure of Blump appeared in the service doorway. The Eastcliff Lodge butler had opened the door just as the purloined letter disappeared into Billy Bunter's pocket.

Bunter gave the butler a glare. He had intended to annex that letter unseen and unsuspected. Had Blump spotted him? Blump's eyes were fixed very curiously on the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, that you, Blump?" stammered Bunter. "I was just going to ring. Get my breakfast served, will you—and quick! I've come down hungry, Blump."

"Yes, sir," said Blump. "But that letter, sir—"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh?" he asked coolly. "What letter?"

"That letter is for Master Cherry, sir!" said Blump, in rather emphatic tones. "Master Cherry went out with his friends, sir, before the post came in, and I placed the letter on the table."

"Did you?" said Bunter. He blinked over the hall table. "I don't seem to see it here, Blump."

"It certainly is not there now, Master Bunter," said Blump, staring at him. "If you supposed that that letter was for you, sir, you are in error. It was addressed quite plainly to Master Cherry."

"Perhaps you put it somewhere else," suggested Bunter brightly. "You're a bit of a fool, you know."

Blump breathed hard. He was a well-trained butler, and never failed to treat his master's guests with proper respect. But a guest like William George Bunter almost made Blump's training fail sometimes. John and Charles and Robert, below stairs, were aware that Blump, had circumstances allowed, would have found considerable pleasure in boxing Billy Bunter's fat ears. He had never been so near yielding to that temptation as he was at this moment.

"There was a letter for Master Cherry on that table, sir!" breathed Blump.

"I expect he's had it, then," said Bunter carelessly. "Never mind

Cherry's letter, Blump—see about my brekker."

Blump looked fixedly at the fat Owl. He had, as he came through the service doorway, seen Bunter annex that letter—the only one on the table. He had seen him quite distinctly. He knew that that letter was now in Billy Bunter's pocket. His look at Bunter was quite expressive.

"Really, sir—" murmured Blump.

"He's had it all right!" explained Bunter airily. "Don't you worry about it, Blump! The fact is, I saw him take it—"

"You—you saw him take it, sir!" gasped Blump.

"Yes; he cut in a minute or two ago, and took the letter," assured Bunter. "He's gone out on the terrace now to read it. That's all right, Blump! Look here, see about my brekker—I'm hungry."

Bunter rolled into the breakfast-room.

Blump cast a still more expressive gaze after him. However, it was not his special business if the guests at Eastcliff Lodge pinched one another's letters; so Blump said nothing more.

Billy Bunter grinned over his breakfast.

Bob Cherry's letter in his pocket had an entertaining effect on him.

For about twenty minutes there was an incessant sound of champing and crunching in the breakfast-room.

That happy sound would probably have gone on much longer; but there came an interruption. Voices were heard from the hall.

The Famous Five had come in!

"None for us!" Bunter heard Harry Wharton's voice. Apparently, the chums of the Remove were looking for letters.

Billy Bunter grinned over a big spoonful of jam! This was very amusing to Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! No letters!" It was Bob Cherry's voice. "I thought there would be one from my pater this morning."

"None here!" answered Harry.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter, over the jam.

"Perhaps the post's not in yet, though!" said Bob. "It's sometimes jolly late here! Where's Blump?"

"Sir!" came Blump's fruity voice.

Billy Bunter frowned over the jam. What did that tubby idiot, Blump, want to be on the spot for?

"Post in yet, Blump?"

"Yes, sir, some time ago!" answered the butler. "There was a letter for you, Master Cherry."

Billy Bunter laid down the jam spoon and rose rather hurriedly from the breakfast-table.

This was annoying and alarming! If that beast, Bob Cherry, got the idea into his head that Bunter had annexed his letter, it was highly probable that trouble would accrue. Bob would want that letter. Not only would Bunter's scheme be knocked out, but Bunter himself, quite probably, might be knocked out as well! That would be quite a disagreeable ending to his little scheme for handing over a Roland for an Oliver.

"Where is it, Blump?" came Bob's voice. "I don't see it here."

"You have not taken it, sir?"

"Eh? No!"

"It was placed on the table, sir, as usual! Perhaps Master Bunter may be able to tell you where it is."

Billy Bunter breathed wrath. The tubby beast was actually giving him away.

"Bunter!" repeated Bob.

"Yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter stopped can't see to the

french windows of the breakfast-room, which opened on the terrace. There were a good many more things on the table which he had intended to add to those already packed away. There was jam, for instance—plenty of jam; and it was against Bunter's principles to leave any jam that he could possibly find room for.

But even jam had to be abandoned now—if he was not to be caught with that annexed letter on him.

The fat Owl stepped quietly out on the terrace. As he did so, he heard Bob's voice again.

"Has that fat frump got my letter, then? Where is he?"

"Master Bunter is at breakfast, sir."

Billy Bunter stepped quickly away from the window as the door from the hall opened. He heard Bob Cherry tramp in.

"Not here, Blump—"

"Indeed, sir! Perhaps Master Bunter has stepped out on the terrace! He was certainly at breakfast here."

"He can't have finished brekker," said Johnny Bull. "There's still grub on the table."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gum! If that fat chump is larking with my letter, I'll—"

Billy Bunter shot along the terrace. There was no time to cut down into the gardens—he would have been in full view as soon as Bob looked out of the breakfast-room. The french windows of the library were wide open. Bunter shot into the library.

Hardly a moment later Bob's voice was heard on the terrace.

"Bunter! Where's that podgy piffler? Where's that blithering bloater? Bunter! Have you got my letter, you footling fathead? Bunter!"

Billy Bunter, in the library, quaked. There was, fortunately, no one in that apartment; he was safe for the moment. But if Bob came along the terrace and looked in—

Bunter did not pause. He shot across the spacious library. By the wall stood a radiogram, with space behind it—and Billy Bunter filled that space in a moment. Between the radiogram and the wall he squatted breathlessly.

There was a sound of a heavy tread on the terrace.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you, Bunter, you bloated brigand? Where are you, you podgy pirate? Where are you, you potty pincher? Where's my letter, you footling fathead? I'm going to boot you all over the shop, you blithering balloon! Where are you?"

If Bob expected that to induce Bunter to show up, he was disappointed. The prospect of being booted all over the shop had no appeal whatever for Billy Bunter. Bunter sat tight. Like that artful animal, Brer Fox, he "lay low and said nuffin'!"

"Not here!" Bob was glaring in at the french windows of the library. But he did not see Bunter. "Can the fat chump have gone down to the beach?"

"Might be in the garden—"

"I'll burst him!"

Footsteps tramped away.

Billy Bunter, behind the radiogram, grinned. They were welcome to hunt for him in the gardens, or down on the beach, as long as they liked.

Bunter decided to give them plenty of time to get clear, and then return quietly to the happier spot where there was jam.

But a couple of minutes later the library door opened. The fat Owl suppressed his breathing and hugged cover. The juniors had cleared off from the french windows—and, for a moment, he supposed that they had come round to

the door from the hall. But the next moment he heard Blump's fruity voice.

"Pray step in, sir! I will inform Sir William."

"Thank you!"

A figure passed, for a second, before Bunter's range of vision, as he peeped out from the alcove behind the radiogram. He had a glimpse of a face with a short beard and thick, dark eyebrows, almost black. Who the man was, Bunter had not the faintest idea; but it was evidently someone who had called to see Sir William Bird.

The door closed. Blump had gone to take the caller's name to Sir William. The caller had sat down.

But when the door had closed, Bunter heard him rise again and cross to the french windows and close them. Then he returned to his seat. It was a bright, warm, spring morning—even Bunter would have liked open windows that beautiful morning. But Sir William's visitor, it seemed, preferred them closed.

Bunter sat where he was.

He did not want to make that visitor

the call arranged on the telephone the previous day.

Wibley had been in the music-room since breakfast, busy on the play on which the Remove Dramatic Society were to get busy next term. He had, in point of fact, forgotten all about Mr. Thompson and his appointment.



Soames was about to fire, when the chunk of grass knocked the automatic from his grasp!

jump by suddenly appearing, like a jack-in-the-box, from behind the radiogram. Much less did he want to leave the library, and fall into the hands of Bob Cherry, in search of his letter and the purloiner thereof. He remained where he was, and a minute or two later the library door opened, to admit Sir William Bird—otherwise Wibley of the Remove.

UNEXPECTED!

WIBLEY came into the library, with the slow step suitable to his venerable outward appearance.

It was ten o'clock, and Mr. Thompson, of the A.R.P., was due to make

But he was reminded of Mr. Thompson when Blump brought him that gentleman's card on a salver. Unwillingly abandoning an occupation much more interesting to the schoolboy actor than A.R.P., Wibley came to the library to see Mr. Thompson.

That gentleman rose to his feet as the dapper figure of the silver-haired baronet entered.

Wibley glanced at him.

He saw a commonplace-looking man in a frock coat, with a short beard and thick, dark eyebrows. So far as he knew, he had never seen the man before, and he was not much interested in him. But he had to play his part

as Sir William, and he advanced cautiously towards the visitor.

"Mr. Thompson?" he asked, in Sir William's throaty voice. "Good-morning, Mr. Thompson! You wished to see me?"

"Yes, Sir William! Thank you very much for granting me this interview," said Mr. Thompson. "The matter is of some importance."

"Pray take a seat, sir!" wheezed Sir William. He waved Mr. Thompson to a chair. "All particulars of the recent air raid have, I believe, been fully reported. But if there is anything further I can do, pray regard me as entirely at your service, Mr. Thompson."

Mr. Thompson sat down, with his back to the light. Sir William sat down slowly and methodically, as was his venerable way.

He adjusted his eyeglass in his eye, and looked inquiringly at Mr. Thompson. That gentleman's keen, light blue eyes were fixed very intently on the pink old face of the baronet, with its frame of silver hair.

"We are not likely to be interrupted, I trust, Sir William?" said Mr. Thompson.

"Not at all," answered Sir William. "The matter I have to refer to, sir, is of considerable importance, and strictly of a private nature. It concerns your safety, sir, in your residence here. You may be aware, Sir William, that this house is watched."

"I am quite aware of it," answered Sir William. "One of the spying rascals is now in the hands of the police; but I am quite aware that there are others still at large."

"Among them, sir, a man who goes by the name of Brown, but who is strongly suspected of being a German spy, an agent of the Gestapo!"

"That is correct," assented Sir William. "If you have any news to give me of the man Brown—"

"I have, sir," said Mr. Thompson; "but the matter is absolutely confidential. Perhaps you would not mind instructing your butler, Sir William, to allow no one to enter while I am discussing the matter with you. My instructions are that the matter is for your ear alone."

"Certainly," said Sir William. He touched a bell.

Wibley was interested now. If Mr. Thompson had news of the mysterious Brown, Wibley was very keen to hear that news.

How the man from the Gestapo had so long evaded arrest was rather a mystery. It was suspected that he had some deep and cunning hide-out, though where, was not to be discovered.

Harry Wharton & Co. had suspected that it was in the chalk cave under the cliffs; but the cave had been searched from end to end, from floor to roof, and no such discovery had been made. Wibley was very keen to hear if there was a chance of the elusive Mr. Brown being laid by the heels.

Blump appeared at the door.

"You rang, sir?"

"Yes, Blump!" wheezed Sir William. "Kindly see that I am not interrupted, Blump, while Mr. Thompson is here. If my young friends desire to come to the library, you will tell them that I am engaged for the moment."

"Very good, sir."

Blump retired and closed the door.

Behind the radiogram, Billy Bunter grinned.

Bunter was interested now, as well as Wibley!

"Pray proceed, my dear sir!"

wheezed Sir William, when the door had closed on the butler.

"I will do so, sir," said Mr. Thompson. "I understand that this man called Brown, and the alien enemies of whom he is the agent, are aware that it was your intention to undertake a journey abroad, on duty for the Secret Service."

"They seem to have nosed that out," assented Sir William. "No doubt that is why my house is watched."

"I gather, sir, that Brown and his associates are greatly puzzled by the fact that you have remained at home when they had accurate information of your intended journey."

"Very likely!" smiled Wibley.

"This has caused them to resort to somewhat desperate measures. The man Brown is one of the most valuable and trusted agents of the Gestapo, and his services are required elsewhere. Yet for several weeks he has been marking time, in constant danger of discovery and the fate of a spy."

"Just so!" smiled Sir William. "I've no doubt he would have been jolly glad—hem!—extremely glad, to solve the problem by a bomb from a Heinkel. Luckily, he did not get by with it."

"The man has now adopted other measures, Sir William," said Mr. Thompson, with a sudden grimness in his tone. "He is somewhat of an adept at disguises—like most men in his profession. You would, of course, know him at once in his proper person—"

"As soon as I set eyes on him," assented Wibley.

"In some disguise, however, he might enter your presence unsuspected—"

"I'd like to see him try it on!"

"I think, sir, that you will have your wish! His plan, according to my information, is this—to disguise his identity, obtain an interview with you on some pretext, induce you to give orders that you are not to be disturbed during that interview—"

"Some scheme!" said Wibley. "Hem! I mean I hardly think I could be taken in like that, Mr. Thompson."

"And then," went on Mr. Thompson, "to stun you with a blow from a loaded stick, and to search your person for official documents from which he has no doubt that he would learn all that he desires to know of your plans, which have mystified him so far."

Wibley laughed.

"Let him try it on!" he remarked.

"I think, Sir William, that you will find him capable of it," said Mr. Thompson, his light eyes gleaming under his dark eyebrows. "With a false beard, and his eyebrows darkened, probably you would not recognise him till too late—"

Wibley laughed again.

"I fancy I should spot him," he said.

Mr. Thompson laughed also—a rather peculiar laugh.

"You have been a distinguished member of the British Secret Service, Sir William. Your services are still valued, judging by the mission lately assigned to you. But you are not, I think, equal to a battle of wits with an agent of the Gestapo."

"We shall see!" said Wibley, cheerfully.

"Gewiss! We shall see, and at once!" came grating from the man with the dark eyebrows.

His hand had slid under his coat while he was speaking.

It whipped out, and in his grasp was a short stick, loaded at the end with lead. And as the last words left his lips he leaped forward, the loaded stick in the air, and struck suddenly and

savagely at the silvery head in front of him.

BUNTER ON THE SPOT!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round the radiogram, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

He stared across the library at the two—at the silver-haired Sir William in his armchair, and the disguised agent of the Gestapo springing at him, the loaded stick swinging in the air.

The fat Owl stared dumb, as if paralysed—spellbound by this sudden and unexpected development.

Not for a moment had Bunter guessed, any more than Wibley, that Mr. Thompson, of the A.R.P., was other than he seemed.

The man from the Gestapo had laid his plans cunningly. But there was one point on which the disguised Mr. Brown could not calculate.

Had it been the genuine Sir William who was seated in the armchair when Herr Braun made that sudden and tigerish spring there was no doubt that he would have gone down senseless under a crashing blow.

But it was not, in point of fact, a venerable and slow-going old gentleman with whom the Gestapo man had to deal; it was a quick and nimble schoolboy.

Wibley was taken utterly by surprise; he had not for a moment doubted the bona-fides of Mr. Thompson. But he was quick on the uptake, and as nimble as a monkey.

As the man with the dyed eyebrows leaped and struck, Wibley moved with a swiftness of which Sir William Bird certainly never would have been capable.

He moved like lightning.

Even as the loaded stick came crashing down, Wibley twisted like an eel over the arm of the chair, and the weapon, instead of crashing on the silvery mop on his head, grazed his shoulder and crashed on the back of the chair.

Mr. Brown pitched forward, almost losing his balance; but his left hand grasped at Wibley as he recovered his right for another blow.

Wibley grabbed at his right arm. He grabbed it with both hands, holding off the blow.

But he had no chance of calling for help. The spy's left hand shot to his throat, half-choking him and forcing him back into the armchair.

Pinned by Mr. Brown's left, Wibley could only struggle desperately to hold off his right, at which Mr. Brown dragged savagely, to free it for another blow with the loaded stick.

That struggle could only have ended one way, had the scene continued uninterrupted, as the man from the Gestapo had so cunningly planned.

But there was a sudden interruption.

Billy Bunter was gazing spellbound—his presence utterly unsuspected by either party to the desperate struggle in the armchair.

But as he realised Wibley's deadly peril the Owl of the Remove woke to action.

Bunter staggered to his feet. A small pair of steps, used for reaching the upper shelves of a bookcase, was near him; he grabbed it, as the only weapon available. Mr. Brown's back was to him as he pinned Wibley in the armchair. Bunter cut across behind Mr. Brown.

Crash!

That terrific crash on the back of his head was Mr. Brown's first intimation

that a third party was present at that exciting interview in the library of Eastcliff Lodge.

The fat Owl of the Remove put all his beef into that crash. It knocked Mr. Brown over, dazed and half-stunned, releasing Wibley.

The steps, slipping from Bunter's fat hands, went to the floor with a crash.

Mr. Brown sprawled against the fender, yelling.

Wibley, half-suffocated, panting, leaped up.

Bunter roared:

"Help! I say, you fellows! Help!"

If there was an echo in Eastcliff Lodge which Bunter's roar did not awaken, it must have been a very distant echo. The Bull of Bashan, of ancient times, had nothing on the terrified Owl of the Remove as he roared and roared.

NO LUCK FOR MR. BROWN!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! That's Bunter!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the hall. They had looked round the gardens for the elusive Owl of the Remove without spotting him. Obviously, the fat Owl, with Bob Cherry's letter in his pocket, was keeping doggo somewhere—and the chums of the Remove were discussing where, when a series of fearful yells from the library gave them the required information.

They stared round blankly at the library door.

Blump had informed them that Sir William was engaged with a visitor in that apartment, so they would not, of course, have thought of butting in—but for that sudden and startling outbreak of frantic yelling.

"Help! Help!" came Bunter's wild roar. "I say, you fellows! Blump! John! Charles! Help! Yaroooh!"

Harry Wharton cut across to the library door. Something, evidently, was up in that apartment, surprising as it was, when Sir William was engaged with a visitor there.

The captain of the Remove threw the door open. His chums were at his heels, and they all stared in. After them came Blump, startled out of his usual calm by Bunter's Bull-of-Bashan effects.

"What——" gasped Bob.

The juniors stared blankly—for a moment. Billy Bunter was standing with his extensive mouth wide open, roaring; a man with a beard and dark eyebrows was sprawling, trying to struggle to his feet; Wibley was grabbing at the poker in the fender.

"Help! Help!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, help!"

The man from the Gestapo gained his feet. The loaded stick had fallen from his grasp as he went over; but as he glared round for it he saw the doorway packed with startled faces.

Mr. Brown did not wait! His game was up—and he made a desperate rush for the french window.

Wibley, poker in hand, cut after him. The tables were turned now—it was Sir William who was the assailant!

Swipe!

The man from the Gestapo wrenched open the french window. As he did so, a swipe of the poker caught him on the back of the head.

He staggered for a moment, yelling wildly, then bounded out on the terrace.

Harry Wharton rushed after Wibley and caught him by the arm.

"What——" he exclaimed.

"It's Brown——"

"Brown!" gasped Wharton.

"After him—quick!"

Harry Wharton ran out on the terrace.

Mr. Brown had leaped down from the terrace to the garden below, and was running almost with the speed of a deer.

"Come on, you fellows!" shouted the captain of the Remove. He rushed down the steps from the terrace.

The Co. rushed after their leader.

Mr. Brown, at racing speed, disappeared in the shrubberies, the Famous Five in hot pursuit.

"Sir William!" stuttered Blump.

"What—what—what—— Goodness gracious! Sir William——"

GREYFRIARS PORTRAIT GALLERY

No. 3.—HORACE COKER



Possessing the muscles of a fellow of twenty and the brains of a Third-Former, Horace Coker is the acknowledged duffer of the Fifth Form. But in his own opinion he ought to be captain of Greyfriars! Nobody at the school takes the great Horace seriously, least of all his two chums Potter and Greene, who, however, greatly appreciate the generous supplies sent to Coker by his Aunt Judy. In spite of his faults, Horace Coker is generous, brave as a lion, and straight as a die.

Wibley turned back from the window. He had forgotten in the excitement of the moment, that he was the venerable baronet. But he remembered it, under the amazed stare of Blump and John and Charles and Robert behind him.

He tossed the poker back into the fender.

"Pray reassure yourself," Blump, said Sir William. "The man you showed in a short time ago was an impostor—a rascally impostor! Send the servants at once to help my young friends search the grounds for him."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Blump.

Wibley was glad to get rid of Blump & Co. He had a misgiving that his silvery beard had been loosened by the Gestapo man's savage grasp on his throat. He kept his hand to his beard till the door closed on Blump and the footmen.

"Oh, my only hat and umbrella!" murmured Wibley. "If it had come off——"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.

Wibley made sure of his silvery beard, then he gave Billy Bunter his attention. Bunter's unexpected presence was as great a surprise to Wibley as it had been to Mr. Brown.

It had been fortunate for him, there was no doubt about that! He shivered to think of his narrow escape from the loaded stick.

But for Bunter, there was little doubt that Wibley at that moment would have been lying senseless; and the Gestapo spy, discovering not the official documents he hoped to find, certainly, but the fact that Sir William was not Sir William at all, the whole game of impersonating the absent baronet would have been up—with what deadly peril to the Secret Service man now in the enemy's country Wibley knew only too well.

"How the thump did you get here, Bunter?" asked Wibley. "What the dickens were you hiding in the room for, you fat chump?"

"Oh lor'! Those beasts were after me!" gasped Bunter. "I got behind the radiogram when that beast Cherry looked in for me— Oh crikey! I—I say, he—he was going to crack your nut!"

"He was!" agreed Wibley.

"I jolly well stopped him!" said Bunter.

"You did, old fat man!" said Wibley. "Jolly lucky you were here, by gum! Fancy you coming in useful! Still, you couldn't be ornamental, could you?"

"Beast!"

"He would have spotted the whole bag of tricks when he started searching me," said Wibley, with a deep breath. "You've nearly given me away about a hundred times, you fat ass; but you saved the jolly old situation this time, and no mistake. What were they after you for, though?" he added. "What have you been up to now?"

"Nothing," answered Bunter. "That beast Cherry thinks I've snooped his letter. Blump told him so. Blump thinks I took it, because he saw me go——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Old ass, you know!" said Bunter. "I never saw it on the hall table at all. Besides, I left it there when I went in to brokker. Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I never took that letter, and it ain't in my pocket now."

"You howling ass——"

"I say, are they coming back?" asked Bunter, as Wibley looked from the french window.

Five breathless juniors were coming back towards the house. Evidently they had failed to run down Mr. Brown.

"Yes," answered Wibley. "You'd better shell out that letter, you fat fraud!"

"I don't know anything about it!" hooted Bunter. "You can tell Cherry that I know nothing—absolutely nothing! If he wants his letter, he shouldn't pull a fellow's leg. Not that I took it to pay him out, you know. Nothing of the kind. And I ain't going to hide it anywhere."

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the library into the hall as Harry Wharton & Co. came across the terrace to the french windows.

PUZZLE FOR BUNTER!

"HE, he, he!" Billy Bunter chuckled. The five other fellows chuckled, also. MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,682

They watched Billy Bunter with great interest.

The Famous Five had been looking for Bunter again. After hearing from Wibley of the fat Owl's share in the exciting episode in the library, Bob had generously resolved not to boot the fat Owl "all over the shop"—in fact, not to boot him at all.

But he wanted his letter—booted or unbooted, Bunter had to disgorge that letter!

They looked for Bunter in his room, but the fat Owl was not there. Coming back by the oak gallery over the hall, they glanced from a window to ascertain whether he was to be spotted in the gardens. He was!

On the terrace below a fat figure was in view.

There was a wide stone balustrade to the terrace on either side of the steps that led down. On its broad top stood several large tubs. Those tubs, later in the year, were filled with plants. At the present time they were empty.

Billy Bunter was reaching up to one of them. It was not very high up; but Bunter was only tall sideways, and he had to stand on tiptoe to reach the rim of the tub. There was a letter in the fat paw that reached up.

In full view of five pairs of eyes from the window above, he dropped that letter into the tub. It tipped over the rim, and disappeared inside the tub, and the juniors at the window watched it disappear.

That letter—evidently the purloined letter of the morning—was quite safe from sight. Nobody was likely to look in that tub on the stone balustrade of the terrace. Why should anyone?

It was safely concealed—at least, Billy Bunter had no doubt that it was. It was going to remain there for a day or two—or two or three days—and Bob, if he wanted it, could whistle for it, which would serve him jolly well right for pulling Billy Bunter's fat leg!

"Ain't he a cough-drop?" murmured Bob to his chums at the gallery window. "Ain't he deep? Don't he play deep, artful tricks—right in sight of about fifty windows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No further search for the missing letter was needed. Billy Bunter's astute performance on the terrace was a sufficient clue.

Happily unaware of five pairs of eyes on him from above, the grinning fat Owl rolled back into the house.

The Famous Five, with smiling faces, went along to the staircase, and went down.

Billy Bunter had plumped into a deep armchair in the hall. He grinned at them as they came down the stairs. Bunter was feeling safe now, on the score of that purloined letter. So long as he had it on him, he had to dodge; but it was not on him now, so that was all right.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Bunter, "looking for a letter?"

"Yes, we're looking for a letter, old fat man," answered Bob Cherry. "Know where it is?"

"Haven't the foggiest," answered Bunter breezily. "If Blump thinks I had it, he's dreaming. You can look in my pockets, if you like. I don't mind. He, he, he! I haven't seen it, you know. Like to look in my pockets?"

Bob Cherry laughed. After what he had witnessed from the window, he was not disposed to look in Bunter's pockets for that letter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,682.

"Oh, never mind!" he said carelessly. "I dare say it will turn up. You fellows coming out? Time for a trot on the beach before lunch."

"Yes; let's," agreed Nugent.

Billy Bunter sat up in his armchair, and blinked at the juniors in surprise. Quite aware that Bob was expecting a letter from his pater, and that he knew that it had arrived, the fat Owl was quite surprised by this careless indifference in the matter.

"I say, Cherry, don't you want that letter from your pater?" he asked.

"How do you know it's from my pater?"

"Eh? I've seen his fist often enough at Greyfriars," answered Bunter, blinking at him. "I know your pater's fist."

"Then you've seen the letter?"

"Eh? Oh, no! I haven't seen it!" said Bunter hastily.

"What I mean is, I don't know whether it's from your pater or not, of course, as I haven't seen the letter. Still, I'd look for it, if I were you. Your father may expect an answer, you know."

"Oh crikey!"

"I dare say you'll find it if you hunt for it long enough," said Bunter encouragingly. "I'd help you, if I could, but, of course, I haven't the faintest idea where to look for it, not having seen it, you know. I haven't hidden it anywhere, or anything of that kind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, ain't you going to look for that letter before you go out?"

"Not before I go out," answered Bob, shaking his head.

"It might be important, you know," urged Bunter. "You ought to look for it. I'd hunt all over the house, from top to bottom, if I were you, old chap."

"You'd like to see me doing it, wouldn't you, you fat chump?"

"Yes, rather! He, he, he! I mean, not at all, old fellow, only I want you to find your letter, as it may be important. I say, you fellows, you ain't really going out without looking for that letter, are you?"

"We are," declared Bob. "Come on, you men! Bunter's frightfully entertaining, but we must tear ourselves away."

And the Famous Five went out, leaving the fat Owl blinking at the door when it shut on them. Really, Billy Bunter could not understand this extraordinary indifference on the subject of the missing letter.

No doubt he would have understood, had he observed Bob Cherry's proceedings a minute or two later.

The Famous Five crossed the terrace to the steps, and, passing the tub into which Bunter had dropped the letter, Bob reached into it, and hooked the letter out.

As it was addressed to him, in Major Cherry's hand, there was no doubt that it was the missive that had been snooped from the hall table that morning.

Bob slipped it into his pocket, to read it on the beach, and the chums of the Remove walked away cheerily down the avenue, leaving a perplexed

fat Owl wondering why the dickens they weren't, after all, hunting for that lost letter.

THE HIDDEN MAN:

"HOLD on!" said Harry Wharton.

He came to a halt.

The juniors were sauntering along the beach, under the shadow of the great chalk cliffs that fronted Eastcliff Bay. The captain of the Remove stopped, where the great cave opened in the cliffs, and stood staring into its shadowy recesses.

"What's up?" asked Bob.



Bunter was about to slip the letter into his po

"Look!"

At the entrance of the chalk cave was a heaped mass of soft sand, left by the last tide. Harry Wharton pointed to a mark deeply indented in the sand, still damp from the tide. It was the mark of a foot.

Masses of seaweed and fragments of driftwood from wrecks lay amid the heaped sand. It was close by an old shattered spar that the footprint was visible.

"What about it?" asked Johnny Bull. "You look as excited as jolly old Robinson Crusoe, when he found a jolly old footprint on his jolly old island."

"By gum, though, it's queer!" said Bob, staring at the footprint. "Looks as if somebody hopped into the cave on one leg. I can't see any other footprints."

The juniors fixed their attention on the mark in the sand. Amid the seaweed and driftwood, there were many patches of smooth sand, that would have retained the lightest imprint. But no other sign was to be seen.

"Somebody's gone into the cave since

last tide!" said Harry quietly. "That footprint leads inwards—and whoever it was, he was trying not to leave tracks behind him. He was treading, so far as he could, where no track would be left—"

"Oh!" said Bob.

"He could tramp over those heaps of seaweed, and on the driftwood, without leaving a track!" said the captain of the Remove. "That's what he was doing—but just in that one spot he made a slip, and trod on the sand."

"By gum! It looks like it!" agreed Bob.

"That's the only way of accounting for a single footprint here," said Harry.



When the portly butler appeared suddenly in the

"Brown!" said Frank Nugent, with a whistle. "This is where he dodged when he got away this morning."

"I don't see who else should want to hide his tracks!" said Harry. "We know that Brown has been in this cave before—we've seen him—and we thought that he had a hide-out here."

"But it's been searched!" said Johnny Bull. "They had a party of police and detectives here a week ago searching it from end to end."

"I know. But somebody's here now—somebody who wanted to hide his tracks when he went in! If it's that Nazi spy—"

The juniors stepped in under the high arch of rock at the mouth of the cave. For some distance the sunlight streamed in—beyond that, all was dark and shadowy.

In the rugged floor, pools of water had been left by the receding tide, and tangled masses of seaweed. Here and there stood great chalk boulders worn into strange shapes by the tides.

That someone was within the cave seemed certain. It was not long since the tide had gone out; and the mark in

the sand was fresh and clear. It seemed likely enough that it was the man who had fled from Eastcliff Lodge that morning; the juniors knew that the mysterious Mr. Brown had hidden in that cave more than once, whether his unknown hide-out was in that locality or not.

The juniors moved up the cave. They would have been very glad to spot Mr. Brown, if he was there—and they had no doubt that they were quite able to collar the man from the Gestapo if they found him—and make a present of him to the officers of the law, who had wanted him so long.

"Hold on!" breathed Bob.

They were hardly more than six or seven yards from the cave-mouth, and still in clear daylight.

Bob called a halt, and pointed to the floor of the cave.

The tide had left a ridge of heaped sand across from wall to wall. It lay smooth and untrodden in front of the schoolboys.

"Nothing there!" said Johnny Bull.

"Can't see any sign?" grinned Bob.

"Not a spot!"

"Exactly! Listen to the Chief Scout, my beloved 'earers!" said Bob. "No sign is good sign, sometimes! The man never came past this sand, or he would have left sign—unless he flew across! It's too wide for jumping."

"Oh!" ejaculated Johnny.

Harry Wharton turned round quickly, his eyes gleaming.

"No sign" was sure sign, in such a case; whoever had entered the cave, could not have jumped across that wide ridge of sand—certainly he could not have flown—and he could not have stepped on it without leaving some traces. And there was not the slightest, faintest sign of disturbance on the smooth surface.

That meant, and could only mean, that the man who had entered the cave after the tide went out was near the cave-mouth—hidden behind some of the big chalk boulders near the entrance.

He was keeping out of sight quite near the open; and the juniors must have passed him coming in.

"Come on!" breathed Harry.

He ran back to the cave-mouth. He fully expected to see the hidden man leap out and make for the open beach when the party turned back. But no one appeared in sight; the man, if he was there, was still hugging cover.

The Famous Five reached the cave-mouth again rather breathlessly, and stopped. They had the unseen man cornered in the cave now, and had only to root among the chalk boulders to discover him.

"Got him, whoever he is!" murmured Bob. "Blessed if I can make him out! I should have expected the Brown bird to push on to the very end if he's hiding here. Anyway, we've got the sweep—let's root him out!"

Quite near the cave-mouth the largest of the chalk boulders stood, a great mass close by the wall. That looked the likeliest hiding-place; and the five juniors separated to pass round it on either side—two on one side, three

on the other. If the man was there, there was no doubt that they had him. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob suddenly.

He glimpsed a figure, and jumped. The man who was crouching behind the boulder went over headlong under that sudden tackle, with Bob sprawling over him. A moment more, and the rest of the Co. were round the big boulder, all of them grasping at the sprawling form.

"Got him!"

"Is it Brown?"

"Got him, anyway!"

"Keep hold!"

Somewhat to the surprise of the juniors, the man did not struggle. They had him—an easy prisoner! But they held him fast.

"Will you have the kindness to let go when you are quite finished, young gentlemen?" came a smooth, calm voice from the man over whom Bob was sprawling. "You are causing me very considerable discomfort."

"Oh!"

"Soames!"

It was not the elusive Mr. Brown. It was James Soames; and, as they made that unexpected discovery, the Famous Five released him, and Soames—a little breathless, but quite composed—rose to his feet.

"GET GOING!"

"SOAMES!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The sea-lawyer stepped out into the open, the juniors staring at him. With quiet coolness he set his tie straight and brushed off the chalk from his clothes.

The juniors noticed that he cast a swift, searching glance out on the open beach. But there was no one to be seen on the wide stretch of sand between the cliffs and the lapping sea. He glanced at the schoolboys with a faint smile on his smooth, sleek face.

"What are you doing here, Soames?" asked Harry Wharton abruptly.

"No harm, sir, I assure you!" answered Soames smoothly. "I am aware that this is a private beach, and that the public are not entitled to enter this cave without permission from the lord of the manor. But I feel sure that Sir William Bird would raise no objection to the presence of his former valet."

"I asked you what you were doing here?"

"Taking a little rest in the shade, after a pleasant saunter in the sunshine on the beach!" answered Soames blandly.

"You don't expect anyone to believe that, I suppose?" said Harry Wharton contemptuously.

"Why not?" murmured Soames. "If you are looking for Mr. Brown, sir, I can assure you that he is not here. I should certainly have seen him if he had been anywhere about."

"So you stepped into the cave for a rest in the shade, did you?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Precisely, sir!"

"And is that why you stepped so jolly carefully, not to leave any tracks behind you?" snorted Johnny. "You left only one track—by accident."

Soames started a little.

"Indeed, sir! I seem to have been careless," he remarked. "Thank you for the tip! I shall be more careful another time."

"So you own up that you were hiding in the cave?" demanded Bob.

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"To tell you the truth, sir——"

"Yes, I'd like to hear you tell the truth!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You'd get about as near to it as Bunter, I expect."

"A little nearer, I hope. Master Bull!" said Soames, smiling. "To tell you the truth, I saw you young gentlemen on the beach, and stepped into the cave to avoid a meeting. It is, of course, always a pleasure to see you young gentlemen," continued Soames blandly. "But I feel that your feelings towards me are not wholly friendly, owing to one or two unfortunate disagreements in the past; so I considered it tactful to avoid a meeting, if possible."

"That's a lie!" said Johnny Bull. Johnny was a painfully plain speaker at times.

"Oh, sir!" said Soames deprecatingly.

"If you'd been on the beach when we came down the gully, we should have seen you, if you'd seen us!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You were in the cave before we came down!"

Soames shrugged his shoulders.

Harry Wharton's eyes were fixed intently on the face of the one-time valet, the sea-lawyer and adventurer. That smooth, sleek face told him nothing. He did not believe a single word that Soames had uttered; but no clue to the rascal's thoughts was to be read in his face.

"I suppose you mean that you are going to tell us nothing?" said the captain of the Remove sharply.

"You are a very perspicacious young gentleman, sir!" said Soames. "I observed as much, on the occasion of the South Seas cruise, when I first had the honour and pleasure of your company."

Harry Wharton set his lips. Soames' manner was that of the respectful and deferential valet; but it was almost openly mocking. Wharton's distrust of the man was deep. It was impossible to forget his treachery on the occasion of the Pacific cruise of which he spoke—and the juniors had found him at Eastcliff Lodge, under the name of Jermyn, playing the part of valet, as he had played it before—but, as they knew only too well, with a secret game of his own to play. Now they had found him hiding in the sea-cave—why, they could not guess, except that his actions were part of some secret and tortuous scheme of which they knew nothing.

"From what I remember of the hours kept at Sir William's mansion, sir, lunch must be almost due!" went on Soames. "You young gentlemen will be late for lunch if you linger here."

"That means that you'd like us to clear off, and leave you to get on with it—whatever it is!" said Harry quickly.

"I am not surprised, sir, that Mr. Quelch has made you head boy of your Form at Greyfriars School," said Soames. "You are so very perspicacious, sir—unusually so!"

"Were you watching for Brown, when we found you here?" asked Harry. That suspicion had come into his mind.

Soames raised his eyebrows.

"Brown?" he repeated. "Is there any reason to suppose that Mr. Brown, or Herr Braun, is in the vicinity?"

"You did not know that he came to Eastcliff Lodge this morning?"

Soames started. Evidently he was unaware of that circumstance.

"Did he, sir? I assure you that I knew nothing of it. Actually, I have not seen Mr. Brown since you so unfortunately intervened on the cliff yesterday."

"We know you are after that scoundrel for some reason," said Harry.
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"So far as that goes, you're more than welcome to get on with it. But——"

"Have you any reason, sir, to suppose that Brown might visit this cave?" asked Soames, his eyes suddenly keen on Wharton's face.

"He's been seen here before, that's all," answered Harry. "But you may know more about it than we do. Look here, are you going to tell us why you were hiding in this cave?"

"I have nothing to add, sir, to the explanation I have already given!" murmured Soames.

"We shan't get the truth out of him," said Bob.

"Look here, Soames," said Harry Wharton. "You were allowed to go, when we found out the trick you were playing at Eastcliff Lodge, because you knew about Wibley. You seem to have kept that secret, and I suppose that's to your credit."

"Thank you, sir! I assure you that Master Wibley's secret is quite safe with me," said Soames. "I have no desire whatever to imperil Sir William Bird, now on a mission sufficiently perilous in itself. Not a word on the subject will pass my lips—so long, naturally, as no move is made against me. In the latter case I might, perhaps, allow a word to slip!"

"I understand you!" snapped Wharton. "But we've no wish to do you any harm—we've not forgotten what you did on the night of the enemy air raid. But you're such a double-dealing rascal——"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Soames.

"You cannot be trusted an inch," said Harry. "You deceived Sir William Bird when he took you on as his valet—playing some game of your own in his house, goodness knows what. You're still at that game—that's why you're hanging on in this quarter. All that's clear enough. What you're up to I don't know—except that it's something that won't bear the light. You're getting out of this, now we've spotted you—and the sooner, the better. We've got to let you run loose—but you're not going to hang about Eastcliff Lodge."

Soames' face was still smooth; but there was a glint in his eyes.

"I mean that," said Harry. "You're not going to skulk in this cave again—you're going to clear off, and we're going to see that you do."

"If you would have the extreme kindness, sir, to mind your own business——" murmured Soames.

"That's enough! Get going!"

Soames' eyes glittered round at five faces. He did not stir, and the juniors drew nearer to him.

For a brief moment there was a flash of rage in the sleek face of the sea-lawyer. Whatever his object might have been in skulking in the sea-cave, it was quite clear that he was enraged and exasperated by the juniors putting paid to it.

But it was only for a moment that his anger showed in his face. The next, he was the smooth and deferential manservant again.

"As you are so very urgent, sir, I shall not take it upon me to dispute your wishes," he said. "I trust I know my place."

"Oh, don't be a goat—get going!"

Soames smiled—and got going.

The juniors walked after him, along the cliffs to the gully that led up to Eastcliff Lodge.

They followed him up the gully to the road over the cliffs. There Soames paused.

Harry Wharton pointed along the road.

"Cut!" he said.

"Certainly, sir, if you make a point of it!" said Soames. "I have the honour

to wish you good-morning, young gentlemen."

Soames touched his hat and walked off up the road.

The juniors stood in a group, watching him till he was out of sight in the distance. Then they crossed the road to the gate on the avenue of Eastcliff Lodge.

"What on earth," said Bob, "is that sweep up to? What the thump can be his game?"

"Something shady!" said Johnny Bull.

"The shadiness is probably terrific!" remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "But it is an esteemed and ridiculous puzzle."

And a puzzle it had to remain.

BUNTER AT IT AGAIN!

"HEM!" said Blump.

The Eastcliff Lodge butler coughed apologetically.

It was rather late in the afternoon. The Easter party had been playing tennis, and when they came in Blump met them in the hall.

Blump's fruity face had a somewhat peculiar expression on it, and the juniors, seeing that something was coming, wondered what it was.

"The post is in, young gentlemen!" said Blump.

"Any for us?" asked Harry Wharton. He glanced at the hall table, where the letters were usually laid. None was visible there.

"Yes, sir!" answered Blump. "There was one for you, sir, and one for Master Nugent." Blump coughed again.

"But——"

"Well, where are they?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"That, sir, I am unable to say!" answered the butler. "They were put in the usual place to be taken; but the next time I passed through the hall, sir, they were gone."

"Oh!" ejaculated Harry.

"Perhaps I should mention, sir, that Master Bunter was in the hall," said Blump. "It is possible, sir, that Master Bunter may be able to tell you what has become of your correspondence. That is all, sir."

And Blump coughed again.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. They gave one another quite expressive looks.

Evidently the fatuous fat Owl had been at it again. His success with Bob Cherry's letter had encouraged him to carry on with the good work. Bunter was in a jesting mood. This particularly brilliant idea having occurred to his podgy brain, he was going to make the most of it.

"The ass!" said Bob. "The benighted bandersnatch!"

"Bunter will have to chuck this!" said Harry. "If Bunter thinks this funny, he will have to be educated a little on the subject. Where's Bunter now, Blump?"

"In the dining-room, sir!"

Blump faded away. The juniors, rather wondering what Billy Bunter was in the dining-room for, when it was not a meal-time, proceeded to that apartment.

They discovered why Bunter was there, as soon as they entered. Biscuits were kept in a silver box in the sideboard. Billy Bunter was seated on a hassock by the sideboard, with that silver box on his fat knees, the lid open.

A sound of munching and crunching greeted the Famous Five as they came in. Bunter was busy on the biscuits.

He was surrounded by a sea of

crumbs! Crumbs plastered his podgy chin and encircled his extensive mouth.

That extensive mouth was full. So were both the fat hands—ready with a new supply!

Munch! Crunch!

They gazed at Bunter.

"Where are our letters, you fat chump?" asked Harry.

"I say, you fellows! Can't you find your letters?" grinned Bunter. "Ain't they on the table in the hall? He, he, he!"

"Will you hand them over, you unspeakable idiot?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"How can I, when I haven't got them?" asked Bunter. "You can look through my pockets, if you like! He, he, he! I'll eat all the letters you can find in my pockets!"

Grinning, the fat Owl resumed munching and crunching.

"I haven't hidden them!" he continued. "I haven't seen them, and never knew there were any. If you and Nugent want your letters, Wharton, you'd better ask Blump what he's done with them."

"So you know they're for Nugent and me, though you've never seen them?" said Harry.

"Oh, no! Not at all! One of them wasn't in your uncle's handwriting, and the other wasn't from Nugent's pater!" said Bunter hastily. "I know absolutely nothing about them. I expect Blump's lost them—if there were any, you know! He's careless. I dare say they'll turn up some time. I shouldn't wonder if they turn up along with Bob's letter! He, he, he!"

"Along with Bob's!" repeated Harry. "Do you mean that you've hidden them in the same place, you foozling fat-head?"

"I haven't hidden them at all, old chap. They might be in the same place, and they might not! That's telling—I mean I don't know anything about it. How could I? Don't you fellows get the idea into your heads that I'm making you sit up for pulling my leg yesterday! I'd forgotten all about that—forgotten entirely—I don't suppose I should remember it, even if you mentioned it."

The fact that Billy Bunter had rendered Wibley much-needed aid in the library that morning saved him from being bumped on the dining-room floor.

Leaving him to devour biscuits, the Co. left the dining-room—a fat chortle following them.

"I fancy we know where to look!" grinned Bob, when they were in the hall. "Come on!"

The juniors went out on the terrace. Billy Bunter's remarks left them in little doubt that he had dropped the missing letters into the tub on the balustrade, where he had dropped Bob's letter that morning.

They proceeded to explore.

Billy Bunter had to reach up to tip a letter in over the edge. Bob, however, was able to glance into it by standing on tiptoe.

He glanced in—and then reached in and hooked out two letters. One was addressed to Wharton, the other to Nugent.

"Here you are!" grinned Bob, as he handed them over to their owners. "Bunter's found such a jolly safe spot that he was bound to use it again. The benighted chump still thinks that my letter's in there—he couldn't look into the tub without getting a ladder."

The juniors chuckled.

The japing Owl evidently had no suspicion that the hiding-place was known,

and that Bob had taken his letter from it long ago. Without getting a lift of at least a foot from the ground, Bunter could not possibly have looked into that tub, and it was too heavy for him to have lifted down and replaced. He was still in the happy belief that Bob's letter lay there, and that he had added Wharton's and Nugent's letters to it.

"Look here, the fat chump's got to chuck this!" said Johnny Bull. "We can't have him fooling about with our letters, the mad ass!"

Bob's eyes glimmered.

"Might make him tired of it!" he remarked. "Wait here a minute or two, you chaps, while I cut off to the gardener's shed."

Bob cut off at a trot, leaving his chums waiting and perplexed. He was back in a few minutes with a large can of water in his hand.

They stared at it.

"What on earth's that for?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Bunter!" answered Bob.

He lifted the can and tilted it over the edge of the tub. His comrades watched him, rather blankly, as the water streamed from the can into the tub, filling it almost to the brim.

"That's that!" remarked Bob, lowering the empty can. "Next time Bunter comes to that tub, he's going to get a surprise!"

"He won't even know the water's there!" said Johnny. "He can only just reach up to it—and if he drops another letter in, he will drop it into the water, you ass, and that will be the end of it."

"Suppose he tried to take a letter out, though?" suggested Bob. "He couldn't do that without tilting the tub towards him, half-over."

"He won't!" said Johnny, staring. "He doesn't want to get the letters back for us! The blithering idiot means to leave them hidden."

"He might!" said Bob. "Suppose—not being able to find those letters—we offered to lend Bunter ten bob if he could find them?"

"Oh!" gasped Johnny.

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

Bob Cherry took the can back to the gardener's shed. Then the Famous Five went in to tea—with smiling faces.

BUNTER GETS A WASH!

BILLY BUNTER grinned over his tea.

Bunter seemed in rather high feather that afternoon. The thoughts in his fat brain appeared to entertain him.

The biscuits did not seem to have spoiled Bunter's appetite. Blump had been under the necessity of re-filling that silver box. But the biscuits that had filled it did not fill Bunter. He had plenty of room left for toast, and scones, and jam—especially jam. Happy and sticky, the fat Owl grinned at Sir William and the Famous Five over the tea-table.

Bunter felt that he was getting his own back. Pinching fellows' letters and hiding them would not, perhaps, have appealed to the average intellect as much of a jape. To Bunter, it seemed fearfully funny. Over the tea-table, his fat face was wreathed in smiles and jam.

"I say, you fellows! Found your letters yet?" asked Bunter, with a giggle of happy enjoyment.

"Know where they are, Bunter?" inquired Nugent.

"He, he, he! Not on me!" said

Bunter. "I haven't got them. He, he, he! I expect Blump's dropped them somewhere! Why not search for them?"

It would have been the cream of the joke, in Bunter's opinion, if the Famous Five had rooted up and down, and round about, all over Eastcliff Lodge, for the letters that lay in the tub on the balustrade out of doors! He would have liked to see them at the task! He would have enjoyed watching them at it!

Blump might have dropped them anywhere! went on Bunter. "Look in the butler's pantry! Look up on the tower! Look everywhere! Look all over the house, you know. Not out of doors—they couldn't be out of doors, of course. Anywhere in the house—"

"I'm sure they're not out of doors," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head.

"The surefulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"He, he, he!"—from Bunter.

The juniors had reason to be sure that those letters were not out of doors, as the letters at that moment were in the pockets of their owners sitting at the tea-table. But the fat Owl, happily unaware of that circumstance, chuckled.

"Of course they couldn't be out of doors," chuckled Bunter, "especially not on the terrace! He, he, he! I say, you fellows, I'd look for them, if I were you! Might have tips in them, you know."

"We were thinking of getting you to look for them, old fat foozler!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"I'll watch it!" said Bunter.

"You wanted to borrow a ten-bob note yesterday," said Bob.

"And you fellows wouldn't lend me one!" jeered Bunter. "You pulled my leg instead! Well, perhaps you ain't the only fellow who can pull a fellow's leg! He, he, he!"

"Suppose you find those letters for us—"

"No jolly fear!"

"And we'll lend you a ten-bob note as soon as you hand them over."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He sat up and took notice at once.

"Honest Injun?" he asked.

"Honest Injun! You get those letters and hand them over—if you can find them, of course—and the ten-bobber's yours!" declared Bob. "You can settle up out of that postal order you're expecting."

"I should do that, of course," said Bunter. "I'm not a fellow to owe money, I hope!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ten bob would come in useful for a short time," said Bunter. "That postal order never came, after all, this afternoon. I don't know why, but it didn't. It's the war, I expect. Anyhow, it hasn't come. You lend me ten bob, and I'll let you have the postal order immediately it comes."

"If you find those letters, it's a go!"

"Well, a fellow might be able to find them," said Bunter thoughtfully. "Mind, I don't know where they are. I haven't the faintest idea, as I never hid them, you know. But I'll do my best. Pass the jam, will you?"

Bunter gobbled jam, grinning more widely than ever.

He had planned to leave those missing letters in the tub on the terrace for a few days—just to make the beasts sit up, as they so richly deserved. But an offer of this kind put quite a different complexion on the matter.

For some time Bunter's worldly wealth had been down to the incon-

siderable sum of one penny, and even that penny was a bad one. A loan of ten shillings was like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. Billy Bunter made up his fat mind at once to find those missing letters.

There was still some jam left when Billy Bunter rose from the tea-table. He was departing from his usual customs in his hurry to find those letters.

"Don't you fellows hurry," said Bunter. "I'm going to look for those letters now. I may be able to find them."

Bunter rolled out into the hall. He carefully shut the door after him. He did not want the juniors to see the way he went. They might suspect that he knew already where to find those letters if they saw him make direct for the tub on the terrace.

"Oh, my only hat and umbrella!" murmured Sir William Wibley, when the fat Owl was gone. Wibley had been told—not in the hearing of Bunter. "This way, old beans! You can see the terrace steps from one of these windows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors moved along to the window that gave a view of the terrace steps. They watched from that window with great interest.

About a minute later Billy Bunter rolled into view.

There was a cheery grin on Bunter's fat face as he rolled across the terrace to the steps. Bunter was heading for the tub that had contained the missing letters, like a homing pigeon. He was losing no time.

It did not occur to Bunter to look round, and he remained happily unaware of six faces at an open window farther along the terrace watching him.

The fat junior reached the tub on the balustrade.

He stopped there.

To drop a letter in, Bunter had only to reach up. But to get a letter out, was a different proposition. He had to tilt the tub towards him with one hand far enough to allow him to grope in it with the other. The juniors watched him breathlessly as he reached up and grabbed the edge of the tub with fat fingers.

Those fat fingers closed on the rim of the tub.

Bunter tilted it over towards him.

Swoooooosh!

Splash!

"Yaroooooh!" came a startled yell from the astonished fat Owl. "Oh crikey! Yurrrrooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came another yell, from the open window on the terrace.

"Urrrrggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gurrrrggh!"

Billy Bunter was taken quite by surprise.

He had expected to find three letters in that tub. He did not expect to find water there. But it was the unexpected that happened. He did not find the three letters there; he found the water.

The water washed over Bunter in a flood. It swooped over his fat face; it ran down his sleeve; it drenched inside his collar; it soaked his fat head. He spluttered and roared.

The tub dropped back into its place as the fat fingers let go. There was still some water in it, but not much. Billy Bunter had had most of it.

"Ow! Ooogh! Grooogh!" spluttered the amazed Owl. "Oooogh! What the—Grooogh! What the—Oooooooh!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey! I'm soaked! I'm drenched—Urrrrggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bunter's audience.

The fat Owl blinked round. He glared through watery spectacles at six convulsed faces at the window.

"Urrgh! I say, you fellows, I'm all wet—Ooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looking in that tub for the letters?" roared Bob Cherry. "What made you think they were there, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Those who hide can find the cracked pitcher that goes longest to a bird in the bush, as the English proverb remarks!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Urrgh! I'm soaked!" yelled Bunter. "Wharrer you cackling at, you beasts? Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I'm sopping wet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you rotters!" roared Bunter, a sudden light dawning on his fat brain. "You swabs! You jolly well found the letters there, and you jolly well put that water there, and—and—Yurrrggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

He tottered away, squelching, and leaving a watery trail across the terrace.

Bob Cherry wiped his eyes.

"Perhaps that fat ass will be fed-up with hiding a fellow's letters after this!" he remarked. "And a wash will do him good! Two birds with one stone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was busy towelling for a considerable time. When he was seen again his fat face was wrathful, but there were no traces on it of tea, lunch, or breakfast. The wash, at least, had done him good!

WHARTON ON THE WATCH!

"FIFTEEN—love!" said Sir William.

It was a sunny morning.

Four members of the Co. were playing tennis, Sir William, seated in a deckchair, his silvery beard glistening in the sunshine, keeping score for them.

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were playing Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in a double. Harry Wharton had played a single with Wibley, and now he was strolling along the court, his hands in his pockets and a thoughtful expression on his face.

He strolled away from the tennis court, leaving his friends hard at it, and walked down the avenue.

He was thinking of that meeting with Soames in the sea-cave the day before. He had given that incident a good deal of thought.

Why was Soames there? He had a motive, that was clear; he had been on watch. Why? And for whom?

The answer to that question, in Wharton's mind, was Brown. Soames for his own reasons, whatever they might be, was on the trail of the Nazi spy; all the Greyfriars fellows knew that. Had Soames some reason for suspecting that Mr. Brown might visit the chalk cave? And had he been on the watch for him there?

The juniors had suspected, when they found the footprint in the sand, that the Gestapo agent might have dodged into the cave for cover, after his flight from Eastcliff Lodge. But Soames had known nothing of that. If he was

watching for Herr Braun, it was because he suspected that Brown had some special motive for visiting the cave, and might be caught there.

Wharton had done some hard thinking on the subject, and it seemed to him that he saw light.

Brown had been seen more than once in that cave. The juniors had suspected that his hide-out was there, and the officers of the law had searched it thoroughly, failing to find any trace of a hide-out.

What if Soames had had better luck? If that hide-out existed, it was hidden deep—not easily to be found. But the cunning and wary sea-lawyer might have traced it.

If that was the case, Soames' skulking in the cave, behind the rock near the entrance, was explained—he had been watching for Herr Braun, knowing that sooner or later the spy would return to his hide-out.

Brown, obviously, did not use that hide-out continually—if it was there. His strange and treacherous business took him to many places, often in disguise. He might not visit it for a week at a time.

But, if it was there, sooner or later he would come—and was that what Soames knew, and was it why he was concealed at the cave-mouth, watching in cover?

It seemed to Harry Wharton more than likely.

The captain of the Remove, leaving his friends busy at tennis, walked down the avenue and crossed the road to the gully in the cliffs. He went down the gully to the beach.

The tide was out, a wide stretch of sand glistening in the sun. He walked along under the cliffs to the chalk cave.

If his suspicion was well founded—if he had, indeed, spotted Soames' motive for lurking in the chalk cave—it meant that Brown's hide-out was there, though it had never been traced. Searching for it was futile—the police had searched every foot—almost every inch—of the great cave, and discovered nothing. But a careless footprint might give a clue—or the sight of Brown himself!

Harry Wharton stopped at the cave-mouth, and gazed into the shadowy interior.

It was silent and deserted, as usual. The ridged sand left by the tide showed no footprint. But that did not prove that no one was there. Wharton remembered Soames' caution—and imitated it.

Carefully treading only on seaweed, and on fragments of wreckage, he picked his way into the cave, leaving no trace of anyone having trodden there.

It was in his mind that perhaps Soames might be there again, sternly as he had been warned off. But a glance round the rugged boulders near the cave-mouth showed that no one was there.

The captain of the Remove stopped behind the great rock that had hidden Soames the day before. There he sat down on a boulder and waited.

It was a couple of hours yet to lunch, and he was going to wait and watch there, as Soames had done the day before.

If he had the good luck to spot the man from the Gestapo, and see him steal into his hide-out, that secret would be known—and it would not be long before the Nazi was in official hands.

The mere possibility of making such a discovery was worth a great deal of trouble. If Soames had a chance of

spotting the spy there, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove had an equal chance, watching in the same place.

A long hour passed, and another had almost passed, when a shadow loomed in the bright sunshine at the cave-mouth.

A man stepped in from the beach. Harry Wharton felt his heart beat a little faster. It might be Soames again—it might be one of his friends,

stood staring out over the beach. Then he turned to go up the cave.

Harry Wharton suppressed his breathing. He was as good as certain now that the man was the Gestapo agent—coming back to his hide-out at last, as he believed that Soames had expected.

The man trod swiftly up the cave. He paused beyond the radius of sunlight and disappeared in shadows.

From the darkness up the cave came a twinkle of light! He had turned on a flash-lamp to guide his way.

Harry Wharton emerged from behind the rock. His luck was in—it was he and not Soames who had spotted

ton could see nothing but a dark shadow; but he saw on what the flash-lamp gleamed.

It was the wall of rock at the side of the cave—in the spot where the arched roof soared high, far out of sight.

That was a spot that Wharton and his chums knew. It was where the wall could be climbed, by a series of rocky ledges, and where they had climbed it, once, in search of the suspected man.

The light was flashed up at the rugged rocky wall. Then it was suddenly shut off.

Wharton's heart beat hard.

The man had reached his goal—and what could it be but the mysterious



Bunter's fat fingers closed on the tub, and it tilted over, shedding its contents over the fat junior!

coming to look for him! But it might be the man Soames had expected the previous day.

Keeping carefully in cover, the captain of the Remove peered cautiously round the big chalk boulder.

His eyes fixed on the figure in the cave-mouth.

His first feeling was disappointment.

He saw a man with dark eyebrows and horn-rimmed spectacles. The man looked nothing like Brown—he was a stranger to the eyes of the Greyfriars junior.

But the junior watched him keenly. Brown had been disguised the day he came to see Wibley, as Mr. Thompson, of the A.R.P. He might be disguised again—and strangers were unusual in that spot, which was private property belonging to the Eastcliff Lodge estate.

And, as the captain of the Remove watched, his heart beat again.

Those dark eyebrows were nothing like Mr. Brown's blond Teutonic brows. But the nose, short and thick and stubby, was like Mr. Brown's. And, as Wharton watched, the man took off the horn-rimmed spectacles, put them into a case, and slipped it into his pocket. He did not, apparently, need them—though he was watching the beach, from which he had come, very intently. A man who wore spectacles he did not need was very probably a man in disguise.

Wharton could see, too, the stretch of smooth sand, over which the man had come, and could see that it bore no footprints. Like Soames the day before, and like himself, the man had trodden cautiously, where his feet left no trace—and that could have only one meaning.

For several long minutes the man



the spy stealing back to his unknown den.

If it was Brown who carried that light—and he was sure that it was—he had only to follow him up the cave to learn enough to put an end to the treacherous activities of the Nazi spy.

Silently, his tennis-shoes making no sound, the captain of the Remove trod up the cave, guided by the spot of light that twinkled ahead in the darkness.

THE SPY'S SECRET!

THE light stopped.

Harry Wharton came to a halt, breathing quickly.

The man with the light was near the extremity of the great cave, where it stretched far under the cliffs and came to an end beneath Eastcliff Lodge.

Of the man behind the light, Whar-

ton could see nothing now, but he could hear; and what he heard was the scraping, brushing sound of a climber.

The man was clambering up the rock wall, from rugged ledge to ledge.

It would have been difficult to carry the light with both hands needed for the climb. But unless he knew the way by frequent use, he could never have ventured on such a climb in the darkness. Plainly, he knew every foot of the way, which could only mean that it was an accustomed way to him.

It was the Nazi spy, seeking his hide-out! Wharton had no doubt about that now. And yet he knew that that rugged rock wall had been searched by official eyes—keen and experienced eyes. The hiding-place, if it was there, was cunningly hidden—and Wharton was sure that it was there.

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He crept a little closer, silently, listening keenly.

He remembered the day when Mr. Brown had been cornered in that cave, and had remained there after the tide had flooded in and driven them from the beach. He knew now that this was the way the spy must have gone on that occasion.

A fragment of loose chalk slithered down the steep cave-wall, knocked away by the climber's foot. Wharton could see nothing; but with his mind's eye he followed the climbing man, swinging himself up actively from ledge to ledge.

The sounds ceased.

The man had stopped.

So far as Wharton could judge by his ears, Mr. Brown had stopped on a ledge well over high-water mark. But he was nowhere near the high, soaring roof of the cave.

That he had stopped, hinted that he was at his destination. Yet, as Wharton knew from having climbed there during the search of the cave, there was no opening in the rocky wall in which a man could hide. There were fissures and crevices, but all open to the view. It seemed that unless the man could pass through solid rock he had to stop.

Obviously he had not climbed there for nothing. There was some secret—some hidden place that he knew and that he could hide from search.

Wharton strained his eyes upward in the darkness, but he could see nothing.

Still, he could hear, and there was another sound in a few moments. It was the sound of a heavy rock stirring under sinewy hands.

Then the captain of the Remove understood in a flash.

An opening existed, but it was blocked. It was so cunningly blocked that it had the appearance of the rest of the rocky wall, with nothing to mark it out. That sound of the stirring of heavy rock told the tale. The Greyfriars junior heard it roll.

The light flashed on again.

Harry Wharton suppressed a gasp at what he saw.

On a high ledge on the rugged wall, where his own feet had trodden once, loomed the dark figure, light in hand.

The light gleamed into an opening of the cave wall above the ledge.

It was hardly more than three feet high, less than that wide. It had been blocked by the rock that the man had dragged from the opening.

That rock, in its place, looked exactly like part of the cavern wall. Now that it was removed, it showed the opening of that deep crevice—obviously Mr. Brown's way to his hide-out.

How the man—a stranger from a strange land—had discovered that secret was a mystery to Wharton. Yet, even as he stood staring up at that unsuspected gap in the high cave wall, the truth flashed into his mind.

On that day when Mr. Brown had been shut in the cave by the tide he had had to climb for safety. Only in this spot was it possible to climb the wall of the cave.

At that time, doubtless, the cavity in the wall had been unblocked. Brown had found it there, open to his eyes.

If that hidden recess had been used in ancient days by the smugglers of the sea-cave, doubtless they had used the rock to block it from discovery—as Mr. Brown used it. But on the last occasion, more than a long hundred years ago, when the smugglers had used the cave for the last time, they had not taken the trouble to block the tunnel they were never to use again. So Brown had found it when the tide had driven him up the cave wall to the ledge where he now stood.

No doubt he had been glad of the discovery. The recess where, perhaps, the reckless dealers in contraband goods had hidden from the Revenue officers in days long past made a hide-out that was exactly what the Nazi spy needed, while he had to linger in the vicinity of Eastcliff Lodge, keeping watch on the movements of Sir William Bird.

At all events, it was clear that this was the spy's hide-out. He stood with the light shining into the cavity—evidently the way he intended to go.

But he did not immediately enter. He stood watching and listening at the cavity. Why, Wharton could not guess, unless there was, perhaps, some other entrance to that hidden den, and Mr. Brown, wary as a fox, had it in his mind that it might possibly have been

discovered. The man was as wary and suspicious as a hunted wolf. It seemed that he was satisfying himself that all was as he had left it before he entered.

He moved suddenly.

The light turned from the cavity in the high cave wall and circled round and downward. It flashed into the watching schoolboy's eyes, dazzling him.

Herr Braun, assuredly, did not suspect that there was anyone below in the cave. It was simply the habit of caution, the stealthy wariness of a man who lived a hunted life making sure that he was not observed before he disappeared into his secret den.

Harry Wharton, staring up, received the sudden blaze of light full in his eyes, and put up his hand to cover them. As he did so he heard a sudden, startled, guttural exclamation from the man up the rock wall.

"Ach! Ach himmel! Was ist das—wer—"

Harry Wharton's heart throbbed. The man had seen him. He had seen the face looking up as it gleamed in the light.

Instantly he realised his peril.

He had discovered the hidden spy's secret, and the spy had discovered him!

He would not get away with what he had discovered if the man from the Gestapo could stop him. Had his chums been with him he would have feared nothing; but alone he was powerless—little more than an infant in a struggle with the strong, wiry scoundrel, helpless in those sinewy hands if they fastened on him.

He turned and cut down the cave.

It was dangerous to run in the thick darkness. The floor was broken and irregular, split with fissures. But he had no choice as he heard the man on the rock wall scrambling down in desperate haste.

Behind him as he ran he heard a voice in guttural German, sputtering curses. The man from the Gestapo was in fierce pursuit, running fast, and the captain of the Greyfriars Remove put on speed, racing for the cave entrance.

He glimpsed the daylight far ahead, but it was still black round him when his running feet stumbled in a gap in the rocky floor, unseen in the dark. He gave a cry as he pitched forward on his face, dazed by the shock.

But he scrambled desperately up. As he did so, a dark figure shot from the darkness behind him, and a savage grasp fastened on him.

In desperation Wharton turned, grappled with his assailant, and struggled.

In deep darkness they struggled and wrenched, the schoolboy striving with all his strength to break loose from that savage grip—striving wildly, desperately, but in vain. Fighting to the last, he was borne to the rocky floor in the grip of the man from the Gestapo.

MISSING!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Seen Wharton?"
"Wharton?" Billy Bunter blinked at the four juniors who came in with Sir William. "Yes. Why?"
"Well, he seems to have walked off while we were playing tennis," answered Bob Cherry. "And it's just on lunch. Where is he?"
"How should I know?" asked Bunter.
"You frabjous fathead, didn't you say that you'd seen him?"
"So I have. I saw him go out with

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you fellows, with your tennis rackets—hours ago!" said Bunter cheerfully.

Bob Cherry gave him a look.

"Can any man tell me what Bunter is doing outside a home for idiots?" he inquired. "I've never been able to make that out."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Blump," Sir William called to the butler, as he appeared in the hall, "has Master Wharton come in?"

"I have not seen him, sir," answered Blump.

"Gone down to the beach very likely," said Johnny Bull. "I noticed he went towards the avenue. Taking another squint in the cave, perhaps."

It was a quarter of an hour later that the gong sounded for lunch. The Co. expected to see Harry Wharton, wherever he was, come in by that time; but he did not appear.

However, fellows had been late for lunch before, and they went into the dining-room, not much concerned about the matter. But when lunch was over, and still the captain of the Remove had failed to put in an appearance, they could not help wondering what had become of him. A fellow might be late, but it was very unusual to cut tiffin.

"Better have a squint round," remarked Bob, and the Co. went out on the avenue to see whether Wharton was coming.

He was not in sight, and they walked down the avenue to the road. As Harry Wharton evidently had gone out, they concluded that he had gone down to the beach, though they could not imagine why he had not returned.

"Watch stopped, perhaps," said Johnny Bull. "Watches do, on the beach."

"I shouldn't need a watch to tell me when I was an hour late for tiffin," remarked Bob Cherry. "I—I wonder if—"

"What?" asked Nugent.

"Well, something's kept him. If he has taken a tumble over the rocks, or something—"

"Come on!" said Nugent hastily.

The four juniors hurried down the gully to the beach. But the tide was in now, washing almost up to the cliffs. They stood at the lower end of the gully, looking along the narrow strip of sand between the cliffs and the sea, diminishing in width every moment.

"He can't be in the cave," said Bob uneasily. "He wouldn't stay there after the tide came up. He's not an ass like Bunter."

"Where the dickens can he be?"

"The wherefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Can't have walked off to Broadstairs or Ramsgate without telling us he was going!" said Johnny Bull.

It was a puzzle to the four juniors—and they were beginning to feel anxious.

Wharton was not on the beach; and if he had been there at all, he must have gone into the cave. But he could not have remained there of his own accord with the tide flooding up the beach, cutting off his return.

"A chap might take a tumble!" said Bob slowly. "I think I'd better squint into the cave. You fellows stick here—no good everybody getting wet."

Bob cut along the base of the cliffs towards the chalk cave.

The distance was a good hundred yards, and the tide was perilously close in. Every now and then an incoming wave washed right up to the cliffs and receded again. Bob dodged them as well as he could, but he was wet to the

knees by the time he arrived at the cave-mouth.

His friends watched him anxiously from the gully.

Breathless, Bob tramped in under the arch of the rock, the sea behind him flooding on. He had little time to spare if he was not to be trapped by the tide.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. His powerful voice rang and echoed through the depths of the cave. "Wharton! Are you here? Show a leg, old man! Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Thunderous echoes answered him from the shadowy depths, but there came no other answer.

He looked quickly about him. Then he was reassured as he saw, on the smooth stretch of sand so far untouched by the incoming tide, no traces of footprints. There was no sign of anyone having entered the cave!

He turned and hurried out.

Brief as the time had been, there was now water up to the base of the cliffs—shallow, but surging, and followed by heavy waves. Kneec-deep, Bob plunged and tramped through the flooding water, and rejoined his friends at the gully.

"Not there!" he said breathlessly. "Not a sign of anyone going in—he never went into the cave."

"Then he never came down to the beach at all," said Frank. "Come on—the sea will be coming up the gully soon."

They tramped back up the gully, Bob squelching water as he went. They reached the road again, and looked in either direction, seeing no one. Then, more puzzled than ever, they went up the avenue to the house.

"Might have come in while we were gone!" said Bob hopefully.

They found Billy Bunter in an armchair in the hall, taking the rest he needed after his exertions at lunch.

"Wharton come in?" asked Nugent.

Billy Bunter opened his eyes behind his spectacles.

"Eh?" he squeaked.

"Has Wharton come in, fathead?"

"How should I know? Think I could see him with my eyes shut?" asked Bunter. "Don't be an ass, Nugent! I say, you fellows, I'd rather you didn't jaw, if you don't mind. I want to go to sleep."

Bunter's eyes closed again behind his spectacles.

Sir William came into the hall.

"Haven't you found Wharton?" he asked.

"No; he's not been on the beach, so far as we can make out!" answered Bob. "He's not come in?"

"No!" answered Wibley.

The juniors stood in a worried group. There was an uneasy thought in all their minds, which Nugent uttered at last.

"If he's run into Soames again—"

"But—but Soames wouldn't—" muttered Bob.

"He was up to something yesterday—goodness knows what. If Wharton's spotted him—We know what Soames can be like if anybody gets in his way," muttered Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—" came a squeak from the armchair.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! Look here, Wharton's all right. I dare say he's gone off for the day, that's all."

"Why should he, ass?"

"Well, he might be fed-up with you chaps—"

"What?"

"I know I am, jolly often!" said Bunter, blinking at the juniors. "Fed-

up to the chin! I dare say Wharton felt the same, and he's just cleared off to get shut of you for a bit! Don't you think that's it?"

The Co. did not seem to think that "that was it."

"Anyhow, don't jaw!" said Bunter. "A chap wants to nap a bit after lunch. Go out and look for Wharton, if you want him; but you'll find that he's only walked off to get a bit of rest from you—bet you that's it! Anyhow, don't stand there jawing when a chap wants to go to sleep."

Bunter closed his eyes once more.

They did not remain closed. They opened quite quickly, as he suddenly shot out of the armchair and rolled on the oak floor.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter, as he landed.

For a moment he fancied that it was an earthquake or an air raid. But it was neither. His sudden transit was caused by Bob Cherry grasping the back of the armchair and tilting it up.

"Why, you beast!" roared Bunter, sitting up and glaring at Bob over the chair-back. "You silly idiot, wharrer you think you're up to?"

Bob did not explain what he was up to. He tilted the armchair over, engulfing Bunter. Then the Co. walked out again to look for their missing chum, leaving a breathless and infuriated fat Owl to struggle out from under the armchair.

IN THE HIDDEN CAVE!

HARRY WHARTON lay on the hard chalk, with a glimmer of lamplight in his eyes.

He could not move.

A cord, knotted so cruelly that it gave him pain to stir, fastened his hands and ankles. He lay on the chalk floor of the hidden cave, a helpless prisoner in the hands of the man from the Gestapo.

The spy's secret was his now—for what it was worth! But, with a feeling of despair in his heart, he knew what that discovery was to cost him. He had no hope.

The struggle in the sea-cave had ended as it could only end. Strong and sturdy as he was, he had no chance in the savage grip of the Nazi. Spent by the struggle, he had been dragged up the sea-cave again, to the foot of the wall below the spy's hidden den. There, without a word, but with bitter rage in his light blue eyes, the man from the Gestapo had bound him—and left him for a few minutes, while he clambered up and disappeared into the tunnel in the cave-wall.

He had returned with a rope, which he knotted to the helpless schoolboy. Then again he had clambered up, and dragged the bound junior to the high ledge on the cavern wall.

Wharton, helpless to resist, was pushed into the cavity in the rock wall. The Nazi spy followed him in, and the rock was tilted over again, from within, blocking the opening.

The thud, as it jammed into place, was like a knell to the schoolboy's ears. It shut off all possibility of discovery and rescue. Even if his friends guessed that he had gone to the cave—even if they searched—the blocked tunnel would defy their search as it had done before. From without there was nothing to indicate that that opening over the ledge, high up the cavern wall, existed. Only too well he knew that.

He was roughly dragged along the tunnel-like crevice, a short distance, and flung down.

Then a lamp was lighted, glimmering

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over a small cave with walls of rugged chalk, hidden in the heart of the cliff.

There were cracks and crevices in the chalk walls, some of which, doubtless, had communication with the outer air, for the air in the hidden cave, though heavy, was easy to breathe. But that secret cave was hidden from all sight and knowledge.

Mr. Brown bent over him, coiled the rope round him, and knotted it again and again. Then he turned from his prisoner, still without a word.

Wharton, as he lay, looked about him.

He knew, only too well, that it was the Nazi spy's intention that he should not tell what he had learned—though what the wretch's precise intentions were, he could not tell. But Mr. Brown, so long as his nefarious task required him to lurk in the vicinity of Eastcliff Lodge, couldn't afford to have his secret known. Whether he was to be kept there a bound prisoner, or whether darker and more terrible thoughts were in the mind of the man from the Gestapo, he could not guess.

Brown, for the time, took no heed of him. He had sat down at a small folding table, seated on an up-ended suitcase, and was busy with papers—occasionally scribbling with a fountain-pen. He did not even glance at the schoolboy lying on the chalk floor.

Wharton's eyes wandered round the little hidden cave. He could see that this was the spy's hide-out—discovered by chance, doubtless on the day when Brown had been shut in the sea-cave by the tide—a discovery that the man from the Gestapo had found very useful indeed. Before that discovery, no doubt, he had skulked in the sea-cave at times; but from that day he had had a safe hiding-place, and had made it his headquarters.

There were three suitcases lying about, a trestle-table that would fold into small compass, a bundle of blankets and rugs, a small oil-stove, and some cooking utensils. One by one, doubtless, those articles had been conveyed there to make the hidden cave habitable when Herr Braun wanted to use it.

But the object that fixed Harry Wharton's attention, and upon which his eyes continually turned, was an iron ladder clamped to the wall of the cave.

That iron ladder led upward, disappearing through what looked like a shaft, or a vertical tunnel, in the chalk roof.

Where did that ladder lead?

It did not take the captain of the Remove long to guess. This cave, as he knew, must be directly under Eastcliff Lodge. He knew that he had now discovered Mr. Brown's secret—an unknown way of entering the mansion when he desired.

Over that hidden cave, but at some distance up, were the cellars of Eastcliff Lodge, one of which had been turned into an air-raid shelter. The others, as Wharton knew, were never entered—had probably never been entered for a hundred years. Never, till Mr. Brown had discovered the secret of the way the smugglers had gone in ancient days, when the then Squire of Eastcliff Lodge had handled contraband goods!

A century, more than a century, ago contraband cargoes had been run into the sea-cave from French luggers, and this was the way they had reached the cellars of Eastcliff Lodge, to be stored till they were disposed of.

Not for a hundred years and more had a human foot trodden that hidden

way—till it was trodden by the feet of an enemy alien—the spy who had discovered it by chance.

No doubt Brown, when he had discovered the hidden cave, had lost no time in learning where that iron ladder led—and his satisfaction must have been keen when he learned that it gave him access to Sir William Bird's mansion.

Wharton knew that that must be the case. This was how Brown had been able to reach Wibley's room in the night, leaving, afterwards, an open window downstairs to throw dust in the eyes of the occupants of the house. This was how he had entered on the night of the air raid, to set the signal-light on the tower for the German bomber.

At the top of that ladder, Wharton did not doubt, was some entrance into the cellars under the mansion—forgotten long ago, and its existence now unknown and unsuspected.

Scratch, scratch, scratch, went the pen in the hand of the spy. Wharton glanced at him from time to time. What he was writing, doubtless, was information he had gathered, to be passed on to another hand.

The junior's heart was heavy. What he knew now was enough—more than enough—to put an end to the spy's treacherous work. But he was not fated to take that knowledge out of the hidden cave.

The man from the Gestapo stirred at last. He slipped the fountain-pen into his pocket, rose to his feet, and looked at his watch.

Then, at last, his light blue eyes, under the dyed eyebrows, turned on the schoolboy who lay bound on the rugged chalk.

The look in them sent a cold chill through the captain of the Remove. The man spoke at last, in a low, guttural voice.

"You young fool! You have thrust your head into a wolf's den! You must take the consequences! I would not willingly have harmed you—I am not here to make war on schoolboys. But I cannot keep you a prisoner here—and I dare not release you."

Harry Wharton's heart was like ice. But his voice was steady as he answered:

"I shall be missed. I shall be searched for! Whatever may happen to me, it will not save you! It will be known what you have done!"

A harsh laugh interrupted him.

"Fool! There will be no trace to point to my hand, or anyone's hand, when what is left of you is washed up by the sea!" He looked at his watch again. "The tide is in. In half an hour more it will be washing in the cave, under the ledge on which that tunnel opens. Your bonds will be taken off when you are dropped into it. There will be nothing to indicate that you have ever been a prisoner. A foolish, careless schoolboy was caught in the tide and drowned—that is all. Who is to think otherwise?"

Harry Wharton did not answer.

His courage did not fail him. But his face was white.

He knew that the man from the Gestapo was right. Dropped from the ledge, into the surging tide in the flooded cave, the strongest swimmer had no chance of life. And when he was washed out to sea, there would be nothing to tell that he had not, as had happened often enough to unwary persons, been caught in the tide. There would be nothing to endanger the Nazi spy.

Was the man capable of it—even a base and treacherous spy of the German

Gestapo? Not if he could have avoided it with safety—but his safety was at stake—his safety and the dastardly work he was carrying on for his masters in Berlin. His secret had to be kept—even at the cost of a schoolboy's life.

Wharton lay silent.

The man turned from him. He stooped over one of the suitcases, opened it, and began to sort over the contents—a variety of disguises, as the junior could see.

Wharton watched him in stony silence. The tide, he knew, was coming up the cave by that time—soon it would be ten or twelve feet deep below the ledge on the cavern wall—and then—

Suddenly he gave a violent start, and barely repressed a cry.

On the iron ladder clamped to the wall, in the shaft that opened in the roof of the hidden cave, a figure appeared.

There had been no sound. From the blackness above, that figure appeared suddenly, noiselessly.

A man was descending, and, clinging to the rusty rungs of the old iron ladder, he turned his face downward, scanning the cave.

Harry Wharton, in utter amazement, recognised Soames.

The Nazi spy, as he bent over the open suitcase, had his back to the ladder. He heard nothing—and he saw nothing. Soames, for the moment, watched him—his glance passing on to Wharton. He released one hand from the rungs and placed his finger to his lips as he caught the junior's eyes fixed on him. But Harry Wharton did not need that sign—he was dumb.

A moment more, and Soames was swinging silently down, landing without so much noise as a cat on the rugged floor of the hidden cave.

Wharton's eyes caught the black muzzle of the automatic in his hand, as he stood, his gaze fixed on the back of the man from the Gestapo. Soft and smooth came the voice of the sea-lawyer.

"I have found you at home at last, Herr Braun!"

The man from the Gestapo gave an almost convulsive bound.

He spun round, gasping hoarsely—to look at a levelled automatic, with Soames' eyes gleaming mockery over the levelled weapon.

SAVED—BY SOAMES!

"BETTER not!" said Soames softly.

The Nazi spy's hand had whipped towards his hip.

Soames' face, sleek and smooth, was calm, faintly smiling. But his eyes were like cold steel over the automatic.

Mr. Brown's hand stopped short of the revolver at which he had instinctively clutched.

The sea-lawyer would have shot him down, on the floor of the hidden cave, without compunction, as he would have shot a rat, had he drawn the weapon from his pocket. Brown checked that instinctive movement only in time.

Harry Wharton, unable to stir, gazed on breathlessly.

The sudden, startling appearance of Soames on the scene made him almost giddy with relief.

Soames was an enemy—when it suited his purposes to be an enemy. But it was not as an enemy that he was there now—he was there as the enemy of the spy, and if he had the upper hand the prisoner of the hidden cave was saved!

"You!" muttered Mr. Brown. His

guttural voice choked with rage. "Jermyn the valet! I suspected—I knew—you were something more—an agent of the Secret Service, like your master—"

Soames laughed, his soft, cat-like laugh.

"You are a spy, my good herr, but you are not up to date with your information," he said banteringly. "Jermyn the valet has ceased to exist—having been detected as quite another person by yonder schoolboy and his friends. Neither, I can assure you, have I any connection with the service of which my former master was a distinguished ornament. My name is Soames—but it might be Ishmael, for my hand is against every man, and every man's hand, is against me."

The spy did not speak—he watched the sleek face with burning eyes.

"In serving Sir William, my good herr, I was serving myself," went on Soames, in the same tone. "If you have at times found me inconveniently close to your track I was not, I regret to say, thinking of serving my country—my object was personal. Yet when I can serve my country without cost to myself I welcome the opportunity."

Brown watched him—panting. The automatic did not waver—nor the steady gaze of the steely eyes over it.

"In Sir William's service," said Soames, "I learned much to my advantage. I gained knowledge of the movements of a gang of spies, for which the British Intelligence Department would have given much. But I had my own game to play, Herr Braun. You have watched Eastcliff Lodge and Sir William Bird—I have watched you. You, my good herr, are the paymaster of a gang of miscreants—that is why you are my game."

He smiled again. "While I was at Eastcliff Lodge my task was easier," he went on. "But after I had to go, I did not think of giving up. I have remained in the vicinity, carrying on under greater difficulties—but carrying on, mein herr. And now I have you where I want you."

"Ach! And what—"

"You are my prisoner, Herr Braun!" said Soames. "Dead or alive—I care little which. I knew you had some den in this place, and hunted for it in vain; but on the night of the air raid, I learned all I needed to learn. You were able to enter Eastcliff Lodge when and how you chose—and I had heard the story of the old smugglers. From this end I could find out nothing—from the Eastcliff Lodge end I was barred off by having been turned out—till the night of the air raid! Then, when I gave warning of your treachery, I was allowed to seek safety with the household in the air-raid shelter in the cellars."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. Soames did not glance at him. His eyes remained fixed on the spy. "I did not leave the cellars, after the raid, with the rest," he went on. "It was my chance, and I made use of it. I explored the cellars, and found the ringed stone that gave access to this den—the way the smugglers went in the old days. Do you understand now, Herr Braun?"

The spy's face worked with fury. "You have known—since that night," he breathed. "You have known—and said nothing?"

"Nothing!" assented Soames. "I waited, my good herr, for you to fall into my hands like a ripe apple."

The spy was puzzled. "What is your game?" he breathed.

"You knew, and you could have told—and you have said nothing. A word to the police—"

"The police and I are not on the best of terms," said Soames. "And I am on the make, my good herr—such is the selfishness of human nature. On the day that I discovered your den here, I searched with care—and found nothing to my advantage. I had to wait—till now."

"And now?" hissed Brown. Soames showed his white, even teeth in a sardonic grin.

"Have I not said that I am on the make?" he drawled. "Have I not said that I know you, Herr Braun, to be the paymaster of the gang of spies who carry out your instructions? That, my good herr, is my game! Safe as you deemed your hideout to be, you did not leave the funds of the Gestapo parked here—you carry them on your person."

"Ach!" breathed the spy between his teeth.

He understood now.

"A money-belt probably," said Soames mockingly. "On your person, at all events, my excellent herr! A large sum—in English money—and all in notes of small denomination—is it not so? Do you not leave certain sums in secret places for your confederates to pick up—to avoid meetings that might be dangerous? One such sum, my worthy herr, has fallen into my hands! You will oblige me by handing over the whole amount with which your rascally masters have trusted you—a sufficient sum, my good Nazi, to keep me from ways that are dark, and tricks that are vain, for many years to come. Do I make myself clear?"

"Ach! Ach!" muttered the spy. "If I give you what you ask, you leave the way open for me—"

"Scarcely! I am a patriot when I can afford to be!" smiled Soames. "It is my duty to secure a dangerous spy—though my young friend yonder may smile at the word duty on my lips."

"Listen!" muttered the spy. "You are a rogue—a rascal—on your own confession. All I carry shall be yours—and twice as much if I go free."

Harry Wharton caught his breath. Soames shook his head gently.

"Even a rogue may have his limit!" he said. "I may be no credit to the country to which I belong, Herr Braun—little more, perhaps, than you are to yours! Yet there is something in the call of one's country that stirs even a rogue like myself! Now—"

He did not finish the sentence. The desperate man before him tore at the revolver in his pocket—and Soames fired on the instant.

"You asked for it, mein herr!" said Soames grimly.

The man from the Gestapo, with a groan, sank to the floor.

Soames slipped the automatic into his pocket, stepped to him, and lifted him to the blankets in the corner of the cave.

Harry Wharton lay silent, watching. He watched the sea-lawyer bind up the shattered arm—he saw Soames take a money-belt from the spy and examine the contents. He saw the flash of triumph in the sleek face as Soames examined his prize—the loot for which he had watched and waited so long. The money-belt disappeared under Soames' coat.

He turned to the bound schoolboy.

"You do not, I fear, regard me with esteem, Master Wharton!" said Soames. "Yet it is fortunate for you that I am here. May I hope, if I release you and see you to safety, that you will raise no hand to prevent my departure

afterwards? It is little to ask in the circumstances."

"I am in your hands," said Harry. "You have nothing to fear from me."

"I would hope that you will remember me with kindness, if not with esteem!" said Soames. "Our ways will lie very far apart from this day—but you will remember, at least, that James Soames was not all bad."

He cut the rope and helped the schoolboy to his feet.

"The tide is in," he said, "we cannot leave by the cave. But the way into Eastcliff Lodge is easy—I will help you up the ladder."

A few minutes more, and the man from the Gestapo was left alone in the hidden cave—groaning on the blankets, his days of evil done: alone, till the officers of the law came to take him.

THE LAST OF SOAMES!

"HARRY—"

"Soames!"

"What!"

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

"My only hat and umbrella!" came from Wibley. "Hem! Good gad!"

"What the jolly old dickens—"

Sir William and the Co. were in the hall, discussing Harry Wharton's strange absence with growing anxiety.

Billy Bunter, not at all anxious—satisfied that his acute brain had hit upon the real explanation of Wharton's absence—chewed toffee.

There was a general jump as Harry Wharton—pale, dishevelled, smothered with chalk—entered the hall from the passage that led to the air-raid shelter cellar, followed by Soames.

His friends stared at him in blank amazement. They stared at Soames in equal amazement—and with far from friendly looks.

Frank Nugent caught his chum by the arm.

"Harry, what's happened?"

"Where on earth have you been?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "How the thump did you get here?"

"And Soames—" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"I've just come up from the cellars," answered Harry quietly. "There's a way into the cellars from the cave—"

"Good gad?" said Sir William. "But that rascal Jermyn—I mean Soames?"

"Soames has saved my life, I think," said Harry. "I'll tell you what's happened—after he's gone! That villain, Brown, had me—and but for Soames—"

"Oh!" gasped Nugent.

"But—but what?" exclaimed Bob.

Harry Wharton crossed to the door and opened it.

Soames glanced round, a deprecating smile on his sleek face.

"I have had the happiness to be of some assistance to Master Wharton, young gentlemen," he said, in his old deferential valet-manner, "but I will not linger to hear your thanks. I am, owing to certain circumstances, somewhat pushed for time. I have no doubt that Sir William—he bowed to Wibley—"will get busy on the telephone as soon as he has heard what Master Wharton has to tell him; and before the police arrive I should like to cover a certain distance—much as I admire and esteem them, I have never been on the friendly terms with them that I could have desired."

"You've been up to some roguery, I suppose?" said Johnny Bull, staring at him.

"In that remark, sir, you display your usual perspicacity!" said Soames, with a bow. "I have! I take my leave with respect, gentlemen! I trust that you will enjoy the remainder of your holiday here, all the more because you will see no more of me, or of Mr. Brown! It will, I am sure, please you to hear that I have come into a small fortune, and that I intend, from this day forth, to be a much more creditable character—modelling myself, so far as I may say so with due respect, on you young gentlemen, whom I have always admired and esteemed."

With that, Soames made a bow, including all present, walked out of the doorway, and disappeared—leaving Billy Bunter blinking and the other fellows staring after him in silence.

It was a week later that the Easter party at Eastcliff Lodge broke up. Before that time, many things had happened. Soames had disappeared, as if into space, leaving no trace behind him. Mr. Brown had passed into safe custody, and from papers found on him the police had traced his associates, who joined him in that safe custody.

Wibley, one day, had walked out—and returned in his own proper person, as William Wibley of the Remove, accompanied by a silver-haired gentleman, who looked exactly like Wibley in his days of impersonation—but who actually was Sir William Bird, safe back from his perilous mission in the land of the Nazis. It was the genuine Sir William who dispensed hospitality at Eastcliff Lodge for the last few days—though Blump and his staff, and all but the Greyfriars juniors, remained in blissful ignorance that there had been any change.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, on the last day, when suitcases were packed, and in the hall. "I say, it's a bit awkward! My postal order hasn't come, after all! Actually, I haven't my railway fare! What's going to be done?"

"Us!" said Bob Cherry.
And it was so!

THE END.

(S. H. for next week: "THE SHADOW OF THE SACK!" Don't miss it!)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

JUDGING by the number of letters I am receiving these days, the jolly old MAGNET is gaining new readers here, there, and everywhere. I must thank new readers and old who have sent me congratulatory letters on the subject of our stories. You may be sure that I will always see to it that the standard of the MAGNET stories remains as high as ever, and that means the finest fiction possible.

Evidence of this will be found when you read:

"THE SHADOW OF THE SACK!"

By Frank Richards,

which appears in our next issue. The Easter holidays having come to an end, Harry Wharton finds himself in hot water on the very first day of term. Always ready to do anyone a

good turn, he helps a certain "bad hat" out of a scrape, only to land heavily in the soup himself! It's a black day for the junior captain of Greyfriars, as you will learn when you read this smashing yarn. You'll enjoy every line of it. Step along to your newsagent right now and ask him to reserve a copy of next Saturday's MAGNET for you. Another special reason why you should make sure of this special issue is that it will contain

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

that will appeal to every one of you. Watch out for it!

By the way, don't forget that there are three new numbers of the "Schoolboys' Own Library" out this week. Two grand Greyfriars stories by Frank Richards: "Southward Ho!" and "The Mystery of Study No. 1!" also a special story of St. Frank's, entitled: "The Touring School!" Read them all!

To wind up this Chat, let me inform you that Tom Brown, of the Remove, takes his place in our Portrait Gallery next Saturday. Mind you add his cheery face to your collection.

THE EDITOR.

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