

THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life.



No. 299. Vol. 8. November 1st, 1913.



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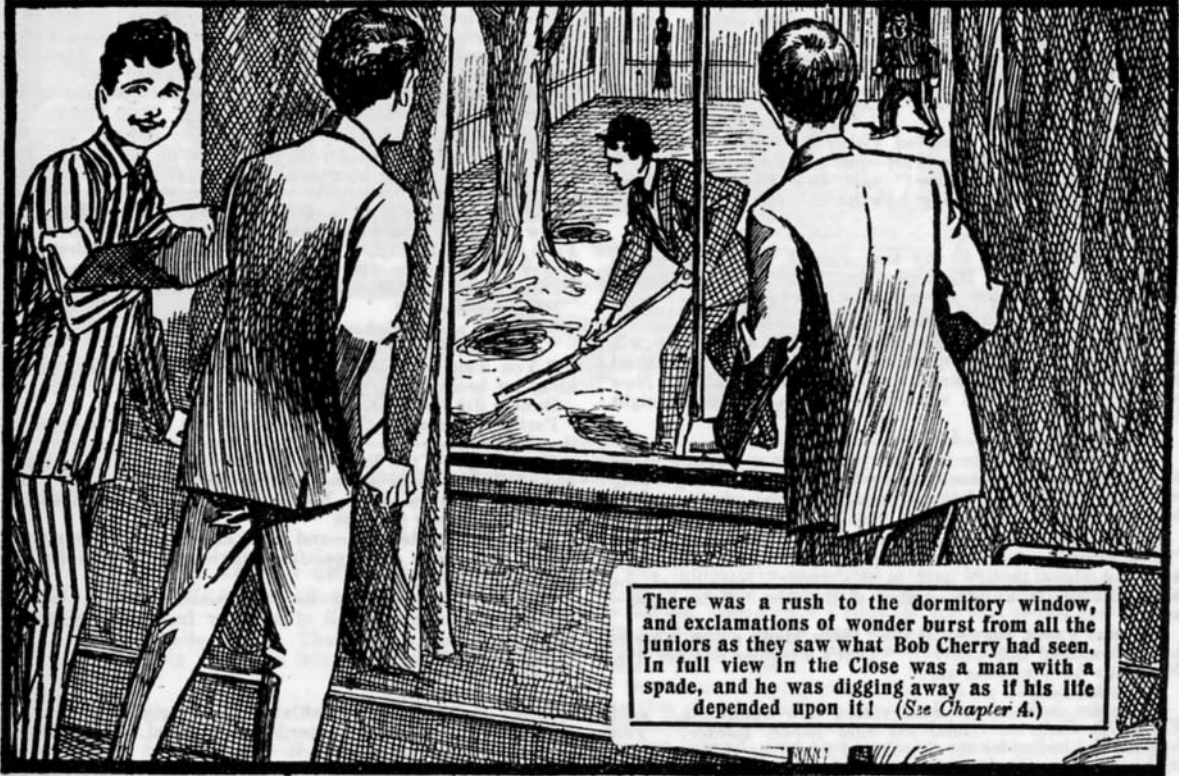
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The Greyfriars Gold Diggers

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By Frank Richards.



There was a rush to the dormitory window, and exclamations of wonder burst from all the juniors as they saw what Bob Cherry had seen. In full view in the Close was a man with a spade, and he was digging away as if his life depended upon it! (See Chapter A.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Mysterious!

"Twenty quid!" Billy Bunter muttered the words aloud. The fattest junior at Greyfriars was standing by the window at the end of the Remove passage. He was holding up a paper, reading it in the failing November light, and blinking eagerly through his big spectacles. "Twenty quid! What a giddy windfall!" Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, had just come upstairs, fresh from footer practice. They looked towards Bunter as they heard his muttering voice, but the fat junior did not notice them. He was intensely absorbed in his paper. "Quids—golden quids!" murmured Bunter. "My hat! I— Yaroo!"

He gave a sudden roar as Bob Cherry's hand descended upon his shoulder. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob cheerily. "What's the little game now?" "Ow!" "Somebody sending you twenty golden quids?" asked Frank Nugent. "Don't forget an old pal when they come!" "Ha, ha, ha!" Billy Bunter backed away, and hastily shoved the paper under his tight-fitting Eton jacket. There wasn't much room for it there—Bunter always seemed just on the point of bursting out of his clothes. "I—I say, you fellows, I—I— Did you hear me speaking?" "You were saying something about twenty quid!" said Harry Wharton. "Sort of day-dream, I suppose?"

"No—yes—exactly!" stammered Bunter. "I—I wasn't really, was I? I think you were mistaken, Wharton. There's nothing whatever in this paper about twenty quid. Perhaps I—I was saying what a lovely sunset it is—golden, you know."

As the sun had set in a November mist, and as Billy Bunter never cared for sunsets anyway, his statement was not probable. The Famous Five looked at him in astonishment. His sudden concealment of the paper smacked of mystery, and he was evidently very much agitated at being taken by surprise.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Johnny Bull. "Is it a prize offered in the paper?"

"A—a—a prize! Certainly not."

"What paper is it?" asked Wharton.

"What—what paper? Oh, a—a copy of the 'Daily Mail,'" said Bunter hurriedly. "I—I got it to—see the war news from the—the Balkans, you know."

"Then you were rather late, as the war has been over for some months!" grinned Bob Cherry. "What are you telling whoppers for, you fat duffer? What is there in that paper you don't want us to see?"

"Nun-nun-nothing!" said Bunter, in great alarm. "Nothing whatever—nothing at all. In fact, I—I wasn't really reading the paper, you know. I—I was admiring the view, you know. Fine view from this window. Sorry I must be off, you chaps—I've promised Fishy to give him some coaching at footer—"

"Too dark for footer now—and you couldn't coach a bunny rabbit at footer," said Bob. "That's whopper number two. What's in that paper?"

"Nothing, you know. Nothing at all. I—I mean I'm going to help Fishy with his Latin. You see, I—"

"Well, here's Fishy," said Wharton, as Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, came along the passage from the stairs. "Fishy, Bunter's looking for you."

"I guess I'm here!" said Fisher T. Fish. "What's wanted?"

"He's going to coach you in your Latin!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I guess he isn't!" snorted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I could construe his silly head off—just a few!"

"Whopper number three!" said Bob Cherry, counting on his fingers. "Amazing how he can roll 'em out, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I really meant to say that—that I was going to see my minor," said Billy Bunter feebly. "Sammy's got lines to do, you know, and I'm going to—help him!"

"First time in your life, then," said Nugent.

"That's whopper number four!" said Bob. "That will do, Bunter. Four whoppers in three minutes is a good allowance, even for a direct descendant of Ananias." Now what's that paper, and what have you put it out of sight for?"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I—I—"

"You don't meant to say that you've got a sporting paper there, Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, his face growing stern. "You are not fathead enough to think you are going to win twenty quid on horses, I suppose?"

"Jolly sight better than that!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I've simply got to pick it up—I—I—I mean there isn't anything about twenty quid in this paper. Nothing of the sort. It's simply an old number of the—the 'Times,' and—"

"It was a new number of the 'Daily Mail' a few minutes ago," remarked Bob Cherry. "That's whopper number five. Now let's have number six!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess he's on to some rotten new competish," said Fisher T. Fish. "Hand me that paper, Bunter. You haven't the brains for it. I reckon I might be able to handle it!"

"It isn't a competition!" shrieked Bunter.

"Then what is it?"

"Nothing at all. I—I was just reading an article on cricket—"

"That's number six!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean football. You know they have jolly good articles on football in the—the 'Penny Popular,' you know—"

"That blessed paper must be magical," said Bob. "It's been a 'Daily Mail' and a 'Times,' and now it's the 'Penny Popular.' What is it going to be next, Bunter—the 'London Magazine,' or the 'Encyclopædia Britannica'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'm going to see that paper," said Fisher T. Fish. "Look here, Fishy—"

"I think we'd better bump him for telling lies," said Harry Wharton. "We can't cure him, but there's no harm in trying."

"And I guess we'll confiscate the paper."

Bunter blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles, and his fat hands closed over the paper where it was bulging under his waistcoat.

"You let my paper alone!" he roared. "It's nothing to do with you! I suppose I can read an article on—on photography if I like?"

"So it's photography now!" yelled Bob Cherry. "That's number seven. Collar him, and we'll bump him before he can think of number eight!"

Billy Bunter backed away, and made a sudden rush. As a rule, Bunter was not much of a sprinter—he was not given to exercise—and he had a great deal of weight to carry. But in his anxiety to preserve his valuable secret, whatever it was, he surprised the Removites. He cannoned into Fisher T. Fish, and knocked him sprawling, and dashed down the stairs before Harry Wharton & Co. could grasp him.

"After him!" roared Bob Cherry, with all the force of his powerful lungs.

The Co. did not pursue Bunter. They did not care the small sum of twopence for Billy Bunter or his secret. But Bunter heard Bob's stentorian shout, and fear lent him wings. He dashed down the stairs three at a time, without looking behind him, and would have been in the lower hall in a few seconds—if he had not unfortunately met Coker of the Fifth on the landing. He crashed into Coker's chest, and Coker sat down on the landing with a roar and a bump. Bunter reeled back from the shock, and grasped the banisters.

"Ow, ow! Oh!"

"Yow!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "Yah!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You wait till I get hold of you!" roared Coker, scrambling up breathlessly.

Bunter did not wait.

Perhaps, under the circumstances, it was not to be expected that he would.

He fled down the lower stairs at top speed—unconsciously leaving behind him on the landing the folded paper, which had slipped from under his waistcoat in the shock of the collision.

Coker raged after him—and if he had caught Bunter there would have been some painful experiences in store for the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter knew that—and he fled wildly—without looking behind. There was a yell of laughter from the top of the stairs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Coker!"

"Hop it, Bunter!"

Fisher T. Fish looked down at the landing.

"I guess he's shed the paper," he remarked, "and I kinder guess I'm going to squint at it—some!"

And Fish went down to the landing and picked up the paper. Harry Wharton & Co. glanced down on the banisters. They saw Fish pick up the paper, and saw him glance at the open page, and heard him give a sudden exclamation.

"Gee-whiz!"

"What on earth is it?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Fish looked up, cramming the paper under his jacket.

"I guess it wouldn't interest you," he replied. "So-long!"

And, without waiting for any further remarks, Fisher T. Fish hurried down the lower stairs and disappeared, leaving the chums of the Remove greatly astonished. It was evident that there was something of extraordinary interest in that mysterious paper; and, whatever it was, both Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish were determined to keep it a secret to themselves. But what it was Harry Wharton & Co. had not the faintest idea.

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"Ow! I've broken my leg!" groaned Billy Bunter. "Also my arm! And some of my ribs! And I think my backbone! Ow!" "Good!" said Bob Cherry. "Then you won't be able to give any trouble while we're burying you! Pile in, you chaps!" (See Chapter 2.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Buried Alive!

GRUNT!
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That sounds like Bunter, or else it's a pig wandered into the Close!" Bob Cherry remarked.

Grunt!

It was very gloomy in the Close of Greyfriars. Harry Wharton & Co. were sprinting round the Close for exercise. Darkness fell so early that there wasn't much time for footer practice after lessons, and the chums of the Remove always sprinted round the Close after tea. They were passing the gymnasium when that deep, stertorous grunt fell upon their ears, and they paused in sheer astonishment.

Grunt!

It was evidently Billy Bunter, and it was equally evident that the fat junior was exerting himself in some unusual manner. It was not often that Bunter did any hard work, but when he did it told on him. He suffered, as Bob Cherry said, from fatty degeneration of his whole carcass.

"He's got a light there," said Nugent, catching a glimmer of light round the corner of the building. "What oan the fat duffer be doing—not exercises?"

"No fear!"

Clink, clink! Grunt, grunt!

"He's digging!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"My hat!"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE COKER CUP!"

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The juniors ran round the corner of the building. The sight of Bunter labouring with a spade would be worth beholding. Once upon a time the Remove chums had taken up gardening, but it had not lasted very long, and even while it lasted Bunter had never shown any disposition to handle pick or spade.

But he was digging now—there was no doubt about that. As they came round the corner of the building, they saw him labouring away, grunting from shortness of breath as he exerted himself. He had Gosling's spade in his fat hands, and Wharton's bicycle lamp was placed upon the ground to show him light. Bending over the spade, the fat junior shovelled at the earth without pause, and grunted away as if by clockwork.

Clink, clink, clink! went the spade; grunt, grunt, grunt! went Bunter.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked that the ony-hatfulness was terrific, his weird English growing weirder in his astonishment.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What are you digging there for, Bunter?"

Bunter gave a jump, and swung round. He leaned breathlessly on the spade, and gazed at the juniors through his big spectacles. He was evidently very much startled at being caught in the act, and not at all pleased.

"Taking up gardening again?" demanded Bob. "Or are

you trying to get through to Australia? You've got a long way to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know—" stammered Bunter.

"Have you got permission to dig here?" asked Wharton.

"You'll get into a row if anybody tumbles into that hole."

"What's the little game?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, I—I'm doing this for exercise, you know!" said Bunter.

"Nothing like digging for exercise, you know!"

"Why don't you dig in the garden, then? You'll get into a row for digging here, you fat duffer!"

"You'd better do a little extra exercise in filling up the hole when you've finished it," said Johnny Bull.

Bunter shook his head.

"Haven't time. I've got a lot of digging to do."

"For exercise?"

"Ye-es! Look here, you chaps, buzz off, and don't interrupt!"

"I begin to believe that Bunter is going off his dot," Wharton remarked, as the chums of the Remove resumed their way.

"What on earth can he be digging there for? He'd rather die of apoplexy than take exercise any day!"

It was a puzzle indeed. But the puzzles of that evening were not over yet. The way of the sprinters ran through the Cloisters, and as they came under the shadowy old arches they caught a gleam of light.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "Here's another lunatic—digging!"

It was Fisher T. Fish.

A bike lantern lay on the flagstones, and the American junior was digging away industriously, in the place where he had levered up one of the large flat stones.

The perspiration was rolling down his brow as he worked.

Harry Wharton grasped him by the shoulder. He was too busy to observe the arrival of the sprinters.

"Gone dotty?" demanded Wharton.

Fisher T. Fish grunted as he rested on his spade.

"Nope!"

"What are you digging here for?"

"Making a hole in the ground, I guess!" said Fish coolly.

"But what for?" yelled Bob Chery.

"For about a foot or eighteen inches!" said Fish humorously.

"You—you frabjous ass! You'll get licked if the Head finds you excavating the Cloisters!" exclaimed Nugent.

"What's the little game? We've just found Bunter digging a hole behind the gym."

An anxious look crossed Fisher T. Fish's sharp face.

"Has he found anything?" he exclaimed.

"Not that I know of."

"Good egg! I guess I shall be the autelope! It takes brains to think out a thing like this!" said Fish.

"Like what?"

"I guess I'm not telling you anything! A still tongue shows a wise head—some!"

And Fisher T. Fish resumed his digging.

"Mad as a hatter!" said Bob Chery. "Come on!"

Amazed and puzzled, the juniors went on their way. As they came out of the Cloisters there was a sharp exclamation from Frank Nugent, and he rolled over on the ground.

The other fellows stopped.

"Ow!" gasped Nugent. "Groogh! There's a hole here! I've stepped into it!"

He staggered to his feet.

"A hole!" said Wharton. "Great Scott! One of those lunatics has been digging here! You might have sprained your ankle!"

He struck a match, and the light flickered upon a hole in the ground about a foot deep and a couple of feet across.

Nugent had stepped right into it, without seeing it in the dark.

Wharton knitted his brows.

"The dangerous idiot!" he exclaimed. "Why, a chap might break his leg there!"

"I've jolly near broken mine!" groaned Nugent, rubbing his knee. "Ow!"

"I'm blest if I know what those two lunatics are digging holes for!" said Wharton. "But I do know this—they're going to stop doing it, and at once!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Let's go and see Fishy. It won't be safe to do any more sprinting in the dark. Goodness only knows how many holes there are to tumble into."

The wrathful juniors returned into the Cloisters. Fisher T. Fish was still digging. They did not waste words on him. They seized him, and jerked the spade away, and sat him down in the excavation he had made. Fisher T. Fish gave a yell of surprise and rage.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 299.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,

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Every Friday.

"Let up, you slabsided chumps! Wharrer you getting at?"

"You've got to stop digging holes for people to fall into!" Wharton explained. "Nugent has just stumbled into one."

"I guess he'd better keep his eye-teeth cut, then! Lemme alone!"

"Are you going to stop digging holes?" roared Wharton.

"Nope!"

"Are you going to fill them up again?"

"I guess I haven't time. If I waste time filling up the holes Bunter will be the chap to find it, I guess."

"To find what?"

"Oh, don't ask questions!"

"I suppose it's a case of pottiness!" Wharton remarked. "But however potty you are, you can't be allowed to dig holes for people to fall into! We'll bury him here, you chaps, and keep him out of mischief!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hyer, I say—I guess—I swow! Ow! Leggo! Gee-whiz!"

But the juniors were in deadly earnest. Whatever might be Fisher T. Fish's mysterious motive for digging holes about the school grounds, it was evidently too dangerous to be allowed to go on. They sat the Yankee junior down in the excavation he had made, which was eighteen inches deep by this time and a couple of feet wide.

His head and feet remained out of it, but the middle of him it was possible to bury; and the juniors proceeded with the burying. While the Co. held the struggling and expostulating Yankee junior in position, Wharton shovelled in the earth and stamped it down.

It did not take long. When it was finished, Fisher T. Fish presented the peculiar aspect of a fellow consisting wholly of legs, and head and shoulders, and divided in the middle. He glared up ferociously at the grinning juniors.

"Lemme me out of this!" he roared. "It's cold! Ow!"

"We'll take the spade away," said Wharton. "I dare say you can wriggle out of that in time, Fishy. Come on, you chaps; we've got to bury Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter loomed up in sight in the Cloisters. "Hallo! Is that Fishy? He, he, he!"

"Lemme out!" yelled Fish.

"Has that rotter been digging?" howled Bunter indignantly. "He's after it, too, is he? I suppose he's got hold of my paper."

"I guess you'd better shut up, if you don't want the whole school to be after it, too!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "Keep it dark, you ass!"

"After what?" demanded Wharton.

"I guess that's a secret."

"Serve you jolly well right, Fishy," said Bunter. "You've no right to look for it, and you jolly well know it. I've been looking behind the gym, but it ain't there. I'm going to dig in the Cloisters now."

"Have you filled up the hole you made?" demanded Wharton.

"Certainly not. I haven't time."

"Left it for somebody to fall in—eh?" howled Nugent.

"Oh, that's their look-out!"

"Collar him! We'll bury him, too!"

"I say, you fellows—" Bunter dodged away as they rushed at him. "I—I say—hands off, you beasts! Ow! Yah! Rotters!"

Bunter fled from the Cloisters, dropping his spade in his hurried flight. From the darkness in the Close came a sound of a heavy bump and a wild yell. The juniors burst into a roar. Evidently Billy Bunter had found the hole Nugent had found ten minutes earlier.

"Ow, ow, ow! Help! Murder! Fire! Ow!"

The juniors hurried after him. Bunter was sitting in the hole, groping wildly for his spectacles. He was not hurt, but he had received a shock.

"Broken your neck?" asked Bob Chery sympathetically.

"Ow! I've broken my leg," groaned Bunter, "also my arm, and some of my ribs! And I think my backbone! Ow!"

"Good!" said Bob. "Then you won't be able to give any trouble while we're burying you. Pile in, you chaps!"

"Ow!"

Bunter leaped out of the excavation with an agility marvellous in a fellow who had so many bones broken, and fled towards the School House at top speed.

Another yell from the darkness showed that he had found another hole, but he had scrambled out of it, and was gone before Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on the spot.

It was half an hour later when Fisher T. Fish came into the house; and then he was in a decidedly bad temper, and earth was clinging to his clothes, and the scent he brought in with him was of the earth earthy.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Coker Is Annoyed!

THE extraordinary actions of Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish were the talk of the Remove that evening. What motive they could possibly have for digging holes in the school grounds was a mystery the juniors could not fathom. If only Bunter or Fish had been taken with that amazing hobby, the fellows would probably have attributed it to a sudden attack of "pottiness"; but it was hardly possible that two fellows could have gone "potty" in precisely the same manner at precisely the same time.

They were questioned by nearly all the Remove—and, in fact, by fellows in other Forms, who heard of their amazing proceedings. But they did not explain. Billy Bunter was willing to tell any number of "terminological inexactitudes" on the subject, and Fisher T. Fish "guessed" that he wasn't giving anything away in the shape of information. The juniors, devoured by curiosity, could only wonder and surmise.

"There used to be a yarn about the school, about a giddy treasure buried by the old monks," Bolsover major remarked. "Is that what you're looking for, Fishy?"

"I guess not!"

"Then what is it?"

"I guess you'll know if you live long enough," replied Fisher T. Fish.

"Sure, and it's potty ye are," said Micky Desmond. "and sure Bunter's as potty as ye are, and ye're as potty as Bunter, and ye're both as potty as one another, bedad!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, as Coker of the Fifth came into the junior common-room, followed by Potter and Greene of that Form. "Here comes the great Horace! Horace, old man, seniors are not allowed in this room. Only respectable company kept here. Dogs and Fifth-Formers not admitted."

Coker took no notice of Bob's humorous greeting. He looked wrathfully round the room, and spotted Fisher T. Fish and bore down on him. Some of the juniors noticed that Coker's trousers were muddy, and they guessed the reason of his visit, and they waited for the fireworks.

"Fish!" roared Coker.

"Hallo," said Fish coolly. "what's biting you?"

"I hear you've been digging holes in the Close."

"Yep!"

"And not filling them up again?" said Coker.

"Nope. Haven't the time."

"Leaving them for chaps to fall into—what?" roared Coker.

"I guess it's up to chaps to keep their eyes open! I guess I haven't the time to go around looking after galoots who trot about with their eyes shut!"

"How is a chap to see a blessed hole in the blessed dark?" roared Coker.

Fish shook his head.

"I guess I'm not answering riddles," he replied.

"I've just taken a tumble," said Coker. "I've hurt my leg, and mucked up my bags."

"Sorry!"

"Yes, and I'm going to make you sorrier!" said Coker grimly; and he immediately proceeded to lay violent hands upon the Yankee junior.

"Hyer, hands off!" yelled Fish. "I guess I shall slaughter you, Coker, if I get my mad up! Hands off! Ow! Help!"

The struggling junior was waltzed to and fro in the powerful grasp of Coker. Coker's large hand rose and fell, and Fish yelled with anguish.

"Ow! Gee-whiz! Great snakes! Help!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroo! Help! Rescue! Are you silly guys going to stand by and see a pal walloped by a rotten Fifth-Former?" shrieked Fish, struggling in vain in the grasp of the burly Coker.

That appeal was not lost on the Removites. They crowded round at once.

"That's enough, Coker!" said Harry Wharton. "Fishy is a dangerous lunatic, but that will do. Hands off!"

"Keep back!" snorted Coker. "I'll give you some if you interfere! I'm going to teach Fish a lesson about digging pitfalls for people!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Help!"

"Rescue!" roared Bob Cherry, and he rushed at Coker, and clasped him round the neck, in a close if not a loving embrace.

Potter and Greene rushed at once to drag Bob off, and Bob's friends at once dashed to his aid, and in a moment a

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wild and whirling fight was raging in the junior common-room.

Fisher T. Fish leaped away as Coker had to put up his hands to defend himself, and the three Fifth-Formers were surrounded by a roaring crowd, and the odds against them told in a few minutes. A dozen juniors went sprawling, and then Coker & Co. were on the floor, with the Removites clambering over them.

"Sock in to them!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Kick them out!" bellowed Bolsover major.

"Pile in, bedad!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"The sockfulness is terrific!"

"Hurrah! Down with the Fifth."

The Fifth-Formers were down already, and struggling under heaps of juniors. Fourth-Formers and fags of the Third had joined in the rush. All the Lower Forms were, of course, up against any invasion of their quarters by seniors. Coker & Co. had awakened a hornet's nest.

In the midst of the uproar, Walker the prefect strode into the room. He had a cane in his hand, and without stopping to talk, he proceeded to use the cane. There were roars from the combatants as the lashes fell right and left.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Tare and ouns!"

"Yaroo!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Stop this row!" roared Walker, hitting out recklessly with the cane. "I'll kick you all till you can't walk, if you don't shut up! The Head's heard you, you young sweeps. Coker, what are you here for rowing with the juniors?"

"Go and eat cokernuts!" howled Coker. "If that cane touches me, Walker, I'll wipe up the floor with you, prefect or no prefect!"

"Get out!" said Walker. "If you three ain't out of this room in two seconds, I'll report you to the Head!"

"Oh, rats!"

But Coker & Co. were out of the room in the required two seconds. As a matter of fact, they were glad to go. They had had quite enough of the juniors at close quarters, and they carried away with them many signs of conflict, and left a good many behind them, too, upon the features of the Removites.

"Now, you noisy young rascals," said Walker. "If there's any more row here, you'll have the Head down on you. You'll take fifty lines each—every junior in the room, and I shall report the matter to your Form-masters."

And Walker strode away.

"Oh, my hat," said Bob Cherry, rubbing a damaged nose.

"That's ripping! My nose will be twice its proper size by the time I've written my lines."

"Look at my eye!" gasped Mark Linley.

"Ow! Look at my mouth!"

"All Fishy's fault," exclaimed Bulstrode, "and Bunter's! I shall have a black eye to-morrow along with my fifty lines! Bump the silly asses!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"I guess—"

But Bunter and Fish expostulated in vain; they were not listened to. They were the cause of all the trouble, and they had to pay for it. The exasperated juniors seized them, and frogs-marched them round the common-room, bumping them every few yards. By the time they escaped from the hands of the avengers, Bunter and Fish were in a breathless and dishevelled condition, and the Removites were feeling a little consoled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

BOB CHERRY turned out of bed as the rising-bell clanged out in the dim November morning. Before the rising-bell ceased to clang Bob Cherry had mounted upon a chair, and was looking out of the dormitory window into the Close.

Bob was anxious about the weather.

It was a half-holiday that day, and the Remove were playing a football match in the afternoon with the Upper Fourth. And the weather of late had not been promising.

"What's it like?" called out Harry Wharton as he jumped out of bed.

"Going to be fine, I think," said Bob. "No rain, anyway." Then he suddenly uttered an exclamation: "My only Aunt Sempronia!"

His exclamation drew all eyes upon him. Bob Cherry was staring out of the dormitory window with an expression of utter amazement upon his face.

"What is it, Bob?"

"My hat!"

ANSWERS

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NEXT MONDAY—

"THE COKER CUP!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. Order Early!

"But what—"

"Another lunatic!" yelled Bob.

There was a rush to the window, and exclamations of wonder burst from all the juniors as they saw what Bob Cherry had seen.

In full view of the Close was a man with a spade. The man was a complete stranger to all the juniors. He was a little man, dressed in check clothes, with a bowler hat on the back of his head. He was digging!

Bunter and Fish had astounded the Greyfriars fellows by their sudden and inexplicable mania for digging in all sorts of unexpected places round about the school. But to see a complete stranger within the precincts of Greyfriars digging away in the middle of the Close simply put the lid on, as Bob Cherry expressed it.

The juniors could only stare and gasp.

The stranger looked neither to right nor to left. He dug away as if his life depended upon it. And round him, at various distances, there were holes in the ground, showing that he had been at work for some time, probably from the earliest peep of dawn.

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton. "Anybody know that chap?"

"Looks like one of the seaside bounders who come down to Pegg in the summer," said Frank Nugent. "But how did he get in here? The gates are not opened yet."

"Must have climbed in over the wall."

"And what is he digging for?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There comes Gosling!"

Gosling, the porter, had finished clanging the rising-bell, and he was now seen in the Close bearing down upon the mysterious digger. Gosling's face was a study. His surprise at finding a complete stranger within the precincts of the school, and at seeing him digging in the Close, as if Greyfriars' Close was his own back-garden, deprived Gosling of the power of speech. His mouth and eyes were wide open with astonishment as he bore down upon the man in the bowler hat.

"Going to be some fun!" murmured Nugent. "Gosling's chivvy is worth a guinea a box!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors dragged up the windows. They were anxious to hear what Gosling would say to the stranger. It was certain to be something eloquent.

"My heye!" roared Gosling, finding his voice at last.

"You cheeky rascal! 'Ow dare you! Wot I says is this 'ere, 'ow dare you!"

The man with the spade ceased to dig, and backed away from the porter.

"No offence, mister!" he said.

"No offence!" roared Gosling. "You're a-trespassin' 'ere, that's wot you're doin', if you ain't a burglar! And diggin'! Diggin' 'ere! Are you mad?"

"I'm looking for it," the man explained.

"Lookin' for what—trouble? If that's what you're lookin' for, you've found it!" yelled Gosling; and he rushed upon the stranger.

The little man with the spade dodged away.

"Hands off!" he panted. "Look here, I'm only—"

"Hout you go!" roared Gosling.

"But I say—"

"Houtside! And thank your stars that I don't 'ave you harrested and 'anded over to the perlice!" exclaimed the indignant porter.

And Gosling grasped the stranger and rushed him away towards the gates. The spade fell with a clang, and the little man struggled unavailingly in the grasp of the angry school porter. Gosling did not stand upon ceremony with him. He was convinced that he had to do with a lunatic, and he also knew that he would have the task of filling up the holes the stranger had excavated.

They disappeared in the direction of the school gates, the little man waving his hands and gesticulating and expostulating, and shedding various things as he was bundled along—first the spade, and then his bowler hat, and then his necktie, and then articles that fell from his pockets in the struggle—so that his way to the gates was marked by a trail of lost property.

The juniors grinned as they gazed upon the scene from the dormitory windows. They did not descend from the windows until Gosling and his prisoner had vanished beyond the elms.

"Well, that takes the cake, I think!" said Bob Cherry, as he jumped down from his chair. "It must be a sort of epidemic. First Bunter and Fish catch it, and now that chap's got it!"

Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows in thought.

"There must be some reason for that chap coming here and digging holes in the Close!" he exclaimed. "He must have been looking for something."

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Every Wednesday.

"But what?"

"The same thing that Bunter and Fishy were looking for, I suppose—whatever that may happen to be."

"We'll make 'em tell us!" said Bolsover major. "I'm fed up with this blessed mystery. Collar Bunter, and make him own up!"

"Well, I think they ought to explain," said Tom Brown. "What's the good of mystifying the whole Form like this? And if they're on to anything good, they ought to let us into it."

"Yes, rather!"

"Now, Fishy!"

"I guess I'm not giving valuable secrets away," said Fisher T. Fish. "It's bad enough to have the general public nosing about with picks and spades, without having all you fellows after it as well."

"After what?" demanded the exasperated juniors.

"It!" said Fish calmly.

"The general public!" repeated Wharton. "Do you mean to say that anybody else is likely to come here digging about like that chap Gosling collared?"

"Heaps of 'em, I guess! Hundreds, perhaps!"

"My hat! What does it all mean?"

"I guess that's telling!"

"And I guess you're going to tell, too!" shouted Bolsover major. "Collar him, and we'll bump him till he owns up!"

Fisher T. Fish grabbed up his clothes and fled from the dormitory in his pyjamas. The juniors rushed in pursuit, but Fish dodged along the passage; and in their present state of deshabille the Remove could not very well follow further. Fish escaped into a box-room, and locked himself in to dress. But Billy Bunter was not so active as the Yankee schoolboy. Bolsover major's heavy grasp fell upon him, and he had no chance of getting out of the dormitory.

"Now," said Bolsover major grimly, "you're going to explain. What were you digging in the Close for?"

"Exercise!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo!"

"You expected to find some exercise buried there?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yes! I—I mean no. You—you see—"

"What were you expecting to dig up?" roared Bolsover.

"Er-earth, you know!" stammered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover major shook the fat junior angrily. He was greatly exasperated, and so were most of the Remove by that time. They did not like mysteries and secrets, unless they were let into them.

"Ow!" grunted Bunter. "Leggo! Don't shake me like that—ow! If you make my spectacles fall off—ow!—and they get broken—ow!"

"Are you going to own up?"

"Ow! You'll have to pay for them—ow!"

"Give me a slipper!" said Bolsover. "I'll soon make him own up!"

"Here you are!" said Skinner promptly. "I'll hold him by the ears!"

"Ow! Leggo! Keep that slipper away! Todd, you beast, help a chap who's in your own study! Ow!"

But Peter Todd shook his head.

"Tell us the giddy secret!" he said. "You've no right to keep it to yourself. Can't you see we're all on tenterhooks?"

"Ow! Keep that slipper away!" yelled Bunter as it descended on his fat person. "I'll tell you—ow! I really meant to tell you all along—yaroo!"

"Buck up, then!" snapped Bolsover major, suspending operations with the slipper.

"I—I was digging for—for—ow!"

"For what?" howled the juniors.

"Gold!" gasped Bunter.

There was a shout of astonishment.

"Gold? You ass!"

"Gold? You fathead!"

"Gold? You frabjous chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you think there's a gold-mine at Greyfriars?" shouted Bob Cherry. "You awful ass!"

"Yes, that's it," gasped the fat junior. "I—I suppose there's a gold-mine, you know. I—I—I—I—I'm digging to find it."

"He's not really so dotty as that," said Johnny Bull, with an air of careful consideration. "He's dotty, but not so dotty as that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There—there may be gold-mines here, for all you know," stammered Bunter. "There's gold-mines in Wales, and why not in England? Ow!"

"Never heard of gold-mines in Wales," said Nugent. "I've heard of Jonahs in whales, but not gold-mines. And you know jolly well you're not searching for gold-mines in the Close. Bump the truth out of him."

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What are you digging there for, Bunter!" Billy Bunter gave a jump, and swung round. He was evidently very much startled at being caught in the act, and not at all pleased. "I—I'm doing this for exercise, you know!" he replied breathlessly. "There's nothing like digging for exercise, you know!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Blessed if I believe there's any truth in him to bump out," said Wharton.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

Bump!

"Yaroo! Help!"

"Now, what have you been digging in the Close for?" roared Bolsover major.

"Ow! I—I was searching for—for—the Greyfriars treasure, you know—the one that was buried by the monkeys in the reign of Henry the Eighth—I mean the monks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Try again, Bunter," said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "After you get to the end of all the lies you can think of, you may hit on the truth."

"Ow! Leggo! The fact is—on my honour—"

"Look out!" said Nugent. "When Bunter says on his honour, it means that there's a specially big one coming."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"On my honour, you know—ow!—I—I was doing it for a joke, you know; just to make you fellows curious. Yaroo!"

Bump!

"Try again!"

"Ow! Yow—yow! Help! Murder! Fire!" roared Bunter.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE COKER CUP!"

There was a sudden shout from Penfold, who was looking out of the window.

"Here's some more of them, you fellows."

"What!"

There was a rush to the windows. In the Close Gosling could be seen, red with excitement and rage, brandishing a huge stick, and giving chase to two men who were racing across the Close with the porter after them. One of them carried a small spade, and the other a trowel, and they had evidently been digging. The angry porter was lashing out with the stick as he pursued them, and the two fugitives hopped and dodged to avoid the blows. They disappeared in the direction of the gates with the porter after them.

The Removites simply gasped with astonishment. Such extraordinary happenings almost took their breath away. Why should members of the general public invade the precincts of Greyfriars with spades and trowels, to dig within the walls of the old school? It was a baffling mystery.

"We'll have it out of Bunter, or else skin him alive!" roared Bolsover major.

But when they looked again for the fat junior, he was no longer in the dormitory. He had seized his opportunity, and fled with his clothes under his arms.

Buzzing with wonder and excitement, the Removites dressed themselves and went downstairs, where they found fellows of the other forms in a state of equal excitement,

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early!

Three more men had been found in the grounds, all of them armed with pick, or spade, or trowel, and caught in the act of digging. They had been chased out of the gates by the irate porter, and they left the school in a state of amazement and wonder that no words could express. There was only one topic of conversation at Greyfriars that morning; but such as they discussed it, the fellows could get no nearer to a solution of the mystery.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Mystery Thickens.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. expected that Fish and Bunter would be called over the coals that morning for the damage they had done with their excavations in the Close, and round the school building. But when Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came into the Form-room he did not single them out. Fish and Bunter had been a little apprehensive, but the keen eye of the Form-master did not rest on them. Mr. Quelch had certainly seen the holes in the ground—he had been observed looking at them with frowning brows—but doubtless he attributed them to the work of the strangers whom Gosling had discovered and chased forth from the gates.

Expressive glances were cast upon Bunter and Fish in the Form-room that morning. In the Form-room, and in the presence of Quelch, they could not be dealt with; but the juniors meant to have the secret out of them after morning lessons. Bunter and Fish, of course, made their mysterious excavations with the same motive as the strangers who had trespassed within the precincts of the school—and the Remove fellows meant to know what that motive was.

The two juniors whose mysterious conduct had so amazed their Form-fellows were very thoughtful that morning. They had excited curiosity to such a degree that they knew they would not be safe when they were outside the Form-room again. The Removeites were prepared to adopt the most drastic measures for making them reveal the baffling secret. There was, in fact, an exciting time in store for Fisher T. Fish and Billy Bunter.

That they had something on their minds was evident from the way they did their lessons. When Mr. Quelch requested Bunter to inform him what the famous Christopher Columbus discovered, Bunter amazed him and the form by replying:

"Twenty quid!"

Mr. Quelch jumped almost clear of the floor.

"What!" he exclaimed in a terrific voice.

Then Bunter seemed to wake up.

"I—I mean, sir, that is to say—America discovered Christopher Columbus—I mean Columbus discovered Christopher America, sir—"

There was a giggle from the Remove.

"Bunter!"

"I—I think that's right, sir," gasped Bunter, in dismay.

"What are you thinking about, Bunter?"

"About—about Christopher Columbus, sir, and—America, sir. I—I'm awfully interested in Columbus, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Then perhaps you can tell me some more about that famous navigator, Bunter."

"Oh, certainly, sir! He, in his youth, sir, stood on the burning deck, with—his little hatchet, sir, because he couldn't tell a lie. And when he died he said, 'Kiss me, Hardy! Thank Heaven, I have done my duty!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, you are a stupid and ridiculous boy. It was Casabianca who stood on the burning deck, and it was Nelson who made the observation you have repeated."

"Yes, sir," said Bunter, "I—I really meant to say Nelson, sir."

"You have not been paying attention, Bunter."

"Oh, yes, I have, sir! I heard everything you said about Christopher Columbus, sir—every word. I'm deeply interested in him."

"Then perhaps you can tell me where he was born."

"In—in New York, sir."

"What!"

"I—I mean in British Columbia, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You stupid boy, Bunter! New York and British Columbia did not exist before the discovery of America by Columbus."

"Of course not, sir," agreed Bunter; "that was what I really meant to say, sir, only you interrupted me."

"You will take a hundred lines, Bunter."

"Th-thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter, glad that it was not the cane he was to take.

"Fish!" thundered Mr. Quelch suddenly, a few minutes later, and Fisher T. Fish gave a jump, and crammed into his pocket a paper upon which he had been scribbling.

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Every Wednesday.

"Yes, sir," said Fish.

"What have you been writing there?"

"I—I guess I've been taking notes, sir," stammered Fish.

"I'm keenly interested in what you've been telling us, sir."

"Indeed! Show me the notes!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"The—the notes, sir."

"Yes—immediately. Pass me that paper upon which you have been scribbling."

"The—the paper, sir."

"Do you want to be caned, Fish?" thundered the Remove master, coming along to the American junior's desk.

"Nope! Certainly not, sir."

"Then give me that paper at once."

Fisher T. Fish reluctantly drew the crumpled paper from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Quelch. The Form-master looked at it in amazement. It was a roughly-drawn sketch-plan of Greyfriars School and its surrounding grounds, and was marked out in squares. Some of the squares were dotted, and others left blank.

"In the name of all that is ridiculous, Fish, what does this mean?" the Remove-master exclaimed.

"Kinder exercise in draughtsmanship, sir," ventured Fisher T. Fish.

"Why have you drawn a plan of the school?"

"I guess that's the only way, sir, when you're looking for a thing," said Fish. "No good going over the same ground twice." Then he caught himself up, as he realised that he was saying a little too much. "I—I mean, sir—that is to say—the fact is, sir—"

"The fact is, Fish, that you are neglecting your lessons to waste your time upon idle amusement," said the Form-master severely. "Hold out your hand!"

Swish! Swish!

"Ow! Yow!"

And Fisher T. Fish did not draw any more plans that morning. The juniors had listened in amazement. Fish was evidently searching for something or other, and that was the meaning of his mysterious excavations—and he had taken the trouble to sketch out a plan of the school grounds, in order not to miss a single spot. But what was it that he was looking for? What did he expect to find?

"My hat!" murmured Peter Todd. "We'll have it out of the boudiers, if we have to boil them in oil! Bunter's in my study, and I'm not going to be left out of any little secrets in my own study."

"And Fish is in mine," said Johnny Bull. "I'll strew him in little pieces over the study carpet if he doesn't explain!"

"The strewfulness will be terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"My dear fellows," observed Alonzo Todd, Peter's cousin "my dear fellows, I do not approve of this spirit of inquisitiveness. I do not think that my Uncle Benjamin would approve of it. I beg you to—Yah!"

"Todd!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, whirling round from the blackboard. "Did you utter that ridiculous exclamation?"

"Yow!"

"Todd!"

"I—I am sorry, sir!" gasped Alonzo. "I felt a sudden pain in my toe, sir, as if someone had stamped on it, sir."

Someone had—but poor Alonzo received fifty lines for his unseemly outbreak, all the same. And before morning lessons were over, there was another interruption. From the Close came the roar of Gosling's angry voice.

"Impudence! Cheek! Get hout! I'll give you in charge, you vagabone! Houtside, I say!"

It was evidently another enterprising digger. There was a sound of a thwacking stick, and a loud yell, and then silence. The enterprising gentleman with the spade had evidently been chased forth. And in the Remove, excitement and curiosity were almost at fever-heat.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Football Under Difficulties!

HARRY WHARTON had something more important than Bunter's vagaries to think of that afternoon however, as the Remove were due to play the Upper Fourth.

After morning lessons Bunter and Fish disappeared, and it was pretty plain they were keeping out of sight to avoid inquiries and stern measures. They turned up at dinner, but dodged out of the hall before the other fellows, and vanished again. But, as Bolsover major remarked, they would be bound to be spotted when they started digging again, and the Removeites arranged to signal to one another when one of them was spotted, so that he could be seized at once and put to the torture. But the Remove eleven had the football match to think of, and probably Bunter and Fish

were waiting for the footer to start before they showed themselves again.

Temple, Dabney, & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were already on the ground when the Remove team arrived there. They were all talking and gesticulating at once, and seemed highly excited.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Anything happened, Temple?"

The captain of the Upper Fourth snorted furiously.

"I should jolly well say so!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Nothing to do with the match, I suppose?" asked Wharton.

"We can't play!" howled Temple.

"My hat! Why not?"

"Look at the ground!"

Temple waved his hand towards the football-field.

Harry Wharton had inspected the field just before dinner, and he had found it in good condition, but it was far from being in good condition now. Holes marked it in various places—some of them a foot deep, some six inches, some more or less. The football-field seemed to have been pitted by a bad attack of smallpox.

The Removites uttered exclamations of rage. They understood now the excitement of the Fourth-Form fellows.

"What dangerous lunatic has been doing that?" howled Nugent.

"We found half a dozen strangers here!" growled Temple.

"They'd been digging while all the school was indoors at dinner. They were digging away like mad, but they bolted when we went for them."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "I gave one a lift under the ear."

"And I booted one of them as he ran," said Fry, of the Fourth. "One of them has left a trowel; and there's a spade left behind, too."

Wharton rubbed his nose in amazed reflection. He was trying to penetrate the mystery, but it was beyond his powers.

"Who were they?" he asked. "Did you know any of them?"

"Not one—all strangers."

Scott, of the Fourth, held up a fragment of pasteboard. It was the return half of a ticket from London.

"One of 'em dropped this," he said.

"My only hat! Then he came all the way from London to dig holes in our footer-ground!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Looks like it. He wouldn't be down here for a holiday, I suppose, in November?"

"They must all be dotty!"

"Dotty or not, they've mucked up our footer-ground!" growled Temple. "We can't borrow Little Side, either. They've been digging holes there, too."

"And the seniors are playing this afternoon on their ground," said Wharton, "or I'd ask Wingate to let us play there."

Temple grinned.

"I've looked at Big Side," he remarked. "There's a regular pitfall in one of the goals, and three or four holes along the half-way line."

"Great Scott! There will be a row!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's another of the lunatics!" shouted Bob Cherry.

He pointed towards Big Side. A man—a complete stranger to the Greyfriars fellows—could be seen near one of the goal-posts, trowelling away at the ground industriously. The juniors stared at him in wonder and exasperation.

"Let's collar him and make him explain!" said Temple.

"Good egg!"

The footballers dashed across to the senior ground. The digger looked up, and perhaps he saw something alarming in the aspect of the angry juniors. He ceased his digging and fled precipitately, and clambered over a paling and vanished.

"The beast's got away!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Here come the seniors," grinned Temple. "I wonder what Wingate will say when he sees these blessed exoavations?"

The Sixth were playing a Form match with the Fifth that afternoon. They came down to the ground together, and their looks were simply indescribable when they saw the excavations with which the footer-field was dotted.

"Who's been doing this?" gasped Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars.

"Those young sweeps, of course!" growled Walker.

"This is their idea of a rag, I suppose?"

"You kids didn't do this?" asked Wingate.

"No fear!"

"Certainly not!" said Wharton indignantly. "You don't think we'd muck up a footer-ground, do you? Our ground's in a worse state. A set of blithering idiots have been digging it up as if they were going to plant cabbages!"

"What on earth does it mean?" exclaimed Wingate.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE COKER CUP!"

EVERY
MONDAY, The "Magnet"
LIBRARY. ONE
PENNY.

"Goodness knows!"

"The Close has been dug up in the same way," Valencio remarked. "The Head was very ratty about it when he saw it this morning. It seems as if the whole blessed lunatic asylum has broken loose in the neighbourhood."

"It's extraordinary!"

"Well, these kids can fag at filling up the holes, so that we can play," Loder, of the Sixth, remarked.

"What about our own game?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"We can do it ourselves," said Wingate quietly. "They're not responsible, and there's no need to spoil their game. They've got plenty to do on their own ground before they can play, from the look of it."

And the footballers, instead of starting play, set to work filling up the excavations in the ground. The task was neither easy nor pleasant, and as they worked they breathed threats of deadly vengeance upon the intruders. It was an hour or more before they could start football.

Most of the Remove and the Fourth gathered round the ground to watch the match, and for the time Bunter and Fish and their mysterious proceedings were forgotten. But at half-time there was a sudden shout from Ogilvy, of the Remove.

"There's Bunter!"

Everybody looked round.

Billy Bunter could be seen, with a large trowel in his hand, jabbing away at the ground near the palings at the further end. A crowd of the spectators rushed in his direction, and the fat junior ceased work and fled at once, darting away, with a yelling mob after him.

The second half was in progress, when there was a sudden shout from the direction of the school gates.

"Collar him!"

"Duck him!"

There was a rush at once in the direction of the shouts. A man—another stranger—was struggling in the grasp of a crowd of excited juniors.

"Found him trowelling behind Gosling's lodge!" gasped Hobson, of the Shell. "We're going to duck him in the river."

"Ow!" roared the captured digger. "Leggo! I'll 'ave the law of you! Let me go!"

"Bring him along."

The excited juniors rushed him down to the river, heedless of his protests and frantic threats and expostulations. They rushed him to the landing-raft, and swung him to and fro, and tossed him into the Sark.

Splash!

"Good egg!" grinned Coker, of the Fifth. "We'll serve 'em all the same way when we catch 'em!"

The man in the water struggled to the towing-path, and scrambled out, drenched and dripping. He fled wildly along the towing-path as the Greyfriars fellows rushed towards him again.

The excited crowd searched through the precincts of the school for further intruders. Several more were found—in the most unexpected corners. One was digging in the Head's garden, and was chased away in terror of his life by a howling mob of juniors. Another was discovered in the ruined chapel, prizing up a flagstone, and was bumped hard and chased away. Another was routed out of the old tower, and another from behind the wood-shed.

It was amazing, and it really seemed as if a lunatic asylum had broken loose upon Greyfriars. Lunatics or not, the intruders were roughly handled whenever the Greyfriars fellows got hold of them.

Hunting for fellows with spades and trowels became the occupation of the afternoon with all the juniors and many of the seniors, and stranger after stranger was caught, and bumped or ducked in the river or chased and pelted beyond the limits of the school grounds.

Meanwhile, the Remove match drew to a close unwatched. The Remove finished with two goals to one, and when they had changed, the footballers joined in the hunting and chasing of the mysterious intruders. It was, in fact, a more exciting game than footer, and the Greyfriars fellows threw themselves into it with great zest.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER,

Very Wet!

"HERE he is!"
"Here's Fishy!"
"Collar him!"
Fisher T. Fish looked up in alarm. He was in a secluded corner at the end of the old Cloisters—digging, of course. The clink of his spade had drawn attention to the

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spot, and a whooping crowd of juniors came rushing round upon him.

Fisher T. Fish grabbed the spade and fled; but it was too late. Harry Wharton caught him by the shoulder, Bob Cherry by the collar, and Bolsover major by the ear. Nugent grasped his hair, and Johnny Bull his jacket. The American junior was fairly caught, and there was no chance for him.

"Let up!" he roared. "I guess I'm busy!"
 "Hold him tight!" said Wharton. "Don't let the rotter get away again! He's going to explain now, or be slaughtered!"

"I guess I'm not explaining anything!"
 "Put him to the torture!" said Bob Cherry. "There have been fifty lunatics, at least, digging about Greyfriars to-day, and we're going to make this one explain what it's all about. Now then, Fishy—"

"Let up, will you?"
 "Yank him along!" said Wharton. "We'll duck him in the fountain, and keep it up till he explains!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "The hear-hearfulness is terrific!"
 "Let up, I say! I guess I'm not going to tell you anything! I guess I can do as I like!" roared Fish.

"Then you've guessed wrong—you can't!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

And Fisher T. Fish was rushed away to the Close, and the excited crowd of juniors halted at the fountain. Fisher T. Fish was hoisted up to the broad rim of the granite basin. He struggled vainly in the grasp of his captors.

"Now then," said Wharton, "what's it all about?"
 "Let up!"

"Are you going to explain?"
 "Nope!"

"In with him!" said Harry.

Splash!
 Fisher T. Fish gurgled and disappeared into the fountain basin. He was hauled out, drenched and dripping and spluttering and gasping for breath. He looked very much like a half-drowned rat, with his clothes clinging to him.

"Groogh!" he spluttered. "Ow! Let up, I say!"
 "What have you and the other lunatics been digging for?" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Groogh!"
 "Explain!"

"Nope!"
 Splash!

Fisher T. Fish went in again. Again he was dragged forth, spluttering more wildly than ever. Some of the juniors were splashed, too; but they hardly noticed it. They were determined that Fisher T. Fish should unveil the mystery, if they had to proceed within an ace of drowning him.

But the Yankee junior was obstinate. He spluttered and spluttered and gasped, but not a word of explanation would he utter.

"Now then," said Wharton grimly, "are you going to explain?"

"Nix!"
 "Shove him in!"

"Ow, ow! Groogh! Yoooh! Hellup!"
 Splash!

Fisher T. Fish was too exhausted to crawl out of the water. He squatted immersed in the granite basin, and blinked limply at the juniors over the rim.

"Ow! Groogh! You slabsided jays! Ow! I won't say a word! Groogh!"

"Shove him under again!"
 "Grooh! Help! Hellup!"

"Hallo, there! What's that row?" exclaimed Walker, the prefect, hurrying up. "You young rascals! Let that kid out of the water at once!"

"It's all right, Walker!"
 "Ow! Hellup! Groogh! Help! Ow!"

The Sixth-Former pushed the juniors aside, and seized Fish, and lifted him from the basin. The drenched junior stood with the water running down him in streams. Walker looked round angrily at the excited crowd. Walker, of the Sixth, was a great deal of a bully himself, but that was no reason why he should allow bullying among the juniors; and he thought he had come upon a particularly flagrant case.

"You young rascals—" he began.

"It's all right, Walker!" said Wharton. "It's only a rag, you know! He's got to explain what he's been digging holes for!"

"Oh, Fish has been digging holes, has he?" said Walker.

"Yes; and he's got to explain!"
 "Have you been digging holes, as well as the lunatics from outside, Fish?" Walker demanded.

"Yep! Ow! Groogh!"
 "What for?"

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"Groogh! That's my business, I guess!"
 "Is it?" said Walker grimly. "Come to my study, Fish! This matter has got to be cleared up, and if it isn't cleared up, I'll give you something worse than a ducking in the fountain! Come on!"

And, with Walker's grip on his shoulder, the American junior was marched away, squeelching water out of his boots as he went. They disappeared into the House, leaving the juniors in a very dissatisfied frame of mind.

"We haven't got to the bottom of the mystery, after all!" growled Bob Cherry. "I think Walker might have minded his own business!"

"He'll make Fishy explain," said Nugent.

"But he may not tell us."

"Let's look for Bunter," said Bolsover major. "He won't stand the ducking so well as Fishy did."

"Good egg!"
 The juniors trooped away in search of the Owl of the Remove.

Meanwhile, Walker marched the drenched Yankee junior into his study. Fisher T. Fish was beginning to wish that the prefect had left him in the hands of the Removites. He could not have been made much wetter than he was, and he suspected that Walker would adopt even more drastic measures to force him to reveal the secret.

Walker looked as if he meant business. He closed the door of the study, and picked up a cane from the table. He swished the cane in the air, as a sort of hint to Fisher T. Fish of what he had to expect.

"So you have been digging holes, too?" he remarked.

"Yep!"

"You're going to explain. The Head is ratty about it—so is your Form-master. If they knew that a Greyfriars boy had been doing it as well as those outsiders, you'd most likely get a flogging. Now, what did you do it for?"

"I say, I—I shall catch cold in these wet clothes," said Fish. "Do you mind if I go and change first?"

Walker grinned.

"Sorry if you catch cold," he said cheerfully; "but you're not going to leave this study till you've explained why you've been playing the giddy goat! Go ahead!"

"I guess it's my secret!"

"You know what will happen if I take you to the Head, I suppose? That's what I'd do on the spot, only I want to know myself first," explained Walker. "So go ahead and tell me what you've been playing the giddy goat for?"

"I guess— Yaroooh!"

The prefect's cane swished across Fish's shoulders, and the junior gave a yell. He made a jump across towards the door, but Walker's grasp on his collar swung him back.

"Do you want some more?" asked the prefect pleasantly.

"Ow! Yow! Let up!"
 Swish, swish, swish!

"Gee-whiz! Chuck it!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'll explain!"

"You'd better!" said Walker grimly. "Now, what was it you have been looking for?"

"Twenty quid!" said Fish reluctantly. "Look here, Walker, you keep it dark, and I guess I'll let you have a whack in the loot when I unearth it—what?"

Walker stared at him.

"Do you mean to say that somebody has buried twenty pounds about here somewhere?" he demanded.

"Yep!"

"And that's what you've been looking for?"

"Correct!"

Swish—swish!

Fisher T. Fish roared with anguish as the cane lashed across his wet shoulders again. He wriggled in the grasp of the prefect.

"Let up!" he yelled. "Ain't I telling you, you jay?"

"Yes, you're telling me lies," said Walker. "What I want to know is the truth. Now, then, there's plenty more where that came from, Fish. Are you going to tell the truth?"

"I guess that's the holy, frozen truth," groaned Fish.

"I'm giving away a secret worth twenty quid to the man who finds the hidden gold, and I guess I'm the antelope that's going to find it—just a few!"

Walker's hand went up again with the cane, and Fish wriggled in anticipation. It was very hard not to be believed when he was, in fact, telling the truth.

"Hold on!" roared Fish. "I guess I'll prove it to you."

"Buck up, then," said Walker.

"Look at this hyer paper."

Fisher T. Fish—hurriedly though reluctantly—drew a crumpled and very damp paper from his pocket, and handed it to Walker. The prefect laid down the cane, and took the paper, keeping between Fisher T. Fish and the door. The paper was a penny magazine, and on the cover the words, printed in red ink, caught Walker's eyes at once:

"Home Hints' Great Hidden Gold Competition! Twenty



Holes marked the football ground in various places—some of them a foot deep, some six inches. The Removites uttered exclamations of rage as they looked around. "What dangerous lunatic has been doing this?" howled Frank Nugent. (See Chapter 6.)

Pounds in Gold to the Lucky Finder! You may find it! Particulars of This Week's Buried Gold in This Number! Don't Forget that You may be the Lucky Finder!" "My only hat!" said Walker.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
The History of the Mystery!

FISHER T. FISH groaned dismally. He had been ducked, and he had been caned, on account of that valuable secret, and now the secret was out! True, it was not Fish's secret—the paper belonged to Billy Bunter, and Billy Bunter had had no intention whatever of sharing the secret with Fisher Tarleton Fish. But Fish by this time had come to regard the hidden sovereigns as being as good as his own. Now Walker of the Sixth was "on" it, and goodness only knew how many fellows would know before the afternoon was out. Fisher T. Fish shivered in his wet garments, and did not look cheerful.

Walker had opened "Home Hints," and was scanning THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 299.

curiously the page devoted to the competition. Then he understood the mysterious raid upon Greyfriars School by strangers armed with spades and trowels.

"HOME HINTS" HIDDEN GOLD COMPETITION.

"Every week twenty golden sovereigns are buried by the Competition Editor of 'Home Hints,' to be found by readers of 'Home Hints.'

"Last week's hidden gold was discovered by Miss Betty Martin, Walker Street, Gammonville. The twenty golden sovereigns were buried on Clapham Common, and during the week it is computed that a hundred thousand readers of 'Home Hints' were seen upon the Common with picks, spades and trowels, seeking for the hidden gold.

"To oblige our country readers, this week the hidden gold has been buried at a considerable distance from London. The twenty golden sovereigns will be found buried in the vicinity of Greyfriars School, near the village of Pegg, on the East Coast.

"Greyfriars is a well-known public school in the South of

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England. For readers wishing to visit the locality from a distance, we may mention that the station for Greyfriars is at Friardale, changing at Courtfield Junction.

"We anticipate this week a rush of tens of thousands of our readers to Greyfriars School, to search in the vicinity for the twenty golden sovereigns buried there by the Competition Editor of 'Home Hints.'

"As usual, a mark has been placed upon the spot where the hidden gold is buried, but what this mark is we leave it to the ingenuity of our readers to discover.

"Twenty golden sovereigns to be had for the trouble of picking them up!"

There was some more of it—a good deal more, in fact—but that was enough to show the reason of the mysterious invasion of the precincts of Greyfriars School by the strangers from afar. Evidently a goodly number of the readers of "Home Hints" had arrived at Friardale, changing at Courtfield Junction, with the intention of discovering those golden sovereigns which were buried in the vicinity of the well-known public school in the South of England.

"Well," said Walker, with a long whistle, "this beats it!"

"I guess it's a good cinch," said Fisher T. Fish. "It only requires a chap with some brains, you know, and I guess that's where I live! Ugh! I'm catching cold."

"You can buzz off now," said Walker.

"Give me my paper."

"That's confiscated."

"Look here—"

Walker threw the study door open.

"Are you going, or shall I take you to the Head, and report you for digging holes in the Close?" he inquired.

Fisher T. Fish decided to go, and he went, without his paper.

Five minutes later Walker of the Sixth called on Gosling, and borrowed a trowel. Walker of the Sixth was on the trail of those golden sovereigns.

Fisher T. Fish changed his clothes, and rubbed himself down in the dormitory, but he came downstairs sneezing. He found a crowd of juniors looking for him. They rushed upon him at once.

"What does it mean?" roared Bolsover major. "We've just seen Walker trowelling in the Head's garden. Has he caught it, too?"

"I guess he has!" growled Fisher T. Fish. "He made me tell him."

"And now we're going to make you tell us!"

"Atchoo—atchoo—choo!" replied Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Caught a cold, Fishy?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"This is what comes of being ducked in fountains. All your own fault."

"Atchoo-choo!"

"We can't duck him again, as he's caught a cold," said Wharton considerably. "We'll give him the frogs' march."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let up!" roared Fish. "I tell you—"

"Stop that ragging!"

Walker the prefect strode up. His hands were soiled, there was mud on the knees of his trousers, and the handle of a trowel was sticking out of his pocket. He pushed the juniors roughly away from Fisher T. Fish.

"Nuff of this!" he said, frowning. "I can't allow this ragging. If Fish is touched again I shall report the matter to the Head!"

"But he's going to explain!" shouted Johnny Bull.

"He can please himself about that. I don't allow bullying. Let Fish alone. He is under my protection. Mind, any more ragging, and you will be reported to the Head. There's been too much of it."

And with that admonition the prefect strode away. The juniors gazed at Fisher T. Fish, who was grinning now.

"I guess that lets you out!" chuckled Fish.

It did. It was impossible to rag Fisher any more after the prefect's warning, and the Removites had to let him alone. Fisher T. Fish walked away chuckling, with his hands in his pockets, and the only consolation the juniors had was in hearing his chuckle change into a wild fit of sneezing.

"What a rotten swindle!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "He's told Walker, and Walker's keeping it dark."

"There's Bunter!" remarked Vernon-Smith. "Let's find Bunter."

"We can still rag Bunter!" grinned Bolsover. "Bunter hasn't been taken under Walker's wing yet. And we'll jolly well have the secret out of him before Walker knows that he knows."

"Hear, hear!"

The search for Billy Bunter recommenced. It was dusk now in the Close of Greyfriars, and if Bunter was still

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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continuing his mysterious search, he would have to have a light. The Removites scattered and looked for him.

"Tally-ho!" roared Bob Cherry suddenly. "Here's a light!"

The juniors rushed after Bob. A gleam of light showed from behind the wall of the ruined chapel. The juniors swarmed up, and there was Bunter, with a trowel in his left hand, a lantern in his right, scanning the ground in search of something—doubtless the unknown mark mentioned by the competition editor of "Home Hints," although the Removites were not aware of that fact.

"Collar him!"

Bunter jumped as the juniors surrounded him.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Shove him against the wall," said Bob Cherry. "If he doesn't explain the history of the mystery we'll cut his head off. Wait till I get my knife."

"Ow! Help!"

Bunter was jammed against the wall, in the grasp of a dozen pairs of hands.

"Bend his head down," said Bob: "It's easier to cut off a head from the back, I believe. I've never done it yet, but we'll soon see, anyway."

"Here you are!"

"Ow! Help! Fire! Murder!"

Bob Cherry took an old postcard from his pocket, and pressed the edge of it to the back of Bunter's bent neck. Bunter wriggled in abject terror as the hard edge of the card pressed upon his fat neck. Nobody but Bunter could have believed that Bob was in earnest; but William George Bunter was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. His little round eyes seemed on the point of starting through his spectacles.

"We can bury him afterwards in one of the holes he's been digging," Bulstrode remarked. "We shall only have to fill it up over him."

"Good egg!"

"Nobody will miss him, excepting the tradesmen," observed Nugent. "It will make a considerable difference to the butcher's bill, I suppose, when Bunter's appetite is gone."

"Ow, ow! Murder! Fire! Thieves! Yaroo!"

"Cut it off!" said Bolsover major impatiently. "It won't be any loss; there's nothing in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him a chance to speak first," said Wharton. "Now, Bunter, this is your last chance. Speak up, or you get it in the neck!"

"Ow, ow! Leggo!"

"Cut away!" said Wharton.

The edge of the postcard scraped along Bunter's fat neck. The fat junior gave a wild howl of terror.

"Ow, ow! Leave off! I'll tell you—ow!—you beasts—yow! I—I've got another copy of 'Home Hints' in my pocket—yaroooh!"

"Home Hints"! What do you mean, you fat duffer?"

"Yow!—it's a competition—ow! Leggo! Yah!"

"Hand it over, then!" said Wharton sternly. "Hand it over, or die the death of a porpoise!"

Bunter jerked "Home Hints"—a brand-new copy—out from under his tight waistcoat, and the Removites pounced upon it. They read the startling announcement upon the cover in the light of the lantern, and then they understood. They were all in possession of the great secret now. Bunter was released, and as he saw the deadly postcard in the hand of Bob Cherry, his feelings were too deep for words.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Head Is Fed Up!

THE secret was out!

In half an hour, or less, all Greyfriars knew that the enterprising Competition Editor of "Home Hints" had buried twenty golden sovereigns in the precincts of the school and that there was a mark to indicate the spot, if only that mark could be identified.

Twenty golden sovereigns were not to be picked up every day—indeed, some of the fellows were of the opinion that they were not to be picked up at all. But it was stated in the columns of "Home Hints" that the competition was absolutely genuine, and, of course, the editor must have known whether it was or not. In a very short time nearly all the junior boys at Greyfriars were searching in the November dusk for the unknown mark which indicated the burying-place of the golden sovereigns. Some of the Sixth were very indignant. They declared that it was like the dashed impertinence of the editor of "Home Hints" to bury his beastly sovereigns within the sacred precincts of Greyfriars. Who was the editor of "Home Hints," anyway, and who wanted his dashed sovereigns? To which it might have been replied—if it had been possible to argue with the great

men of the Sixth—that nearly everybody at Greyfriars wanted them!

It was, in fact, a stroke of luck. The fellow who discovered the twenty golden sovereigns would be able to have an exceedingly good time while they lasted, and so would his friends. It was agreed by all the Remove that it was simply unspeakable of Billy Bunter to keep the valuable secret away from the rest of the Form, and still worse of Fisher T. Fish, who had only learned the valuable secret from Bunter's paper. Bunter, on the other hand, was indignant and exasperated. Nobody at Greyfriars took in "Home Hints" excepting himself, and he declared that whoever found the golden sovereigns, he would claim them as his by right.

Nobody objected to his claiming them, so far as that went; but whether he would get them was quite another matter.

Bunter also declared that the hidden gold competition was, undoubtedly, genuine. Not only did the editor of "Home Hints" state the fact, in capital letters; but Bunter knew. Bunter had won prizes in "Home Hints" before—at least, one prize. He had won a share in the famous "Home Hints" prize of a Thousand Pounds, and it was merely an unfortunate circumstance that there were so many other winners that Bunter's prize amounted to less than sixpence.

"It's genuine enough," Bunter declared to a crowd of dusty and muddy juniors in the common-room, after a long and unsuccessful hunt, "and us Greyfriars chaps have a better chance than the general public. We can stick together and keep them out, you know, and make sure of getting the prize ourselves. I'll tell you fellows what I'll do. It's my twenty quid, whoever finds it!"

"Rats!" came a chorus of interruption.

"Of course, you know it's mine!" said Bunter, blinking angrily through his spectacles. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take all you fellows in as partners in the search, and when we find the prize, I'll hand out a quid to the chap who finds it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Otherwise," said Bunter firmly, "I shall refuse permission to you rotters to search at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's my prize. It was my 'Home Hints,' and—"

"And if you'd been decent enough to tell us about it, we'd have agreed to let you have a whack out of it when it was found," said Bob Cherry. "But now I move that the winner stands a feed all round, and that Bunter and Fish are kicked out of the feed."

"Hear, hear!"

"Passed unanimously!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"I guess—"

"You're a pair of rank outsiders," said Harry Wharton.

"Any other chap would have told the whole Form at once."

"I guess that wouldn't have been business," said Fisher T. Fish, with a shake of the head. "I kinder reckon I know when to keep my chin still. When I get a good cinch, I guess I don't go around telling it to every two-legged galoot I know!"

"It wasn't your secret, you rotter!" howled Bunter. "It was mine. You boned my paper, and you've no right to look for the hidden gold."

"I guess I shall look, all the same," chuckled Fisher T. Fish, "and I guess I shall be the galoot that ropes it in—just a few. This thing requires brains."

"Well, we'll all have a whack at it," said Peter Todd. "If No. 7 Study finds it, it's going to be whacked out among the whole study—myself, Dutton, Alonzo, and Bunter."

"Look here," roared Bunter, "I'm not going to whack it out!"

"You are, if you find it!" said Peter Todd serenely. "I'll see to that. You won't have a whole bone left to bear the weight of your fat, if you don't!"

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"We've all agreed on that," said Peter Todd. "Haven't we, Dutton?" he roared in the ear of the deaf junior.

"Eh!" said Dutton.

"We're going to whack out the quids when we find them!" shouted Peter.

"Certainly not!"

"What! Why, you agreed to do it!" said Peter indignantly.

"Eh!"

"You agreed to it, you bounder!" yelled Peter.

"I certainly did not. I should never agree to such a thing, and I'm surprised at your suggesting it," said Tom Dutton. "Whack kids till you blind them, indeed! Why, what are you thinking of?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what kids?" asked Dutton. "What have the fags been doing?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Peter. "Not kids—quids. Find them, not blind them. Why don't you get an ear-trumpet?"

"No more loose in the crumplet than you are!" retorted Tom Dutton. "I think you're a rotten bully, and if I catch

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you whacking kids till you blind 'em, I'll jolly well whack you, I can tell you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd groaned and gave it up. He was equal to most things, but Tom Dutton's deafness was sometimes a little too much for him.

"By the way, our study's going to share those quids, if we find them," Tom Dutton went on innocently. "You're agreeable to that, Bunter?"

"No, I'm not! I'm going to stick to my own prize!" howled Bunter.

"Well, I shouldn't spend it all in pies; but you can do as you like with your own share, of course."

"I'm going to bag the lot, fathead!"

"Talking rot—eh? Do you mean Todd or me?" demanded Dutton warmly.

But Bunter did not reply—he fled.

Several more of the Remove studies had agreed to search for the golden sovereigns on the principle of "whacking" out the prize if they found it. The Famous Five, of course, were to go co., if they discovered the quids. Bob Cherry remarked that the arrangements being made on all sides somewhat resembled the plans of the hunters who shared the skin of the bear before that animal had been caught.

But the Remove were entering very keenly upon the hunt. So were the other Forms, for that matter. Fags were grubbing in every hole and corner round and about the school. Spades and picks and trowels were at a premium. Coker & Co. of the Fifth had been seen prospecting along the towing-path, peering into every clump of reeds and rushes. The Sixth, indeed, assumed an attitude of lofty disdain; but it was surmised that in a quiet way they were keeping their eyes open for the unknown mark on the grave of the golden quids.

Vernon-Smith pointed out that the statement in "Home Hints" was to the effect that the golden sovereigns were buried in the "vicinity" of Greyfriars. They mightn't be within the school walls at all—indeed, it was extremely probable that they were not. However much nerve the Competition Editor of "Home Hints" might possess, he was hardly likely to bury the quids on private property, with a whole "vicinity" to choose from. The fellows admitted that the Bounder's suggestion was a wise one—and many of them went outside the walls in their search—and astonished simple natives on the roads and fields by peering and grubbing and digging in all sorts of places. But after the gates were locked, outside search had to be given up, much to the annoyance of the gold-seekers, who were fearful that during the night some outsider might chance upon the twenty golden sovereigns and carry them off.

"If we could only guess what blessed mark was put on the place," said Tom Brown reflectively. "It might be anything, you know—a stone, or a stick, or a bit of paper, or anything like that. Blessed if I think Sherlock Holmes could follow up a clue like that!"

"The twenty golden sovereigns are wrapped in the current number of 'Home Hints,' and buried at a depth of not more than eighteen inches," Bolsover major read out from the page of particulars kindly provided in "Home Hints" for the help of the eager searchers.

Many of the juniors were provided with copies of "Home Hints" by this time. All the copies of that valuable paper in Friardale and Courtfield had been cleared out.

"They make it a special point that they're golden quids," grinned the Bounder. "They're not palming off silver sovereigns on the public."

"I'll believe in the quids when I see 'em!" remarked Skinner.

"Oh, it's genuine enough, I should think!" Harry Wharton remarked. "Twenty pounds isn't much for a prize; and they must be selling the paper like hot cakes, to judge by the number of silly asses who have been nosing round Greyfriars to-day."

"Gosling turned the hose on 'em this afternoon!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!" said Vernon-Smith. "We might tip Gosling to keep strangers away. If the quids happen to be buried inside the walls we can find 'em, without any help from outsiders."

"Yes, rather!"

Mark Linley came into the common-room, with a grin on his face.

"Seen the notice, kids?" he asked.

"What notice?"

"It's on the board—about the golden quids!"

There was a rush into the hall to see the notice. And there was a growl of dismay when the fellows read it. It was in

the handwriting of Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, and it ran:

"Considerable damage has been done to the grounds by excavations in various places by strangers and also by Greyfriars boys. The police have been requested to take measures for dealing with trespassers; and any Greyfriars boy discovered making excavations within the precincts of the school will be severely punished.

"(Signed) H. LOCKE,
"Headmaster."

"Oh, crumbs!" said the Removites, all together. "I suppose it was getting rather thick," said Harry Wharton, laughing; "the whole place is getting honey-combed with holes. The Head was bound to get fed-up in the long run."

"But we're going to find the quids, all the same," said Johnny Bull. "Twenty quids are not to be sneezed at!"

"Atchoo, atchoo, atchoo!" came from Fisher T. Fish. "Only by Fishy!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Even that notice by the Head—a very plain intimation that he was indeed "fed-up"—did not damp the enthusiasm of the juniors. Darkness and the necessity of doing their preparation put an end to the search for that day, but they were all laying plans for a more extensive and thorough search on the morrow.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
No Takers!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent were hard at work upon their prep. in No. 1 Study, when the door was jerked open, and Coker, of the Fifth, came in. Wharton and Nugent rose at once—not wholly out

of politeness—to receive their visitor. Fifth-Formers did not often pay visits to junior studies, and the chums of the Remove supposed that Coker's visit meant trouble. Nugent picked up an ebony ruler, and Wharton carelessly slid his hand towards the inkstand. Horace Coker grinned as he noted those preparations, and waved his hand in sign of peace.

"It's all right, you kids," he said reassuringly; "I'm not going to lick you."
"We know that!" said Wharton cheerfully. "It's a job too big for you, Coker. But we thought you might have thought of trying."

"You cheeky young sweep—" began Coker warmly. "Where will you have it, Coker?" asked Wharton thoughtfully, balancing the inkpot in his hand and regarding Coker's person.

"Ahem! I've come here to talk to you."

"Sorry!"

"Look here," said Coker, growing exasperated, "I've got something to say to you! It's about those twenty golden sovereigns."

"You haven't found them?" exclaimed Wharton and Nugent together, in a breath.

"Well, not yet," admitted Coker; "I'm going to, of course! I'm thinking the matter out very carefully, and I think I shall be the chap to hit on the giddy secret. A job like this requires some brains, you know!"

"Oh, I see!" said Wharton, as if a light had broken upon him. "That's why you've come to us! Thanks for the compliment!"

"Nothing like recognising your own deficiencies, Coker!" said Nugent encouragingly. "It shows that you're a modest chap. And you've come to the right study for brains!"

Horace Coker seemed to find some difficulty in breathing for a moment. But he managed to control himself, and went on:

"I'm going to propose something to you fags. It's a bit beneath the dignity of the Fifth to be mixed up like this in a scramble after twenty quid with a crowd of fags and inky young ruffians! Now, my idea is this—"

"You've got an idea!" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment.

"Yes."

"My hat! Who'd have thought it?"

"Will you shut up, and listen to me?" roared Coker. "My idea is this. I'm going to look for those quids, and I expect I shall find them. I can't have a crowd of fags jostling me all the time. Chap must think of his dignity. Now, there are a crowd of young rascals here searching for the quids, and all sorts of rotten outsiders coming down on the railway or tramping over from the towns up and down the country. I'm going to suggest to you kids to allow you a whack in the prize when it's found, on condition that you do your part of the bizney."

"And what's our part?" asked Harry.

"You're captain of the Remove. You can get your blessed army of fags together, and keep watch for outsiders. Whenever you spot a feller digging or looking about him in a suspicious way, you chuck him into the river, or bump him into a ditch," said Coker. "That will keep the ground clear of outsiders. You fags can make yourselves really useful that way."

"Go hon!"

"Of course," said Nugent solemnly, "a fag couldn't have a higher or nobler ambition than to make himself useful to Coker, of the Fifth."

GOOD TURNS—No. 16.



A Magnetite having witnessed an accident in the street immediately dashes off to the nearest doctor.



Harry Wharton & Co. from above saw Fish pick up the paper, and saw him glance at the open page, and heard him give a sudden exclamation: "Gee-whiz!" "What on earth is it?" cried Harry Wharton. (See Chapter 1.)

"Exactly!" agreed Coker. "Well, that's my idea. Instead of grubbing about after the quids yourselves, you keep the ground clear for chaps who are older and have more sense!"

"But there ain't any at Greyfriars!" said Wharton.

"Older, perhaps!"

"Look here—"

"And if we do our part of the bizney, you're going to look for the golden quids and discover them?" asked Nugent.

"That's it!"

"And hand them over to us for our trouble?"

"What! I'm going to hand you one of them—enough for you to make yourselves ill at the tuckshop!" said Coker loftily.

"And what are you going to do with the other nineteen?"

"Keep 'em, of course!"

"There's only one drawback to your scheme, Coker, old man," said Wharton, with a shake of the head. "You're too generous! I know it's a fault on the right side; but

you're too generous! We're not selfish chaps, and we're not going to take advantage of your generosity!"

"Now, look here——" said Coker.

"Sorry, we've got our prep. to do!" said Harry. "Otherwise, of course, we should look at you with pleasure, Coker! It's as good as looking at the monkeys in the Zoo, and cheaper!"

Coker exploded.

"You cheeky young rascals! I've made you a good offer! Now, look here—I'm not going to have you fags grubbing about after the quids! You'll keep off the grass, or you'll get a licking! Savvy?"

"Pile in with the licking!" said Nugent cheerfully.

Coker seemed inclined to do so for the moment. But he looked at the ruler and the inkpot, and apparently decided that it was not good enough; and he quitted the study and slammed the door with a slam that was heard the length of the Remove passage. Wharton and Nugent resumed their work, but a moment later the door reopened, and Coker put his head in again.

"I warn you fags to keep clear, that's all!" he said sulphurously. "On second thoughts, I'll allow you to grub round in the Close. But I'm going to search along the towing-path, and if I find any fags grubbing there I'll pitch 'em into the river! See?"

"Have you bought the towing-path, by any chance?" asked Wharton sweetly.

Slam!

The violent shutting of the door was Coker's only reply to the question. Apparently he had not bought the towing-path.

The chums of the Remove chuckled, and went on with their preparation. They had nearly finished when Todd came into the study. The two Todds were so much alike that they did not know which one it was till he spoke.

"My dear friends." Then they knew it was Alonzo. Peter Todd never spoke in that tone of gentle and lamblike mildness, but Alonzo never forgot the nice manners he had learned at the knee of his estimable Uncle Benjamin. "My dear friends, if I may venture to interrupt you——"

"Venture away, old chap!" said Wharton. "Put it in words of not more than seven syllables, and we'll try to understand!"

"I have been reflecting upon the remarkable circumstances that have arisen," said Alonzo. "There is a great probability that the interred sovereigns may be unearthed by some of us. You probably agree with me, my dear fellows?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Therefore, I have a suggestion to make. Twenty sovereigns is a sum of considerable magnitude, is it not?"

"Good word!" agreed Wharton. "But there's only three syllables in it, and we can stand anything up to seven! Pile in!"

"It has occurred to me, my dear Wharton, during my ruminations upon this subject, that some good work might be effected with the assistance of such a sum as twenty pounds," pursued Alonzo. "You are undoubtedly aware that in certain benighted regions of the terrestrial globe there are unhappy and unfortunate beings still existing in a state of primitive barbarism."

"In the Third Form room, do you mean?" asked Nugent gravely.

"Certainly not, my dear Nugent. I am alluding to the islands in the South Seas, where the natives exist in a very uncivilised state, and indeed, are given to such unpleasant habits as eating one another in time of famine. You must acknowledge that this is a shocking thing. Consider the feelings of an aged parent, for instance, when he beholds his son or grandson making preparations for cooking him."

"Must make him very ratty, I should think," agreed Wharton. "But I suppose it saves something in the way of old-age pensions."

"This is really not a matter for jesting, my dear Wharton. The Society for Providing South Sea Islanders with Tracts and Trousers has lately issued an appeal for funds. Mr. Bourne Gabbler, the celebrated missionary, states that with a thousand pounds he hopes to be able to establish himself on the island of Foo-loo-boo-goo, and undertake the conversion of the cannibals. I have his pamphlet, and can show you, if you like, his photograph of a South Sea Islander wearing trousers and reading a tract. It is a most remarkable photograph."

"It would be more remarkable, I suppose, if the South Sea Islander were wearing the tract and reading the trousers?" suggested Nugent.

"I am sure," continued Alonzo, unheeding, "that you will agree with the really excellent suggestion I am going to make. Let us all agree, my dear friends, that when the twenty sovereigns are discovered, they shall be sent to the

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Every Wednesday.

Tract-and-Trousers' Fund. The Head would gladly give us a cheque in exchange for the money, and it could be posted immediately to Mr. Gabbler—I have his address—at Cod House, Spooch Street."

Wharton and Nugent gazed at Alonzo. The gentle youth was very enthusiastic, and he seemed to have no doubt whatever that the Remove fellows would jump at his excellent idea.

"I am sure my Uncle Benjamin would approve of this plan, too," added Alonzo, as if that was a clincher.

"He might!" agreed Wharton. "And if your Uncle Benjamin finds the quids, he can send them to the Society for Providing the South Sea Islanders with Bags and Books——"

"Tracts and Trousers, my dear Wharton."

"Yes, tracts and trousers. But if I find it I'm going to provide the Remove with jam-tarts and ginger-pop!"

"My dear Wharton——"

"Go and suggest it to Peter," said Wharton. "If he agrees, I'll agree."

"Ahem! Peter does not seem to approve of the idea—indeed, he called me by several somewhat discourteous names when I broached the matter to him," said Alonzo regretfully. "I was hoping that with your influence brought to bear on Peter——"

"We'll wait till Peter's influence is brought to bear on us," said Wharton. "Of course, a chap feels inclined to cry over the poor cannibals who haven't either tracts or trucks——"

"My dear friends——"

Wharton took Alonzo gently by the arm, and led him outside the study, and closed the door. He locked the door, and then the chums of No. 1 finished their prep.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Success!

"COKER'S borrowed an alarm clock!" Bob Cherry observed, when the Remove went up to their dormitory that night.

"So he's going to steal a march on us!" said Bolsover major. "Well, I'm going to get up before rising-bell to-morrow morning. Since the Head has cut up so rusty, we shall have to do our digging when the masters are not about."

"There'll be a good many early risers at Greyfriars to-morrow, I expect," grinned Bob. "I shall be one."

"I'll call you chaps at half-past five," said Wharton. "We've got to be on the ground early."

"Oh, my hat! Might over-do a thing, you know."

"Very important!" said Wharton. "We've got to get on the ground before Coker."

Bob Cherry chuckled. He understood that the captain of the Remove had a scheme in his mind for taking a rise out of the great Coker. But the matter was not discussed in the crowded dormitory. It could keep till the morning. For a considerable time the Removeites remained awake, talking of the twenty golden sovereigns and their various plans for discovering the same, and the way in which they meant to spend them when discovered. And in all the other dormitories at Greyfriars the same talk was going on. The managers of "Home Hints" and its famous competition would probably have been very flattered if they had known how the hidden gold had taken hold of the imagination of the Greyfriars' fellows. Nearly every fellow was laying plans for the expenditure of the twenty golden sovereigns so obligingly provided by "Home Hints."

It was still dark in the morning when Harry Wharton awoke at half-past five, and turned out. He called his comrades, and was answered by sleepy grunts.

"Chuck it!" mumbled Bob Cherry. "I'll let some other chap have the twenty quid. I'd rather have forty winks."

Bump! Bob Cherry descended upon the floor, tangled up in his bedclothes, and roared. Then he dressed himself. Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh turned out peaceably. Some of the other fellows had awakened, but no one showed any disposition to rise at that early hour in the dark November morning. Bolsover major had declared his intention of rising early, but on second thoughts he decided to wait for the rising-bell. So did the rest of the Remove. Only the Famous Five went out shivering into the gloomy mists of the Close.

"We shall want a lantern if we're going to search for the blessed quids!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I've got a lantern, but we're not going to search for the quids yet," said Wharton. "Coker came to my study last night, and warned us off the towing-path. He's taken the towing-path for himself. He thinks the quids are most likely hidden there. Some chap was yarning about seeing a stranger the other day poking about among the rushes, and

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Every Friday.

Coker thinks it was very likely the "Home Hints" man burying the quids."

"The cheek!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, indignantly. "We'll jolly well search the towing-path, Coker or no Coker."

"Yes, rather!"

"But it's a pity to disappoint Coker," said Wharton. "Coker is so keen on finding the quids, and so keen on keeping us off the grass, that I think we ought to help him."

"Help him!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Off your rocker?"

"No; we're going to help Coker. We can't help him find the 'Home Hints' treasure, but we can provide another treasure for him to find, and that will be better."

"Oh, I savvy!"

"Good egg!"

Wharton felt in his pockets, and produced a little metal box. There was a lock and a key to it. The juniors looked on with interest as he filled the box nearly full of pebbles, with a couple of old keys, and a French penny, and a bad fathing. He snapped the lid shut, and locked it, and rattled the box. The clink from inside rang sharply.

"If Coker digs up that little box, ten to one he fancies he's found the quids," said Harry. "'Home Hints' doesn't state whether the quids are in a box or not—only that they're wrapped up in the current number of the rag itself. Well, I've got a current number of the rag."

And, having removed the key from the box, he carefully wrapped the latter in a number of "Home Hints."

Then the grinning juniors made their way to the towing-path. The school gates, of course, were not open at that early hour; but the juniors climbed the wall easily enough. It was very dark and dim on the towing-path, and mist was thick on the river.

"Coker won't be up so jolly early as this!" said Bob.

"Well, we've got to be before him, and you can't be too careful. Now, where are we going to bury the treasure?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's a good place!"

The juniors halted at the foot of a tree that grew close beside the towing-path. Wharton scooped out a hole at the foot of the tree, and planted in it the box wrapped in the current number of "Home Hints."

Then he carefully pressed the earth down upon the buried treasure.

He had written a little message on the inside of the lid of the box, for Coker's benefit, in pencil; but Coker would not read that until he opened the box. The juniors earnestly hoped that they would be present when he opened it.

"Now for the mark!" said Bob Cherry. "'Home Hints' makes a mark over the spot where the giddy quids are buried."

"Here goes!"

With his pocket-knife, Wharton hacked at the bark of the tree. In a few minutes he had roughly fashioned the letters, "H. H."

"Mustn't make 'em too prominent," he remarked. "But Coker will find that if he really searches. It will be a reward for industry. 'H. H.' stands for 'Home Hints,' and Coker will be on to it immediately he sees it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors quitted the spot. A glimmer of light was coming out from the river now, and they commenced their search for the golden sovereigns. They ransacked rushes and beds of reeds, thickets, and tangled coppices, but never a sign of the golden quids did they discover. As the sun rose higher, three figures were seen coming along the towing-path. They were Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth.

Coker uttered an exclamation of wrath at the sight of the Removites, and hurried towards them.

"You young sweeps! Didn't I warn you to let the towing-path alone!" he exclaimed. "You're barred here. Clear off!"

"Have you found the quids?" demanded Potter.

"Not yet."

"And you're jolly well not going to," said Coker. "Clear off, or you'll get a licking."

At any other time the Famous Five would have invited Coker & Co. to pile in with the licking; but just now they were quite willing to leave the towing-path to Coker. So they walked away with lamblike meekness.

"That's the way to deal with cheeky fags," said Coker loftily, a little surprised, as a matter of fact, by the submissiveness of the usually unruly Removites. "I'm not standing on ceremony with them, you bet. Now let's get to work. It's a quarter of an hour yet to rising-bell."

"Yaw—aw—aw!" yawned Potter.

"Oh, wake up!" growled Coker. "You don't get a chance of picking up twenty quid every day for the trouble of rising a little early."

"If we were only sure of the quids!" murmured Potter.

"Well, we've got a good chance; it's the early bird that catches the worm, you know," said Coker briskly. "Now pile in, and don't begin to dig till you've found a mark that looks like the right one."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE COKER CUP!"

EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

"What's the right one like?" asked Greene.

"How should I know, fathead? Pile in, and don't jaw!"

The three Fifth-Formers began their search. Up and down the towing-path they went, searching for a sign. The rising-bell clanged out from the direction of the school. Then other fellows began to come out in ones and twos and threes, and in spite of wrathful looks from Coker, they joined in the search. But they came too late. Potter had already made the great discovery. He called in a hushed voice to Coker.

"Coker, old man, come here!"

Coker hurried towards him excitedly.

"Found anything?"

"Look!" said Potter, his voice trembling with excitement.

"I—I don't know if it's the mark we're looking for, but it looks jolly like it to me."

Coker stared at the tree. In the bark were the letters "H. H." roughly hacked, and quite clear to the view now that the sun had risen.

"H. H.!" said Green. "My hat, that stands for 'Home Hints'!"

"Great Scott!" said Coker. "That's it! Blessed if I noticed it when I was searching along here yesterday! I passed this very tree, too, and looked round it. But there's no doubt about it. Give me the spade, Greeney."

The sight of Coker digging brought other fellows hurrying to the spot. There were loud exclamations at the sight of the initials cut on the bark of the tree. The crowd grew in numbers and in excitement as Coker shovelled out the earth. Coker's face was red with excitement. It was he who had fairly ragged Potter and Greene into getting up early that morning, and this discovery was the result. Horace Coker had reason to be proud of himself. The prize, when discovered, was to be "whacked out" among the chums of the Fifth, but the honour and the glory were clearly all Coker's.

"By Jove," said Walker, of the Sixth, who had arrived among the eager crowd, "it looks to me as if there's something in it! You'd better leave this to me, Coker. As a prefect, I shall take charge of the whole matter."

Coker glared over his spade.

"You'll take charge of a job on the jaw if you give me any of your rot!" he replied belligerently. "This belongs to us."

If Coker had been a junior, Walker would probably have settled the matter by slinging him away and collaring the spade. But Coker was in the Fifth, and he was a particularly big and truculent Fifth-Former, too. So Walker thought better of it. Coker continued to dig away, till there was the sound of a clink under the spade.

The excitement redoubled. Coker threw down the spade, and groped in the excavation with his hands. He dragged out a parcel and held it up. It was a folded copy of the current number of "Home Hints," and there was something wrapped in it.

"By gum," said Potter, "we've got it!"

"Hurrah!" chirruped Greene.

Coker, with fingers trembling with excitement, unwrapped "Home Hints." A metal box was disclosed. It was locked, but Coker shook it, and from within came the sound of a musical clink of metal.

"Clink! Clink! Clink!"

"Got it!" shouted Coker. "Got 'em—got the twenty quids! Hurrah!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Find!

"COKER'S got it!"

"Coker's found the quids—the golden quids!"

"Lucky bargee!"

"Oh, gee-whiz, that lets me out! I guess it was rotten luck for a silly jay like Coker to bungle on the dollars, and a galoot with brains to be left out!"

"I say, you fellows, you'll back me up, won't you? Those quids really belong to me, and I'm going to demand them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Quite a little army marched round Horace Coker as he came back from the towing-path, with the little clinking box, wrapped in the current number of "Home Hints," in his hand.

Horace Coker carried his head high, as was befitting to a fellow who had succeeded where all others had failed. Potter and Greene walked on either side of him, very pleased and proud. For once they were proud of Coker. It had been Coker's idea to take up the search for the golden quids. Potter and Greene had been rather inclined to scoff at it, adopting the lofty, dignified tone of the Sixth. It was Coker

who had routed them out of bed at any early hour that morning, and fairly dragged them out to look for the clue to the hidden gold. Clearly, all honour was due to Coker, and Potter and Greene acknowledged it. Coker, the ass of the Fifth—the duffer of the Form, the fellow who was popularly supposed to have been forgotten when brains were served out—Coker had led them to success, and left all the other fellows behind. It was a glorious victory for Horace Coker.

There was pride in his port, as the poet puts it, as he walked back into the school between Potter and Greene, surrounded by the crowd. Many of the fellows were congratulatory, and some were envious. All were deeply impressed by the musical clink in the little metal box that Coker carried in his hand. Two at least were indignant—Fish and Bunter. They felt that Coker, of the Fifth, hadn't any right to walk in in this way and carry off the valuable prize.

Billy Bunter had just come down when he met the procession coming across the Close. The Owl of the Remove was crimson with wrath as he planted himself in Coker's path.

"That's mine!" he said.

"Gerrout!" said Coker.

"Look here, you've collared my twenty quid!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, ain't that my twenty quid?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you make that out, you fat jackanapes?" demanded Coker.

"I was looking for it!"

"So were all the fellows!" chuckled Coker. "Findings keepings in this case, as the thing was put there to be found."

"I was looking for it first!"

"Well, I was looking for it last!" said Coker. "I'd stand you five bob out of it, if you'd been decent enough to let us in to it, but you tried to keep it dark, you greedy rotter! Clear off!"

"Well, I won't insist upon having it all," said Bunter considerably. "Hand me half the quids, and call it square!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you going to give me, Coker?"

"A thick ear!" said Coker promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow—wow—yow!"

Coker & Co. walked on, leaving Billy Bunter clasping his ear, and howling with anguish. The crowd followed Coker into the house. They wanted to see him open the box, and to see the golden quids pour forth in a shining cascade. Alonzo Todd met Coker in the passage, and planted himself in the Fifth-Former's way, and jabbed at him with an objectionable skinny forefinger.

"My dear Coker, pray allow me to congratulate you upon your success!"

"Thanks!" said Coker. "Gerrout of the way, unless you want me to walk over you!"

"One moment, my dear Coker," said Alonzo earnestly. "You have been the fortunate discoverer of the considerable sum of twenty sovereigns. Has it occurred to you what a really extensive amount of good might be done with a sum of that magnitude, were it devoted to good works?"

"Can't say it has!" grinned Coker.

"May I make a suggestion, my dear Coker? I am sure that in years to come you would feel a thrill of pride and satisfaction if now, in the moment of success, you should be self-sacrificing enough to devote that sum to the good of others!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"May I beg you to send it to the Society for Providing the South Sea Islanders with Tracts and Trousers?" said Alonzo earnestly. "In the island of Foo-loo-goo-goo—"

"Clear off!" roared Coker.

"My dear Coker, reflect—those benighted savages tractless, trouserless—"

Tractless and trouserless savages apparently did not appeal to Coker. He gave Alonzo Todd a shove, and the gentle youth sat down quite suddenly, with a sudden gasp. Coker & Co. walked on to their study, and the crowd streamed after them. Everybody wanted to see Coker open that box. As it was locked and minus a key, the opening was a little difficult, but Coker had tools in his study. He laid the metal box on the table, and opened his tool-chest, and took out a hammer and a chisel.

"Now look out for the giddy gold!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"If you have quids, prepare to shed them now!" murmured Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You kids can cackle, but you couldn't find the quids," said Potter, with a sniff. "You shut up!"

"Yes, you shut up!" said Hobson, of the Shell. "Coker's THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 299.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

going to stand a big feed with those quids—ain't you, Coker?"

"Yes, I am!" said Coker.

"Just like you, Coker, old man!" said Hobson affectionately.

"But I sha'n't be asking any Shell kids to my feed!" said Coker grimly.

"Why, you—you rotter!" said Hobson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! Coker was hammering the chisel into the metal box with vigour. The lid was soon dented in, and the little lock burst open.

"Now for the giddy quids!" said Harry Wharton.

Coker turned the box upside down as the lid burst open, and the contents streamed out on the study table.

Then there was a gasp of stupefaction.

The fellows crowded in the study and crammed in the doorway, gazed at the contents of the box, and simply gasped for breath.

Pebbles, old keys, a farthing, and a French ten-centime piece! Such was the valuable prize that had rewarded the industrious search of Coker & Co.

Coker gazed at the curious collection as if he could hardly believe his eyes. The gasp in the study was followed by a ripple of laughter. Coker and Potter and Greene were amazed and furious. But the other fellows seemed to see something funny in the matter, and they chuckled.

"Oh, what a surprise!" howled Hobson of the Shell.

"The surprisingness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It—it's a swindle!" roared Coker. "I—I'll have the editor of 'Home Hints' prosecuted for this! He's palmed off this rubbish on us instead of twenty quid! It's a swindle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dished!" growled Potter. "Oh, you ass, Coker! I had a suspicion all along that it wasn't all square."

"So had I, now you mention it," said Greene. "Just like Coker to make a blithering ass of himself like this!"

"It's a swindle! I—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker looked into the box, as if hoping to find some quids sticking there somehow. He did not see any quids, but he saw a pencilled message on the inside of the lid.

"With Kind Regards from the Remove!"

Coker stared at the words as if he were in a dream. It was evidently not a joke on the part of the Competition Editor of "Home Hints." Coker's wits were a little slow, but he realised now that the valuable find had been planted for him by the Remove fellows. His face grew purple with wrath.

The other fellows shrieked with mirth. Coker blinked at the box and the pebbles, the bad farthing, and the French penny. Then he made a jump for the poker, and turned upon the howling crowd in the doorway.

They fled, roaring with laughter.

When Coker came in to breakfast a little later his face was very red, and a ripple of laughter greeted him. And after breakfast, when he went out, numerous voices greeted him on all sides:

"Lend us a quid, Coker, old man!"

"I say, Potter, lend us a quid!"

"Greene, old fellow, let's have one of the quids!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker marched off with his nose high in the air. In the Close he stopped, with a majestically frowning brow, and glared at Potter and Greene, who were looking furious.

"Nice pair of silly asses you are, ain't you?" said Coker.

"What!" yelled Potter and Greene ensemble.

"Catch me helping you look for silly buried rubbish again!" snorted Coker. "Just like you, I must say!"

"Why, it was your idea!"

"It was you who—"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Coker crossly. "I'm fed up! If you ask me to look for silly quids again you'll get a thick ear. I can tell you that! Br-r-r-r-r!"

And Coker stalked away, leaving Potter and Greene in a state of mind that bordered upon ferocity.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Tozer in Luck!

DURING morning lessons that day there were several outbreaks of disturbance in the Close, due to enterprising strangers being discovered there and ejected by Gosling. Round about the school all sorts and conditions of persons were seeking for the hidden quids, and many of them ventured within the walls of Greyfriars in the search.

The Head of Greyfriars, naturally, had no sympathy with the treasure-seekers. He was deeply annoyed when he heard of the matter, and resented very much the publicity and notoriety brought upon Greyfriars by the cheerful Competition Editor of that enterprising journal, "Home Hints." That cheerful Competition Editor probably regarded himself as giving the old school a great free advertisement, and might have expected gratitude from the headmaster, but if Dr. Locke had been able to speak to him on the subject his remarks would not have been of a grateful nature.

Gosling had been instructed to eject without ceremony any intruders found within the walls; and the Head had telephoned to the police-station in Friar-dale to ask for official assistance in getting rid of trespassers.

Police-constable Tozer might have been seen, as they say in the novels, parading with an important air outside the school gates; but, curiously enough, Police-constable Tozer might also have been seen peering into odd corners, and jabbing a stick into various recesses, every few minutes. Mr. Tozer considered it judicious to attempt to kill two birds with one stone, and while he was keeping off too-eager seekers of the hidden quids he was not without hopes of discovering them himself.

After lessons that morning almost all Greyfriars turned out to the search. The Head's order forbade any excavations to be made within the limits of Greyfriars, and so there was not so much reckless digging; but the fellows looked round incessantly for the unknown mark placed over the hidden quids by the Competition Editor of "Home Hints."

Some of the fellows gave up the search in disgust, especially Coker. Coker was fed up with it. But the great majority were still keen.

Outside the gates it was possible to dig without fear of wrathful masters and prefects, and there the eager juniors excavated holes in all directions, for, strange to say, large numbers of signs were found which might have indicated the burial place of the golden quids.

Initials and marks cut on trees, sticks planted in the ground, heelmarks impressed in the soil in odd corners. There was quite a number of them. And it was not till hundreds of holes had been dug in vain that it dawned upon the fellows that some practical joker was at work providing those signs for their guidance.

That day was the 5th of November, and that anniversary was generally celebrated at Greyfriars by the juniors with a tremendous amount of noise. But in the excitement caused by the quest of the golden quids the 5th of November was hardly noticed. The Quest of the Golden Fleece in ancient times was as nothing to the quest of the golden quids at Greyfriars. Fellows who had laid in supplies of fireworks for the Fifth almost forgot them now.

"Are we going to have a bonfire to-night?" Bob Cherry asked as the Remove came out of their Form-room. "It's the Fifth, you know!"

And his chums replied with one voice, "Blow the bonfire!" "No time for bonfires," said Harry Wharton. "It's up to the Remove to find those quids."

"But we've got the fireworks!"

"Blow the fireworks!"

The Famous Five walked out of the school gateway, Wharton with a spade on his shoulder, and Nugent with a trowel sticking out of his pocket. Police-constable Tozer was visible in the lane. He was supposed to be keeping watch for trespassers, but as a matter of fact he was leaning down by the hedge, with his eyes fixed upon some hidden spot there. The chums of the Remove exchanged grins.

"Looking for the giddy treasure!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"And neglecting his duties!" remarked Bob Cherry severely. "Looking for hidden quids in the time paid for out of the rates and taxes! This must be stopped!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!"

Bob Cherry tiptoed behind the fat officer. Mr. Tozer was scanning the ground inside the hedge with glittering eyes. He had discovered something—the letters "H. H." traced in the ground. H. H. stood for "Home Hints," and Mr. Tozer was trembling with excitement at the thought that he had discovered the hiding-place of the treasure. He did not know that Vernon-Smith of the Remove had traced the letters there, as well as in about fifty other places.

Mr. Tozer was caught bending, so to speak. He was too excited to hear the tiptoeing junior as he came behind him. Bob Cherry bent over Mr. Tozer's lowered head and uttered a sudden roar.

"Hallo!"

Mr. Tozer, startled almost out of his wits, gave a gasp and a jump.

"Ow!"

Bob Cherry smiled at him cheerfully as he spun round.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Tozer!"

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"Ow! You young himp! Give me quite a turn!" gasped Mr. Tozer.

"Looking for anything?" asked Bob politely.

"Nunno!"

"Dropped something in the hedge?"

"No, I ain't!" said Mr. Tozer.

"Just studying Nature, I suppose?" suggested Harry Wharton.

"You run along!" said Mr. Tozer. He was very anxious that the juniors should not see the sign traced under the hedge. He did not want to have any rivals in the search. He was inwardly wondering whether he could dig a hole with his baton and unearth the treasure. If he left the spot it was quite likely that someone else would find the tell-tale sign and bag the golden quids.

The juniors grinned cheerfully. They knew that Mr. Tozer had discovered something, and they were pretty certain that it was "spoo." As a matter of fact, they had seen the Bounder at work after breakfast.

"If you've lost anything we don't mind helping you look for it," said Nugent obligingly.

"I ain't lost anything!" said Mr. Tozer. "You run along, and don't worrit."

The juniors strolled down the lane, and there was a clink as Nugent dropped his trowel as if by chance. He did not seem to notice it, but walked on; and Mr. Tozer fastened on that trowel at once. It was just what he wanted. The juniors halted a little further on, to admire the view, perhaps.

Mr. Tozer cautiously crept towards the trowel and picked it up. He looked towards the juniors, but they had their backs to him, and were at a little distance. Bob Cherry was pointing out something on the summit of Black Pike. Mr. Tozer hesitated no longer. His whole fat frame was tingling with excitement. He grasped the trowel and plunged into the hedge, and the next moment he was digging away as if his life depended on it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Mr. Tozer jumped and looked round, with his face streaming with perspiration. He was not accustomed to exertion. He simply glared at the obnoxious juniors. There they were again—standing in a row, watching him.

"Have you seen a trowel anywhere?" asked Nugent innocently. "I've dropped a trowel."

"Will you run orf, you young vagabonds?" roared Mr. Tozer.

"Why, you've got my trowel!" said Nugent indignantly.

"Fancy a policeman stealing a trowel! I shall report this to your inspector, Tozer. Forty bob or a month!"

"You you you —"

"Digging for birds'-nests, Tozer?" asked Wharton.

"I I've borrowed this 'ere trowel, Master Nugent," said Mr. Tozer. "I I'm digging for— for worms. I'm goin' out fishing to-morrer."

"Poor old worms!" said Johnny Bull. "Don't you think it's cruel to use worms for fishing, Mr. Tozer? They can't like it."

Mr. Tozer made no reply. He went on trowelling. The juniors watched him with interest. They made signs to other fellows, and quite a crowd gathered round to watch the exertions of Mr. Tozer. Mr. Tozer was in a state of fury as he saw the gathering crowd, but he dared not relinquish his task now. He felt that if he left the spot someone else would finish digging for the golden quids. And he could not be far off the prize now. He had dug to a depth of eighteen inches. The exertion was telling upon him. His fat face was purple, and perspiration ran down it in streams. He took off his helmet, and hung it upon a branch, to cool his fevered brow, and went on digging.

Encouraging remarks came from the ever-thickening crowd of Greyfriars fellows.

"Go it, Tozer!"

"I suppose you're going to share out the quids, Tozer?"

"Buck up, before your inspector comes along. He will want halves."

"You're making your bags muddy, Tozer. Take care of those bags. They belong to the Government, you know!"

Mr. Tozer made no reply. He went on digging feverishly. The hole was nearly two feet deep now, and still there was no sign of the golden quids or the current number of "Home Hints." Bob Cherry quitted the crowd, and ran back into the school at top speed. He came back in a couple of minutes with a little bottle in his hand, and upon that bottle was a label—FIXER'S CELEBRATED MARKING-INK. WARRANTED INDELIBLE!

Mr. Tozer was still slaving away with the trowel. He had no eyes for Bob Cherry. Bob quietly detached the helmet from the branch, and drew back behind the grinning crowd.

He was at work on the interior of the helmet for about half a minute, but when he had finished the bottle of Fixer's Celebrated Marking-Ink, Warranted Indelible, was nearly empty. Then he hung the helmet on the branch again.

The juniors watched his proceedings with deep chuckles. Mr. Tozer went on digging. He had turned out a great heap of earth into the ditch. Quite a cavern yawned in the bank now, but still the golden quids were invisible.

"You're going jolly deep for worms, Tozer," Johnny Bull remarked.

"He's digging for my quids!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "Look here, Tozer, if you find my quids, I shall claim them. I shall complain to your inspector if you don't hand them over."

Mr. Tozer grunted, but made no reply. He was beginning to fear that he was upon the wrong track, after all. The hole was more than two feet deep, and nothing had come to light. His efforts slackened at last.

"Found anything, Tozer?"

"No, I ain't!" growled Mr. Tozer.

He rose at last, muddy and exasperated, and flung down the trowel.

"I bleeve it's a rotten swindle!" he growled. "I found the mark—all right, but there ain't no golden suvings buried there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you find the mark?" asked Vernon-Smith, with interest. "H. H.—was that it?"

"Yes, it was!" grunted Mr. Tozer.

"Why not try again?" asked the Bounder. "You'll find another mark just like it a little further on—and still another by the stile."

Mr. Tozer stared.

"You see, I know, because I made those marks myself," the Bounder explained. "It was just to encourage the fellows, you know—just to cheer them up in the search."

"You—you—" Words failed Mr. Tozer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Tozer looked at Vernon-Smith as if he could eat him. The crowd of juniors roared. Mr. Tozer, without a word—his feelings were too deep for words—grabbed his helmet, jammed it on his head, and stalked away. A yell followed him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Tozer had long been of the opinion that all boys ought to be drowned at birth, but he felt now that boiling in oil would be more appropriate.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. Highly-coloured!

"H, my hat!"

"Look at his chivvy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Police-constable Tozer halted, and glared at the group of juniors in the gateway of Greyfriars. It was half an hour since his industrious search for the invisible quids. Mr. Tozer was in a very bad temper. He had been stationed near the school at the request of the Head of Greyfriars, to warn off trespassers, or take them in charge if necessary. As he was certain to get a handsome tip from the Head for his trouble, he did not object to the duty.

But he objected very much to what was happening now. He had routed out several enterprising quid-hunters on the towing-path and round the boathouse and in various places. He had warned them off with a stern voice and a threatening forefinger. But, to his amazement, instead of being duly impressed by the majesty of the law, they had burst out laughing in his face. They had departed—as he ordered—but they had departed doubled up with mirth. Mr. Tozer could not understand it. He was accustomed to inspiring awe, if not terror. To be laughed at, grinned at, and chuckled at was a severe blow to his dignity, and it perplexed him.

He knew that he was red and perspiring. The exertion of digging had told upon him very much, and his fat person was in a perspiration all over. Little streams trickled down from under his helmet. And as he was quite unaware of the surreptitious tampering with his helmet, he could not, of course, know that each little trickle was a deep purple in colour, and that his fat face resembled by this time the coat of a zebra.

As he came past the school gates, the juniors there caught sight of him, and there was a roar. Mr. Tozer's aspect was decidedly funny.

"Look 'ere," exclaimed the exasperated Mr. Tozer. "I've 'ad enough of this! You 'ear me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"If you can't treat a hoffer in the hexecution of his dooty with proper respect," said Mr. Tozer, "I shall complain to the 'Ead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where did you get that face, Tozer?"

"The facefulness of the esteemed Tozer is terrific!"

Mr. Tozer frowned—a purple frown—and marched towards the gates. He was fed up. He was there to oblige the Head, and he intended to inform the Head of the gross disrespect with which he was being treated.

"Coming in, Tozer?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, I ham!" said Tozer emphatically. "I'm goin' to the 'Ead, Master Wharton, to report you all!"

"My hat! Going to the Head—like that?"

"Like wot?" roared Mr. Tozer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Tozer stalked majestically through the hysterical juniors. They simply gasped at the idea of Mr. Tozer presenting himself before the grave and reverend Head of Greyfriars with his fat visage marked with a zebra-pattern. Mr. Tozer had wiped his face several times with the back of his glove, with the result that the purple lines had been criss-crossed. As he marched into the Close, all the fellows who caught sight of him stared, and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at Tozer!"

"Did you wash this morning, Tozer?"

Mr. Tozer snorted and marched on. As he reached the School House he met Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. Mr. Quelch stared at him, and almost jumped.

"Tozer! What—what does this mean?"

"I am going to see Dr. Locke!" howled Mr. Tozer.

"Wot! Really, sir, I'm surprised to see you a-larfing!"

"Tain't wot I should expect of you, sir!"

Mr. Quelch turned away. He had tried to frown, but, in spite of himself, the frown had become a laugh. Mr. Tozer walked on indignantly. Trotter, the page, came to see what he wanted, and he burst into a shriek as he caught sight of Mr. Tozer's face.

"Oh; crikey! He, he, he!"

Mr. Tozer frowned at him.

"None of your cheek, young impurence!" he exclaimed. "You jest show me in to the 'Ead; and if I 'ave any of your sorse, I'll report you, too."

"Oh, my 'at!" gasped Trotter. "You're going to see the 'Ead—like that?"

"Like wot?" roared Mr. Tozer.

"He, he, he!"

Trotter staggered away to announce Mr. Tozer. The fat constable followed him with the heavy, majestic tread with which he was accustomed to warn malefactors that it was time to pack up their loot and depart.

The Head of Greyfriars was in his study—not at all in his usual good-humour. The golden quids were getting on Dr. Locke's nerves.

"Well, what is it, Trotter?" he asked sharply, frowning at the sight of the page's grinning face.

"If you please, sir, Mr. Tozer is askin' to see you, sir!" gasped Trotter.

"Show him in!"

"Oh, lor', I—I mean, yessir."

Trotter almost tottered from the room, and showed in Mr. Tozer. The Head stared at him blankly. He was not accustomed to staring at his visitors, certainly, but he could not help staring at Mr. Tozer.

"Scuse me, sir," said Mr. Tozer. "I don't want to worrit you, but I got to complain of them young raskils, sir—I mean, the young gentlemen—"

"Tozer!"

"Yessir!" gasped Mr. Tozer, startled by the Head's tone.

"Are you intoxicated?"

"Me, sir!"

"Yes, you. How dare you, sir, come here in a state of intoxication?" demanded Dr. Locke.

The unfortunate Mr. Tozer almost fell down. To be ragged by all Greyfriars was bad enough, but to be treated like this by the Head himself was the limit. Mr. Tozer wiped his heated brow, and spread an art shade of purple all over it.

"Me intoxicated, sir!" he murmured. "Which I never drinks on dooty, sir—never once in my life, sir. Me!"

"Then if you are not intoxicated, how do you come to be in that state?" said the Head sternly.

"In wot state?" howled the unhappy Mr. Tozer. "Pr'aps I'm a bit excited, sir, but so would you be if you was larfed at and jeered at by a 'undred young himps, sir."

"I am not surprised that the boys have laughed if you have come here in that state. Though, indeed, it is no laughing

matter. I am deeply shocked. I have always regarded you as a respectable man, Tozer."

"Ain't I respectable?" roared Mr. Tozer, beginning to lose his temper. The head of Greyfriars was a very awful personage, certainly; but Mr. Tozer was a man, and an Englishman, and he wasn't going to be browbeaten by anybody. "Which I defies any man to say I ain't respectable, sir."

"You are intoxicated."
"Which I ain't, and I defies you to prove it."
"Do you mean to say that you are sober?"
"Sober as a judge!" howled Mr. Tozer.
"And yet you present yourself in public with your face painted, sir, like that of a wild Indian."
"Wot!"

"If you are not intoxicated I think you must be insane," said the Head coldly. "Kindly leave my study at once, Mr. Tozer. I am afraid it will be my painful duty to mention this matter to your superintendent."

Mr. Tozer passed his hand across his face.
"Painted!" he murmured.
"Yes. Are you unaware, sir, of the state your face is in?" demanded the Head.

Mr. Tozer rushed frantically to the looking-glass. When he saw the reflection of his empurpled visage, he almost fainted. He stood rooted to the floor, gazing at the dreadful vision in the glass.

"Oh, crikey!" he murmured wildly. "Is that there my face? Wot's the matter? I've got some 'orrible disease all of a sudden, I s'pose. Oh, crikey!"

"It is ink on your face," said the Head sharply. "Purple ink of some kind."

"Ink!" said Mr. Tozer dazedly.
"Yes. Your helmet appears to be smothered with it inside," said Dr. Locke, glancing at the helmet which Mr. Tozer had taken off.

"My—my 'elmet!"
Mr. Tozer looked into his helmet, and uttered a yell. He understood now.

"Which I took off my 'elmet for a few minutes, when them young rips was there. They 'ave been a-puttin' of ink into my 'elmet, and I never saw it."

"Oh!" murmured the Head.
He understood, too.

"Which I never suspected it!" howled Mr. Tozer. "Lor' wot a sight I've been, goin' around like that. No wonder they larfed!"

The Head smiled slightly.
"I am afraid you have been the victim of a trick, Mr. Tozer: perhaps played by one of my boys," he said. "I am sorry I said you were intoxicated, but you must admit that your remarkable appearance—ahem—"

"Must 'ave thought I was simply roarin' drunk, goin' about like that!" groaned Mr. Tozer. "Ow am I to get back to the station like this 'ere? The ole village will rise to it. I shall 'ave 'arf Friardale arter me."

"You had better wash your face here before you go, Mr. Tozer. I will call Trotter to conduct you to a bath-room. If you can name the boy who did this—"

"Ow am I to name 'im, when there was a 'undred of them there?" groaned Mr. Tozer. "I ain't no idea who it was. The young rips! Thank you kindly, sir."

Mr. Tozer uttered those last words in quite a changed tone, and he slipped something into his pocket. Then he followed Trotter.

He was half an hour scrubbing his face, and he came out at last with the ink gone, and a complexion like that of a newly-boiled beetroot in its place. The chums of the Remove were waiting for him to come out.

Mr. Tozer gave them a freezing glance.
"Which of you was it put hink in my 'elmet?" he demanded.

"I wonder!" said Bob Cherry.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Tozer!" said Harry Wharton laughing. "It was really too bad. It isn't right to treat harmless lunatics like that."

"You young himp—"
"We've been waiting for you, Tozer!"
"I'll report yer!"

"We thought you might be thirsty after so much digging," explained Wharton. "We've raised five bob. It was worth it."

Mr. Tozer's expression changed.
"Of course, I can't accept this, Master Wharton," he said, as the five shillings were slipped into his fat hand.

"Of course not," agreed Wharton. "Good-bye, Tozer, and don't forget your old pals when you find the buried quids."

"Which I can take a joke as well as anybody, Master Wharton," said Tozer, quite affably. "Wouldn't dream of reporting a young gentleman for a little joke. I notice as 'ow you 'as some hink on your fingers, Master Cherry, but I ain't savin' nothin'. Good-afternoon."

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And just then, an alarm being given by Gosling, Mr. Tozer rushed off to hunt and harry two enterprising treasure-seekers who had been discovered digging in the Head's garden. And the juniors cheered Mr. Tozer as he marched them out of the precincts of Greyfriars with a grasp upon their collars.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Fireworks!

THE early November evening put an end to the treasure-seeking, and still the golden quids had not been discovered. At all events they had not been discovered by the Greyfriars fellows. Of course, it was possible that some one of the horde of gold-seekers who haunted the vicinity of Greyfriars had been successful. If so, the fact would not be known until the publication of the following week's number of "Home Hints." Even after dark, eager seekers haunted Greyfriars, and the gates were locked at the earliest dusk to keep them out. Not that that kept them out. They climbed the walls, and during the evening there were many alarms. Gosling had let his mastiff loose in the Close, and the growling of the mastiff was mingled many times with the terrified yells of quid hunters as they were chased to the walls.

Harry Wharton and Nugent were doing their preparation in No. 1 Study when Billy Bunter came in. The Owl of the Remove was looking muddy and furious.

"I say, you fellows, I want you to back me up!" he roared. "I can't find Todd—the silly ass has gone out looking for the quids. Look at me!"

"Well, you look a little soiled," said Wharton. "Have you been digging for gold with your whole carcass?"

"It's Walker!" howled Bunter. "Walker and Loder. They think they've got a clue—in the Head's garden—and they chucked me out."

"Go and chuck them out!" suggested Nugent.
"Oh, really, Nugent! Look here, they've no right to chuck the Remove out," said Bunter. "I think very likely they're on the track, too. I heard Walker say that he had found a footprint in the garden away from the path, where no one ever goes, and he left it till after dark, so that he wouldn't be seen digging."

"Is he digging?" exclaimed Wharton, in a shocked tone.
"A prefect, too, disobeying the Head's express orders. This won't do!"

"It's up to the Remove to keep the prefects in order," said Nugent solemnly. "I am shocked at Walker. Loder, too, another prefect! And they chucked you out, Bunter?"

"Yes, on my neck!" growled Bunter. "Look here, get some of the fellows, and we'll go and chuck them out, and see if the quids are there ourselves. They won't dare to report us to the Head. They're breaking the Head's commands themselves, you see."

"A Daniel come to judgment!" grinned Wharton. "We shall never have a better chance of scoring off the rotters. And we shall be able to use the fireworks, after all."

"The fireworks!" said Nugent.
"Yes—a little surprise for Walker and Loder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Ten minutes later the chums of the Remove dropped quietly over the gate in the Close, and were in the Head's garden. That garden was forbidden ground to juniors, but the Removees were stretching a point in their own favour. They crept silently along the garden path, their pockets bulging with fireworks.

"Hush!" murmured Wharton, as a murmur of voices came to his ears.
They stole along on tiptoe.

"How deep is it now, Loder?" It was Walker's voice.
"Nearly two feet, I think."
"Haven't found anything?"

"No!" growled Loder. "It's all rot. Blessed if I believe the quids are buried at all. It's all bunkum."

"I don't see how that footprint came there, then," said Walker. "And this is just the place they'd choose—it's quiet, and easily got at from the road. It would be ripping to rake in twenty quid, old man!"

"Too ripping to be true," said Loder, who was evidently not so keen as his companion; "and we should get into a row if anybody saw us here. The Head's given orders against any digging inside the limits of Greyfriars."

"Oh, blow the Head!" murmured Walker, which was decidedly disrespectful. "It will be put down to the fags. I chased Bunter out of here ten minutes ago. I can report him for digging in the garden, if necessary."

Loder chuckled.
"Oh, the awful rotter!" murmured Nugent. "I say, it's time we woked them up."



"Right!"

The juniors crouched under the shadow of a huge mass of rhododendrons. They were completely concealed from the two Sixth-formers. Wharton silently drew a wax vesta along his boot and lighted a jumping cracker. He extinguished the match instantly, and let the fuse burn a moment, and then rose from the shadow and tossed the cracker in the direction of the seniors.

"Dig another foot or so!" Walker's voice went on. "Hallo! I say, Loder, you shouldn't strike matches here—it's not safe. We might be seen."

"What do you mean, you ass?" growled Loder. "I haven't struck any matches."

"What's that burning on the ground, then— Oh— my hat!"

Bang!
Walker jumped clear off the ground. Loder stared round him in alarm.

Bang! bang! bang!

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Great Scott!"

A squib fizzed along the ground, enveloping the treasure-seekers in a shower of sparks.

Then two or three more repeating crackers were tossed. They fell around the astounded seniors, exploding incessantly.

Bang! bang! bang! bang! bang! bang! bang!

Walker gave a yell of fury.

"It's fireworks—some fag is chucking fireworks—"

Bang! bang! bang!

"Now, then!" came Gosling's voice from the direction of the gate. "You ain't allowed to let off fireworks in the 'Ead's garden, and well you know it. I'll report you."

Bang! bang! bang!

"Cut!" whispered Loder hurriedly. "That fool will see us, and the Head will be ratty if he knows we've been digging in his garden—"

Bang! bang! bang!

"Wot I say is this 'ere. I'll report yer!" Gosling came striding down the garden, and ran right into Loder and Walker as they fled. He collared them at once, under the impression that they were juniors.

"You cummerlonger me!" said Gosling. "Which I'm going to march you straight to the 'Ead! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Let go, you fool!" roared Loder.

"My heye! Master Loder!"

"Let go my collar, or I'll smash you!" growled Loder.

Two unseen juniors backed away in the darkness, chuckling softly. Gosling did not let go the captured prefects.

"Which of you hit me in the execution of my dooty? Master Loder, it will be my dooty to report it to the 'Ead! You young gentlemen in the Sixth, too, a-lettin' orf fireworks in the 'Ead's garden! I'm surprised at yer!"

"We haven't been letting off fireworks!" howled Walker. "Don't be an ass."

"Why, 'ere they are still goin' orf!" said Gosling, as the last cracker banged. "and the smell of 'em is somethink howful. 'Ow can you tell such whoppers, Master Walker?"

"It was juniors throwing the things at us—"

"Then wot was you doin' 'ere, may I arsk?"

The two seniors ground their teeth. After the Head's strict order on the subject, they dared not let it be known that they had been digging for the golden quids.

"We—we came here to—to look for the juniors," stammered Loder.

"Which I don't see any of 'em!" said Gosling sarcastically. "May I arsk if you 'ave found any of 'em 'ere, sir?"

"We—we haven't—but—"

"I thort not!" grinned Gosling. "I'm afraid I shall 'ave to report this to the 'Ead, sir. Which he's bound to see the fireworks a-lyin' about to-morrow mornin'."

"I tell you we haven't—"

"You can tell that to the 'Ead, if you please," said Gosling stolidly.

Walker and Loder exchanged furious glances in the gloom. They knew what Gosling wanted, and what he meant to have, and there was no help for it.

"Thank you, kindly, young gentlemen," murmured Gosling, as two half-crowns were slipped into his hand. "Course I don't want to make no trouble for you young gentlemen—prefects, too! But really you mustn't let orf any more fireworks in the 'Ead's garden. Let 'em orf in the Close as much as you like. No law agin that!"

The two prefects hurried out of the garden. Their search for the golden quids in that direction was over. As they came towards the School House, breathing fury, they caught sight of Wharton and Nugent in the midst of a crowd of juniors. Wharton and Nugent were evidently

relating something of a comic nature, for the rest of the juniors were howling with laughter.

Loder and Walker strode furiously into the group.

"So it was you young scoundrels!" said Loder, between his teeth. "Follow me to my study at once."

"Going to share out the quids?" asked Wharton calmly.

"Did you find them?" Nugent wanted to know.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder glared at them. It occurred to him it was better to let the matter drop. He did not want to have to explain to the Head what he was doing in the garden, and the excavation remained as evidence against him.

"Come on," murmured Walker, taking his arm. And they walked in glowering, and the juniors chuckled gleefully. Billy Bunter started off cheerfully to continue the investigations started by Walker and Loder, but he came back half an hour later muddier than ever, and without any golden quids.

"I think it's a rotten swindle," said Bunter, in the common-room. "I say, you fellows, I'll tell you what. They're my quids, if they're found, as you all know jolly well, but I'm willing to sell my right to them for a quid now—cash down!"

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, make it half-a-quid!" said Bunter generously.

"No takers, I guess!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"Five bob!" said Bunter.

"Five rats!" said Bolsover major.

"Well, I'm not looking for the rotten things any more," growled Bunter. "I think it's a swindle. Still, if you should happen to find them, Todd, remember our agreement—we're whacking it out."

"But you didn't agree to that!" said Peter Todd, with a grin.

"Ahem! I agree to it now."

"Too late!" said Peter calmly. "That agreement is rescinded. Go and eat coko!"

"Look here, I'm going to have my whack!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, if that's all you want, you can have your whack now," said Peter, picking up the tongs and starting towards Bunter.

But that was not the kind of whack Bunter wanted, and he did not stay to take it.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo Does It!

"DEAR me!" murmured Alonzo Todd. "I wonder what is the cause of that!"

It was the next day, and morning lessons were over, and a good many of the Greyfriars' fellows were on the search again. Not so many as before, however. Want of success was damping their keenness, and many of them had become fed up.

Alonzo had retired to a quiet spot to read his favourite volume, a present from his Uncle Benjamin. He was seated on the stump of a tree near the river, with the shining Sark, bordered with rushes, before his eyes. His eyes had wandered from the book, and he had caught sight of an old umbrella-handle stuck in the ground in the midst of the rushes. It was hidden from sight to anybody passing, but from where Alonzo sat, he happened to see it.

His curiosity was aroused. It was certainly a peculiar place for an umbrella handle to be discovered.

"I wonder!" murmured Alonzo.

He closed his book and rose. He had been thinking how extremely gratifying it would be if he could discover the twenty golden quids, and send them to the Society for the Provision of Tracts and Trousers for the unfortunate islanders in the South Seas. The vision of brown-skinned cannibals, wearing handsome new pairs of trousers, and reading nicely illustrated tracts, was before Alonzo's eyes, and the thought of it moved him almost to tears. He had a trowel in his pocket, in case he should discover the unknown mark left on the burial-place of the quids by the enterprising competition editor of "Home Hints." And the thought was in his mind now that perhaps he had discovered it.

He laid down his volume, and glanced round him. No one was in sight. Then he dropped on his hands and knees in the rushes, and jerked out the umbrella-handle. He remembered the practical jokes of Vernon-Smith, and it was not really with much hope that he began to trowel away the soft earth.

But he worked industriously.

His mild eyes shone as he felt the trowel jam on something harder than earth. He groped in the hole with his hands, and drew out a little bundle.

It was the current number of "Home Hints," folded up!

"Goodness gracious!" murmured Alonzo.

But he remembered the little joke on Coker of the Fifth, and still he had his doubts. With trembling fingers he unfolded the current number of "Home Hints."

Inside was a little canvas bag—and it gave forth a musical clink as Alonzo seized it.

He opened the bag!

A little cascade of golden coins rolled out on the grass. Sovereigns!

Real sovereigns! Alonzo, with glistening eyes, counted them. Twenty!

The golden quids!

There was no doubt about it now. Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of Greyfriars, had discovered the hidden treasure. The name of Alonzo Todd would appear in the next number of "Home Hints," as that of the discoverer of the hidden gold! Alonzo's heart was beating fast with excitement.

"Dear me! I have found them! How pleased my Uncle Benjamin would be, and how delighted he will be when he knows what I have done with the money!" he murmured.

Alonzo gathered up the twenty golden quids, and replaced them in the bag. He placed the bag in an inside pocket, and made his way to the school. And when he arrived there he went immediately to the Head's study.

He was in the Head's study about ten minutes, and he came out with a sealed envelope in his hand, and walked down to Friar-dale Post Office. There he registered the letter, and walked back to Greyfriars with a sweet and benevolent smile upon his face.

It was tea-time, and he found a crowd of juniors coming into the School House. Peter Todd shouted to him.

"Where have you been, fathead? Tea's ready!"

"Yes, my dear Peter. I trust I have not kept you waiting," said Alonzo.

"Well, you have, as a matter of fact," said Peter. "But, never mind, buck up. We're going to have another hunt for the quids after tea."

"The quids, my dear Peter!"

"Yes, ass!"

"But they are found," said Alonzo mildly.

"What!"

It was a shout from all the fellows, and they gathered eagerly round Alonzo. Billy Bunter held out a fat hand.

"My quids!" he shouted. "Hand them over!"

"Shut up, Bunter! Have you found them, Alonzo?" asked Harry Wharton.

Alonzo nodded with a beaming smile.

"Yes, my dear Wharton, I am very pleased to be able to impart the gratifying news that the twenty golden sovereigns have been unearthed at last."

"You've found them?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes, my dear Cherry."

"And dug them up?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Well, my hat," said Bolsover major, "wonders will never cease! Fancy the biggest duffer in all the school finding the quids at the finish."

"I say, you fellows, I'm going to have my quids!" roared Bunter furiously. "They're mine. Look here, Todd, you hand over my quids!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"Oh, you dry up, Bunter!" said Peter Todd, shoving the Owl of the Remove back. "You're altogether too numerous. Lonzy, old man, you're a nut! Why, this will set the study up in funds for weeks!"

"The—the study, my dear Peter!" faltered Alonzo.

"Yes, the study!" said Peter, frowning. "I suppose you're going to whack it out?"

"M-m-my dear Peter—"

"Of course, he's going to whack it out!" yelled Bunter. "You hand me over five quid, Alonzo Todd, do you hear?"

"You're out of it," said Peter chidingly. "You stayed out of your own accord. I say, you chaps, we'll have a celebration over this—a big feed for the whole of the Form."

"Hear, hear!"

"Every chap in the Remove is invited, and there will be plenty of the very best," said Peter generously; "that's right—eh, Lonzy?"

"My dear Peter," said Alonzo feebly, "you—you did not mention anything to me before about whacking out the sovereigns!"

"Well, I make the laws in No. 7, don't I?" demanded Peter. "Don't be mean, Lonzy. You can't help being a duffer, but you needn't be mean."

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"I am sure I don't mean to be mean, my dear Peter," said Alonzo in great distress. "If I were still in possession of the money, I should hand you as much as you desired without the slightest hesitation."

Peter gave a yell.

"You haven't parted with it?"

"Yes, my dear Peter."

Peter stared at him blankly. So did the rest of the Removites. That tremendous feed, upon which they were counting as a certainty, began to fade from their vision like a beautiful dream.

"You've spent twenty quid!" gasped Peter at last. "How long ago did you find it?"

"About an hour. You see—"

"But you can't have spent twenty quid in an hour!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What on earth have you spent it on?"

"You see—"

"Oh, Alonzo's having a little joke with us," said Nugent. "He's got the quids in his trousers' pocket all the time. Roll 'em out, Alonzo!"

"Trot out the quids!"

"This way to the tuck-shop!"

"My dear friends," said Alonzo, "I am sincerely sorry. But when I tell you what I have done with the money, I am sure you will rejoice as much as I do—as much as I am certain my Uncle Benjamin will when he hears. The Head has been kind enough to give me a cheque for twenty pounds in exchange for the sovereigns."

"What did you want a cheque for?" shrieked Peter, with a dreadful foreboding. "But if you have it still about you, we can change it. It's all right. Trot out the cheque!"

"Lucky we caught him in time!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Out with that cheque, Lonzy!"

"But have we caught him in time?" grinned Wharton.

"Where is the cheque, Alonzo?"

"I have posted it."

"Posted it?" yelled Peter.

"Yes, my dear Peter."

"Where—who-what?"

"To the Society for Providing Tracts and Trousers for the South Sea Islanders," said Alonzo, with a beaming smile. Peter Todd almost collapsed.

"What!" he murmured faintly.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"The ass!"

"The idiot!"

"Oh dear!"

"My dear fellows," said Alonzo in surprise, "I am sure that when you come to think about it you will rejoice—ah!—oh!—my dear Peter—yow!—my dear Bunter—my dear Cherry—ow!—my dear friends—yarooooh!"

They rushed upon him. They seized him, and bumped him, and rolled him over. They frogs'-marched him, and bumped him again, and rolled him in every puddle that could be discovered between the school gates and the door of the School House. The din was terrific, and the Head of Greyfriars opened his window and looked out, but in the thickening November dusk he could see nothing but a shouting mob of juniors.

"What is that?" he exclaimed. "What is it, Wharton? What has happened?"

"It's all right, sir," said Wharton. "Alonzo's been doing a good deed, sir, and the Remove are giving him a demonstration, sir, to show how they appreciate it."

"Oh, is that it!" said the Head. "Very well, that is very right and proper; but pray do not make quite so much noise."

And he closed his window again.

The demonstration did not appeal to Alonzo Todd as right and proper, by any means. By the time he escaped from the hands of the enraged Removites, he was simply the wreck of a junior; and his only consolation was the knowledge that he had succeeded in providing quite a large number of cannibals with trousers owing to his fortunate discovery of the golden quids!

THE END.

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MYSTERIA



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'-shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island by swimming, under cover of the fog. Subsequently, Ferrers Lord leads a night expedition on to the island—and succeeds in recapturing the launch. By dint of his unparalleled ingenuity and hard work, Hal Honour, the engineer, succeeds in repairing the Lord of the Deep sufficiently to allow her to leave her dangerous situation in the island harbour, and anchor in the deep water outside. One day two of Faber's gang, Larkin and "Stumpy" row out to the submarine, and are in conference with Ferrers Lord, when the phantom island once more becomes visible. Ferrers Lord promptly bundles the two ruffians into their boat, and sets off in chase of "Mysteria." The mysterious island disappears again, however, and the Lord of the Deep is compelled to heave to. Meanwhile, some of the crew are amusing themselves in the billiard-room, when Gan-Waga gives Barry a poke in the ribs with a cue.

(Now go on with the story.)

Not According to Programme!

"Wirrastru!" shrieked Barry, "Phwat d'yez mane by ut? Oi'll tear the wool off yez in half a minute. Me ribs are split to splinters. Lit me git howld of yez. Faix, Oi'll prinit your stuffed fragments to the British Museum. Have at yez! Whoo-roosh."

While Ching-Lung hummed "Here we go round the mulberry bush," Barry O'Rooney started in chase of his foe round the billiard-table. Gan-Waga had a good start, and for a time he kept it. But Gan-Waga was more speedy in the water, or over snow and ice, than he was on a carpeted floor. He saw that his foe was gaining slowly but surely.

"Chase me, chaso me, Mary Ann!" laughed the prince. "Put more steam on, Gan, my little man, or he'll catch you and present you to the British Skewzeum. You'll look sweet in a glass case, Eskimoses. Why don't you run? Shoo-oo! Put on your hill-climbing clutch. Ten to one on the Irish beauty! Ten to one on the bonnie boy from Cork! Barry of Ballybunion wins for anything except money. Ting-a-ring! Last lap! Barry of Bally—Gone away! Go-one away! Yoicks! Tally-ho! Gone aw-a-ay!"

Seeing his pursuer almost ready to pounce, Gan made one desperate spurt, gained a couple of yards, and then made a bee-line for the open door. Barry, unprepared for this manoeuvre, could not turn at once. With an angry bellow, he spun round and continued the chase, and Ching-Lung hopped down from the table to see the result of the exciting man-hunt.

Gan-Waga was seeking his refuge, the swimming-bath, but he had still a long way to go, and he was tiring fast. Still, he had an even chance of making good his escape, unless something occurred to hamper him.

Something did occur. Prout's big figure loomed into sight, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 299.

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barring the way to freedom, and the Eskimo gave a weak squeal of horror and blank despair.

"Howld him, Tommy! Saze the wicked riptoile, Tommy!" panted Barry from the rear. "Don't lit him go,ould man! Collar him, and see me play 'Swate chiming bells' on his face."

"No, no! Lemme goes, Tommy!" wailed Gan-Waga. "Ow! Bad 'nough orfuls! Lemme go! Nots stopes me, Tommy. Ow, ow, ow! Orful badnesses! Lemme goes!"

"By hokey, I can't! I loves you too well," grinned the steersman, folding the shuddering Gan to his capacious bosom. "From thee I cannot part. Don't kick, by hokey, or I'll choke you first and squeeze you flat afterwards. Here the pretty dear is, Irish. What's he been a-doin'?"

Barry O'Rooney proceeded to divest himself of his pea-jacket. This accomplished, he rolled back his shirt-sleeves, and spat on his hands. Gan-Waga watched these ominous proceedings with anything but pleasure, for they looked remarkably business-like.

"Ow, ow, ow! Yo' no pals, Prouts. You bad 'nough pigs to hold me," he whimpered. "Yo' one big cowardfulness. I tells my Chingy. Where my Chingy? Yo' bofes bad 'nough beasts!"

Barry spat on his hands once more, just for luck. Over his shirt he was wearing a tight-fitting, sleeveless jersey. He smiled, and winked merrily.

"Phat's he been doin', the weevil, you ax, Tommy?" he said. "Whoy, whin Oi was bathed in tears, as the ladies' novelettes put ut, sorrowing over the lamented dith of me Uncle Dennis, that haythin rascal sthabbed me in the ribs wid a block of wood. Moind yez, Oi wasn't lukiug at the toime. Like a base-born coward, he crawled up ahoind me and sthabbed me in the back, so to spako! He did, the oily thafe—he did, bedad!"

"And what are you going to do to him, by hokey?" inquired the bald-headed steersman.

"For a start," answered Barry, smacking his lips gleefully. "Oi intend to have the blissful joy of whooping up the flure wid him. Aftther whooping up the flure, Oi shall gintly percade to remove both his handsome ears, just to kape him from crawling round corners and lishening to phwat honest people are sayin'."

"A mighty good idea that, mate," said the steersman, with approval.

"Of coorse—of coorse. Faix, yez moight think Oi kept bad oideas in my brainbox to hear yez talk. Whin Oi have delicately divested the riptoise of his lisheners, Oi shall have great pleasure in dancing the 'Campbells are comin' on his manly chest wid both fate and a smoile. A funeral will close the iligant performance, for which I make no charge for admission. There will sartinly be a collection afore the funeral takes place, but that will be the collection of the remains of the deceased. Now, Oi stharrt!"

"Ow! I nots do it no morders, Barry!" wailed Gan-Waga. "Yez spake the truth, oily bhoy! Yez spake the solemn truth!"

"Yo' bofe bad 'nough cowards," sighed the Eskimo. "Chingy! Ooh, where ares yo', where ares yo', Chingy?"

"He's gone to order your coffin, by hokey!" chuckled Prout.

Gan's plaintive voice echoed hopelessly along the iron-walled corridor.

"Chingy, helpses! Ow, bad 'nough! Dey killings me! Where are yo', Chingy? Helpses, helpses, helpses! Ow, orfulness! Helpses, Chingy! Dey murders yo' butterfubs boys!"

If the faithless Ching-Lung heard, he did not heed. He probably heard, for he was watching the scene through the keyhole of the billiard-room door. Gan-Waga gave himself up for lost. He was no match for the fighting Irishman, and he was sorry now that he had not left Barry to weep in peace and comfort.

Prout held him, and when Prout held anyone in his lusty grip, the chances of escape were as remote as remote could possibly be.

"By hokey, start your job," said the great Thomas. "I can't wait here till Friday fortnight!"

"Howld on a bit," growled Barry. "Oi mane to do the thrick properly this toime, my pretty man. Oi invoite yez to the wake, and ut'll be the purtiest wake yez ever saw wid your two oies and a tilscope. Oi'll be airier widout this jarsey hamperin' me. Wait till Oi get ut off!"

The jersey had been made for a man of less bulk than Barry O'Rooney, and it fitted him like an elastic-stocking. He wriggled it over his head.

"Give us a pull, Tom!" he said, in strangled tones. Thomas Prout grinned and winked.

"Now's your chance, fat 'un," he whispered in Gan's ear. "Smack him, by hokey!"

An additional repetition of this wholesome advice would have been ridiculous and unnecessary. In plain language, Gan-Waga did not need to be told twice.

Squealing aloud with bliss, he fell upon his muffled and helpless foe, and rained blows down on the writhing jersey. Muffled howls and shrieks of wrath and anguish came out of the jersey as Gan got some of his best work in.

Then he followed the retreating steersman. There was a noise of tearing cloth, and Barry's enraged and purple countenance burst into sight.

"Oi'll ate yez at wan boite, Tom Prout, yez thraitorous baste!" he bellowed. "Oi'll slay yez!"

And a voice—it was the dulcet voice of Ching-Lung, of Kwai-hal—lifted through the gloom. It said:

"Pip, pip!"

A Present that Disgusted the Carpenter—The Perfidy of Prout—Mysteria!—"We Have Her Now, Lads!"

Ching-Lung awoke to hear pleasant news, which was imparted by the energetic Joe over a tray of steaming coffee. In spite of his prolonged labours, the carpenter looked none the worse.

"Good-mornin', sir!" he said pleasantly. "We've got the last bolt into her."

"Mean it, Joseph?"

"It's a fact, sir. There's just a little more to be done inside, but that'll be finished afore night, and then she'll be as tight as ever. Your corfee, sir. We've patched the launch up already, sir!"

"Joe," said the prince, "you're an ugly-looking rascal to bring such good news. I'm almost inclined to give you a nice present. Would you like a present, Joe?"

"Would I, sir? Ax me something easy."

Joe expected a five-pound note, at least; for Ching-Lung was, as a rule, most open-handed. His Highness drank the coffee, and lay back on the pillow, closing his eyes. Joe waited for a few moments, and then ventured to cough.

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"Waiting for anything?"
 "The—er—the—er—I—I think you mentioned a present, sir, if I warn't mistaken," stammered Joseph.
 "To be sure I did. I must have been dropping off to sleep. You are very sensible to remind me of it, Joe. What shall I give you? Let me see."
 He pondered for some time, and Joe began to imagine that not a five-pound note but a ten-pound note was coming his way; or, perhaps, a gold watch and a diamond-ring.
 "I have it," said Ching-Lung.
 "Yes, sir," said the carpenter, all ears.
 "You'll find a tooth-brush on the washstand, and it's not nearly worn out. Take that with my blessing, Joe. Don't thank me, please, for I hate to be thanked. Good-morning, Joe!"

Joe nearly let the tray fall. He gazed long and steadily at Ching-Lung, who was snoring peacefully, and then slowly went out. Ching-Lung opened one eye and winked at the ceiling.

"I shall die a pauper if I keep on giving things away at this speed," he grinned. "I'm too generous—far too generous. Seven o'clock, by Jove! It's time I went for my dip."

But there was no bathing that morning. As Ching-Lung started for the swimming-bath, with his towels over his arm, he heard the sound of the pumps, which told him that the Lord of the Deep was rising to the surface. Presently, bright sunshine came flashing in through the portholes. The noise as heavy waves rolled against the vessel and the uneasy motion of the submarine told him, too, that the sea was running too high for bathing, so he returned to his cabin to wash and dress. They were hammering and tinkering away forward, at full blast.

The day passed uneventfully. It was far too rough to go on deck, but the barometer promised finer weather. The ship was cleaned down and made snug. Barry had quite forgotten his wrath with Gan-Waga in his resentment he felt against his faithless comrade Prout. There was an Arctic coldness between these two gallant gentlemen. Barry told Maddock about it in the fore-castle, and Maddock was sympathetic. He was also washing his classic face in a bucket at the time.

"Will, bedad! Phwat d'yez think about ut, at all?" asked the irate Irishman from Ballybunion.

"I think, souse me, as it was a mean trick to play on a messmate," grunted the bo'sun, using the yellow soap liberally. "And 'cos why? We arranged as we was to stick together, him and me, and you and Joe, just to perlect ourselves agen' them two. It warn't shipmatelike, souse me! But are you sure as he done it? P'r'aps the hoily Heskimo cut his cable. Tom not being on the lookout at the time, and boarded you, you being out of haction. Are you sartin, souse me?"

"Och! Oi'm as sartin as eggs ain't oranges," said Barry. While Maddock was scrubbing himself with a rough towel, Joe looked in. Barry bounced upon him immediately, and told the tale of his woe and of the falseness of Mr. Thomas Prout. Joe was still writhing under the sting of the magnificent present Ching-Lung had offered him that morning, and in a very mutinous state of mind. A man who expects a ten-pound note and receives a worn-out toothbrush instead, has some excuse for being slightly out of temper. And as Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga were bosom friends, Joe looked upon both of them as the common foe.

"It's scandalous!" he said. "I wouldn't ha' believed it o' Tom Prout. They've bought him over, that's what it is. It's all a low-down, common game. He ain't acted the pal, nohow."

Barry shook his clenched fist, and hissed out:

"Phwat shall be done to the thraitor who
 Bethrays and sells his comrades thrue?"

"I don't know, souse me!" answered Maddock.
 "Nor me," said Joe.

"Mate him at noight wid a big, sharp knife,
 And stab and hack till yez take his loife!"

said O'Rooney fiercely.

"Sthab and hack till he howls wid pain,
 Thin sthab and hack till he yells again.
 Smack his head wid a bag of bricks,
 And fill him up wid hob-nailed kicks.
 Then twist his neck in a sailor's knot,
 And do a guy wid the oof he's got.
 That's how to treat a thraitor,
 And no way cud be nater."

"And, bedad, that's phwat he deserves," went on Barry of Ballybunion. "Fancy a man lifting a woid blubber-ating

Iskimo loose on the man he called his pal! Flesh and blood can't stand it; cast iron and copper wid brass bindings and gunmetal frillings cudn't stand ut. We're a society formed for self-perfection and for perfecting aich other. Gentlemen, Oi move that Thomas Prout, as a baldheaded thraytor wid number forty-six boots, be no longer a mumber of our society. And, gints, Oi also move, that a diputation waits on that same Thomas Prout and tills him so to his ugly face!"

Barry's suggestion was not received with any great enthusiasm.

"Pr'aps you'll be the deputation, souse me!" said Benjamin, the bo'sun.

"Eh?"

"You're such a good 'un at talkin' and putting things plain," added Joe flatteringly.

The flattery was wasted. Barry recalled the size and hardness of the steersman's fists. Prout might not take the news of his summary expulsion from the self-protection society in a meek and lamblike spirit. He might be angry, he might even be violent. After his experience with Gan-Waga, Barry felt that his face was in too tender a condition to have any further attacks made upon it until he had thoroughly recovered. His nose was specially sore.

"Let's all three go together," he said. "Faith, he can't do anythin' to the three of us."

This was agreed to, and they made for the conning-tower. The vessel was rolling strongly, and her decks were awash. Joe went up first. He was rather taken aback when he saw Prout and Gan-Waga sitting amicably on the floor opposite each other, sharing a quarter of a Dutch cheese and pickles together.

Joe waved his boof to warn O'Rooney and Maddock not to ascend just then.

"Hallo, nails and splinters!" gurgled the Eskimo. "How goes it, hunk? How's yo' was, ole sawduat faces? Ho, ho, ho-o-o-oo! Why, yo' not deads yet? How yo' muvvers offs fo' soap? Ho-o-o-o-oo-o!"

Here was an absolute proof of Prout's perfidy; Prout, the trusted Prout, was hobnobbing with the enemy.

"Feel perky, Tom?" asked Joe, trying to be affable. "All right, I 'ope?"

"Go and eat gimlets, by hokey, your face worries me!" snapped Prout. "It's killin' all the mites in the cheese, and, to my mind, live mites is the best part o' cheese. Run 'omo and carve yourself a new dial, there's plenty o' wood about."

"Ho, ha, ho-o-oo! Go and carves noo diles," giggled the blubberbiter. "He wants new diles bad, hunk, Tommy?"

After all these years Prout—their trusted Prout—had gone over to the enemy. Joe could hardly believe his eyes and ears. It was impossible, it was some dream. Joe felt sure that he was sleeping, that he would awaken presently and find it was a vision, born of the pickled salmon and stout he had taken for supper. Prout could not be false, he was above bribery, he could not forsake his old comrades.

He shook his boot again.

"Ho, ho, hoo! Ha, ha, haa! Here morer funny faces, Tommy," chuckled Gan-Waga. "Here lot morer sheep's headses, Tommy. Dey wantses boilings. Yah-h! Yoo! Takes dems aways and scrapes dems. Oh, look at silly trishes! Yo' makes me laughs. Ha-a-aah! Ho, ho, hoo! Hee-ee-ee-hah-hoo!"

Barry and Maddock were almost as astounded and bewildered as Joe. What they saw almost took their breath away, and what they heard was enough to make them swoon.

"And this—this," said Barry hoarsely, "is the ind."

"Which end, by hokey?" inquired Prout, fishing in the pickle-jar with a fork.

"The bitter ind," sighed Barry.

"Then sprinkle a bit of sugar on it before you swaller it," said the steersman.

Maddock could only mop his forehead and gasp, "Souse me—souse me!" for he was too overcome to do anything further. And Joe, the turncoat, and Gan the Eskimo, devoured cheese and pickles hungrily.

"Oi've come to till yez, Tom," said Barry, "that—Oi mane that—at laste we're a diputation."

"You look more like the scrapings of a circus, by hokey!" said the steersman; and Gan laughed with glee.

"Howld on and go aisy, sor," said Barry. "Oi don't want to lose my timper!"

"Oh, do something sensible! Go and lose yourself!" snapped Prout.

"Ho, ho, hoo-oo-oo! Ha, ha, haa-a-aa!" roared the delighted Eskimo. "Dat butterfuls 'nough, Tommy."

Maddock was somewhat of a slow thinker, but when he had once made up his mind his mind took a good deal of altering. Still murmuring "Souse me!" in a dazed sort of way, he removed his coat.

"Are yez goin' to thrash the perfijus villain?" asked Barry.

"Souse me, I ham!" said Benjamin emphatically. "He warn't no good. I'll punch him!"

"And O'll help yez," added Barry. "Bedad, he nades us!"

Prout saw trouble coming, and stood up. A shout broke from him:

"Mysteria—Mysteria! Tumble up!"

The next instant, forgetting their quarrel, all the men were out on deck, clinging to the rail, with the water hissing high above their knees with every roll of the vessel. The island was not a league away. In the strong sunshine it looked like a huge patch of sickly yellow on the tossing waves.

"Full speed ahead!" cried Ferrers Lord.

It could not escape them now. Boring through the waves the Lord of the Deep churned ahead nearer and nearer. With strained eyes and eager faces they watched the spectral island rising out of the sea.

"We have her now, lads!" said Ferrers Lord triumphantly. And he was right.

Marked Down—Thurston Makes a Wager—The Floating Island.

Seldom indeed had the nerves of these veteran adventurers been strung to such an intense pitch of curiosity and excitement. Was their quest over at last? Would the phantom vanish again when they were within a pistol-shot of its spectral shores? Or would the Lord of the Deep sail sheer through it, to find that it was no island at all, but only a mist and a mirage?

"By Jove, I believe we've nailed her at the finish!" said Ching-Lung. "She looks real enough."

"Yes," said Thurston, "she does. I fancy I shall have to admit that Lord was right, as usual, and that I am wrong, as I frequently am. What a queer show! It looks as if it had been bleached."

Prout put a pair of binoculars in the prince's hand. A

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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steamy haze almost obscured the mysterious island. He could make out phantom trees of weird shapes, but they were glassy and colourless. Mysteria seemed to be at least three miles in length; but it was difficult to judge.

Every time the propellers throbbed, their burning curiosity grew stronger. Maddock was trembling with excitement; and it took a good deal to excite the sturdy, steel-nerved bo'sun of the Lord of the Deep. Even Hal Honour had abandoned the engine-room, and there was an unwonted sparkle in his blue eyes.

"There's a lot of rough water round her," said Ferrers Lord. "It will be awkward to land, if we wish to land."

"A hundred cigars she doesn't float, Lord!" cried Rupert Thurston.

"A bet, Rupert!" answered the millionaire. "And I think you will lose."

The bell in the engine-room clanged. The steamy haze that jealously clouded the island of mystery, as if to hide its secrets from their gaze, seemed to grow denser. It was hot and stuffy in the conning-tower, but the roughness of the sea made it impossible to open the door just then.

GRAND NEW FEATURE.—No. 2.

Our Winter Evening Problem Corner.

On the opposite column there is another little picture-puzzle for my ingenious chums. The whole picture-puzzle should be pasted on to a piece of thin cardboard, and the black pieces carefully cut out; correctly pieced together they will form the silhouette figure of a well-known character at St. Jim's School. Any of my chums who find they are unable to tackle this test of skill successfully will find the correct solution published on this page next Monday.

No. 3 PROBLEM NEXT WEEK.

Hearts and pulses throbbed faster.

"She's going, by hokey! She's melting clean away!" yelled Prout. "She's going to cheat us, arter all."

To all appearance, Prout was right. The island was melting into a thick bank of fog. A dark cloud passed over the sun. There was something terribly unreal and unearthly about it.

"Oi shudn't wondher av the ghosts of all the poor folks who get dhrowned at say wint yondher," said Barry, in an awed whisper. "Av ut's an oiland at all, ut belongs to Davy Jones. Whisht! Oi can faal the hair on my head sthartin' to bristle!"

They were within a few furlongs of the bank of fog.

"Try to find bottom there," said Ferrers Lord.

The submarine was slowed down, and Prout waded out to heave the lead. He could find no bottom.

"If that island don't float, by hokey," he said, "it's about as high as the Helps—a fair mountain stuck in the sea!"

He squeezed the water out of his soaked trousers, and shook his bald head in perplexity.

"There she is!"

The shout was unanimous and general. A giant hand seemed to strip away the fog like the lifting of an enormous curtain.

Almost unconsciously, Ferrers Lord stopped the engines. There was a tense hush, broken only by the swish of waves as they shouldered over the plates, and broke with a hiss against the conning-tower.

"The cigars are yours, Lord," said Rupert Thurston, with a quick, nervous laugh. "She floats."

"Yes," said the millionaire. "Undoubtedly Mysteria is a floating island."

There will be another long instalment of this splendid serial story next Monday.

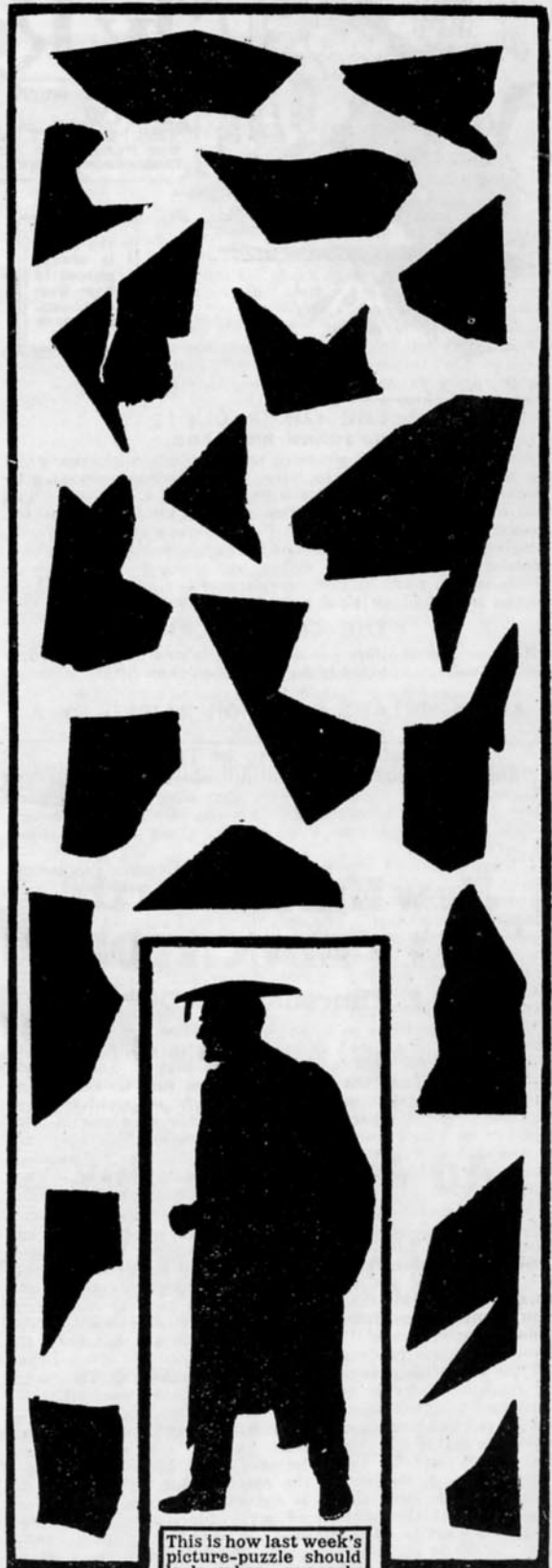
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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE COKER CUP!"

This is how last week's picture-puzzle should look when properly pieced together.

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My Readers' Page

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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE COKER CUP!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Our next grand long complete tale deals with the great football competition for the handsome silver cup, presented by Horace Coker, Esq., of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. The competition arouses tremendous enthusiasm throughout the school, and teams from every Form, except the First Form, which is barred, are entered to struggle for the great cup. Horace Coker, although rather unfortunate in his experiences on the football-field, revels in the limelight which is turned upon him as the donor of

"THE COKER CUP!"

which, as Coker himself is careful to inform all and sundry, cost his doting Aunt Judy no less a sum than fifteen guineas.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION RAISED BY A READER.

Postcard Vote to be Taken.

"Dear Editor,—I have been an ardent reader of 'The Magnet' Library from the very first number, and I think there is no book to touch it. There is one matter, though, which I have wanted to write to you about for some time, so here goes.

"I have noticed you have left out the comic supplement lately. Why is this? I have always been very fond of funny pictures, and I thought that, with the comic supplement, 'The Magnet' was perfect. The only thing is, I suppose, that some readers want all stories. I am sure it must be awfully hard for you to please everybody. If this is the case, then I have got an idea to propose to you, if you will listen to me, Mr. Editor. Why not bring out another little paper, a sort of extra companion paper to the dear old 'Magnet,' and put a lot of comic pictures in it, as well as a few pages of story—school story, of course? What I mean is, really, let's have the comic supplement as before, only bigger, and brought out separately from the 'Magnet.' I am sure thousands and thousands of 'Magnetites' would willingly pay another penny a week to get a separate 'Magnet' comic supplement, with some more school story in as well. Anyway, I think my idea is one that is worth putting to a 'postcard vote' of readers, don't you? Hoping to see my suggestion adopted.—Your ardent reader,
 'LONDONER' (P. J.)"

Well, "Londoner," I must confess at once that yours is a letter which I read two or three times over after I had opened it, and I feel sure that it will give your fellow-readers some food for thought, also. I will readily admit that I quite see the force of your remarks concerning the comic supplement; but you hit the right nail on the head at once when you mention the difficulty of "pleasing everybody." The comic supplement of 'The Magnet' Library has been the subject of more readers' letters since it was first started than all the other features of the paper put together. Thousands of readers, evidently of the same opinion as yourself, have written in appreciation of the feature, and of the way in which it brightens up our grand little story-paper, expressing the hope that it will continue indefinitely. On the other hand, an almost equally large number of "Magnetites" have written to me, expressing the opinion that, excellent as the supplement is in itself, it is out of place in a school story paper. What this section of my readers says, in fact, is: "All we want in 'The Magnet' is good stories, and nothing else!" While matters, therefore, are in this rather puzzling state for your poor Editor, along comes "Londoner" with his letter and interesting proposal.

His proposal is certainly rather a daring one, but there is no doubt that another companion paper, somewhat on the lines he suggests, would solve the difficulty. Before I can seriously consider "Londoner's" suggestion, however, the great question to be decided is, could I rely upon the bulk of my "Magnetite" chums to support me in such a venture? I am only too willing to hearken to any feasible suggestion, and do my utmost to carry it out, provided I can be certain that by so doing I shall be doing the great majority of my chums a real good turn, and can consequently count upon their whole-hearted support. These are the conditions which have always guided me, and, I hope, will always continue to guide me.

On this occasion, I must say I think that "Londoner's" idea is a sufficiently sensible and practical one to be put to a "postcard vote," and I therefore invite every one of my "Magnetite" chums, without exception, to drop me a postcard at once, stating simply whether they are in favour of a new companion paper on the lines suggested by "Londoner" or not.

HOW TO SUCCEED AS A CLERK.—No. 2.

(Special Article.)

Mental Equipment.

Leaving aside the moral qualities that make for fame and wealth, let us consider the mental equipment of the clerk. First of all he should have a good memory. It is not our business to point out here how this is to be acquired, but the ability to carry easily and with unflinching accuracy a mass of detail, either important or trivial, is of the highest importance. Then there is the question of English composition. Not one clerk in a hundred can write decent English. And what is worse than the inability to write good English is the ignorance that one is wanting in this particular. If you have not the education necessary for the composition of decent prose, you have not got the means of detecting the weakness or the error of what you put down on paper. How many times do we get "different to" instead of "different from," and shoals of similar faults. A term or two at an evening school would soon put an end to these elementary errors of expression.

There is, in so many cases, too, a strange want of interest in the work in hand. A man will spend years in the office of a firm of shippers, and never know where the places are located to which the vessels sail; never know anything of the source or the use of the goods that the firm handles. Commercial geography may not be required of the thirty-shillings-a-week clerk, but a little professional interest in the trade of the employer may well be looked for from the manager or the chairman of directors. Most clerks know more about the results of the last series of football matches than they do of the movements in the trade to which they owe their living. Clerks, as a body, waste their leisure on trivial and frivolous matters. They read inane books and the least useful parts of the newspapers, and they spend their time in search of amusement instead of in search of improvement.

A Business Man's Opinion.

The writer has had experience, in one way or another, of hundreds of clerks, and he has been sorrowfully if powerfully impressed by their sad lack of interest in the things that appear to them to be their real welfare.

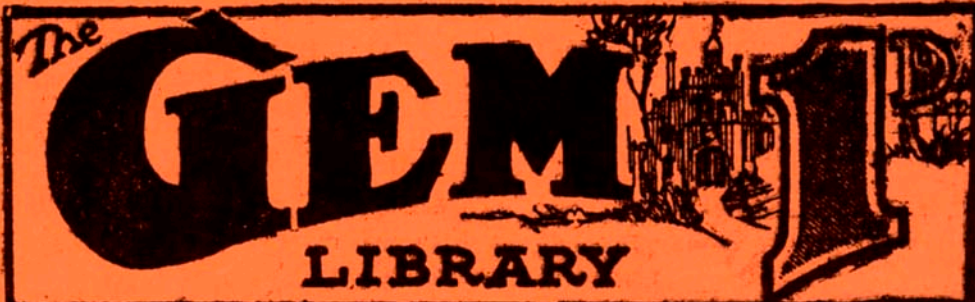
Sir Albert Spicer said, in a recent interview: "If our young fellows are not making progress as they grow with the firm, and become expensive hands for the work they are doing—that is, not qualifying for work of a higher character with higher pay—when we come to examine into the matter for the cause, we usually discover they are giving practically all their evenings to pleasure—pleasure, possibly, of quite an 'innocent kind.'" This opinion of a representative man of the great business world is worth serious consideration by those concerned.

(Another special article on this important subject next Monday.)

The Editor

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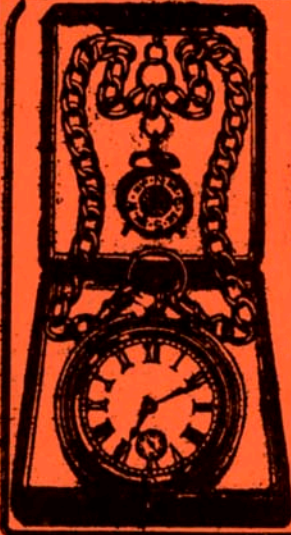


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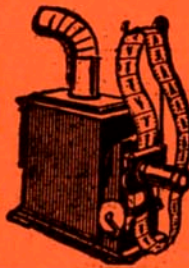


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