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BUNTER—TRESPASSER!

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A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

SIR JIMMY'S SECRET!

By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Bumps for Bolsover!

"HA, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry heard the roar of laughter as he passed the door of the Common-room, and he paused.

He recognised the cackle of Skinner and Snoop, and the deep, bull-voice of Bolsover major. When those three estimable youths were very merry, it was a pretty certain sign that somebody else was extremely uncomfortable, and so Bob Cherry looked into the Common-room with a somewhat warlike expression. He was quite prepared to find Skinner & Co. ragging some unfortunate little fag of the Second Form.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the merry joke?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a paper pinned on the wall of the Common-room, and Skinner & Co. were regarding it with great hilarity. And Sir James Vivian of the Remove was wriggling furiously in Bolsover's muscular grasp, struggling to get at the notice on the wall. Bolsover major was holding him back. Sir Jimmy was little better than an infant in his hands, and the baronet's furious struggles only made Bolsover chuckle.

"Lemme go, you cad!" howled Sir Jimmy, as Bob came in. "'Ands off, I tell you! Take yer 'ands off'n me, you 'ooligan!"

And the baronet's weird diction made Skinner & Co. howl with mirth.

Sir Jimmy was a source of never-ending entertainment in the Remove. Though he was undoubtedly a baronet, and a relation of Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Lower School, Sir Jimmy was, as Mauly himself admitted, a "corker." A neglected orphan, he had grown up in a London slum, till Mauly's uncle had found him and reclaimed him. And Sir Jimmy, though he had considerably improved since then, retained many of the manners and customs, and especially the phraseology, of Carker's Rents.

Bob Cherry and his chums—the Famous Five of the Remove—were very kind to Sir Jimmy. So was Mauly, so were Mark Linley and Vernon-Smith and Penfold and Squiff, and indeed most of the fellows. But Skinner & Co. found a great delight in holding Sir Jimmy up to ridicule. Skinner was a humorist, and his humour was seldom good-natured.

Bob Cherry glanced at the notice on the wall. It was written in large capitals, and ran:

"LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED!
SOMEWHERE IN GREYFRIARS!
A LARGE NUMBER OF
ASPIRATES,
The Property of Sir James Vivian, Bart.
FINDER SUITABLY REWARDED!"

Bob Cherry grinned for a moment, but his face grew grim as he looked at the baronet, wriggling in Percy Bolsover's powerful hands. Sir Jimmy evidently wanted to tear down that humorous notice. He was somewhat sensitive on the subject of his dropped h's.

"Let the kid go, Bolsover," said Bob quietly.

"Rats! He's not going to spoil the joke!" said Bolsover major. "It's doing him a good turn, too. He may want some of those h's he's been dropping."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotten 'ooligan!" roared Sir James. "If I was as big as you are you wouldn't be so jolly funny about a bloke."

"You shouldn't take any notice of these silly chumps, kid," said Bob Cherry. "They can't help being rotters!"

"I'm goin' to 'ave that there paper down," said Sir Jimmy, his eyes wet with tears of vexation. "I ain't going to be made fun of like that there."

"I'll soon settle that for you," said Bob. And he strode towards the paper.

"Let it alone!" shouted Skinner. "That's for all the fellows to see."

"All the fellows will be disappointed, then," said Bob coolly.

And he reached up to the notice.

"Stop him!" yelled Bolsover.

The bully of the Remove released Sir Jimmy, and rushed forward. Skinner and Snoop and Stott followed him. They weren't afraid to tackle Bob Cherry, with the burly Bolsover to lend aid. In a moment Bob Cherry was struggling with the four of them.

"Fair play, you rotters!" howled Sir Jimmy.

And he rushed in recklessly to help his champion.

"You rotters!" panted Bob.

"Bump the meddling cad!" shouted Skinner.

"Squash him!"

"Are you coming, Bob?" called a voice in the passage—the voice of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove.

"Rescue!" yelled Bob.

"Oh! Right!"

Wharton came dashing in, and after him came Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Johnny Bull. They did not stop to ask questions, but piled into the combat at once.

"Hold on!" yelled Skinner. "Ow! Leggo, Bull, you beast! Only fun, you know! Yaroooogh!"

Johnny Bull grinned, and got Skinner's head in chancery. Nugent rolled on the floor with Stott. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh waltzed round in a loving embrace with Snoop, who shrieked to him to let go. And Harry Wharton laid a strong grasp on Bolsover, who struggled fiercely. But Bob Cherry grasped him, too, and Percy Bolsover was swept off his feet and swung into the air, roaring.

"This is where the bumping begins!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Don't you dare! Yaroogh! Leggo! Oh, my hat!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Snoop and Stott and Skinner broke away, and fled from the Common-room in a very dishevelled state. But Bolsover major was not so lucky. He found himself in the grasp of five pairs of hands now, and he smote the Common-room floor with his bulky person half a dozen times in succession, to an accompaniment of terrific yells.

"You rotters! Stoppit! Chuckit! I'll smash you! Oh, crumbs! Leggo! I say, leggo! Oh, crikey!"

Bump, bump!

"Now we'll make him eat his words," grinned Bob Cherry, jerking down the notice from the wall. "They're Skinner's words really. But Bolsover can eat them for the two. Here you are, Bolsover!"

"You—you villain——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You take his nose, Johnny! That's right! You his chin, Inky! Good! Now yank his jaw open!"

A terrific yell came from Bolsover major as his jaw was yanked open. Bob Cherry stuffed the crumpled paper into his extensive mouth, and Percy Bolsover gurgled wildly.

"Eat it!" commanded Bob.

"Gugggggiggguug!"

"It's a bit over the Food Controller's allowance," grinned Johnny Bull. "But you're welcome to it, Percy."

"Groooooch!"

"You're not getting on with it, Bolsover! Give me his nose, Johnny. I'll see if I can persuade him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry's methods of persuasion were successful. Bolsover major, glaring like a Hun, masticated the morsel, and it disappeared. He had eaten his words with a vengeance!

"Now, are you going to chuck up being funny about the noble baronetage?" asked Bob.

"Groogh! Gurrrrrh! I'll smash you! I'll smash him! Guggg!"

"Frog's-march!" said Bob.

"Oh, crumbs! Leggo! You rotters! Five to one! Yow!"

"You were four to one a few minutes ago," grinned Bob. "One good turn deserves another."

"What is saucy for the esteemed goose is saucy for the gander, my excellent bullying Bolsover!" chuckled Hurree Singh.

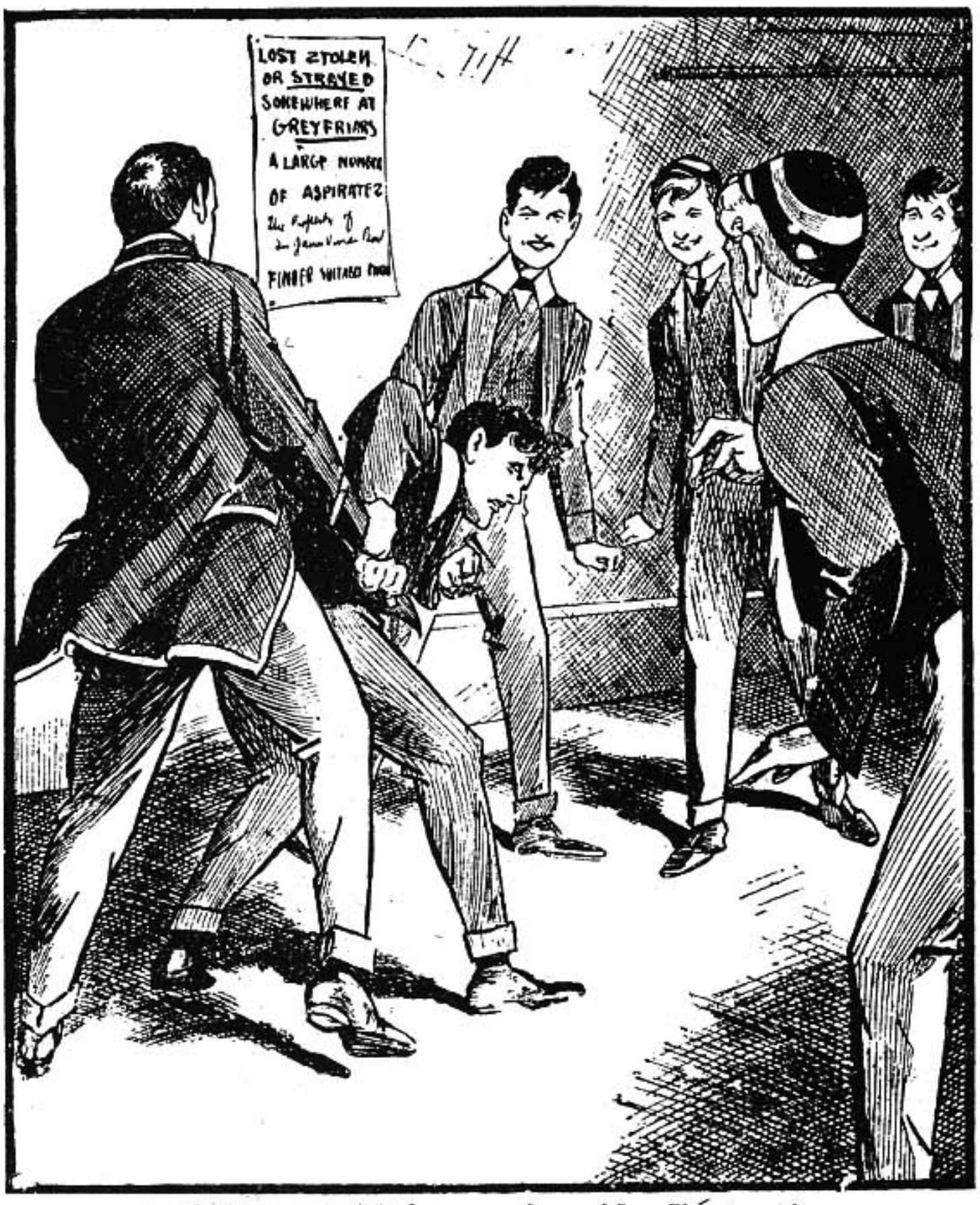
And the bully of the Remove went round the Common-room in the frog's-march. He was badly in need of his second wind by the time it had finished, and the Famous Five left him gasping on the floor. And when they sauntered out, after administering that much-needed lesson to Bolsover major, Sir Jimmy scuttled after them. It was judicious for the schoolboy baronet to give Bolsover major a wide berth after that.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
An Old Acquaintance!

BILLY BUNTER joined the Famous Five as they came out into the quadrangle.

There was a woebegone expression upon Billy Bunter's fat face.

The fattest junior at Greyfriars was not happy.



Sir Jimmy and Bolsover major. (*See Chapter* 1.)

Since the food regulations had come into force they had been strictly adhered to at Greyfriars. The Head's orders were formal—the allowance was not to be exceeded by any inmate of Greyfriars—master, senior, or junior. Mrs. Mimble, at the tuck-shop, knew exactly how much she might supply to each fellow; and it was a case of thus far and no farther.

Billy Bunter's pocket-money always went in one direction—to the school shop. He never had enough cash to satisfy has gargantuan appetite. But, of late, Bunter had actually been in the awful position of having cash that he could not expend upon tuck. It was too awful for words—from Bunter's point of view.

Actually, with ready cash in his pocket, he had been refused at the tuck-shop! Mrs. Minble had suggested that he might use the said cash in settling up an old account, certainly. But Bunter would not have found any satisfaction in that; and he declined, without thanks.

Billy Bunter's idea of food regulations was that they were all "rot"; all very well, perhaps, for the poor, but absurd for fellows with cash in their pockets.

Unfortunately, the Head did not see eye to eye with Bunter on that point.

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter dismally. "This is awful, isn't it? I'm hungry!"

"Go and eat coke!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Yes, that isn't restricted," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "The Food Controller hasn't started on coke yet."

"Don't be funny!" groaned Bunter. "It ain't funny for me! Mrs. Mimble's refused to serve me, and—and if I go down to Uncle Clegg's, in the village, and get bowled out, it means a thumping licking! Quelchy said so."

"Serve you right!" said Harry Wharton unsympathetically.

"It's all very well for you, Wharton—you've got no appetite. I'm growing thinner!"

"Well, you can do with it; though I haven't noticed it."

"Have you gone under twenty-five stone?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! Look here, what's a fellow going to do? Why can't they stop the brewer's using wheat and sugar for whisky and things, instead of starving us?"

"Better inquire at Whitehall," said Bob. "Ask Quelchy to let you use his telephone, and ring up the Food Controller. He knows."

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!"

"Don't you be a pig, Bunty! The allowance is plenty large enough, and it would be caddish to have more than anybody else simply because you happen to have the money!" said Wharton frowning.

"As a matter of fact, I haven't the money," said Bunter. "I've filled up on chocolates and ginger-pop and toffee. You can have those, you know. But what I want is a square meal. I say, are you fellows going on a picnic?"

"No, ass! Picnics are off till the end of the war."

"That may be six or seven years yet!" howled Bunter

"Can't be helped! Good-bye!"

Billy Bunter blinked suspiciously at the juniors. Bunter's thoughts ran incessantly upon eating and drinking. He had a very strong suspicion that the Famous Five were going to some secluded spot for a secret picnic. That was what Bunter would have done, if he could have contrived it.

"I know your game," he said. "You're going to separate, and buy things at different shops, and meet in the wood for a feed! Look here, I'll come with you!"

"You fat bounder——"

"Look here, if I don't have my whack I'll jolly well give you away to Quelchy!" said Bunter desperately. "I'm hungry!"

"You fat griffin!" shouted Bob Cherry. "We're going to Wapshot Camp to see my cousin in khaki."

Billy Bunter gave a fat wink.

"Tell that to the Foreign Office!" he said. "You can't spoof me! I don't believe your cousin's in khaki at all! I know he was trying to keep out of it! He was a regular dodger! Look here —— Yaroogh!"

Billy Bunter found himself suddenly sitting down in the quadrangle. Bob Cherry stayed only to stuff his cap down his back, and then walked on, with a red face.

Bob's cousin, Paul Tyrell, had certainly shown great ingenuity in keeping out of khaki for a long time; but he had joined up at last, and was in training at Wapshot Camp, a few miles from Greyfriars. Bygones were bygones, so far as Bob was concerned; and he did not mean to take any jeers from Bunter on the subject. The one-time wastrel of the family was playing a man's part now, at least.

Billy Bunter gasped, and struggled to recover his cap—not an easy task. The Famous Five went down to the gates, and Harry Wharton called to Sir James, who was hovering near.

"You'd better come along, kid! You don't want to see Bolsover major again just yet, especially while we're out."

Sir James chuckled.

"Right on the wicket!" he agreed. "I don't! But you blokes don't want me!"

"The pleasurefulness of your esteemed company would be terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur solemnly.

"Yes, come on, kid!" said Bob.

Sir James hesitated. He had come to Greyfriars a cheeky street-arab, in spite of his baronetcy. He had been something like a fish out of water there. He knew he was not like the other fellows, and he was more sensitive about it than most of the juniors knew or cared. He stood in doubt, and Bob Cherry slipped an arm through his and marched him off.

Sir Jimmy grinned, and submitted.

"I'll come as fur as the village, if you like," he said. "I ain't goin' to the camp."

"Just as you like," said Bob.

And Jimmy trotted along contentedly with the famous Five. Billy Bunter blinked out of the gates after them.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter. "They are going on a picnic! They wouldn't be silly asses enough to walk to Wapshot to see a soldier! I dare say that waster Tyrrell's deserted by this time, too. It's a picnic, and perhaps Marjorie will be there! And they want to leave me out—jealous of a chap's good looks! Pah! I'm jolly well going, all the same!"

And William George Bunter rolled out, on the track of the supposed picnickers.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked with springy strides, and covered the ground quickly. Bunter's fat legs had to go

like machinery to keep them in sight in the winding lane.

His round eyes glistened behind his spectacles as the party halted in front of Uncle Clegg's shop, in the village.

"Beasts! I jolly well knew it!" muttered Bunter.

But the Removites did not enter Uncle Clegg's establishment. They had stopped to say good-bye to Sir Jimmy.

The schoolboy baronet was determined not to go on to Wapshot with them; he knew they were going to meet a relation of Bob Cherry's there, and Skinner's sneers at his accent and manners had sunk deep. He would not disgrace, as he considered it, the fellows who had been kind to him.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on through the village, and took the turning that led to Wapshot; and Billy Bunter cast a furious blink after them, but did not follow farther. He knew that there were no shops in that muddy lane, and no building at all till the camp was reached. He had been a little too suspicious after all.

He joined Sir Jimmy in the village street. Bunter was one of the fellows who professed to be shocked at the idea of the street-arab coming to Greyfriars at all. But just now Bunter was hard up, and he bore down on the schoolboy baronet with a fat grin.

"Coming in?" he asked, with a nod towards Uncle Clegg's door.

"No, I ain't!" said Sir Jimmy.

"It's my treat!" urged Bunter.

"You've 'ad me like that afore!" grinned Sir Jimmy. 'Sides, we ain't allowed to buy any wittles out of the school!"

"I know that!" growled Bunter. "I dare say old Quelchy will come down asking Uncle Clegg questions, too. But you can buy toffee, if you like, and chocs, and Turkish delight. Come on!"

"I'm goin' 'ome," said Sir Jimmy. And he turned back towards Greyfriars.

"Look here, you slummy little rotter!" howled Bunter.

"Oh, rats to you!" said Sir Jimmy. And he walked off, turning out of the High Street, by way of the lane, into the wood.

He did not want to get back to the school just yet, and meet Bolsover major there.

Billy Bunter blinked after him savagely. He would have given the little ragamuffin a licking, but for the consideration that probably Sir James might give him a licking!

Sir Jimmy walked on with his hands in his pockets, whistling, and almost ran into a man who was coming out of the Cross Keys. He was a man of about forty-five, shabbily dressed, with a narrow, cunning-looking face, and deep-set, shifty eyes. He stopped, with a muttered anathema, as Sir Jimmy almost collided with him.

"See where you're goin', you young —— Great pip! Jimmy!"

Sir James halted.

"Scaly Bill!" he ejaculated.

Billy Bunter stared at them. He knew that Vivian must have had some very queer acquaintances in the place he had come from, and he guessed that this frowsy gentleman, "Scaly Bill," was one of them. That much was evident from the mutual recognition.

"My hat!" murmured Bunter, in lofty disgust. "Nice kind of a friend for a Greyfriars chap! I wonder what the Head would say!"

And Billy Bunter sniffed with contempt. But his curiosity was aroused, and he edged nearer to see what that excessively "scaly" gentleman could have to say to Sir Jimmy of Greyfriars.

Sir Jimmy did not notice him. He stood stock still, as if rooted to the pavement, staring at the rough-looking man with eyes wide open with dismay.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bad News for Bob Cherry!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. tramped cheerily up Wapshot Lane in the bright spring sunshine. They were in merry spirits that afternoon, especially Bob Cherry. It was a source of great pride to Bob that his cousin was in khaki. All the Greyfriars fellows knew that Paul Tyrrell had been a dodger; but they knew, too, that he had exhibited great pluck on the occasion of a Zeppelin raid, and had received serious injuries, and that, after his recovery, he had joined up at the earliest moment.

The one-time slacker and wastrel was doing his duty now, and was in hopes of getting into a draft for the Front; and Bob had quite dismissed his old distrust of his cousin. He was anxious to see Private Paul Tyrrell again, and see what a difference khaki had made to him. Bob's last visit to the camp had been when his father, Major Cherry, was stationed there. He was going now to visit a private instead of a major. His chums were quite pleased to spend the half-holiday on a visit to the camp, to "see the soldiers."

Wapshot Camp came in sight at last. The party of schoolboys stopped at the gate, where a man in khaki was on sentry-go. He gave them an inquiring look.

Bob Cherry explained.

"My cousin's here," he said. "I've come to see him. Private Tyrrell, of the Loamshire Fusiliers."

The sentry gave him a rather queer look.

"Private Tyrrell, of the Loamshire Fusiliers!" he repeated.

"That's it," said Bob. "Can we go in? Or perhaps you could send word in to my cousin?"

"You'd better see my officer," said the sentry, with a very curious expression on his face. Bob could not help noticing it, and it gave him an uneasy feeling.

"You know my cousin?" he asked.

"I've seen him."

"Is he in the camp now, do you know? He asked me to come here this afternoon—but that was last week."

"He ain't in the camp now."

"Oh!" said Bob, disappointed. "Has he gone in the draft already?"

"He hasn't gone in any draft," said the soldier. "You'd better see my officer, if you can tell him anything about Private Tyrrell. Wait here a bit."

The sentry called another soldier, and exchanged a few words with him in a low tone. The second man hurried into the camp and disappeared.

Harry Wharton & Co. waited.

Bob Cherry's face was not so bright now. He could not help suspecting that something was wrong, and he wondered miserably whether the wastrel had broken out again, and was in trouble. He had wondered how the reckless scapegrace would stand the regularity of a military life.

"Here you are!" said the sentry suddenly.

The soldier who had gone in, evidently with a message, came back.

"Which of you is Private Tyrrell's cousin?" he asked.

"I am," said Bob.

"Then follow me, please."

"Can my friends come in with me?" asked Bob.

"Better wait here."

"Oh, all right! Will you fellows wait?"

"All serene," said Harry. "Go it, Bob!"

Bob Cherry followed the soldier in. His brow was clouded now, and his heart was heavy. It was only too clear that there was something wrong.

He was taken to the officers' quarters, and into a hut, where a young man in lieutenant's uniform fixed a very keen glance upon him.

"Ha! You know something about Private Tyrrell—what?" he inquired.

"I'm his cousin," said Bob. "I came here to visit him. I understood he was here."

"Then you don't know where he is now?"

"Not unless he's here."

"Well, he isn't here," said the lieutenant, with a dry smile. "I'm afraid it will be rather a shock to you, my lad. I'm sorry to tell you that Private Tyrrell has deserted."

Bob Cherry almost staggered.

"Deserted!" he repeated faintly.

The lieutenant nodded.

"If you know anything about him, it's your duty to state it," he said.

"I—I don't know. I didn't know anything," stammered Bob. "I—I—I suppose there's no mistake? Deserted!"

"I'm sorry, my lad," said the officer, kindly enough. The dismay and horror in Bob's face would have touched a harder heart than that of the young man in khaki. "It's rotten news, I know."

"But—but——" Bob was bewildered. "Excuse me, sir. I know I'm taking up your time, but—but this is a shock to me. When did he go?"

"Last night."

"Was he—was he in trouble?" faltered Bob.

"Yes."

"He—he had done something?" muttered Bob.

"Yes."

The officer's manner indicated that the interview was over, but Bob did not go.

"Will you—will you tell me what he'd done?" he gasped.

"I will if you wish, my boy. It was robbery."

"Robbery!" Bob gasped. "Robbery! My cousin! Oh!"

"He was placed under arrest, to take his trial by court-martial," said the lieutenant. "He got away somehow. Good-afternoon!"

Bob Cherry tottered from the hut.

He made his way blindly out of the camp. Many glances were turned upon the white, stricken face of the schoolboy, but Bob did not heed. He joined his chums outside the gate.

"Bob!"

"Let's get away!" muttered Bob. "Quick! For goodness' sake, let's get away!"

He turned down the lane, his chums following him with dismayed faces. Bob did not speak, and they did not ask questions till they were a good distance from the camp.

But Wharton caught him by the arm at last and stopped him.

"What on earth's the matter, Bob?" he asked anxiously. "You look as if you'd seen a ghost."

Bob groaned.

"Has anything happened to Tyrrell?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Yes!" muttered Bob.

"Well, what is it?" asked Johnny Bull.

"He's deserted!"

"Deserted!"

"Poor old Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "Buck up! It isn't your fault, anyway."

"Deserted!" repeated Bob. "The

officer told me he's a thief, and he deserted from arrest."

"Bob!"

Bob's face was working.

The juniors walked on in silence.

There was nothing they could say in the presence of such a blow as this. The news surprised them, and yet not very much. They had known Paul Tyrrell, and they had known that he was a slacker, a waster, and a good deal of a rascal. The good impulse that had led him to join up at last had died away. That seemed to be the explanation.

Bob had hoped that soldiering would have marked a turning-point in the wastrel's life—that it would have made a new man of him. Instead of that, he had gone to the bad with a crash!

The brightness of that sunny afternoon was blotted out for Bob Cherry. His face was white and lined as he strode on, hardly seeing where he was going.

It was not till Greyfriars was in sight that he roused himself from his miserable, stunned silence.

"Don't talk about this there!" he muttered. "For goodness' sake don't let's have it about the school! I couldn't stand that!"

"Of course we sha'n't say anything," said Harry. "It's a rotten thing, Bob; but nobody will know, at any rate."

"The secretfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Bob," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I couldn't stand it being jawed about," said Bob huskily. "It's horrible! I—I never thought he'd turn out like that. I can't understand it. He wrote to me in great spirits. He was expecting to be sent out with the next draft, as he's had training with the Territorials years ago, and was fit for service. He was looking forward to it. And now ——" Bob's voice broke.

He went in without another word, his chums following in miserable silence. Paul Tyrrell was nothing to them; but they felt his disgrace keenly, for Bob's sake.

A voice hailed the Famous Five as they entered the School House. Mark Linley greeted them with a cheery smile.

"Hallo! You didn't stay long at the camp!"

Bob shook his head.

"Anything wrong?" asked Mark, catching the look on Bob's face.

No reply.

"There's a letter for you, Bob," said the Lancashire junior. "It came soon after you went. It's in the rack."

"Confound the letter!" muttered Bob.

"It's in your cousin's fist," said Mark. "I noticed that, Bob."

Bob started.

"My cousin! In his fist! Oh!"

He ran to the letter-rack, and hastily scanned it. He grabbed the letter down, and hurried away with it. He did not want his chums to be with him when he read that letter from the deserter. Mark Linley looked at the Co. in amazement and uneasiness.

"What's wrong with Bob?" he asked.

"Well, he's had a bit of a shock," said Harry. "Don't talk about it, old chap. Bob would rather you didn't."

"Right-ho!" said Mark at once.

Bob Cherry had gone up to his study. His chums did not follow him. They knew he wanted to be alone.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Good Turn!

"BY gum, Jimmy!"

The seedy, beery-looking man was blinking at Sir James of the Remove, still in a state of astonishment. Billy Bunter blinked at both of them with great curiosity. Neither noticed him for the moment.

"Wot a surprise!" continued Scaly Bill, with a grin. "I 'eard about you, Jimmy, but I never expected to see you agin. Fancy you—in that clobber! Quite a gentleman, now—hey?"

Sir Jimmy did not answer.

"Not too proud to speak to an old pal—wot?" asked Scaly Bill.

"No, I ain't," said Sir Jimmy at last. "But you wasn't never a pal of mine, Scaly Bill. I never chummed with your sort."

"Fancy meeting you 'ere!" grinned Scaly Bill, unheeding. "Wot a pleasure! I 'eard all about the old toff raking you out of Carker's Rents and taking you away, Jimmy, to send to school. School near 'ere?"

"Never you mind," said the baronet. "That ain't your business."

"Afraid an old pal might call on you there?" chuckled Scaly Bill. "Ha, ha! It would be rather a surprise for your new, nobby friends!"

"You'd get throwed out sharp enough if you was to come to Greyfriars," said Sir Jimmy.

"Greyfriars!" repeated Scaly Bill.

The junior bit his lip. He had let the name of his school slip out.

"That's the big school near 'ere," said Scaly Bill. "I've passed it. I know the place. 'Ow are you getting on there, Jimmy?"

"I'm getting on orlright," said Sir Jimmy. "Good-arternoon!"

"You ain't goin to leave an old chum so soon?" said Scaly Bill. "Look 'ere, I got the arternoon off. Let's 'ave a talk over old times, Jimmy."

"I don't want to."

"I'll come up to the school if you like," grinned Scaly Bill. "I dessay you could stand an old pal a bit of grub—wot?"

"You wouldn't be let in there," said Sir Jimmy, his face growing scarlet. "Don't be a rotten 'ound, Bill! Wot 'ave you got agin me?"

"Nothin' at all, my pippin; but I ain't going to be throwed over like that 'ere. Ain't you anxious to 'ear the noos of Carker's Rents? All about your old pals—hey?"

"'Old your jaw!" muttered Sir Jimmy. "There's that fat rotter listening to every word you say!"

Scaly Bill stared at Bunter.

"One o' the young gents at the school?" he asked.

"Yes," muttered Jimmy.

"I'll soon clear 'im off!" said Scaly Bill. And he made a movement towards the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter did not wait to be cleared off. He gave the ruffian a blink of sovereign disdain, and rolled away, with his little fat nose in the air.

"I got to 'ave a talk with you, Jimmy," said Scaly Bill. "Look 'ere, I ain't going to 'urt you. I won't come to the school if you don't like. But one good turn deserves another, and there's something you can do for me."

"Wot is it?"

"We can't talk 'ere," said the other, with an uneasy glance along the village street. "It won't do you no good to be seen talking to me, either. Come into the pub. There's a garden——"

Sir Jimmy shrank back.

"I can't go in there. It's out of bounds for us."

Scaly Bill chuckled.

"My heye! You've growed perticklar since you left Carker's Rents! Never mind. Come along the footpath yonder."

"I'll do that," said Sir Jimmy.

He followed his old acquaintance into the wood from the lane. The sight of Bill Hichens—otherwise Scaly Bill—had been a shock to the Greyfriars junior, but he was not now wholly displeased by the meeting. Greyfriars was not quite like a home to him, and Scaly Bill came as a reminder of old days which had not all been unhappy. He had left friends in Carker's Rents, though they were not exactly the kind of friends who could have visited him at Greyfriars.

The wood was very pleasant, with the sweet scent of spring among the thickets. The beery-looking ruffian seemed strangely out of place there. Bill Hichens seated himself on a log, with his back to a thicket, and lighted his pipe. Sir Jimmy stood in front of him.

"What are you doing down 'ere, Bill?" he asked at last. "You didn't come down 'ere to see me."

"No fear! Never knowed you was within miles of the place!" said Bill, with a grin. "I got a job at Wapshot."

"You haven't joined up?" exclaimed Sir Jimmy. "Not you, Bill Hichens! That ain't your sort!"

"Ain't I over age?" grinned Scaly Bill. "They can't make me. I got a job in the canteen—'ard work it is, too, for a bloke; but things was getting too 'ot for me nearer 'ome."

Sir Jimmy nodded. He quite understood. Gentlemen of Scaly Bill's kind find it necessary to change their residence sometimes, to ward off inquisitiveness on the part of the police.

"But that ain't neither 'ere nor there," continued Hichens. "I got a good job, if you come to that, though I don't say I shall keep it long. In fact, I was thinkin' of chuckin' it; but it don't soot me to chuck it too sudden, for reasons I've got. I dessay I shall 'ang on for another week or two—p'r'aps three."

Sir Jimmy nodded again. He could not feel any regret that Scaly Bill's stay in the neighbourhood was likely to be short.

"'Ow's the Spadger getting on?" he asked. "You seen him?"

"Sellin' papers, same as usual, when I saw him," said Hichens. "I'll give him the noos of you when I go back—if I go back—Jimmy."

"Tell 'im I ain't forgotten him," said Jimm. "I'd like 'im to come and see me, only—only I don't think it would do."

"I dessay it wouldn't," grinned Bill. "They wouldn't welcome the Spadger at the big school, I reckon. I've got some cigarettes if you'd like one, Jimmy."

"I've chucked that now."

"More fool you!" commented Bill. "Well, look 'ere, kid! As I said, I don't want to do you no 'arm, but I want you to do me a good turn. 'Tain't much as I'm going to ask, either."

"I'll do anything I can," said Sir Jimmy. "Don't ask me to help in anything that's shady, though. You know I won't do that."

"I ain't forgotten," said Hichens. "It's because you're straight that I'm going to ask you this 'ere. Look 'ere, Jimmy, I've 'ad some luck."

The schoolboy looked suspicious.

"Not that!" said Hichens, answering his unspoken thought. "Honest! I've 'ad some luck in a—a sweepstake—that's wot it was—and I won the prize. Well, it ain't safe for me to carry it about with me in the camp. There's all kinds there, you know. 'Sides, I might blow it in booze, and I don't want to do that. Will you mind it for me?"

"Much?" asked Sir Jimmy.

"Well, it's over a tenner," said Scaly Bill cautiously. "But it's done up in a packet, and you got to give me your word not to open it. You was always a bloke of your word, Jimmy."

"I'll do it," said Sir Jimmy. "That ain't much to do for anybody. 'And it

over. 'Ow'm I going to give it back to you, though?"

Bill Hichens reflected.

"You come 'ere this day week, same time in the arternoon," he said. "You can be 'ere?"

"Easy."

"Well, if I'm ready I'll be 'ere; if not, a week later, and you can come agin. A walk won't 'urt you."

"Done!" said Sir Jimmy. "'And it over, Bill!"

Bill Hichens fumbled in his coat, and seemed to hesitate. He produced a small packet at last, carefully wrapped and tied with string.

"Mind, you give your davy not to open it?" he said.

"I promise if you like."

"Not that I think you'll pinch it," said Bill. "You never was that sort of cove, I'll say that, Jimmy. Still, it's better to keep out of temptation—wot? You keep that in a safe place, and don't tell nobody about it, not a word. Bring it with you next Wednesday to this 'ere spot. Honour?"

"Honour bright," said Sir Jimmy.

"Put it in yer pocket now. Don't let nobody spot it!"

Sir Jimmy hesitated a moment.

"Look here, Bill, it's all square?"

"Square as a die," said Hichens. "It's the money I won in the sweep, that's all; but it's more than's safe for me to carry about, and I ain't got a bank I can shove it in!"

He chuckled.

"Right-ho!" said Sir Jimmy.

He slipped the little packet into the inside pocket of his jacket.

"Good!" said Scaly Bill, rising. "I was wondering 'ow I'd put it somewhere safe, when I met you. This 'ere is good luck for me. And now so-long, Jimmy, and don't be afraid of me. I wouldn't show you up at the school for anything, you take my word!"

And, with a friendly nod, Scaly Bill lurched away, taking the direction of the Cross Keys again. Sir Jimmy walked slowly towards Greyfriars in a thoughtful mood.

The meeting with his old acquaintance had stirred strange thoughts in his mind. It had brought back Carker's Rents and the past forcibly to his memory; and his predominant feeling was that he was glad to be at Greyfriars, in spite of the little difficulties that beset his path there.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Skinner is Suspicious!

BOB CHERRY'S face was white and set as he stood in his study with the letter from his cousin gripped in his hand.

The address on the letter was in Paul Tyrrell's handwriting; there was no mistake about that. It was from the scapegrace.

There was bitter anguish in Bob's heart.

Once before, when Paul Tyrrell was dodging his duty, he had written to Bob, and had the cool impudence to ask for his assistance. Bob had no doubt that this was another letter of the same kind. He had not expected it. Was it possible that the rascal, after covering himself with disgrace, supposed that Bob would have anything further to do with him? Surely even Tyrrell's impudence had a limit?

It was in Bob's mind to burn the letter without opening it; but he opened it at last. He would see, at least, what the scapegrace had to say for himself. His lip curled as he thought of the specious pleading that was probably written there.

But as his eyes fell on the letter he started. It was not the letter he had expected to find. It ran:

"Dear Bob,—I hope you'll get this before you start for Wapshot. Otherwise, you'll get a bad shock.

"Don't be too hard on me before you know the facts. I was placed under arrest last night, and I got away and ran for it. I'm scribbling this in the dark in Friardale Wood. I don't know what to do. I don't ask you to help me; you can't, without risk to yourself. I'm really a deserter now. I swear to you, Bob, that I never wanted to desert, and I am innocent of what I am accused of. I was looking forward to getting into the draft for Flanders. It's just my rotten luck to be bowled over like this when I swear I was going straight.

"Somebody got at the major's desk and stole some banknotes—I think, about thirty pounds in fivers and currency notes. Who it was I haven't the faintest idea. That was Monday night. I changed a ten-shilling note in the canteen on Tuesday afternoon. It turns out that it was one of the stolen currency notes—at least, so they say. It couldn't have been; but the note was produced, and the major had the number. It's a horrible mistake of some kind; I don't know how it happened. I was placed under arrest at once. I knew how the trial would go, of course. There wasn't a chance for me, and I had a chance of getting out, and I cleared. But I swear to you, Bob, that the note I changed was my own, and I had never even heard of the robbery until I was arrested and taken before the colonel.

"I'm going to hide in the old priory again. If you don't believe me, Bob, you can give me away. I can't do more than give you my word. But if you do believe me, you can come and see me. But I won't ask you to help me; it's too risky for you. I don't know which way to turn. Believe in me if you can, Bob.

"PAUL."

Bob Cherry crushed the letter hard in his hand.

Was it true?

His old distrust of his scapegrace cousin had revived in full force; yet there was a wild earnestness in the letter that impressed him in spite of himself.

Was it possible that the wretched waster was innocent—that he was wronged, and had acted as he had done under the fear of condemnation for a crime he had not committed?

His recklessness in writing such a letter seemed to show that he was not quite as cool and self-possessed as Bob had always known him. The letter might have been opened. The juniors' correspondence was subject to supervision on occasion.

If that letter had fallen into the hands of a master at Greyfriars the result would have been certain. The visit Paul Tyrrell received would have been from the police.

Bob pressed his hand to his throbbing brow.

Was it possible that Tyrrell was innocent this time, and was the victim of a wrongful suspicion?

The evidence against him, as he briefly stated it, was clear enough. It was plain that his condemnation must follow a trial. Yet, was it possible——

The study door opened, and little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, came in. He gave Bob a friendly grin. Bob hurriedly crushed the letter into his palm.

"Handsome Bob Chelly lookee sickee," said Wun Lung. "Not wellee?"

Bob did not reply.

He struck a match, lighted the letter, and watched it burn to the last fragment. Whatever he decided to do, the sooner that letter was out of existence the better.

"Leady for tea?" asked Wun Lung.

"I don't want any tea," said Bob.

And he quitted the study, leaving the little Chinee blinking in surprise.

Bob strode down the passage with a knitted brow.

Whether to believe his cousin or not he could not decide. Tyrrell's old bad name was against him. But if he was innocent——

It was not Bob Cherry's way to desert a fellow when he was down. Tyrrell did not ask him for help, but it was clear enough that he wanted help. What was the hunted outcast to do? He might find shelter in the old priory for a day or two; it would not be safe after that. It would come out, too, that he had a relative at Greyfriars, and search might be made for him in that direction.

Bob was sorely in need of friendly counsel, but he shrank from confiding the matter to his chums. He could guess in advance what their opinion would be. Yet, where else was he to turn for help?

He went out into the quadrangle, trying to think it out. There was a sound of buzzing voices near the gates; but he did not heed till he heard a yell in Sir Jimmy's voice.

"Let go, Bolsover, you rotter!"

Then Bob looked round.

Sir Jimmy had just come in, and the bully of the Remove had borne down on him at once. Bolsover major had been waiting for him.

The little baronet was wriggling in the grasp of the burly Bolsover, who was shaking him savagely.

"Leggo!" roared Vivian. "I'll kick your shins, you beast!"

"You cheeky little slummy rotter——"

"Leggo!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bolsover major, as Sir Jimmy carried out his threat, and planted a heavy boot on his shins. "Oh, crumbs! Ow-ow!"

"I told yer I would!" gasped Sir Jimmy.

Bolsover major howled with pain, and began to thump his victim savagely. Sir Jimmy struggled, and hooked his leg in Bolsover's, and they rolled over together.

Skinner uttered an exclamation as a packet dropped from the baronet's jacket and crashed on the ground.

"Hallo! What's that?"

He seized the packet and held it up.

Sir Jimmy was on his feet with a bound, and rushing towards Skinner. It was the packet Scaly Bill had entrusted to his keeping which the cad of the Remove was holding up.

"Give it to me!" yelled Sir Jimmy. "Don't you open it!"

Skinner grinned, and held the packet behind him. Sir Jimmy's anxiety about it amused him.

"What's in it?" he asked.

"Mind your own business!" said Sir Jimmy fiercely, making vain efforts to reach the packet. "It's mine. Give it to me! Here, you leggo!"

Bolsover major had grasped him again.

"Hold him!" grinned Skinner. "Let's see what's in it, that's he so jolly careful about."

"Don't you open it, you rotter!"

"Open it!" grinned Snoop. "Let's see."

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter, joining the group. "Let's see what's in it. I dare say he's been stealing something."

"I ain't!" shouted Sir Jimmy furiously. "Look 'ere, Skinner, that

there packet ain't mine! I'm minding it for a bloke. Don't you open it!"

"You can open it," said Bolsover major, holding Sir Jimmy back by main force. "I shouldn't wonder if the slummy little beast has been stealing something."

"You're a liar!" retorted Sir Jimmy.

Skinner took out his penknife and cut the string.

Then he gave a yell as a grasp of iron was laid on his collar, and he was spun round.

Bob Cherry glared at him.

"You cad! Give Vivian his packet!" shouted Bob.

"Mind your own bizney! I—— Leave off!" shrieked Skinner. "You're choking me! Grooogh! The little beast can have his packet! Yow-ow! There it is! Groogh-hooh!"

Skinner flung the packet to the ground.

Bob Cherry pitched him aside, and picked it up.

"Here you are, Vivian!" he said. "Let Vivian alone, Bolsover!"

"Hands off, you fool! I——"

"Bolsover!" Wingate of the Sixth came up, with a grim brow. "Are you bullying Vivian again? You can come into my study, Bolsover."

Bolsover major gave the captain of Greyfriars a black look. But even the bully of the Remove did not venture to bandy words with Wingate. And he followed him with a sullen brow. There was a sound of swishing in Wingate's study a few minutes later. And when Percy Bolsover came forth again from that apartment his face had an expression that would have done Von Tirpitz credit. Meanwhile, Sir Jimmy Vivian had replaced the packet in his pocket.

"Thank you, Master Cherry!" he said gratefully. "This 'ere packet ain't mine, you know. I'm minding it for a cove."

"All serene," said Bob.

"Something he's been stealing, more likely," sneered Snoop.

"That's a lie, and you know it!" said Bob directly.

"What's he so alarmed about, then?" said Skinner. "Why shouldn't a chap see what's in it?"

"He's says he's minding it for somebody, you suspicious rotter!"

"Who's he minding it for, then?" jeered Skinner. "Likely any chap here would give him a parcel to mind, isn't it?"

"It ain't a chap 'ere," said Sir Jimmy.

Billy Bunter burst into a cackle.

"It's his pal, that he met in Friardale," he chuckled. "You should have seen him—a fearful rough he called Scaly Bill! What a name!"

"You're a spyin' fat 'ound, you are!" said Sir Jimmy.

And he walked away, with the packet safely stowed away.

Bob Cherry gave Skinner & Co. a dark look, and strode off the scene. But Skinner & Co. were not heeding him. They were listening with keen interest to Bunter's description of the "fearful rough" whom Sir Jimmy had met in the village. It was a tit-bit of news that was very welcome to Skinner & Co. They meant to let Sir Jimmy—and all Greyfriars—hear a good deal about the rough gentleman who bore the remarkable name of "Scaly Bill."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry's Resolve!

"TEA'S ready, Bob."

Harry Wharton joined his chum in the quadrangle.

Bob had been tramping to and fro under the elms since the scuffle with Skinner. His hands were driven deep into his pockets, and there was a deep line in his brow.

The usually cheery junior looked as if half the troubles of the world had suddenly fallen upon his young shoulders.

"Tea!" repeated Bob.

"No good moping, old chap," said Harry. "You can't help what your cousin has done."

"It isn't that," said Bob. "I—I've got something to tell you, Harry. You know that letter was from him?"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"He says he's innocent, Harry! It's an unjust suspicion——"

Bob broke off as he caught the involuntary expression on Harry's face.

"You don't believe it?" he asked.

"Well, I can't," said Harry candidly. "Of course, it might be so. Such things have happened. But—but——"

"But his old record is against him."

"Well, yes."

"I—I hope he's telling the truth, all the same," said Bob. "It's possible, at least. Somebody else may have done it, and shoved it on him, you know."

"Does he tell you what the evidence is?"

"He passed a note in the canteen, which turned out to be stolen," said Bob reluctantly.

"I don't quite see how anything could be clearer than that," said Harry. "I'm afraid there's not much hope, Bob."

Bob was silent. He had expected that opinion.

"Does he ask you to help him, as he did before?" asked Wharton quickly.

"He doesn't ask."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes."

"You're not going to him, Bob?"

No answer.

"Bob," said Wharton, his face growing very serious. "You can't do it! You can't break the law. And he's a deserter, you know. You can't!"

"I could hear what he has to say, and judge for myself," said Bob. "He's at the old priory now. That's where he was when he was dodging, you know. The police looked for him there that time. It's risky for him!"

"Jolly risky—and for you, if you go there!" said Harry.

"I don't care for the risk. It's not that. If I could believe he was innocent I'd stand by him. But—but I don't know! I think I ought to see him, and hear what he has to say. His letter sounded true."

Wharton knitted his brows. He had no faith in the scapegrace, and he could foresee that the reckless fellow would be dragging Bob into his troubles. It was a serious enough matter to have dealings with a deserter.

"He says I can give him away if I don't believe him," said Bob. "If I hadn't some faith in him, I'd do it, too. But he's down, Harry, and it's only playing the game to give him a hearing. Don't you think so?"

"I can see you've decided what to do," said Harry. "I'm blessed if I know what to say. He oughtn't to have written to you."

"But if he's innocent——"

"I'm afraid he would put it like that anyway, if he's anything like what he used to be."

Bob winced.

"I suppose you're right. But—but—— I think he's changed, Harry. I saw him in khaki, you know, and he looked every inch a soldier. Proud of his regiment, and keen on getting to the Front. I can't believe that he's gone to the bad like this of his own accord, when he was getting on so well. I think I ought to give him a chance. I'm going to, Harry!"

"You mean you're going to see him?"

"Yes," said Bob, with a deep breath.

"Then I'll come with you," said Harry quietly. "You're not going to land yourself up to the neck in troubles on your own."

Bob shook his head.

"I'm not going to drag you into it," he said. "I'll go alone. Hallo, hallo, hallo! What do you want, Mauly?"

Lord Mauleverer joined the two juniors. The dandy of the Remove was looking worried and troubled.

"More trouble!" he sighed.

"What's the matter?" asked Wharton.

"That relation of mine!" groaned Lord Mauleverer. "The festive Jimmy! Have you fellows heard the yarn that's goin' round? Bunter seems to have brought it home. Remarkable gift Bunter has for spyin' out what doesn't concern him. Vivian has been meetin' an old pal outside the school—a fearful character, who's called Bill Bailey, or somethin'!"

"Scaly Bill, I think," said Harry, with a smile.

"Yaas, that's it. I knew it was somethin'," said his lordship lucidly. "I'm supposed to be lookin' after Vivian, you know, as he's my relation. He can't be allowed to go on meetin' Bailey Bill—I mean Bill Scaly—can he? But when I spoke to him about it, he said—what do you think he said? 'Rats!' you know," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Perhaps it's only Bunter's rot," suggested Wharton.

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"No; there's somethin' in it. It seems that this scaly merchant has given him somethin' to mind for him—blessed if I know what! I ought to do somethin' or other in the matter, oughtn't I?" asked Mauly, looking doubtfully at the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Better go and have a deep think," he suggested. "I don't think Vivian needs much looking after. He's as good as gold, if he is a rough diamond!"

"You don't think he'll be gettin' into mischief?" asked Lord Mauleverer anxiously.

"Not for a minute!"

"You see, he must have known a lot of queer codgers in his old days—burglars, very likely, and pickpockets, and things! He can't have gentry of that sort visitin' him at Greyfriars, can he?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"But you think it's all right, and I needn't bother—what?"

"Yes," said Harry, with a smile.

"Good! I'll take your word for it." And his lordship's brow cleared. "You're a sensible chap, Wharton. What do you think, Cherry, old scout?"

"Eh? I haven't been listening. What is it?" said Bob confusedly.

"Oh, begad!" His lordship eyed Bob Cherry curiously. "You look rather down in the mouth, dear boy. Anythin' up?"

Bob gave a grunt.

"Had a good time at the camp?" asked Mauleverer. "I heard you were goin' to a camp or somethin', to visit a soldier, or somebody, or somethin'. I hope whoever it was is gettin' on topping. But I'm borin' you, I see. Ta-ta!" And his amiable lordship ambled away at last.

Bob Cherry turned in the direction of the gates, and Harry hurried after him.

"You'd better let me come, Bob."

"No." Bob smiled slightly. "I sha'n't let Paul get me into playing any fool game, Harry, if that's what you think. I'm not going to drag you into it, anyway. Good-bye for the present!"

Bob hurried out of the gates, and the

captain of the Remove returned slowly to the School House with a wrinkled brow. His mind was full of misgivings for his chum.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Trouble for Bob!

BOB CHERRY strode swiftly through the leafy woodland path towards the old priory of Friardale.

He had made up his mind that he would at least see his cousin, and give the outcast a hearing.

There could not be any harm in that, at all events. He was not bound to help the scapegrace evade the law.

But, in spite of his knowledge of Tyrrell's unscrupulous recklessness, there was a feeling in Bob's heart that, this time, the wastrel was more sinned against than sinning—that he had honestly done his best when this misfortune had overwhelmed him.

He realised very clearly, too, the danger Tyrrell was in. On a previous occasion he had sought refuge in the old priory, and the police had looked for him there. That was before he had decided to do his duty and join up.

Now that he was posted as a deserter, were not the police likely to look for him there again? It would doubtless be remembered that his cousin was at Greyfriars, too. Police-constable Tozer, of Friarda'e, at least, would not have forgotten that.

Tyrrell had chosen the ruined priory as the only refuge in his extremity; but it was likely to prove a very insecure refuge for him.

The old priory lay quiet and deserted in the shimmering afternoon sun, as Bob Cherry came through the wood towards it.

But as he drew nearer to an ancient, shattered gateway he found that it was not so deserted as it looked.

He paused in the gateway as he caught sight of a helmeted head among the bushes that grew thickly in the ruins.

"Ha!"

It was a sudden exclamation in a voice he knew. The portly figure of Tozer came ambling through the greenery.

The constable fixed a very suspicious look upon Bob Cherry.

Bob's heart sank.

What did the policeman's presence in the old priory mean? The ruin lay far out of the way of the village constable's usual beat.

"Good-arternoon, Master Cherry!" said Mr. Tozer, with a tone of sarcasm that was not lost upon the junior.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Tozer!" faltered Bob.

"Lookin' for somebody here—what?" smiled Mr. Tozer.

Bob did not reply.

His glance turned upon Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, who had just emerged from the shadowy opening in the massive wall of the priory where the entrance lay to the ancient vaults below.

The inspector came towards Bob Cherry at once.

"So you're here!" he said grimly.

"Here I am," said Bob.

"Do you know where Private Tyrrell is?" asked Mr. Grimes directly.

"Isn't he here?" asked Bob.

"You thought he was?"

Bob nodded. It was evidently not much use to think of concealment.

"I thought he was," he assented.

"And you came to see him?"

"Yes."

"I thought so," said the inspector drily. Are you aware, young man, that it is a serious offence against the law to help a deserter?"

Bob Cherry flushed.

"I did not come here to help him escape, if that's what you mean!" he said hotly. "He wrote to me, and told me he was unjustly accused of something. I came to hear what he had to say for himself."

"It was your duty to inform the police."

"I'm not an informer!" said Bob.

The inspector coughed.

"But isn't he here, then?" asked Bob.

"You can see that he isn't!" said Mr. Grimes tartly. "Unless he had warning that he would be looked for here——"

He paused.

"I didn't warn him," said Bob, his lip curling. "I only got his letter by the afternoon post. Do you know whether he's been here, then?"

"There are traces of someone having been in the vaults," said Mr. Grimes, frowning. "I suppose it was the deserter, as you tell me that you expected to find him here, Master Cherry."

Bob bit his lip.

He could see that the inspector had come there on suspicion, remembering Tyrrell's previous sojourn in the priory. He had had no information; he had obtained it now from the schoolboy.

"My cousin says he's innocent," said Bob.

"A pity he didn't stay for his trial, then!" the inspector remarked drily.

He made a sign to Mr. Tozer, and the two officers left the priory.

Bob Cherry stood in troubled thought.

Mr. Grimes had a lantern in his hand, and had evidently been searching the underground recesses beneath the ruined priory.

Was Tyrrell there?

If he had been hidden in the vaults, as on a previous occasion, how had he contrived to evade the search?

Bob gave a start as a new thought came into his mind.

He remembered the old subterranean passage that led from the priory to the ancient crypt at Greyfriars.

Its existence was not generally known, and the entrance to it was hidden by a moving block of stone. Mr. Grimes apparently knew nothing of it. Tyrrell could have known nothing of it. Was it possible that, in his sojourn in the vaults, he had discovered the secret, and had used it as a means of escape?

In that case, he had doubtless been concealed in the subterranean passage while the police were searching the vaults.

It seemed the only way of explaining his evasion, for certainly he could not have escaped by any other means if he had been there. And the inspector had said that he had found traces of someone having been in the vaults.

Bob Cherry made a quick step towards the opening.

Then he paused, as he heard the clink of a stone in the distance. It came into his mind that Mr. Grimes had not gone, but was remaining to watch him and see what his proceedings were.

The junior smiled grimly.

It was no business of his to help Mr. Grimes in the man-hunt, at all events. He was not a policeman. He turned back, and walked through the shattered gateway again.

As he expected, he found Mr. Grimes there, coming upon him quite suddenly.

The inspector coloured a little as he met the junior's glance.

Mr. Tozer, who was mopping his manly brow with a big red handkerchief, coughed in a curious way. Bob smiled.

"Oh! You are going, Master Cherry?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, Mr. Grimes."

"Listen to me, young man," said Mr. Grimes seriously. "Your cousin appears to have made some appeal to you, which you have foolishly taken heed of. Private Tyrrell is a deserter, and you are liable to imprisonment if you assist him to escape. That is a warning. If he communicates with you again you are bound to inform the police. Unless you promise me now to do so, I shall call upon your headmaster, and acquaint him with the whole matter!"

Bob did not reply.

"I am doing this for your own good!" said Mr. Grimes sharply. "I should be sorry to see you get yourself into trouble, Master Cherry. Let me make an appeal to your common-sense and proper feeling. Your father is at the Front, facing the Germans. You are proud of him. What would he say if he knew that you lent aid to a deserter from the Colours? Come, think of it!"

The schoolboy's face became crimson.

"I haven't helped him, and I'm not going to!" he exclaimed. "I know my duty as well as you do, Mr. Grimes! But—but if he should write to me—I don't suppose he will—but if he did——"

"If he did, you should take the letter at once to your headmaster."

"So I would if—if I believed he was guilty," said Bob. "But—but——"

"But the rascally fellow has deceived you and worked upon your feelings, you foolish lad!" said the inspector severely. "I shall call upon your headmaster, Master Cherry. You have made that necessary now."

"You will do as you think best, sir," said Bob.

And he strode on.

Mr. Grimes shook his head. He liked the open-hearted, fearless junior. There were few who met Bob Cherry who did not like him. But Mr. Grimes had his duty to do; and, even for the boy's own sake, it was Mr. Grimes' duty to see that he was not drawn into any reckless conduct by an unscrupulous wastrel. And when Mr. Grimes left the priory, it was towards Greyfriars School that he turned his steps.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Called Over the Coals!

"WOT'S the blinking matter?" Sir Jimmy of the Remove asked that question in a somewhat resentful tone.

He had just come into his study, No. 12 in the Remove passage. Lord Mauleverer and Delarey, Jimmy's study-mates, were there, and they both fixed very serious looks upon the schoolboy baronet.

Sir Jimmy had always found a cheerful toleration in that study, in spite of his many little drawbacks. Lord Mauleverer was his relative, and backed him up loyally; and Delarey, the South African, was always kind to him, and often chipped in to save him from persecution at the hands of Skinner & Co. But just now there was evidently something up.

"Wotcher looking at a bloke like a pair of boiled howls for?" pursued Sir Jimmy. "Wot 'ave I done?"

"Nothin', dear boy."

"You're a young ass!" said Delarey. "Look here, Jimmy, we're your friends, you know that. We're not going to let you get yourself into trouble. I've told Mauly to give you a good talking-to."

"Yaas, begad! Wharton thought it was all serene, so I let it drop, an' now Delarey's woke it up again," groaned his lazy lordship. "It seems that you're a young ass, Jimmy!"

Sir Jimmy grinned.

"Come, Jimmy," said Delarey, "you

know the yarn that's going about the school. You'd better explain to Mauly. You met somebody in Friardale this afternoon?"

"Yes, I did."

"A chap named Scaly Bill—what?"

"Bill Hichens," said Sir Jimmy. "He was called Scaly Bill in Carker's Rents. He was allers a scaly customer, Bill was."

"Is he the kind of chap the Head would want you to know?"

"Grashus! No!"

"Well, then——"

"But I don't know him," said Sir Jimmy. "I jes' met him by chance."

"Oh," said Delarey, "that alters the case! Bunter and Skinner are saying that you're keeping up friendship with a low-down ruffian of some kind. You know that wouldn't do, Jimmy."

"Course it wouldn't," agreed Sir Jimmy. "I know that! But Bill Hichens ain't no friend of mine!"

"You see, it's all serene," said Mauleverer.

"It's better to get at the facts," said Delarey. "We can't have Jimmy being claimed as a pal by all sorts of burglars and bounders from Carker's Rents. It will get him into trouble with the Head, as well as giving cads like Skinner a handle against him. You didn't know the man was in Friardale, Jimmy?"

"Course I didn't! You mighter knocked me hover with a feather when I seed 'im there."

"Good! Did he come down here to see you?"

"Not a bit. Never knowed I was 'ere!"

"Good!" said Delarey. "Still, what was the fellow doing in a quiet village like Friardale, Jimmy? You say he's a scaly customer. That means that he is not honest, I suppose?"

"He'd sooner steal than drink," said Sir Jimmy, "and that's saying a lot!"

"Begad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"He ain't like my ole pal the Spadger," said Sir Jimmy. "If the Spadger was to come and see me, I'd chum up with him, and you can bet your boots on that. But Scaly Bill wasn't never no pal of mine. He was a rotter, he was!"

"What is he doing in Friardale?" asked the South African junior quietly. "That wants explaining, Jimmy."

"Oh, that's all right! He's got a job in the canteen at Wapshot, so he told me. I s'pose he's had a day orf."

"You see, it's all serene," said Lord Mauleverer. "I don't blame you for stickin' to your old pal the Sparrow, whoever he is, Jimmy; but you must draw the line at Bill Bailey—I mean Bailey Bill."

"And you're not going to meet him again?" asked Delarey.

Sir Jimmy hesitated.

"Come, Jimmy!" said Delarey. "Look here, it seems that you've got a packet, or something, that somebody gave you to mind. Bunter says it must have been this scaly fellow who gave it to you. Is that so?"

"S'pose it is?"

"That means that you're getting mixed up with him," said Delarey, with a frown. "That won't do!"

"I give 'im my word not to tork about it," said Sir Jimmy. "Nothing would 'ave been knowed, only that 'ound Skinner got 'old of the packet. Look 'ere, I'll tell you this much. I'm goin' to mind that there packet for 'im, and 'and it back to 'im on Wednesday next week. That's all!"

"But what is it?"

"Money he won in a sweepstake in the camp. 'Tain't safe for 'im to carry it about with him there," explained Sir Jimmy.

"And that's all?"

"That's all."

"And after next Wednesday——"

"He's goin' away, and I sha'n't never see him any more, and don't want to, neither!"

"Begad! I'm glad of that!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, that's all right," said Delarey. "But you can't be too careful, Jimmy. Hallo! What's that?"

The South African junior made a sudden spring to the door, and dragged it open.

There was a howl, as Billy Bunter tumbled headlong into the study.

It was pretty clear what the Owl of the Remove had been doing.

He sprawled on the floor, roaring.

"You fat rotter!" shouted Delarey. "You were at the keyhole!"

"Yow-ow! I wasn't!" roared Bunter. "I—I happened to stop to—to—to tie up my shoelace! Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, you Boer beast!"

"Begad! Give him one for me!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Yarooh! Yow! Oh!"

Biff, biff, biff!

Billy Bunter squirmed out of the study, with Delarey's heavy boot to help him. He vanished down the passage, yelling. Peter Todd came out of No. 7, and caught him by the collar and stopped him.

"Yow! Leggo!" roared Bunter. "He's after me! Yarooh!"

"What are you after my prize porker for, Delarey?" demanded Peter Todd.

"I'll turn your prize porker into gammon rashers if I catch him at my keyhole again!" growled Delarey. And he went back to his study.

Peter Todd marched Bunter into No. 7 with a grim brow.

"Listening again, Bunter!" he said.

"I wasn't! I—I——"

"Give me that stump, Dutton!"

Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, looked round.

"Not at all," he replied.

"Eh?"

"I've not got the hump," said Dutton. "Bunter looks as if he's got the hump. Were you speaking of Bunter?"

"Oh, my hat! Hand me that cricket-stump!" roared Peter.

"Who's a mugwump?"

"Great pip!" Peter Todd fetched the cricket-stump himself. "Now, Bunter, you fat Hun——"

"I wasn't listening!" roared Bunter. "I never heard Vivian say a word about Scaly Bill giving him a packet to mind! Yarooogh! I don't know what's in it! Yow! It isn't the money he won in a sweepstake that I know of! Yow-ow-ow! Keep that stump away, you rotter! Oh, crumbs!

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Fire! Murder! Yooop!"

Peter Todd threw down the stump.

"Keep clear of keyholes!" he said reprovingly. "You're a disgrace to this study, Bunter!"

"Yarooh!"

"I shall break that stump on you one of these days, and think what a waste that will be in war-time!" said Peter severely.

"Yooop!"

"If the war lasts ninety-nine years, we may need the last cricket-stump to pull us through!"

"Yow! Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study; but he rolled back, his little, round eyes glistening behind his spectacles.

"I say, Toddy——"

"Well," grinned Peter, "do you want some more?"

"No, you beast! I know it's only your fun, or I'd mop up the study with you!"

"You'll get some more of my fun next time you're caught at a keyhole!" said Peter grimly. "I'm going to make a man of you, Bunter. It's a big job, but I'm the chap to do it!"

"I—I say, Peter, sweepstakes are gambling, ain't they?"

"Of course they are! Anybody been offering you shares in a sweep?" asked Peter. "Keep out of it, you ass!"

"'Tain't that! But Vivian said there was money in that packet that Scaly Bill won in a sweepstake," said Bunter. "Money won in gambling doesn't belong to a chap, does it?"

"Not really," assented Peter. "It belongs to the owner!"

"Well, as the money was won in gambling, that ruffian ought not to have it, ought he?" said Bunter argumentatively. "Suppose we take it away from that shabby young bounder, Peter?"

"Eh?"

"I could tackle him if you'd keep Delarey off," said Bunter eagerly. "Then we'd collar the packet, Peter, and prevent that beast, Scaly Bill, profiting by his filthy gambling—see? That would be high-principled, wouldn't it?"

Peter Todd glared at Bunter speechlessly for some moments.

"You—you—you——" he stuttered.

"You back me up, Peter, and—— Yarooh! Wharrer you at?" yelled Bunter.

Peter didn't explain what he was at. He left Bunter to guess that. By means of the cricket-stump he was impressing upon the Owl of the Remove what he thought of his high-principled suggestion. Billy Bunter fled from the study roaring like a bull of Bashan.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom Dutton, as Peter pitched the stump into a corner.

Tom had watched the proceedings in astonishment.

"Bunter asked for a licking!" gasped Peter.

"By Jove! What was he sticking to?"

"Oh, dear! Not sticking—licking!" yelled Peter.

"Oh, kicking!" said the deaf Removite. "I see! You don't speak plainly, Toddy; you mumble! But you haven't told me who he was kicking!"

And Peter Todd didn't tell him.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
The Meeting!

"MY esteemed Bob——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"The respected Head wishes to see you in his study," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry grunted.

"The esteemed Wingate told me to tell you," said the nabob. "I hopefully wish that it does not mean trouble for my excellent chum!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob.

He left the study with a moody brow. He could guess that Mr. Grimes had made his call upon the headmaster, and that Dr. Locke wanted to see him in consequence.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went along to No. 1 Study, where he found Harry Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull. Bob Cherry went downstairs. His chums waited somewhat anxiously for him to return. A summons to the Head's study was unusual, and they wondered what was the matter.

It was about ten minutes later when Bob Cherry came back, and Harry Wharton called to him as he passed the open door of No. 1 Study.

"Come in, Bob!"

Bob Cherry came in.

"Well?" said his chums, all together.

Bob smiled faintly.

"It's all right," he said. "Did you think I'd been sent for for a licking? It was only a jaw."

"Nothing about your cousin?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Yes; it was about my cousin."

Bob hesitated a moment, and then went on:

"I may as well tell you fellows. Grimes has been looking for Tyrrell at the old priory, and I met him there. He's been to the Head."

"You're not backing up that deserter?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"I haven't seen him. But the Head's told me that if he writes to me again I'm to take him the letter at once."

"Well, you ought to," said Johnny Bull.

"I've promised to," said Bob. "I suppose the Head's right. But I don't think Paul will write again, so it doesn't matter."

"You didn't find him at the priory, then?" asked Harry.

"No. He had cleared off somehow before Grimes got there, or else——" Bob paused. "Perhaps I'd better not say any more!"

"Just as you like," said Harry. "But if he was in the priory vaults, there was only one way he could clear off, if the police were there."

"My hat! The subterranean passage!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Did he know about it, Bob?"

"Not that I know of. But he may have found it out, nosing about the ruins, same as we did long ago," said Bob. "I suppose you fellows think that Paul ought to be handed over?"

"Not much doubt about that," said Johnny Bull drily. "It's hard lines, the chap being your cousin; but you can't help a deserter. It's against the law; and it's wrong, too!"

"He says he is innocent of what he was charged with!"

"That might be; but he's not innocent of desertion. A chap hasn't any right to leave the Colours!"

"No; I know that. Only—only, if he was innocent, it was rough on him," said Bob. "The proofs seem clear enough, but I can't help thinking the poor chap was all right this time! His letter sounded like it!"

Johnny Bull grunted. It was plain that he, at least, had no belief in the innocence of the wastrel.

"I don't expect you to agree with me," said Bob, colouring. "He's my cousin, not yours, and that makes a difference, I suppose. Anyway, you needn't be alarmed about being dragged into it!"

"Oh, rats!" said Johnny Bull. "I can see you've got something in your mind, and whatever you're going to do your pals are going to stick to you! We'll all go to chokey together, if you like. It will serve us right if we have anything to do with a deserter!"

"The rightfulness would be terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

Bob grinned.

"It won't come to that. I simply want to see him, and give him a chance to explain!"

"How are you going to see him?"

"I'd better not tell you!"

"Oh, rats! Get it off your chest!"

"Well, if he got away from the priory to the underground passage, you know where he must be. I can get to him from this end—from the crypt under the old chapel. As soon as it's dark I'm going to see. I'm going alone, of course!"

"Better give him a wide berth!"

growled Johnny Bull. "He oughtn't to have come anywhere near Greyfriars!"

Bob Cherry quitted the study without replying.

He left his chums in a very uneasy mood. There was no doubt about the Co. sticking to Bob, but they were not happy at the prospect of their chum getting concerned in the escapades of a deserter.

Bob's mind was made up.

It was already dusk, and he left the School House and went to the bike-shed for his lamp. With the lamp under his jacket he made his way to the old chapel. A few minutes later he was descending the stone steps into the crypt.

On more than one occasion the juniors had explored the subterranean passage leading to the priory in the wood—though it was, as a matter of fact, out of bounds. The old crypt was too full of pitfalls for the boys to be allowed there.

Bob lighted his lantern in the crypt, and pursued the path through the dark, reeking stone passage winding away into the depths of the earth.

The more he reflected upon the matter the more certain he felt that Paul Tyrrell must have discovered the passage, and used it as a means of escape when Inspector Grimes searched the priory.

He flashed the lantern-light before him as he strode on among pools of water and slime. The passage reeked with damp. He covered the distance at a good speed, and he knew, at last, that he must be close to the priory. Suddenly, from the darkness ahead of him, there was a sound of a movement.

In the radius of the lantern-light, a figure in muddy khaki loomed up, and a white, desperate face gleamed in the light.

"Stand back!" It was a husky, threatening voice. "Stand back, or—— Bob!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
The Right Thing!

"BOB!"

The fierce threat on the lips of the deserter died away as he recognised Bob Cherry.

Bob halted.

He held up the lantern, and the light streamed upon the muddy, khaki-clad figure, the white face and gleaming eyes. It was Paul Tyrrell who stood before him.

"Bob!" repeated the deserter, in amazement.

"Paul! So you're here?" muttered Bob.

"But you—how did you come?"

"This passage leads to the crypt under the school chapel," said Bob. "I guessed you'd found it out."

"You came to see me?"

"I went to the priory this afternoon, and found the police there. I guessed where you must be."

Tyrrell breathed hard.

"I found the moving stone," he said. "I guessed I might be searched for there, as I hid there before; and I was looking for some corner to lie low in. And then I found this passage. I was hidden behind the stone while the police searched the vaults. I never knew it led to the school. I—I thought the police had found me when I saw your light. Bob, you got my letter?"

"Yes; after I'd been to Wapshot and heard the news," said Bob grimly.

Tyrrell's haggard eyes searched his face.

"I was innocent, Bob! You believe me?"

"I'm trying to," muttered Bob.

"I swear I was innocent! I never even heard of the robbery until I was arrested," said Tyrrell huskily. "My rotten luck's failed me, just when I was getting clear of the past. I was booked for the next draft for the Front if this hadn't happened, Bob."

"And then you deserted?"

"What could I do?" said Tyrrell. "The proof seemed clear against me. I should have been found guilty, sent to prison, and kicked out of the Army. What was the good of waiting for that?"

"You ought to have waited," said Bob. "You'd have had a fair trial. You ought to have stood your trial. By clearing off like that you've made yourself look guilty."

"But—it was too black against me!"

"You say you were innocent," said Bob. "If you were innocent, why shouldn't the trial have cleared you? What's a trial for?"

"You—you don't understand. I passed a note in the canteen, and it turned out to be one of the stolen notes. At least, they said so."

"If they said so, it was so," said Bob.

"Yes, yes! I know. The note must have got changed somehow!"

"It sounds jolly thick," said Bob. "But I'm trying to believe you, Paul. If you passed a note of your own, how could it be supposed that the stolen note in the canteen was that note?"

"I don't know. It beats me."

"But the court-martial would have got at the truth when they tried you. The stolen note was in the canteen. Somebody passed it, that's certain. They'd examine every man who changed a note there that day."

"I heard that much. I was the only man's who's spent paper money there since the robbery took place, as it happened."

"Paul!"

"Now you believe I'm guilty!" said the outcast bitterly. "What was the good of standing a trial when my own cousin can't believe in me?"

Bob Cherry knitted his brows.

The more he heard of the affair the clearer his cousin's guilt seemed to become. Yet there was something in the white face that went straight to Bob's heart. Conclusive as the evidence seemed, he could not believe Paul Tyrrell guilty.

"But—but how could it have happened?" muttered Bob. "If what you say is true, the note was already in the canteen when you changed your note, and somebody belonging to the place must have had it, and pretended that it was paid in by you."

"I suppose so."

"Then the thief is a man in the canteen," said Bob, "and he's given false evidence to put it on you."

Tyrrell nodded.

"It looks like it," he said. "But what's the good of spinning a yarn like that at a trial? It sounds too thin!"

"If it's true, it's what you ought to do," said Bob. "Running away looks as if you're guilty. Besides, if there's a man in the canteen who's a thief and villain like that, something might be found out about him. Are there any civilians employed there?"

"Oh, yes."

"What sort of chaps?"

"Oh, all sorts."

"If you're innocent, Paul——"

"If!" repeated Tyrrell bitterly.

"If," said Bob, with a nod—"if you're innocent, it was one of the canteen chaps who stole the notes, and he pretended the note you passed in was one of them, to get himself safe. If he had the stolen notes in his pocket, it was easy enough for him to substitute one for another, I suppose. Why, if a search

was made, he might be found with the rest of the plunder about him! You've done the worst thing possible for yourself in clearing off. You've given the rotter time to stow his plunder away in a safe place."

"I—I know! But——"

Bob Cherry fumbled in his pocket.

"I've brought you some sandwiches, Paul. I suppose you're hungry?"

"Famished."

"Here you are."

The outcast took the sandwiches eagerly.

"Now, look here," said Bob quietly. "I'm going to give you some advice, Paul. You've got to go back!"

"Go back!" muttered Tyrrell.

"Yes, and stand your trial. You can't desert the Colours in war-time. It's too low. That's a bigger crime than the one you're accused of. At least, even if you don't get justice, your conscience will be clear, if you do what's right. But I believe you'll get justice. Why shouldn't you?"

"I can't go back!" muttered Tyrrell. "I'm a deserter now, and I've got to stand the racket for that as well as the other."

"Not so bad if you give yourself up at once. Look here, Paul, this mustn't go on. You can't starve in this underground hole, and the police know already you're somewhere near Greyfriars. You're bound to be taken sooner or later. You know that."

"But—but——"

"It's a soldier's duty to stick to the Colours. I shouldn't think it was necessary for a schoolboy to say that to a man in khaki," said Bob. "I know I'm right. You ought to go back and face the music. Besides, there's nothing else to be done. Suppose I help you, and bring you grub, and all that, how long do you think it can go on without being spotted?"

"I don't want to drag you into it, Bob."

"You can't do anything else if you stick it out here. Besides, how can you dodge them for months, and perhaps years? The war can't end till next year, at the earliest, and all that time you'll be hunted for! You played a mug's game in clearing off!"

Tyrrell was silent. He knew, in his heart, that the junior was right.

"I don't want to force you," said Bob. "But I know what you ought to do. Stick it out with the Colours, and don't fancy that you're not going to get justice. Look here, Paul! Let me go and ask the Head to telephone to your commanding-officer that you've decided to come back at once. Very likely that would wipe out the desertion."

There was a long silence.

Tyrrell looked round him, at the stone walls reeking with moisture, the slime and water at his feet. He was shivering.

But that damp, dark den was his only refuge. As soon as he showed himself in the light of day recapture must follow.

Even if Bob helped him with clothes and food and money, and he escaped for a time, the end was no less certain—and the generous schoolboy would be dragged into punishment and disgrace for his sake.

He realised it clearly enough. He had had time to reflect while he was lurking in that hidden den.

Bob watched him anxiously.

"You believe me, Bob?" Tyrrell asked at last.

"I believe you're innocent," said Bob.

"And you advise me to go back?"

"Yes. It's your only possible chance of clearing yourself. The longer you stay away the more certain everybody will be that you're guilty, and the less chance there will be of finding out the real thief."

"I was a fool to run for it!" muttered Tyrrell. "But—but I was desperate—there seemed no chance. But I can see you're right. I couldn't stay here long, that's certain, and I'm not going to drag you into my troubles. I'm determined on that. I'll take your advice, Bob."

"It's the best thing you can do, Paul," said Bob, with a deep breath of relief. "Thank goodness you've decided to do it! May I tell Dr. Locke?"

"Yes."

Ten minutes later Bob Cherry was making his way back to Greyfriars. He went with a lighter heart.

Through the dusky woods the deserter was already on his way back to Wapshot Camp.

"He was, sir," said Bob quietly. "He isn't now. I've persuaded him to go back to the camp."

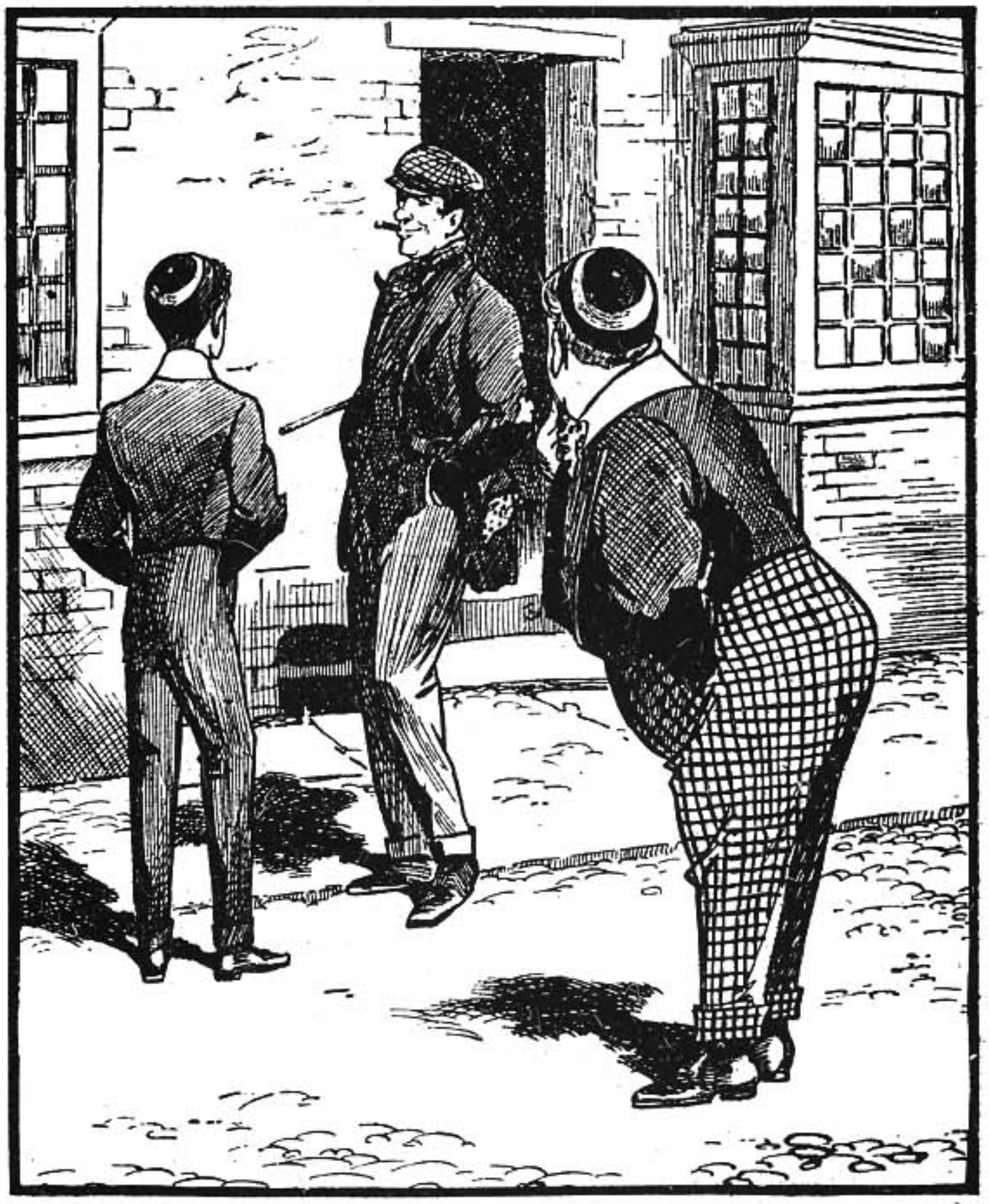
Dr. Locke's face cleared.

"My dear boy, I am very pleased to hear that!" he exclaimed. "You have acted quite rightly."

"My cousin is innocent of the crime he is charged with, sir."

"I am sure I hope so," said the Head, somewhat drily.

"He is going back to stand his trial. But—but he might be seen and collared before he gets back to the camp, sir, and then it mightn't be believed that he really meant to surrender. Would you be kind enough to telephone to Wapshot and tell them he is coming? It's only fair to him, sir!"



Sir Jimmy meets Scaly Bill. (*See Chapter 2.*)

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
No Help for Bunter!

"COME in!"

Dr. Locke glanced up as Bob Cherry entered his study.

His brow was somewhat severe as he surveyed the junior. The Head of Greyfriars had not been pleased by Inspector Grimes' call, and what Mr. Grimes had told him.

"Ah, it is you, Cherry!" said the Head. "Does this mean that you have received another communication from your unfortunate cousin?"

"I've seen him, sir," said Bob steadily.

Dr. Locke started.

"You have met him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then he is near the school?" exclaimed the Head, frowning.

The Head pursed his lips for a moment.

"I will do so, certainly, Cherry," he said, after a pause.

"Thank you, sir!"

Bob Cherry left the study as the Head turned to the telephone.

The junior's heart was much lighter now. He was still anxious for his cousin. But he believed him innocent, and it was clear enough that the best thing an innocent man could do was to face the music and take his trial.

"I say, Bob, old chap——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, fatty!" said Bob, in quite his old manner. "Food restrictions bothering you again?"

"No, you ass!" growled Billy Bunter. "I say, I want you to help me. It's a rather important matter. I've asked

Toddy, but he cut up rusty. You know what a rotter he is! Don't walk away while I'm talking to you!"

"Well, what is it?" asked Bob.

Billy Bunter drew him into a window recess in the passage, with a very mysterious air.

"You're down on gambling, ain't you?" he asked

"Eh? Yes."

"Especially in war-time!" urged Bunter. "It's immoral at any time, isn't it, and ever so much immoraler in war-time?"

"I suppose so," said Bob, in amazement. "What on earth are you driving at, Bunter?"

"Suppose a chap won a lot of money in a sweep, ought he to be allowed to keep it?" said Bunter.

Bob stared at him blankly.

"Suppose he gave it to a Greyfriars chap to mind for him?" said Bunter. "Suppose it happened to be young Vivian?"

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Bob angrily. "I don't know what that packet is that young Vivian has, but it's nothing of that sort."

"He says so himself!" said Bunter triumphantly.

"Eh? He hasn't said so to you, anyway!"

"I happened to hear him tell Mauly and Delarey so—quite by chance, of course," explained Bunter. "I was tying up my bootlace outside their study ——"

"Oh, dry up, you eavesdropping porpoise!" growled Bob.

"I hope you don't think I'd listen, Bob Cherry. It was quite by accident I happened to hear them. Well, that packet's got money in it—money won by gambling, you know!"

"No business of yours if it is so!"

"But just think, as a high-principled chap!" urged Bunter. "That man Hichens got the money in a sweep. He must have got it off the soldiers, you know."

"Why, you ass?"

"Because he's at Wapshot Camp," explained Bunter. "Scaly Bill, you know—that ruffian Vivian used to know in the slums."

"What has he got to do with Wapshot?"

"He's employed there."

"What rot! They wouldn't employ a man like that, if he's anything like your description of him," grunted Bob.

"I dare say he got a false character," said Bunter, "and labour's so scarce, perhaps they can't be particular now. Anyway, he's there. He told Vivian so, and I heard Vivian tell Mauleverer. Now, if he won money in a sweep at the camp, he must have got it from the soldiers, so he ought not to be allowed to keep it. I dare say he swindled them, too. He looked that sort."

"Well, what are you getting at, anyway?" asked Bob impatiently.

"Under the circumstances, as moral chaps, oughtn't we to see that the beast doesn't finger that money?" demanded Bunter.

"What!"

"And the only way to do that is to make Vivian give it up!" said Bunter firmly.

"Eh?"

"And — and confiscate it!" said Bunter.

"Do you mean steal it?" yelled Bob.

"Nunno. Confiscate it, you know," said Bunter. "Use it for good purposes, and so on. We could use it to support industry—to help on trade by—by buying things, you know—toffee, and—and cake, and so on. Yarooh! Wharrer you at?"

Bob Cherry shook the Owl of the Remove till he shivered like a very fat jelly.

"You sneaking burglar——"

"Gurrrrrrrgh!"

Bob Cherry gave the fat Removite a final shake, and sat him down forcibly on the floor, and strode away.

"Groogh-hooh-hooh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, dear! Beast! Yow-ow-ow! He's a worse beast than Toddy! Gerrrooogh!"

And William George Bunter picked himself up and drifted dolefully away. There really seemed to be no opening at Greyfriars for a high-minded fellow like Bunter.

Bob Cherry went to Study No. 12, and looked in. He found Sir Jimmy and Lord Mauleverer and Delarey at their prep.

"Vivian, you had better keep an eye on that packet of yours," said Bob. "Bunter's got an eye on it, and he's going to burgle it if he can."

"Wot-ho!" said Sir Jimmy.

Bob went along the passage to Study No. 1, where he found his chums.

"It's all serene," he said cheerily. "Paul's gone back. He's at Wapshot by this time, or soon will be."

"Jolly good!" said Harry Wharton. "Did you persuade him?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it!" remarked Nugent. "He was an ass to run away if he was innocent. And it looks now as if he might be, as he's gone to face the music."

"I wish there was something a fellow could do," said Bob. "I'm certain of Paul's innocence. But unless they find out the real thief it may go hard with him."

"After all, if he's innocent, it's pretty certain to come out at the trial," said Wharton. "I suppose he's told you how it happened?"

"Yes; and it looks black. But—but I believe in him. I shall be jolly anxious for news from Wapshot."

And Bob went to his study to get on with his prep.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

BILLY BUNTER was wearing a very thoughtful look that evening.

Owing to his peculiar methods of obtaining information, the Owl of the Remove knew all about the packet in Sir Jimmy's possession, and what it contained.

The thought of money haunted him.

On the rare occasions when he had been in funds, Billy Bunter had blossomed out into a blade on the lines of Ponsonby of Highcliffe. But on other occasions he was prepared to be highly moral on the subject of gambling.

Money won by gambling did not morally belong to the winner. Bunter held that view—for the present, at all events.

It was correct enough as far as it went; but the conclusion Bunter drew from it on this occasion was not quite so correct.

Scaly Bill had stated that he had won the money in a sweep. Therefore, it was not his. Whose was it, then?

Apparently, it had really no owner.

If it had no owner, it was a sin and a shame to leave it lying idle, when it represented ever so much tuck to a hungry junior.

The food restrictions galled Billy Bunter sorely. But with plenty of

ready cash he knew he could get round those restrictions, not being restrained by any scruples on such matters. With a sufficient supply of money Bunter would have been a food-hog of the most pronounced type.

By means of these reflections Bunter had succeeded in convincing himself—or almost convincing himself—that he would be justified in lifting that packet at present in Vivian's care.

He had an uncomfortable feeling that less high-minded youths might regard the lifting as theft. Indeed, Toddy and Bob Cherry had made their views on that point painfully clear.

But Bunter had made up his mind. And, to avoid misunderstanding, it was better to keep his design a secret, he considered.

When the Remove fellows went up to their dormitory, the Owl was still looking deeply reflective.

He had not solved the difficulty yet, but he was a sticker where a prospect of unlimited grub was concerned.

He did not go to sleep as usual within five minutes after lights out. After the rest of the Remove had fallen asleep, the fat junior was still wide awake, thinking out his problem.

As ten o'clock struck, Billy Bunter sat up in bed.

"You fellows asleep?" he whispered.

No reply.

"You fellows asleep?" Bunter's voice was louder now.

There was a grunt from Peter Todd's bed.

"Shurrup, you fat owl! Wharrer marrer?"

"Oh, n-nothing!" stammered Bunter. "I—I didn't know you were awake, Toddy. I—I wasn't thinking of getting up."

Bunter laid his head on the pillow, and snored.

He had intended his last words to banish any suspicion Peter Todd might have formed. They had the opposite effect.

Peter Todd sat up in bed, and blinked in the darkness.

He had not forgotten Bunter's proposition to raid Vivian's packet, and he knew that Bunter had been trying to find out whether all the fellows were asleep before leaving the dormitory on a secret errand. It was not difficult for Toddy to put two and two together.

Peter did not go to sleep then. He sat up, waiting, with a glimmer in his eyes.

It was nearly half an hour later when Bunter sat up once more.

"I say, you fellows, are you asleep?" he breathed.

Silence.

"You asleep, Toddy?"

Peter Todd was grimly silent, but he was very wide awake.

Satisfied at last, Billy Bunter crawled out of bed. He hurried on half his clothes, and stole away to the door on tiptoe.

The dormitory door closed softly behind him.

The next moment Peter Todd was out of bed.

He tiptoed out of the dormitory, and down the dark stairs to the Remove passage. As he expected, there was a glimmer of light under the door of Lord Mauleverer's study.

Billy Bunter was there.

As he paused outside the door, Peter could hear the Owl of the Remove fumbling about the study, evidently in search of the mysterious packet.

If it had been daytime, Peter would probably have brought into use the cricket-stump which he kept in Study No. 7 for Bunter's benefit. But that was scarcely feasible at half-past ten at night.

He did not enter the study.

He stole away quietly to Study No. 7, and returned with a cord in his hand. The cord he attached carefully to the handle of the door of Mauleverer's study.

Having securely fastened it there, he carried the cord along to the next study, and fastened it to the handle of the next door.

The cord was drawn taut, and knotted.

It was strong enough to resist any pull. Billy Bunter was a prisoner in Study No. 12 now, though quite unconscious of the fact.

That work done, Peter Todd returned to the dormitory and turned in, grinning.

When the Owl of the Remove discovered that he was shut in Mauleverer's study, he would have an opportunity of meditating upon his sins. Peter Todd intended to slip down at rising-bell and let him out. It would be a much-needed lesson for the Owl of the Remove, and might impress upon his mind the undoubted fact that the way of the transgressor is sometimes hard.

Peter Todd closed his eyes, and slept the sleep of the just.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was rummaging about Mauleverer's study, with the gas turned half on.

Every receptacle that he could open he had examined, but the packet had not come to light.

Even Bunter hesitated to break a lock.

He paused at last before Sir Jimmy's desk, and glowered at it through his spectacles. He had tried the desk in every way, but it was locked, and he could not open it. His glance wandered to the poker in the grate, but he shook his head.

"He's locked it up! Rotten suspicious beast!" muttered Bunter, with a snort of disgust. "Yah! I can't bust the rotten desk, but I'll jolly well borrow Fishy's bunch of keys! I dare say one of them will fit it."

And Bunter turned to the door, intending to visit Study No. 14 and borrow Fisher T. Fish's keys. To his surprise, the door did not open when he turned the handle.

In some alarm Bunter tugged at the door.

It yielded about half an inch, and there it stopped.

"M-m-my hat!" ejaculated Bunter, dragging savagely at the door. "What on earth's the matter with the rotten thing? Oh, dear!"

He tugged, and tugged in vain.

It dawned upon him at last that somebody must have fastened the door on the outside since he had entered the study.

"Toddy!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, the beast! He wasn't asleep after all! Oh, the rotter! Fancy treating a pal like this! Oh, crumbs!"

He left off tugging at the door. That was evidently useless.

He was a prisoner!

The Owl of the Remove forgot all about the precious packet now. His only thought was to escape from the study.

"Toddy!" he whispered through the keyhole. "Toddy, old chap, lemme out, you know!"

There was no reply.

"Toddy, you rotter! Toddy, old chap! I say, you cad, if you don't lemme out I'll yell and wake old Quelchy!" said Bunter, in a shrill whisper.

But there was no answer, and it came into his mind that Toddy was gone. Billy Bunter plumped down into the armchair and groaned.

How long was the practical joker going to leave him there?

Had the beast gone back to bed? It was past eleven o'clock now, and the fat junior was very sleepy.

He started up as there was a sound of footsteps in the passage without.

"Toddy, you rotter——"

The door-handle was tried.

"Open this door at once!"

Billy Bunter collapsed into the armchair again. It was the voice of Mr. Quelch, his Form-master.

"Quelchy!" he gasped.

"Open this door! How dare you show a light at this hour! Who is here? Dear me, the door is fastened!"

Billy Bunter quaked.

With his usual carelessness, he had omitted to cover the window with the blind, and a streak or two of light had escaped. Mr. Quelch always made a round before going to bed, to see that the lighting regulations were observed. He had caught the glimmer of light from the window of a Remove study, and naturally he had come up in great wrath to discover the cause, as all the Removites were supposed to have been in bed for an hour and a half.

Billy Bunter heard the Remove-master detaching the cord. Then the door opened, and Mr. Quelch rustled in.

"Bunter! he exclaimed. "Is it you?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Bunter. "It—it isn't—I—I mean——"

"Boy! What are you doing here at this hour of the night? This is not your study!" thundered the Remove-master.

"I—I—I—— Toddy fastened me in—at least, somebody did, sir!" groaned Bunter.

"Why did you come down to this study?"

"I—I—I——"

"Is it possible, Bunter, that you were visiting Mauleverer's study at a late hour of the night with dishonest intentions?" exclaimed the Form-master, in a voice like the rumble of thunder.

"Nunno!" stuttered Bunter. "I—I wasn't going to confiscate it, really! That was only a—a—a joke! I just wanted to see it——"

"To see what?"

"The—the—the packet, sir."

"Are you wandering in your mind, Bunter? If you have any explanation to make, make it before I administer the most severe punishment!"

Billy Bunter gasped.

"I—I felt I ought to—to look into it, sir," he stuttered. "You see, Vivian ought not to be minding the packet for an awful outsider like Scaly Bill——"

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter stammered out the story. It was the only defence he could make. He judiciously refrained from explaining that he had intended to confiscate the mysterious packet. According to Bunter, he had felt bound to look into the matter from the highest motives, and really more for Sir Jimmy's own sake than for any other reason.

"This is a most extraordinary story!" said Mr. Quelch, at last. "I shall question Vivian in the morning. Meanwhile, you may return to bed, Bunter. Take five hundred lines!"

"Ye-e-s, sir."

And Billy Bunter limped away to the Remove dormitory. His quest of the mysterious packet had been a frost with a vengeance.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
Cleared at Last!

CLANG! Clang!

The Removites turned out at the rising-bell in the sunny spring morning. Peter Todd stared at Bunter's bed blankly.

"You here!" he ejaculated.

"Yah, you rotter!" groaned Bunter. "Quelchy found me, and I've got five hundred lines! Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

Bunter snorted and rolled out of bed. The Removites were about to go down, when Mr. Quelch entered the dormitory.

"Vivian!" he rapped out.

"Yessir!" said Sir Jimmy cheerily.

"Come with me!"

"Yessir!"

The schoolboy baronet followed Mr. Quelch.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up with Sir Jimmy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, I think Quelchy's found out about that packet," said Billy Bunter. "It's all Toddy's fault!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter Todd.

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You've given Vivian away, you—you—you Hunnish slug!"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"What does it matter, anyway?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I'm afraid Vivian will get into a row for meeting' that chap Bill Bailey—I mean Bailey Bill!" said his lordship. "Can't be helped! Where's my necktie?"

Sir Jimmy followed Mr. Quelch in surprise. He did not know the cause of the grim frown upon his Form-master's brow. To his further surprise, Mr. Quelch led him to No. 12 Study in the Remove passage.

"I understand, Vivian, that you have a packet that you are minding for some person outside the school?" said the Remove-master.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Sir Jimmy.

"Kindly produce it!"

"But, sir——"

"Do as I tell you, Vivian, please!"

Sir Jimmy unlocked his desk and took out the packet.

"Now follow me to the Head, Vivian!"

"Yessir!"

Dr. Locke was in his study when the Form-master arrived there. Sir Jimmy could see that Mr. Quelch had already spoken to the Head on the subject.

Dr. Locke signed to the baronet to lay the packet on his desk.

"Now, Vivian, kindly explain to me precisely how this packet came into your possession," he said.

"I told Scaly Bill I'd not mention it, sir——"

"You were to keep it secret?"

"Yes, sir."

"And why?"

"'Cause it's vallyble, sir," said Sir Jimmy. "You see, sir, I knowed Scaly Bill at Carker's Rents. He wasn't a friend of mine, and it give me a turn, it did, when I met him in Friardale yesterday. But I didn't see no 'arm in doin' as he asked. I s'pose I better tell you now it's come out——"

"You had certainly better," said the Head grimly.

"It's money, sir," explained Sir Jimmy. "Scaly Bill—that's Bill Hichens—won it in a sweep in the camp. It ain't safe to carry a lot of money about there, so he asked me to mind it till next week. That's all, sir."

"If you meet any other associates of your early life, Vivian, you must tell your Form-master at once."

"Werry well, sir."

"It is my duty to open this packet," said the Head. "It is very probable that this man Hichens was deceiving you, and that he was in reality making use of you to take charge of the proceeds of a theft. It is certainly much more probable."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Sir Jimmy.

"It—it came into my 'ead, sir; but—but I asked Scaly Bill, and he swore as it was a tenner he won in a sweep," stammered Sir Jimmy.

"We shall see," said Dr. Locke. "Certainly it cannot be handed back to such a person without examination."

The Head opened the packet, Sir Jimmy watching him in dismay. It was not a tenner that was revealed, however. It was a bundle of banknotes—several fivers and a wedge of currency notes.

"Twenty-nine pounds ten shillings," said the Head grimly.

"Grashus!" murmured Sir Jimmy. "Bill said it was a tenner!"

"Is this man employed in Friardale?" asked the Head.

"Oh, no, sir! He's got a job at the canteen in Wapshot Camp."

The Head started.

"Bless my soul! In the camp! I am aware that a theft was committed there—Mr. Grimes informed me that a number of five-pound notes had been taken—but a soldier was suspected——"

"Cherry's cousin!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Dr. Locke, it really does look as if——"

"As if this is the stolen property, indeed," said the Head. "I will telephone to the camp immediately, and ascertain, if possible, the numbers of the stolen notes. You are sure, Vivian, that you received this packet from a man named Hichens, employed at Wapshot Camp?"

"Cert'n sure, sir!"

"Very well! You may go! I shall not punish you, Vivian; but it is clear that you have been concerned, though innocently, in helping a thief to conceal his plunder. You will be more careful in the future, Vivian!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Sir Jimmy.

His face was very white as he left the Head's study.

Lord Mauleverer and a crowd of Remove fellows met him at the end of the passage.

"Begad, you look queer, dear boy!" said his lordship. "Has the Head given you a lickin'?"

Sir Jimmy shook his head.

"What's the matter, kid?" asked Bob Cherry kindly.

"I never knowed," said Sir Jimmy. "There was a lot of money in that there packet—a lot of notes, and the 'Ead says they must 'ave been stolen, and—and that rotter got me to mind 'em for 'im. I never knowed! The bloke must 'ave pinched them notes in Wapshot Camp, and he was looking for somewhere to hide 'em when he met me, and then—— Oh, the rotter"

Bob Cherry's face had grown suddenly pale.

"Notes—stolen in Wapshot Camp!" he said thickly. "Jimmy: who was it give you that packet?"

"Scaly Bill, what works in the camp——"

Bob Cherry caught him by the arm.

"Is he employed in the canteen?" he asked huskily.

"Yes. 'Ow did you know?"

"Good heavens!" muttered Bob.

Harry Wharton pressed his arm. He understood.

"Looks like a chance for Cousin Paul, old chap!" whispered Harry.

And Bob nodded without speaking. He could not speak.

Mr. Quelch came down the passage. He gave Bob Cherry a very kindly look.

"Cherry, please step into the Head's study."

"Yes, sir," muttered Bob.

He fairly ran up the passage. Dr. Locke had set down the receiver. He turned to Bob with a kind smile.

"I have news for you, Cherry—very good news," he said. "I have just spoken to Wapshot Camp. Your cousin surrendered last night; but I do not think he will have to stand a trial. The stolen notes have been found. They are here!"

"They were in that packet, sir?" breathed Bob.

"Yes. The major has given me the numbers of the missing notes, and they are the same," said the Head. "Only one ten-shilling note is missing, and that one was used, as it now appears, to fasten suspicion upon your cousin. A man named Hichens, employed in the canteen, was the thief. He is being placed under arrest at once. This means, my dear boy, that your cousin will be cleared!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bob.

"Under the circumstances, I think his commanding-officer will take a merciful view of his act of desertion, as he gave himself up again so promptly," said the Head. "You may hope for the best, Cherry. I congratulate you, my boy!"

Bob Cherry left the study as if he were walking on air.

"Well?" demanded four voices in unison, as the Co. surrounded him.

"Hooray!" roared Bob.

"All sérene?"

"Right as rain! Paul's cleared! Hooray!"

"The hoorayfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"What did I tell you?" chuckled Bob. "Didn't I tell you poor old Paul was all right? Hooray!"

And Bob Cherry's stentorian roar rang from one end of Greyfriars to the other.

* * * * *

Private Tyrrell was cleared; there was no doubt about that. Scaly Bill was taken charge of by the kindly authorities for a couple of years, and lodged in a residence where the very rigid rules would keep his hands from picking and stealing for that period of time. And the next time Bob saw his cousin was at Greyfriars—Private Tyrrell visiting the Co., and having tea in No. 1 Study with them, on his last leave before going to the Front.

(Don't miss "HIS FATHER'S HONOUR!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 19.—HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH.

SOME readers have been foolish enough to imagine that a slight was intended to Inky in leaving him thus late in this series. One such reader was badly disgruntled. He wrote with the maximum of heat and the minimum of politeness to protest. Doubtless he is very fond of Inky; but he has not modelled himself upon his character, one fears, for Inky does not often get heated, and is nearly always polite.

It would hardly be wise to run a series like this on the principle of giving first all the more popular characters, and leaving till later those of less importance, and those who, on account of their unpleasant traits, lack supporters—except the wrong-headed youths who would prefer Charles Peace to Richard of the Lion heart, and Jack Sheppard to Nelson!

Our policy is the natural one of variety. Thus the appearance of Skinner before Hurree Singh does not mean that Skinner is a favourite in the editorial office—any more than the giving the gentle Alonzo preference over, say, Rake, implies that Alonzo is considered the better man of the two.

Far be it from us to show any incivility to Inky! Who could help liking him, the loyal, good fellow, with his amusing speech, which yet does not make him a mere buffoon, for he has dignity enough—with his princely generosity and his brave heart—unselfish and cheerful, and ready of hand and brain? It would be difficult to find in all Greyfriars a fellow with fewer grave faults than he, and yet he is never dull, as the "unco' guid" are apt to be.

Curious questions reach here about Inky. Is he a nigger? That is one of them. My dear boys, there is as much difference between a Hindu of the warrior races and a nigger as between, say, you and an Eskimo! The higher races of India are of the same Aryan stock as ourselves.

Do all Indians talk as Inky does? Of course they don't! Inky says it is the way he was taught. One suspects it of being a whim of his, no more. Why does not Koumi Rao, of St. Jim's, talk the same odd lingo? The answer to the earlier question should serve for this; but, to make it quite clear, it is not the way Koumi Rao was taught, or the way that, for instance, Ranjitsinhji, Jam Saheb of Nuwanagar, the great cricketer of whom you have all heard, was taught.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, to give him his full name and style, came to Greyfriars with the contingent of foreign boys from Beechwood, and was put into No. 1 Study, with Bulstrode, Wharton, and Nugent—much to the disgust of Bulstrode, who made that same silly mistake of confusing the Hindu with the negro. But Harry and Frank took to him, if Bulstrode did not, and, as an expert in ju-jitsu, Inky proved quite capable of holding his own against the bullying tactics of Bulstrode.

When the Beechwood boys left, Hurree Singh stayed behind—in hiding, whereof came mysterious disappearances of grub—all duly settled for later, for there is nothing of the Bunter about Inky. It was decided that he should stay, and henceforth he was one of the little band of chums known at one time as the Famous Four—later, after Johnny Bull's accession to it, as the Famous Five. And of them all no one has been more unswearvingly loyal to Harry Wharton's leadership than he. Inky, at least, is always sure that, even when Harry seems unreasonable, he is not a "meddling, spiteful rotter" as some reader lately called him, because he was not at once ready to make it up with Peter Todd!

On the whole, Inky has not figured very often as the principal character in a story. Like Johnny Bull, he has generally been shown acting in concert with his chums, making no pretensions to lead the way. But it is not essential to interest that the limelight shall be continually focused upon one, as is clearly proven by the many friends Inky has made among our readers. It must be admitted that some of them clamour for more of the limelight for him, however!

Once or twice it has happened that Inky's dusky complexion has kept him outside Remove japes. It would have given the thing away completely if he had been among the disguised juniors, who, as the Cliff House girls, played and best the Highcliffe nuts at footer. Nor was he there when the "girls' school" took down Dick Rake & Co. But he has been in most of the other chief doings of his Form, and he played no unworthy innings for his side when he aided in Bob Cherry's barring-out.

There was a time when he revealed unexpected skill as a goalkeeper, but nowadays he plays in the forward line. He is quite the best bowler in the Remove, too.

When Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, left Greyfriars for a while to attend the great Delhi Durbar as head of his race, he warned Wharton to beware of Bulstrode. The warning was not an unneeded one; but when Inky came back it was to find the Bounder antagonising his chum, and it was only Inky's race against time which saved Harry from being ousted from the Form captaincy by the schemer.

Yet the Bounder did not realise how deep-rooted was the loyalty of the Indian lad, and when he started his Greyfriars Crusaders team he was foolish enough to believe that he could detach Inky from the brotherhood by persuading him that Johnny Bull had been allowed to usurp his place in his absence.

"I could not be cadful and liarful enough to please the esteemed Bounder," said Inky, in his weird and wonderful style.

Of the weirdness and wonderfulness of that style few better samples could be given than this, Inky's speech at Wun Lung's "house-warming" in Study 14: "In every department of his honourable nature the worthy Wun Lung is redounded. Shall I point to his sincere friendliness to his august chums, or to his worthy manfulness in every particular that should grace the humane nature? Is it not certain that if the votefulness should be taken unanimously all those who agreed that our friend is a sincerely great and truly august person would be a large and working majority? Is it not certainfully established that, as your poet Shakespeare says, 'Take him for all in all, we shall never look upon his like, which is rounded by a sleep'?" And so on, for there is not space to give the speech in full.

Harry saved Inky when, through German intrigue, he was kidnapped by the rascally Ram Das. It was at heavy risk to himself; but when did Wharton shirk danger? And what is there he would not do for a chum? He may be a trifle too masterful at times, may think his way the only way, but his faith and friendship are "fixed as any star."

And so likewise are the faith and the friendship of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, junior of Greyfriars, and prince of good fellows!

No. 20.—HORACE COKER.

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Bob Musters and Ted O'Brien, an Irish boy, escape from the clutches of Faik, a rascally adventurer who is in pursuit of a secret treasure in the African wilds. Faik is working in collusion with Jasper Orme, Bob's cousin, at Cape Town. The two lads are captured by the natives of the Inrobi tribe, who also surround Faik's party. Faik has done the old chief of the tribe a bad turn in the old days, and tries to place the guilt on Bob; but, thanks to a Scotchman named MacGregor, and a friendly native—Mendi—he fails in his plot. Bob is acclaimed chief on the death of Kazna, the former leader. The comrades save Faik from the vengeance of the tribe, then push on after the treasure, but are waylaid by Mopo and a strong force. Mopo, who is Bob's deadly rival, is beaten off, with his braves, and Galza, a messenger from the Inrobi, comes to their camp.

(Now Read On.)

Galza's Story.

"O master, thy servant would speak to thee!" he said. "For many days and nights he hath travelled to fulfil the command laid upon him!"

"And what is that?" Bob asked.

Galza put his hand across his forehead as a token of loyalty.

"Young white chief, who ruleth over our tribe, Kampa, the great medicine-man, who is head of us all in thy absence, bade me seek thee out. Therefore I am here. For the prophecy that we shall be ruled by a white chief must be fulfilled, and if thy head fall from thy shoulders, then how canst thou rule?"

"No way that I know!" Ted chuckled. "All you chaps have a queer way of getting things off your chests. Don't ask any more conundrums, but get on with the message!"

"Let the chiel gang his ain gait, Ted," MacGregor said. "They have their own way of telling things. If you cut in he'll only answer you, and this message must be verra pressing!"

"I had hoped they had forgotten all that rot about my being the chief!" Bob groaned. "I wish they would chuck it!"

"Mon, it's a good thing for us they havena," MacGregor remarked, "for, like as not, we're in great danger of which we canna know onything! They wadna have sent this fellow along if their great interest was not to see you were all richt. Dinna fash yerself noo. Find out what the puir black has got in his mind!"

Bob nodded.

"O Galza, fleeter than the deer, and more daring than the lion, I thank you for that you have travelled so far to find me. And now I will hearken and be silent, that without more ado I may hear all. Speak, then, from thy heart!"

He looked at the Scot.

"Verra weel!" said MacGregor.

"I will speak, for my heart is with the young white chief who braves the darkness and witchery of the great forests!" Galza answered. "An enemy is on thy trail. This I know with my own eyes, but the news also is known to the tribe. And when the great Kampa had the tidings, he, who is wise, could not rest, for he knew the evil mind of Mopo. And, also, he read the stars, and his fear of the whiteface now with Mopo was confirmed. So he sent out scouts to follow Mopo, and thus did they see the meeting between the twain!"

"Hoots, mon! We're getting at it noo!" MacGregor murmured.

"Then did the scouts return, bringing with them one who had been led into folly by Mopo," Galza continued. "Nor was he put to the torture, for he spoke, and Kampa, who can read all men's hearts, said he spoke true. And he told of Mopo's evil plans, and how the whiteface had sent some of Mopo's men with a message far away to the land washed by the great waters, across which the white men here came from all time."

"He means Cape Town!" MacGregor murmured.

"And lo! this whiteface has a friend there whose heart must be black as this forest, for the message was that men and guns and a waggon should come hither to follow the young white chief. And thus were great riches to come to these men, and Mopo, and those who were with him, were to be rewarded. And when Kampa heard this he sent me hither, that you might be warned!"

He stopped, and again passed his hand across his forehead.

Bob drew a deep breath.

"Faik has sent back word to my cousin, Jasper Orme," he said. "Orme is to send up a relief-party. Mr. MacGregor, your theory about Faik's influence over Mopo is now made clear. Don't you think so?"

"I do; and that is why these fellows keep hanging on to us. And they'll never leave off until——" He broke off and chuckled. "If once we get through this forest—and we havna very far to go now—they'll hae the surprise of their lives!" he chuckled. "But sooner than let us escape they'll put up a terrific fight!"

He began pacing up and down, deep in thought. Then he wheeled round.

"Once we win clear o' this forest, we come out near at once by the bank of the lake," he said. "We then hae three days' trek across open country. I dinna think we are in much danger whilst we are here, for they hae once attacked our new fortified camp, and have been so badly worsted that they won't like to try that game on again!"

"Do you think that they will wait for the gang from Cape Town?" Ted asked.

"That may be the present idea of that scoundrel Faik, but he'll get a big disappointment, I ken!" MacGregor replied. "Faik doesna ken what's on the far side of this forest, but I do. It's not that I'm bothering my puir brain aboot!"

"Tell us what's in your mind?" Bob asked eagerly.

"When we are oot in the open country we winna be able to defend ourselves as we are doing here," MacGregor replied. "For one thing, there winna be the trees to make a wee bit barricade. They'll see that, and Mopo will come for us. Those three nichts will be a very anxious time, laddie!"

"We'll find some way of dealing with them!" Ted said.

"We'll e'en dae our best, I'm thinking!" the old Scotchman replied. "We've time enough to think oot our plan. And now, about Galza. Shall we send him back to his ain folks, or keep him wi' us for a bit? He might come in verra useful!"

"In that case, we'll keep him with us!" Bob agreed.

"Good! That's settled, laddie! Now let us get on with our work. We maun fix up the camp for the nicht, and we want oor supper. I'd like a hot dish of parritch, but we maun joost mak' do with what there is. I'll light a fire and put down the kettle. Ah, but it's a woeful country, after all, and I often wish, laddie, I was back at hame, with a bit of Glasgie sneeshin' to my pooch, and the auld croft looking sae comfortable!"

The Pursuit and the Escape.

The old Scotchman's cheery counsel found willing hearers. The thought that before long they would be out of the gloom, in which they had toiled so long, heartened them all. Bob and Ted worked even harder than ever during the next few days; and at last the hour came when the forest around grew brighter. They were nearing the end of their journey through the wooded wilderness.

Their hearts were thrilled. Ted cheered with delight when in the distance they saw the sun's rays shining on the undergrowth. They hoped to get into the open country before night, but in this they were disappointed. Five hours' work on the following morning, however, brought them to the edge. Dropping their axes, they stepped into the open land.

The sun beat down, sending a glow through their veins. They gazed up at the blue sky, at the waters of the lake, gleaming like silver, and away to the horizon, across green grass, and to the mountains in the distance. They felt like prisoners set free, and, with eyes dancing and faces all smiles, they shook hands all round.

"Isn't it grand!" Ted cried. "It makes a fellow feel fit to face anything! The blood is tingling through my veins, and I'm that elated that I can't keep still! Who would ever have believed that that dark, damp forest could have made one feel so miserable?"

"Ay, mon, you're talking as I did when I came oot of it the first time," MacGregor remarked. "I kenned what we were up against on this lang journey, but I wouldna say a woord for fear of throwing a damper over you two laddies. But I needna have been so cautious. You're both game to tackle anything, I ken noo."

Bob was gazing at the lake.

"Does it run much farther than this?" he asked.

"I canna say," the old Scotsman replied. "We hadna to look for the end, and we weren't just exploring for the love of it, not then. And we don't mean to do that noo. We're going straight for that treasure, and Mopo is coming

fast behind, and it's that villain we have to reckon on. I've been thinking things oot, and if we peg away hard we may be able to get oot of his clutches the third day from noo. That only gives him two nichts in which to attack us."

"And how shall we defend ourselves?" Bob asked.

"By strategy! That's the verra best suggestion I can give ye. We'll make the best camp we can, but we winna sleep in it. Instead, we'll separate, and meet in the morning. That's when Galza will come in handy. I'll take him, and do you lads take Mendi. We can trust the two of them to bring us together in the morning.

"Good idea!" Bob agreed. "Mr. MacGregor, you said once you were afraid you would be a drag on us, but I guess it's far from that."

The old Scotsman smiled.

"I've got veldt craft, of course, through lang experience," he replied; "but I'm no' much verra good when it comes to hard work. And where would I be without you two laddies? I'd be eating out my heart, ending my days with the poor, benighted Inrobi. But we'll talk no more, for we maun keep pressing on. We'll travel as far and as fast as we can. You see yon ridge? It's about twelve miles awa'. We'll make for that, and then I'll show you what we'd better be doing."

They slung their axes into the cart, and now tramped on in full enjoyment of the open country. After walking six miles they rested, and, looking back, they could not see Mopo and his followers. Again they pressed on, and about an hour before sunset they got to the ridge. MacGregor at once explained the idea in his mind.

The two lads were to build the camp, with the assistance of Mendi, some few hundred yards further on, while he and Galza remained on the ridge to prevent a rush by the savages till nightfall. Bob and Ted set to work whilst there yet was daylight. Twice they heard the sharp crack of a rifle, and knew that the savages had been advancing, and that MacGregor was holding them back. They completed the camp, lit a bonfire, and then waited. In a couple of hours' time MacGregor and Galza joined them.

They had their supper, and allowed the fire to die down. Then they all crept away, and Bob and Ted, following Mendi, went down by the lake. Some hours passed before they saw that the camp was being attacked. They heard the savage shouts of the enemy on finding that they had been taken in. From that till dawn was a very anxious time; but with the coming of daylight immediate danger passed away. And Mendi, as MacGregor had anticipated, was able to lead them to the spot where he was still resting.

Thus reunited, they continued the journey, pressing on as fast as they could. MacGregor, wishing to change his tactics and thus baffle their pursuers, now left both Mendi and Galza as a rearguard to watch the enemy. That night they did not make a camp, but hid on the bank of the river. Mendi and Galza kept close on the track of the enemy, searching for them; thus they could give warning if the savages found the white men's spoor.

Fortunately, the night was very dark, and the tribesmen failed. Starting at the first hint of dawn, the small party pressed on. They had a march of twenty miles before them, and the old Scot was unable to hide his anxiety. Once Bob asked him the reason.

"Because, having failed twice at night, they will attack us in daylight noo and chance a'," he replied. "And a' depends on oor speed. No doubt we could bring down a good few of them, but still there wad be enough left to wipe us all oot."

All through the heat of the tropical day they trudged along, often looking back, and the evening was not very far advanced when Mendi detected the enemy a few miles behind.

"Young chief, they are chanting the battle-song, for though the wind does not carry the noise, yet do I know by the swinging of the axes," he said. "And Mopo leads, and they are full of fight. Have we far to go? For in less than an hour from now they will be upon us."

MacGregor was seated in the cart. The mule was quite exhausted, and unable to quicken his pace. Bob looked very grave.

"What is that chiel Mendi saying?" the old Scotsman asked.

"Mopo is coming along," the lad answered, with as much indifference as he could assume.

MacGregor shaded his eyes with his hand. He glanced back, and then scanned the view ahead.

"In another half-hoor he might put on all the speed he has and yet we would be safe as if at home," he said. "It's touch and go, lads! I'm too auld to run, and this poor animal is dead fagged. Hadna you a' better go on ahead, and I'll gie you your instructions?"

"We haven't the least idea of doing that!" Bob said firmly.

"No fear!" Ted agreed. "We stick together, Mr. MacGregor!"

MacGregor drew a deep breath.

"Then it will be a tough fecht, and I wish you wad leave me," he replied. "I'm auld, and little eno' it matters what happens to me. But as you won't rin, then we'll have to fight a rearguard action, that's all."

"Good!" Bob said. "Ted and I will drop behind and keep them back."

"Don't wait too long; always keep half a mile from them," MacGregor urged, his voice now vibrating with anxiety. "And juist remember this—if you go doon, I mean to go doon, too. So there's no use in your thinking of giving up your ain lives for me. That I winna have!"

"All right! We'll do all we can to safeguard ourselves," Bob replied. "Now get Mendi to push on the mule as fast as he can, and leave the rest to us."

The two lads allowed the cart to go ahead, and then kept within six hundred yards of it. They spoke very little; they knew they were close to death, but neither felt fear. The savages, pressing on, saw them more clearly, and before long their wild war-cries floated across with the wind. Often the two boys looked back. Finally Bob stopped.

"We'll have to send some bullets into them," he said. "Kneel down, Ted, and take good aim. If we knock one of them over, it may stop them for a bit."

They fired, and one of the savages flung up his arms and fell. The others gathered around him. Bob and Ted jumped to their feet and ran on. But the respite was short. And now the mule-cart, with MacGregor, was ascending an incline.

Again the two lads stopped and fired, but neither hit. The savages ran on the faster, their shouts increasing in fury.

Bob turned.

"We must outpace them and fire again," he said; "and in any case we must remember our promise to MacGregor, to be with him at the end."

The cart was now near the top of the incline. As the two lads sped over the ground it reached the crest, went over it, and disappeared. Up they toiled, and then saw that MacGregor was driving it straight for the water.

"What can his game be?" Ted panted.

"I don't know. Let's have another shot," Bob replied. "Take steady aim."

Again they fired, and this time they brought down two of the enemy, but without staying the progress of the rest.

"It's all up!" Ted gasped. "Let's join the old man."

MacGregor had reached the bank by this time, and was out of the cart. He was waving to them to come on, and the savages were topping the crest. Down the incline they pelted. An axe flashed between them.

And the old Scotsman's voice came to them, hoarse and shaking.

"We're safe, laddies—safe!" he cried excitedly. "Hae nae fear, but follow me. I'm going in, and I winna come up, but I ken weel what I'm aboot."

Into the water he dived, and Mendi and Galza followed him. The two lads could hardly believe what they had heard. They wondered if he had suddenly taken leave of his senses. They rushed to the bank and gazed.

There was an ever-widening circle in the water, and that was all. Neither of the three who had taken the plunge appeared. Another axe flashed by Bob's head and splashed into the lake. Now the savages were only twenty yards behind.

"Are they drowned?" Ted cried.

"If they are, that end would be better than torture at Mopo's hands," Bob replied. "Ted, will you follow the old man? And if this is to be the end——"

"Follow! Of course I will! Come on!" the Irish boy replied.

They raised their arms; they poised their figures. They dived.

And they, too, disappeared in the waters of the lake before the amazed eyes of the Inrobi tribesmen.

The Mystery of the Lake.

Headed by Mopo, the savages rushed to the spot where Bob and Ted had disappeared, and gazed down into the water, their axes poised ready to hurl. But the spreading rings gradually died away. Once again the lake lay placid as a pool. And not one of the fugitives had come up!

The savages stood amazed, almost terrified. Over the top of the hill Faik appeared, toiling laboriously after them.

"They are dead!" Mopo said. "The great spirit of the deep has seized them. They cannot rise. I am chief of the Inrobi! Thus hath that foolish prophecy of a white chief come to naught. Now shall I rule, and woe to that evil medicine-man, Kampa, and all others who have opposed me. As for you, my slaves, obey on the word, or you will find my axe is sharp!"

Faik panted up.

"Where are they?" he gasped. "What are you fools doing, gazing like pelicans into the lake?"

"Whiteface, you speak to the great chief of the Inrobi," Mopo said, with a new dignity. "And he is one who will not brook insult. Therefore keep a guard on your tongue!"

"You chief of the Inrobi?" Faik spluttered. "That may be when this gang are done with. No humbug, Mopo! If you try that, you won't get the reward that will make you a power in the land; but, instead, you will be forced to wander as an outcast, for your people have put a price upon your head. Drop all that talk, and tell me what you are fooling round after here?"

Mopo fingered the blade of his axe, and there was a tone in his voice boding no good to Faik as he spoke.

"Whiteface, you dare too much!" he said. "The young chief and his friend and old Barelegs, and those traitors Mendi and Galza, are down below. Rather did they seek death than to face my wrath. And as they are gone whither we do not choose to follow, how now can you find the treasure, for it was they who were to show the way to it? You are now as nothing. To my people I return!"

Faik's jaw dropped. He stared blankly into the lake.

"They're drowned?" he gasped. "Are you certain they did not swim away?"

"They are held below by the spirit."

Faik's lips began to twitch. He walked along the bank, and gazed hard at the water; then he stood up, and began to stamp the ground.

"And you, great Mopo, chief of the Inrobi, and my friend for ever, were you near at hand when the spirit took them?" he asked, changing his tone.

The savage smiled, but his eyes glinted. Faik's new civility did not deceive him.

"Lo; I saw all!" he replied. "They sank, and they were held."

Faik's face changed.

"They are not dead!" he said confidently.

"Then would'st thou like to follow them, for in that I can assist thee?" Mopo chuckled.

Faik was evidently taken aback by the suggestion.

"No, good Mopo. With thee would I stay, so that we win great glory and riches together," he answered ingratiatingly. "Nor have we long to wait. For I know the ways of my own race. They will make big talk with the spirit, and he will let them go, and then we will follow them again. Have I not always spoken wisdom? Why should I be wrong now?"

Mopo lifted his axe to his shoulder, and his lip curled.

"Thine is the wisdom of the ass and of the goat," he said, "and thy courage is as the pigeon's, and thy heart is like to the heart of a serpent. That do I know full well! And all that thou hast said hath come to naught, and thy lies are many as the leaves in the forest. But through thee have I been avenged. And great glory is now mine, and the goods of all my tribe will be mine also. But with thee have I done, for thy use is ended. Therefore, begone, or stay here, as thou wishest. But if thou darest to approach my tribe again—for thee it is death!"

Faik trembled with fear.

"They who have gone will return, and then shalt thou be richer than ever," he urged.

"Peace, fool!" Mopo retorted. "Thy brain is as an addled egg!"

He waved to his warriors.

"Dogs, follow me!" he commanded loftily. And without looking back he began to ascend the hill.

Faik watched until they all had crossed the crest and he could see them no longer. Then he sat down heavily on the bank, and spluttered savage oaths.

Meantime, what had happened to Bob and Ted? With an unwavering confidence in MacGregor they had plunged into the lake. Down they went into the cold water—down, and ever down. The instinct of self-preservation made them strike out, but for a second or two they could not move. Their chests began to be racked with pain, and their heads throbbed violently.

They struggled to rise to the surface, but could not. They struggled harder yet; but they were held as in a vice. Now their senses began to dull, and their arms grew weak. Then they went down again. Swiftly and more swiftly they were dragged downwards. They were whirled round and round. At length, sure that death must come, they longed that it might come swiftly.

Then they saw, as it were, myriad lights, clouds of gold and amber and magenta and rose, and the pain died away, and a drowsy peacefulness stole over them. But suddenly they were whisked sideways at terrific speed, and there was the roar of thunder in their ears, and they stopped with a thud, and began to gasp.

They lay still, clear of the water, but fighting for breath. It came back to them at length, and they began to distinguish things. Voices sounded. They saw a beam of light, like a lantern suspended very high up. And they found that they could move their limbs. Then they heard a voice—a voice they knew—that of MacGregor!

"Ay, Mendi, the mule and the cart are gone, I dinna doubt," he was saying. "But I reckoned on that from the start. "'Twas the same the last time I came here. And we're all dripping wet, and there's no way that I ken to licht a fire for a spell. But when the young chief and his friend begin to buck up we'll get a move on us, and that will help to dry us."

"O, Barelegs, great miracle worker, to whom Kampa is as but a child!" Mendi answered. "Never have I known such wonders, nor have I ever seen the waters thus defied. And now there is naught that I can fear, for who before ever lived through peril such as this? But still, my heart is sore, for my people are lost to me for ever!"

"Not if you dinna show the white feather," MacGregor chuckled. "I've been here before, and come oot alive, but it's an experience to shake a mon's nerve. Eh, mon, for a' that, it didna last but a few seconds. But ye're a benighted heathen, an' ye dinna see things richt. Hi there, Bob! I heard you groan a few seconds ago. Have you got back your wind yet?"

Bob struggled to sit up, and stretched out his hand, trying to avoid hitting his head against a rock. When his mind was clear he was overwhelmed with astonishment.

"This beats me!" he began, and his voice sounded odd to himself. "And I ought to feel half stifled so far below the surface, and I don't."

"The air here is as good as on you veldt," MacGregor said. "And ye, Ted! Hoo are ye?"

Ted's voice came uncertain out of the darkness.

"Are we alive?" he asked.

"Of course we are!" MacGregor chuckled.

"Are you sure of that? For I'm not!"

"You couldna be talkin' if you werna alive."

"Humph! There's something in that," Ted replied. "Still, this may be some other life. It's a new world, anyhow. However, alive or dead, I don't feel too bad. Is it safe to stir? Mebbe I'll float away somewhere else if I do."

"Ye can jump up and walk away to the richt for miles without rinnin' into onything," MacGregor said cheerily. "But if ye move a yard to the left ye'll be into the water."

"Thanks! No more whirlpools for me at present. I've had enough. Well, here goes. I'll find out if my legs are any use. Ah! That's quite decent! I'm on my feet, and now, if you'll give me your address, I'll call and leave my card without delay."

He crossed over, and sank down by MacGregor. In a few seconds they were joined by Bob. By this time their astonishment was giving place to a deep interest, combined with no small amount of anxiety. Also, they were beginning to see more clearly in the gloom.

High above their heads great walls formed an arch, and far as the beam of light they seemed to run back. The walls were bevelled smooth, and where the light shed its rays strongly they looked as if a yellow pattern had been traced upon them. Bob spoke after gazing long and silently.

"All this could not have been excavated by men, surely?" he asked.

"Ye're wrong in that. I thought the same at first," the old Scot replied. "Many thousands of years ago men were working here and taking out gold."

"Is this a gold mine?" Ted gasped.

"It was once, but maist of the stuff has gone," MacGregor answered. "It's a fact, now known to everyone, that the Phœnicians came to Africa, and took back tons of gold. Some of them settled here, too. But they a' died out. And nane could explain how they had had the gold to make the beautiful things they made, until it was found that they got it in Africa."

"I remember reading about that," Bob said.

"And nane kens why the Phœnician race here in Africa should have died out, and why there shouldn't be a trace of them left," MacGregor continued. "But I found out one reason onyhow, when I came along here."

"Tell us more, Mr. MacGregor," Ted urged, as the old man fell into a reverie.

"Ye won't be long here before ye see the evidence of a gigantic upheaval," MacGregor said. "An immense volcano must have arisen, and then burst. There was only a small lake before. There was nae lake at a' where we are now, nor for miles away. That volcanic eruption changed the whole face of the country for hundreds of miles around. And it wiped out the Phœnicians who had settled all round here to get the gold."

"And is there any gold left?" Ted asked.

The old man chuckled.

"Eh, mon, but you have a practical mind," he said. "And that's more like an Englishman than an Irishman. Now, if it was Bob who asked that——"

"Don't forget the Scot," Ted retorted jokingly. "You were the first to come here! And now, after what you've said, I'm longing to have a look round."

"Then we'll get on the way," MacGregor said, rising. "Gold! There are tons of it, mon! And everything else is wonderful, for you're going to step into fairyland. We go this way."

He walked some yards, stopped, and laughed.

"What's amusing you?" Ted asked.

The old man stroked his grey beard.

"There's the funny side to a' things," he said. "I'm thinking o' that villain Faik! I'd like weel to see his face. We've gi'en him the fair knock-out, and I'm wondering hoo he feels."

"Not over happy, I expect," Ted remarked. "But this time, at all events, we've done with him."

"Aiblins!" MacGregor said thoughtfully. "Aiblins, my lad. But I'm none sae sure o' that!"

(Continued on page 20.)

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MAGNET, May 12th, 1917.

IN A LAND OF PERIL.

(Continued from page 18.)

MacGregor Explains.

In single file they walked towards the beam of light. As they drew nearer, the brightness increased, and they could now discern clearly the gold vein running through the granite walls. At last they were under the light, and looked up.

Far away above their heads the sun was shining!

"Great Scott!" Ted gasped. "I had no idea that it was this we would see!"

"And what did you expect to find?" MacGregor chuckled. "Ye didn't think, did ye, that there was onyone hereabouts to light a lantern to guide us on our way?"

Ted laughed.

"I didn't try to solve the mystery," he replied. "After a chap has been a water nymph against his will for no end of a time his brain isn't taking on conundrums."

"That must have been the shaft of the mine," Bob suggested.

He was examining the orifice closely.

"That's so," the old Scotchman agreed. "This talk of our finding out so much nowadays is a wee bit overdone, ye ken. In some way the Phœnicians learned all about boring for gold. Why, it's been proved beyond dispute that the Egyptians used the telephone! It's a true old saying that there's naething new under the sun. But perhaps I'm wrong, for now I'm going to show you what you'll never find in any book. And some of it isna too cheerful."

They went on.

"If one got up that shaft we've just passed, where would he come out?" Bob asked.

"I can only guess," MacGregor answered. "I fancy he wad come on to the level from which we jumped into the lake."

"That's what I've been thinking," the lad agreed. "And what puzzles me is that no one has discovered the opening to the shaft and come down through it."

"I canna tell why that is," MacGregor answered. "I meant to try and find oot. But just aboot that time we were attacked, and my comrades wiped oot, and I wandered off to try and save my life. And was glad when at last I got to the Inrobi, an' found friends. But when we leave this place we'll have a search."

Mendi and Galza were keeping close to the Britishers, like children afraid of the dark. Now Mendi spoke.

"O, Barelegs, wisest of men," he groaned, "and is it fated that we dive into the water again, so that I may see my tribe? For if that be so, then my tribe is no more to me. Here will I live."

MacGregor tugged at his beard.

"Of a truth, Mendi, ye go to look for ill-fortune," he replied. "Thou art hungry. Then is it not enough that thy hunger be appeased? What is to-morrow when to-day is full of trouble? And thy present trouble is not for long. For soon thou shalt taste food."

"And don't keep treading on my heels, old chap," Ted added.

But he and Bob exchanged significant glances, for they saw that the old Scotchman was keeping back something. It was clear that before they could get up to the heights again big danger would have to be faced. Yet, as MacGregor apparently did not care to tell what it was, they hesitated to ask him.

There was also another subject on which Bob was most anxious for an explanation.

"Mr. MacGregor, how did you come to find out that if we jumped into the lake one would be carried down here?" he inquired.

The old man answered with shining eyes.

"That's an unco' interesting business," he replied. "I told you, when first we met, that I had made a wheen inquiries. I first got the incentive to seek out this place from calling one night in a storm at an old Boer's shack, and asking him to put me up for the night. He was a morose old fellow, and left me to myself. To kill time, I looked around, and found some books. One of them was fu' o' very old tales aboot a wonderful explorer."

"Yes?"

"I read those tales, and they seemed to me like fables; but somehow I thought there was truth here and there in them. I couldna get them oot of my mind. They were aboot this lake, and how the explorer had fallen into it, and come into a new country. After that I heard noo and again more precise acounts aboot the lake. And in a certain house I was shown a piece of gold plate; and experts said the gold wasn't quite the same as any other known anywhere. I put a' this together.

"Then in Cape Town I heard more, and we set out to locate this treasure. I remembered what I had read in that book. We came to the lake, and my companions thought I had gane daft."

(Next week's issue will contain another splendid instalment of this exciting story.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"HIS FATHER'S HONOUR!"

By Frank Richards.

Next week's fine story tells of the coming to Greyfriars of an ambitious boy from across the Atlantic, who aspires to take Harry Wharton's place as Form captain. Quite lately, in a series of stories, you have read how Peter Todd and Percy Bolsover tried conclusions with Wharton. But this new attempt is on different lines. Tracey is practically a stranger, and, without strong backing by someone of more influence, would have no chance of success, "well-heeled"—in Fishy's phraseology—though he is. He gets that backing by blackmail, forcing a fellow who carries great weight with the Remove to help him by threatening to expose a shady episode in the past of that fellow's father if he refuses. Who the junior thus forced into a most unwelcome and unpleasant position is, and what the result is, you will learn next week.

POOR FISHY!

From Fulham one who signs himself "A Delighted British Boy"—but he seems to have taken some trouble to acquire a certain degree of familiarity with the great Amurrican language—sends me quite an amusing letter. He writes:

"I am a new reader of the MAGNET, but I just must say how good it is right through, with one exception—it is unfair to American boys, as typified by Fish. I happen to know several boys from across the big drink, and they are all good and white right through. There are others, of course. Some of us Britishers are not all we should be, such as the hoodlums over on the East Side, where you get sandbagged and robbed, and perhaps likely gunned. I read something about Fishy's weird American language. Well, if Fishy's hot air ain't the right brand who ought to be clubbed for it—Fishy, or the professor of the college where he's loading his education? He ought to be pitied and helped, as he comes from one of the waste places of the earth outside of our country—from the land of the wooden nutmeg. Instead, he gets biffed so hard and often by the other guys that it's a wonder he ain't soaked for keeps. It gets my goat to read that Fishy is rated lower than Bunter, who is only a case for cookies and candy, or the work-shy Norman stiff, Mauleverer, with no more go to him than a damp squib on a wet Fourth, as Sam Weller would say. But everything else is lots of fun. Wharton's hero crowd, including the man and brother, is the real thing. The Wharton boy himself is IT, and the whole fixing is literary pie."

This may need a little translation for some of our readers who don't know "Amurrican." "East Sido" is "East End"; "gunned" is "shot"; "hot air," "big talk"; "loading his education," "getting educated." The passage about the waste places of the earth is elaborate sarcasm (U.S. brand). "Wooden nutmeg" would take too long to explain, but it stands for the sharpest of sharp-dealing: "soaked for keeps" is equivalent to "done in," I take it; "work-shy Norman stiff" may be translated "lazy aristocrat." Sam Weller wouldn't have said anything about "a wet Fourth"—Fourth of July, the great national American celebration, is meant. What did Sam know or care for that? "The man and brother" is our good old Inky.

Poor Fish! One is very sorry for him just now. He is no longer a "nootral"! But even as an ally I cannot prefer him to Mauly.

THE NEW RALLYING.

Still, it's good to know he can't be neutral any more. Fish is not a type, as has already been pointed out; he is just "Fisher Tarleton Fish, from Noo York."

"Old Glory" waves above millions of Americans as unlike Fish as Bunter is unlike Bob Cherry, and I think those Americans must look up to their flag now with a new affection and a new respect.

For now the Stars and Stripes waves beside the Union Jack, the tricolours of France and Russia and Italy and Belgium, the flags of Rumania and heroic Serbia and brave little Montenegro and loyal Portugal, the Rising Sun standard of Japan, in the War of Right! And other flags are being unfurled beside them—the flag of Cuba, to whom the great Republic gave freedom; of Panama, the creation of the U.S.; of Brazil, the daughter of Portugal. And there may be more before this is read—China's, almost certainly; perhaps Spain's and those of Spanish America—the Argentine and Chile and Peru and Bolivia!

Your Editor

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