

# BILLY BUNTER'S BIRTHRIGHT!



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## THE HEROIC BUNTER!

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

# BILLY BUNTER'S BIRTHRIGHT!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Sammy Wants to Know!

"**W**HERE are you going, Billy?" Sammy Bunter stood in the old gateway of Greyfriars. He put that question to his major, who was in the act of going out.

Billy Bunter was walking quickly, and with an expression on his face which showed that he was on pleasure bent. And, if that were the case, Sammy didn't mean to be out of the running.

Billy rolled to a halt as Sammy hailed him.

"I'm just off to Friar-dale," he said.

"What for?"

"To—have a look at the shops."

Sammy chuckled.

"You can't pull the wool over my eyes," he said. "You're going for a feed. I know that jolly well. And I'm not going to be out of it—mind that! It is a feed, isn't it?"

"Yes!" growled Bunter.

"Got your meat-card?"

"No."

"And your sugar-card?"

"No."

"And your margarine-ticket?"

"Oh, ddy up! There's a new restaurant opened in Friar-dale, and I've made arrangements with the proprietor to have a jolly good feed this afternoon."

"On tick?"

"No, fathead!"

"Been robbing a bank, then?"

"A certain new kid advanced me five bob as a temporary loan," said the Owl of the Remove, with dignity.

"He, he, he! He's a mug if he believes that yarn, Billy! Look here, old chap. I'm coming along to this restaurant."

Sammy Bunter protested.

"You can come along," said Bunter, who really had no choice in the matter. "but you're not going to stuff yourself at my expense!"

"Well, you're about as mean as they make 'em!" said Sammy, in disgust. "But I ain't going to let that choke me off. Come on!"

Major and minor rolled away together.

It was many a long day since Billy Bunter had been privileged to enjoy a really good feed. Famine seemed to have descended upon Uncle Clegg's; and the shops in Courtfield had also suffered. Now that some enterprising person had come to Friar-dale and started a refreshment-house on a solid basis, Billy Bunter felt considerably bucked, though he ruefully reflected that five bob wouldn't go very far now that Sammy was with him.

The restaurant proprietor, anxious to work up a good connection, had promised to give Billy Bunter a first-rate feed to set the ball rolling. It was a small, greasy-looking man, with an expansive smile—not the sort of man any decent person would want to be; but then, Billy Bunter was but a doubtfully decent person at best.

The new man was civility itself when the two Greyfriars juniors rolled in.

"Good-afternoon, my young friend!" he said affably. "You have brought your brother along, I see! Splendid! Like you, he is remarkable for good looks and a certain dignity of manner!"

"Thanks!" said Billy Bunter. "But we came here for toast and sausage-rolls, not for flattery. Cut the cackle, and come to the 'osset!"

"This way!" said the proprietor. "I'd prefer you to have your meal in the privacy of the parlour, because there will be some more customers in the shop presently, and they may think you're—ahem!—exceeding the speed-limit. Make yourselves comfortable, young gentlemen. What are you having?"

"Ham-and-eggs, to begin with!" said Sammy Bunter quickly. "Then some sausage-rolls, then treacle-tart, pineapple, and a plum-cake."

Billy Bunter protested.

"Oh, really, Sammy, we can't afford to be so beastly extravagant. Funds won't run to it!"

"Oh, yes, they will!" said Sammy cheerfully. "They'll have to, anyway. I feel in great form!"

With a groan Billy Bunter submitted. There were occasions when Sammy exercised a peculiar and subtle influence over him. And this was one of them.

The ham-and-eggs arrived, so did the sausage-rolls, and in due course the treacle-tart. The Food Controller seemed to have no terrors for the oily proprietor, who was all out for custom, and foresaw great possibilities so far as Bunter major and minor were concerned.

For some moments there was no talk whatever, though jaws were not idle. The Bunters were going strong.

The Owl of the Remove was half-way through his treacle-tart when his eye lighted upon a newspaper which lay on the table.

Billy Bunter seldom worried his head about newspapers; but a headline caught his attention, and he snatched up the paper and started to read it. As he did his little round eyes fairly gleamed behind his spectacles:

### "DEATH OF SIR FOULKES BUNTER.

#### "Romance of Missing Heir.

"We regret to announce that Sir Foulkes Bunter has passed away at his residence, Chuckfield Place, Sussex, after a short illness.

"It is interesting to recall that Sir Foulkes' eldest son, W. G. Bunter, mysteriously disappeared several years ago.

"Rumour has reached us that the will of the late Sir Foulkes Bunter provides that the whole of the property and estates shall go to the missing heir, if he can be found.

"Any communication which may throw light upon the mystery of W. G. Bunter's whereabouts should be addressed to Messrs. Seacombe & Fynde, Solicitors, Chuckfield."

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

The paragraph fairly took Bunter's breath away.

For a moment he was too dazed to think clearly. And then great possibilities dawned upon Bunter's slow brain.

What a golden opportunity of stepping into a vast fortune! What was to prevent his announcing himself as the missing heir?

Billy Bunter actually left off eating his treacle-tart in his excitement.

"Hallo?" said Sammy, looking intently at his major. "What's up?"

"N-n-nothing!" said the Owl of the Remove hastily.

"Rats! You can't kid me, Billy. I wasn't born yesterday! What's in that paper?"

"Mind your own bizney!"

Sammy Bunter made a grab at the paper, and his major did the same. It came in half. But Sammy got the half that mattered. He caught sight of the paragraph announcing the death of Sir Foulkes Bunter and read it, keeping his major at bay with the toasting-fork.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Sammy. "This is some sensation, if you like! W. G. Bunter—the heir of Chuckfield Place!"

"Gimme that paper!" howled Bunter.

"Not just yet, Billy, old top! And keep your distance, or I'll tiddle you in the ribs with this toasting-fork. I say! I see what your little game is now! You're going to make out that you are the missing heir!"

"Not so loud, fathead!" said Bunter warningly. "Walls have ears, you know!"

"Well, said Sammy, as he finished the paragraph, "we've struck oil this time, and no mistake! I'm going halves with you over this business!"

"Who said so?"

"I did, of course! Getting deaf, fathead? We'll leave Greyfriars, and go down and manage the family estates between us. It'll be top-hole—what?"

Billy Bunter groaned. Sammy's determination to have a finger in the pie quite nettled him.

But it was no use reasoning with Sammy. The cat was out of the bag now, and the fat, grasping fag was not to be put off. Sammy Bunter would stick closer than Mary's little lamb.

"There's just one thing you've forgot," said Sammy at length. "Sir Foulkes Bunter's dead, isn't he?"

"Dead as a doornail!"

"But our pater's still alive!"

"Oh, crums! I hadn't thought of that! We shall have to say that he's an uncle of ours, that's all. We shall have to keep him in the dark about this, or else he might want to be in it. And it won't do to have many people in the swim."

"No jolly fear! Of course, if the worst comes to the worst, we shall have to let the pater know all about it, and get him to say he's merely an uncle."

"That's so. We shall have to play our cards very carefully, Sammy, or else—"

"Would you like your bill, gentlemen?"

The voice of the oily proprietor broke in upon the Bunters' conversation.

"What's the damage?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Twelve-and-tuppence-ha'penny."

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter made a wry face, and pulled out two half-crowns.

"You'll get the rest to-morrow," he said.

"Not likely! I prefer to have it now!"

"But you can't!"

"You're not leaving this establishment until you've settled up in full," said the proprietor firmly.

Billy Bunter glared at Sammy.

"It's you who let me in for this!" he growled.

"Rats! Bunk for it, you fool!" hissed Sammy.

And together the two brothers made a bolt for the door. They dashed out of the parlour, through the restaurant, and into the street.

The proprietor, baffled and indignant, came after them like a furious watchdog.

Standing invitingly in his path was a soup-tureen. The proprietor saw it not. He gave it, unintentionally, a flying kick, and lurched forward on his face, with wavelets of soup oozing around him.

The next moment Bunter major and minor were scorching down the village street as fast as their fat legs could carry them.

They were free!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### A Dreamer of Dreams!

"WELL, of all the nerve!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Of all the brazen cheek!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"This walks off gracefully with the esteemed biscuit!" concluded Hurree Singh.

The Famous Five, returned from an hour's hard hitting at the nets, had proceeded to Study No. 1 for tea. And the first thing which greeted their gaze when they threw open the door was Billy Bunter, curled up on the couch, fast asleep, with a seraphic smile upon his face.

"Seems to have mistaken this study for a doss-house!" observed Harry Wharton. "We shall have to teach the sleeping beauty otherwise!"

And the captain of the Remove advanced towards Bunter with a frown. "Hold on!" muttered Nugent. "He's talking. I saw his lips move."

The Famous Five gathered round the couch, looking down at the fat junior as if he were a patient stretched out on an operating-table.

The sleeper's smile broadened.

"Glorious!" he murmured dreamily. "Good shooting, good fishing, seven meals a day, and more cash than I know what to do with!"

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"What d'you make of that, kids?"

"Water on the brain," said Johnny Bull.

"Can't be that! Bunter hasn't got a brain! Listen!"

"It'll be absolutely top-hole!" murmured Bunter, rolling dangerously near to the edge of the couch.

"William George Bunter, owner of Chuckfield Place, Sussex! Wallowing in money and living like a giddy lord! I shall be able to buy up Mauly and Smithy and those other beggars who reckon they're rich! And Wharton and the rest will have to toe the line, too! When they know that I'm one of the wealthiest



The Brothers Bunter in flight! (See Chapter 1.)

in the land, they'll come slobbering over me, and falling on my neck for favours! But they won't get any change out of me—not likely!"

"Hark at the fat cad!" roared Johnny Bull. "Shall we slay him?"

"Shush! Let him ramble on," said Bob Cherry. "If I'm anything of a prophet, he'll land on the floor like a high-explosive bomb in a minute."

Billy Bunter rolled still further towards the edge of the couch.

"Living in the lap of luxury!" he murmured. "I shall succeed to the title, too, I expect. Sir William George Bunter! Sounds jolly good, and I don't think there'll be a hitch. I shall have to keep Sammy well in hand, that's all. My hat! Won't there be some excitement when I leave Greyfriars to take over the estates! I shall send the Head a brace of pheasants now and again, just to show there's no ill feeling. But all those mean fellows like Wharton, who button up their pockets every time I come near 'em, won't get a stiver! Serve 'em jolly well right, the rotters! I—"

Bump!

Billy Bunter gave his final lurch to starboard. He rolled over and smote the floor with a terrific concussion.

"Yarooooop!"

The Owl of the Remove was fully awake at last. He sat up and blinked at the grinning faces of the Famous Five in profound astonishment.

"Yow! What are you laughing at, you beasts? M-m-my back's broken, I believe!"

"No such luck!" said Bob Cherry. "You've merely fractured a thigh and busted a few blood-vessels!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I feel absolutely done in!"

"Leave us those magnificent estates you were babbling about, and we'll see that you have a respectable funeral," said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Slowly Billy Bunter rose to his feet, rubbing himself tenderly to make sure that each of his joints was still in position.

On his return from Friar-dale the Owl of the Remove had crept stealthily into Study No. 1, helped himself from the

cupboard, and then made himself comfortable on the couch. He had intended to have a five-minute nap, but the five minutes had lengthened into fifty; and the heavy meal he had eaten in Friar-dale had caused him to chatter in his sleep.

"So you're going to become Sir Bunter de Grunter—what?" said Bob Cherry. "You're going to fish, and shoot, and live like a fighting-cock? And we're not going to be allowed even to pat your gamekeeper's dog? For shame, Bunt!"

Billy Bunter forgot his injuries for the moment, and emitted a fat chuckle.

"This is where I come into my own," he said. "I've stood your beastly insults long enough, till I'm sick and tired of 'em. Pr'aps when I have a handle to my name you'll show me more respect."

"Yes, m'lord!" said Frank Nugent humbly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This time next week," said Billy Bunter impressively. "I shall rank with the highest in the land. I always told you I was of noble descent, but you'd never believe me. When you see me in my ancestral home you'll be sorry you ever doubted me."

"Are you keeping this up?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in surprise. "D'you mean to say it's something more than a wild dream?"

"Yes," said Bunter. "It's fact!"

The Famous Five smiled.

Bunter's facts usually ranked with the wildest fiction.

This was not the first time he had prated of ancestral halls and unlimited riches.

"Bunter never gets tired of those yarns," said Johnny Bull. "He trots 'em out as regularly as stale chestnuts, and knows jolly well that nobody believes him. Blow Bunter, and blow his vast estates! I want my tea!"

Johnny Bull moved to the cupboard, and Billy Bunter moved to the door at the same instant. The fat junior's action roused sudden suspicion.

"Have you been rifling our cupboard, porpoise?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really Wharton! I hope I'm above that sort of thing. I—"

In a twinkling Bob Cherry had darted

towards the fat junior, and caught him in a vice-like grip by the collar.

Meanwhile, Joanny Bull threw open the cupboard.

"Gone!" he exclaimed dramatically.

"The cake, and the sardines, too! The first luxuries we've been able to get for weeks—and Bunter's had them! He's already been to Friardale and stuffed himself out like a kite-balloon; then he comes back here, has a second instalment, and calmly curls up on our sofa and goes to sleep! If that's not the giddy limit, I'd like to know what is!"

"Ow! Lemmy go, Cherry, you beast! I don't know anything about your beastly grub! And you shouldn't have hoarded it, anyway!"

"Kick him out!" said Wharton tersely.

The next moment Billy Bunter seemed to be caught up like a straw hat in a burricane. He saw five faces, dark with indignation; he felt five boots smite the rear of his fat person; and he sat down with a terrific bump on the linoleum in the passage.

Then the door of Study No. 1 slammed in his face, and the aspiring heir of Chuckfield Place was left to sort himself out, and to vow to get his own back as soon as he became a member of the Upper Ten.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In Clover!

**B**EFORE bed-time that evening Billy Bunter wrote a letter to the solicitors at Chuckfield, asserting that he was the missing heir.

The writing of that letter was a painfully slow business.

To begin with, Billy Bunter was bad in expression, and distinctly rocky in spelling. And secondly, the letter had to be written in the seclusion of the box-room, away from curious eyes.

Sammy Bunter came along to help in the composition; and Sammy's presence made matters considerably more complicated. He disagreed flatly with nearly everything his major wrote, and it was not until Wingate came round to shepherd the Remove to bed that the task was accomplished.

The letter, in its completed form, ran as follows:

"Greysfriars School,  
Friardale, Kent.  
To Messrs. Seacombe & Fynde,  
Solicitors, Chuckfield,

"Dear Sirs,—Irite to say that I am the missing heir of Chuckfield Place, and shall be pleased to take over the estates at once.

"A few years ago I ran away from home, because my father, Sir Foulkes Bunter, wanted to send me to Eton, and I wanted to come to Greysfriars, which nicks Eton into a cocked hat.

"I have laid low ever since, but now that Sir Foulkes has chucked in his mitt, I think it's about time I took on the job.

"Please let me know when it will be convenient to call on you.

"Yours respectfully,  
"W. G. BUNTER."

"Look here," said Sammy. "That letter ain't so bad now, as far as the wording goes; but if you send it in that queer spelling the lawyer jolunies will smell a rat."

Billy Bunter glared.

"What's wrong with the spelling?" he demanded.

"Lots of things," said Sammy. "You've spelt every other word wrong. 'Heir,' fr'instance. You spell it 'hare,' whereas any kid knows it's 'hair.'"

"Look here," said Bunter, "you cut off the end, or you'll be getting it in the

neck! I won't post this letter to-night. I'll get Skinner to re-write it to-morrow, in case there happen to be any words spelt wrong. Skinner writes a good fist, too."

"But that means letting Skinner into the secret—"

"Not at all. He'll think it's a perfectly genuine claim. How's Skinner to know I'm not the heir of Chuckfield Place? He doesn't know anything about my past life—before I came to Greysfriars, I mean."

"Oh, all serene!" said Sammy. "Do as you jolly well like! But don't say I didn't warn you not to trust Skinner!"

Billy Bunter sought out Skinner on the following day.

"I say, Skinner! You might do a chap a favour—"

Skinner promptly buttoned up his pockets.

"It—it isn't a loan I'm wanting," said Bunter hastily.

Skinner gasped.

"Not wanting a loan!" he muttered. "Who said the age of miracles was past?"

"The fact is," said Bunter, "in a few days I shall have more money than I know what to do with. When I succeed to the title and estates—"

"The title! The estates!" gasped Skinner. "Have you got a touch of the sun, porpoise?"

Bunter linked a fat arm in that of the cad of the Remove.

"I didn't mention it before," he said, "because I'm not one of the swanky sort; but I'm the eldest son of the late Sir Foulkes Bunter. He was a very big pot, you know, down Sussex way, and now that he's snuffed it"—Bunter thought he'd better dab his eyes with his handkerchief at this juncture—"I'm stepping into his shoes."

Skinner stared at the Owl of the Remove in amazement.

"Well, of all the cheek!" he exclaimed. "D'you think I'm going to swallow a cock-and-bull yarn like that? Not likely!"

Billy Bunter produced the newspaper-cutting which told of the death of Sir Foulkes.

"Here you are!" he said. "Read it for yourself!"

Skinner was certainly staggered. The name "W. G. Bunter" was there right enough. Was it possible—

"You—you say you're the missing heir?" he gasped.

"Certainly!"

"Then what about your pater? We know him, you know. He wasn't Sir Foulkes Bunter."

"Nunno! He's not my pater at all. Merely an uncle, you know."

"My hat!" exclaimed Skinner.

As a general rule Bunter's stories passed him by like the idle wind. Bunter had been telling fairy-tales ever since he left the cradle.

But somehow he was more convincing on this occasion. There was just a shadow of possibility that Bunter's oft-repeated tales of titled relatives might have some foundation in fact; and, on the off-chance, Skinner decided that it would pay him to be on the friendliest of terms with the Owl of the Remove. If there were any invitations to country houses going begging, Skinner meant to be on the spot.

"What did you want me to do, Bunt?" he asked pleasantly.

"Ah! I've put in my claim to these beastly solicitors, but you can scrawl a slightly better fist than I can, and I thought you wouldn't mind re-writing the letter."

"With pleasure!" said Skinner.

Half an hour later the missive was

completed, and posted in the school pillar-box. The spelling was correct this time, and the letter was far more likely to carry weight with the solicitors than Bunter's appalling effort.

Bunter thanked Skinner, and assured him that he would fix up many a delightful week-end for him on the Sussex estate. Skinner had his doubts about the ownership of that estate, but he didn't tell Bunter so.

Some claims out of every ten which Billy Bunter made proved to be false and worthless, but there was always the tenth chance; and Harold Skinner, being a keen-witted individual, did not ignore it.

Billy Bunter went about in a state of feverish excitement during the next few days. He babbled of Chuckfield Place by day, and he babbled of it in the watches of the night.

In class he was more inattentive than ever, and Mr. Quech dropped heavily upon him on more than one occasion. But Bunter didn't care. A few more days, he reflected, and he would shake the dust of Greysfriars from his feet for ever.

Three days passed without any news from the solicitors.

On the morning of the fourth day, however, the expected letter came. Billy Bunter greedily tore open the envelope, and his little round eyes positively danced as he read the letter:

"Chuckfield.

"Dear Sir,—We are in receipt of your letter stating that you are the true and lawful heir to the Chuckfield estates.

"It will be necessary for you to pay us a personal visit in order to substantiate your claim, and if you will do us the favour of calling here at your convenience, we shall be happy to discuss the position.

"Yours faithfully,

"SEACOMBE & FYNDE."

Sammy Bunter rolled up as the Owl of the Remove finished reading, and he shared in his major's excitement.

"They've swallowed your yarn all right, Billy!"

"Yes, rather! I've simply got to call on these lawyer fellows, and chuck my weight about a bit, and then everything in the garden will be lovely!"

To which Sammy Bunter responded, with great vigour and heartiness:

" Bravo! You're Sir William now, and of course, I'm Sir Samuel, ain't I?"

"Nothing of the sort, you young faid-head!" snapped the Owl. "You've no title!"

"Oh, haven't I, then? We'll see about that, my pippin!"

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ways and Means!

**B**ILLY BUNTER, in his delight at getting a favourable reply from the solicitors, had overlooked for the moment two points, and they were very important points, too.

When he became calmer the Owl of the Remove realised first of all that before he could interview Messrs. Seacombe & Fynde it would be necessary for him to learn something about the real heir to Chuckfield Place, so that he could try to behave exactly as that youth would behave in similar circumstances. The solicitors were bound to ask him questions, and unless he had ready replies to those questions he would stand a good chance of being bowled out.

That was point number one.

Secondly, how was he to get the necessary time off in which to go down to Chuckfield?

It would be absurd to tell the Head

or Mr. Quelch that he had suddenly stepped into a vast fortune. They would not let him go on the strength of such a fable.

Billy Bunter pondered over the problem deeply. It disturbed him in the daytime; it caused him several sleepless nights.

To go down to Chuckfield without leave, barring that of the French variety, was more than Bunter dared do. He would have to get permission somehow, though he could not for the life of him see how.

Fate, however, took an unexpected turn in Bunter's favour.

Listening through the keyhole of Study No. 1, he heard Harry Wharton & Co. discussing a cricket-match with St. Jim's.

Bunter, though no great shakes at geography, was aware that Chuckfield Place was not a far cry from St. Jim's.

On the strength of this information Billy Bunter felt considerably bucked. His course was obvious. He must accompany the Remove Eleven, give them the slip on the way to St. Jim's, and then make tracks for Chuckfield Place.

But it wasn't so easy as it at first seemed. Even if Bunter went down on his knees to Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove would not for an instant agree to give him a place in the team.

Billy Bunter's knowledge of the grand summer game was exactly nil. He had a hazy idea that you stood in front of the wicket and slogged blindly at whatever came your way, and left the rest to Fate. Of the finer arts of the game, such as smart fielding and skilful bowling, Bunter knew nothing, nor did he care to know.

No; if he plodded till Doomsday for a place in the team he would never get it. Harry Wharton & Co. knew him far too well. They would rather have taken the field with only five men than look to Billy Bunter to help them to victory.

"Pr'aps I could squeeze in as umpire," reflected the Owl of the Remove.

But here, again, he was floored. Bundell of the Fifth was accompanying the team in that capacity.

And, apart from this, how could Bunter possibly undertake to umpire at a game of whose rudiments even he knew nothing?

There was only one thing for it. He must ask to be allowed to keep the score.

Yes; that would be a good wheeze. It might not come off; but he could at least try. Fired with hope, he rolled along to Study No. 1.

"I say, Wharton, old chap—"  
"Wharton, old chap," who was crouched upon a loose leg-guard strap, whilst his chums were doing their prep at the table, surveyed the Owl of the Remove with extreme disfavour.

"Get out!" he said tersely. "You know what happened the last time you set foot in this study!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I haven't come after the grub—"

"All the same if you had," said Bob Cherry. "There's none going. The only thing that's going is you! Buzz off!"

"Look here!" said Bunter, raising his voice. "I call that downright mean. I come here to make a sporting offer, and you want let me get a word in edgewise!"

"What's the sporting offer?" grinned Nugent. "To collar our rations while we're away at St. Jim's?"

"Not at all. It's this. I'm prepared to come over with you and keep the score."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blushed reproachfully at the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I see where the joke comes in!" he said.

"Why, if you were to score," said Johnny Bull, "it'd be the joke of the season. Every time a chap hit the ball you'd put down six runs—unless he was a fellow you didn't like, and then you'd put nothing. Sheer off, Bunter! We're not having you at any price. People would take us for a travelling wild-beast show."

"I always did say you hadn't any manners or good breeding, Bud—"  
"Eh?"

Johnny Bull jumped up from the table, and Billy Bunter jumped through the doorway at the same instant.

He was only just in time. As it was, a volley of books and cushions shot out after him, and he beat a hasty retreat along the passage.

"It's no good!" he muttered to himself. "I'm dished at every turn. No use asking Quelch if I can go over to St. Jim's just to watch the match. He wouldn't bite. I s'pose it'll have to be French leave after all."

And then, in the very moment of despair, inspiration came to Bunter.

Ah! The very thing! He would write a letter to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, telling him how badly he wanted to come over.

D'Arcy would fix it up all right. He was one of those fellows who never shirked doing a good turn, even to fellows he didn't admire.

"And, of course, he admires me," said Billy Bunter. "Haven't I entertained 'em all with my ventriloquism at St. Jim's? Haven't I fairly astonished the natives when I've gone over there? Yes, old D'Arcy would do anything for me. Now that I come to think of it, I believe he swore eternal friendship with me once. Anyway, I'll write him to-night; and then—well, we must hope for the best." —

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Working the Oracle!

THE summer sun, streaming in at the high windows of the Remove dormitory, brought the Famous Five early from their beds.

Before Gosling had sounded the final note of the rising-bell, Harry Wharton & Co. were strolling across the Close in their flannels. They carried their towels, intending to open the day with a dip in the Sark.

It was the morning of the match—just such a morning as delights the heart of the cricketer.

"It will be a bat-man's wicket to-day," said Bob Cherry. "Hard and fast. No muddy patches to wallow about in. Wynn and Talbot will have to work miracles in the bowling line if they want to get rid of us."

"Don't talk too soon," said Harry Wharton. "They may bat first, and declare at three hundred or so!"

"Well, you're a cheerful sort of cove, I must say!" said Bob. "If I were skipper of the side, and couldn't say anything more encouraging than that, I'd go and suffocate myself in the nearest air-raid shelter! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the postman. Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed!"

There was, however, one letter which affected the Famous Five. It was addressed to Harry Wharton, and the postmark was Wayland.

"Hope they're not cancelling the giddy match," said Nugent uneasily. "Whose writing is it?"

Wharton grinned.

"There's only one fellow I know at St. Jim's who sports a crest," he said.

"The esteemed and ludicrous D'Arcy?" suggested Hurree Singh.

"Yes."

The captain of the Remove ripped open the envelope, and frowned a little as he read the letter. He couldn't quite understand it.

"Any trouble?" asked Bob Cherry anxiously.

"No; but—well, it's rather a queer request for D'Arcy to make, that's all. Read it, and see what you think of it."

And Wharton handed over the letter.

"St. Jim's."  
"My dear Wharton,—I have rather a peculiar favour to ask you, but I know you'll take it in the right spirit."

"Bunter—that ventriloquist fellow at your school—has appealed to be allowed to come over to St. Jim's with your team—not to play, of course, but to give us an entertainment after the match. Bunter isn't a fellow one can take to one's bosom exactly, but he's jolly good fun in the ventriloquial line when he gets going; and I want you to let him come. I leave it to you to wangle the formalities. Better call him a reserve, or something like that."

"I have spoken to Tom Merry and the others, and they don't object to Bunter coming along, provided he brings his own ration-card. Tell him there will be nothing to go into raptures over as regards the grub he will get here; but we'll do our best to make him comfortable."

"That's all, dear boy. Hope we shall have a topping game."

"Yours sincerely,  
"ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

"What d'you make of it?" asked Wharton.

"Why, the fat cad has gone behind our backs to arrange this!" shouted Johnny Bull. "He got no change out of us the other day, so he's written and sponged on D'Arcy's sympathy. Bunter wants palverising!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But we can't very well refuse to let him come," said Wharton. "It would look as if we were slighting D'Arcy. And D'Arcy's a jolly good sort—quite one of the best. We shall have to put Bunter on the list as a reserve."

"Looks like it," said Nugent gloomily. "It's a rotten outlook. You know what Bunter is when he goes to a place like St. Jim's. Struts about as if he's running the war, and makes himself a general nuisance. We shall have to keep a tight rein on him, that's all, and bump him every time he makes himself objectionable."

It was extremely fortunate for William George Bunter that he was not within reach of the Famous Five at that moment. The method he had employed in order to accompany the Remove team was particularly mean; and Harry Wharton & Co.'s indignation against the fat junior waxed exceedingly strong.

After their dip and a hearty breakfast, however, the juniors felt so bucked with life that they had no malice towards anyone. They sought out Bunter, and told him the news.

"I've put you down as a reserve," said Harry Wharton. "Not that we shall be wanting you to take a hand. That would be turning the match into a pantomime. But D'Arcy has specially asked that you may come over with us."

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"Good old Gussy! He knows how to stand by a pal. Some of you might take a leaf out of his book. What time do we start?"

"Train leaves Friardale at ten-thirty," growled Johnny Bull.

"Good!" Billy Bunter rolled away to acquaint his minor with the glad tidings.

"I've wangled it all serene!" he said. "With a bit of luck I shall be in Chuckfield this afternoon, and as soon as I've got the hang of the place, and can find out something about the missing heir, I shall see the solicitors."

Sammy Bunter sniffed. "Ten to one you put your foot in it!" he said. "You'll either say too much or not enough, and give yourself away. Wish I could come along, and keep an eye on you."

"Oh, really Sammy! You're a silly young ass! When I come back in a few days' time, and tell you that we can take possession of the giddy estates, and everything that's in 'em, you'll fall on my neck."

"You'll have to wash it, first!" said Sammy emphatically.

"Look here!" said Billy Bunter. "Stop that rot, and leave it all to me. If I make a mess of things, you can say what you like; but at least give me a fair chance."

Sammy granted. "Well, try not to be a bigger ass than you can help!" he said. "Remember, there's a giddy lot hanging to it!"

"Rely on me," said Billy. "And he went up to the Remore dormitory to change into his Sunday best."

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Nipped in the Bud!

**B**ILLY BUNTER'S plan of campaign was simple, and it presented no great difficulties.

When the train reached Wayland Junction the fat junior intended to alight and change on to the branch line for Chuckfield, thus giving the Remore Eleven the slip.

The cricketers charged into an empty carriage when the train rolled into Friardale Station, and Billy Bunter was caught with the tide, as it were. He was impelled, by pressure from the rear, into the carriage, and found himself in the company of the Famous Five, Vernon-Smith, Mark Linley, and Peter Todd.

For once in a way Billy Bunter had very little to talk about. He seemed anxious and impatient, and even when Peter Todd pulled out a bag of chocolates Billy Bunter did not ask for any.

The cricketers clipped the Owl of the Remore a good deal at first; but when they saw that Bunter took no heed they soon gave it up, and fell to discussing the forthcoming match.

"Wayland!" exclaimed Johnny Bull at length. "This is where we change. Where's Bunter going?" added Johnny suddenly.

"Bolting for the midway-buffet, most likely," grinned Bob Cherry.

"He isn't!" said Peter Todd excitedly. "He's making for that train over yonder. Collar him!"

Billy Bunter's fat little legs were going like clockwork. He realised how essential it was that he should catch that train, and he went all out.

But the fleetest runners of the Remore were not to be balked of their prey. Bob Cherry and Peter Todd arrested the fat junior just as he was attempting to clamber into the other train.

"Ow! Lemme go, you beasts!"

"No fear, my pippin!" said Peter Todd, tightening the pressure with his thumb and forefinger on Bunter's ear. "We're not exactly thirsting for your company. At the same time, we're not

letting you out of our sight without knowing what's on."

"Yooooop! Leggo my ear!"

"Tell us where you were bolting, then—sharp!"

"Ahem! I—I consider it an act of sacrifice to break away from the party."

"An act of sacrifice! How d'you make that out, you fat worm?"

"Well," gasped Bunter painfully, "the pressure on his ear was not relaxed—there were thirteen of us going to St. Jim's—the eleven, Blundell, and myself. And thirteen's an unlucky number. If I came, you'd lose the match for a cert. It occurred to me as we were coming along, I realised that I should be doing the decent thing by dropping out. I—I'm inclined to be rather superstitious, you know."

"And we're inclined to write you down as a first-class fibber!" said Bob Cherry. "Fancy you performing an act of sacrifice! Why, if you ever did a thing like that the world and the war would come to an end at the same time!"

"You've collared him, then?" said Harry Wharton, coming up with the rest of the cricketers. "What was his dodge?"

"He pretends that he gave us the slip because thirteen was an unlucky number," grinned Bob. "The fat duffer seems to think we were born yesterday."

"Rylcombe train's coming in," said Mark Linley.

"Good! Come on, porpoise! We're not letting you out of our sight a second time."

The Removites swarmed into the train, and Billy Bunter, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, accompanied them.

The fat junior was furious. His cherished plans of getting to Chuckfield Place seemed to be knocked on the head.

There was nothing for it but to proceed to St. Jim's with the cricketers, and possess his soul in patience until he saw a loophole of escape.

It was rotten luck, Bunter reflected, to be foiled when his goal was almost in sight; but the Owl of the Remore could be very determined on occasion, and he meant to carry out his purpose.

Having got so far, Bunter meant to carry on. Doubtless a watchful eye would be kept on him at St. Jim's; but stone walls did not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. He would get free somehow, and with this reflection he resigned himself, for the time being, to the mercy of his captors.

A very strong force of St. Jim's fellows greeted the Remore Eleven at Rylcombe Station, and the proceedings were considerably enlivened by Grundy of the Shell and Herries of the Fourth. Herries brought his cornet into play, and Grundy tried to go one better with his mouth-organ, with the result that the most ear-splitting noises rang through the usually quiet countryside.

"You've brought Bantals, I see," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, after he had shaken hands with Harry Wharton. "That's toppin'! He'll be able to keep us amused in the evening. It's awfully wippin' of you to let him come."

Wharton flushed. "I'm sorry—in fact, we're all sorry—that he should have pestered you by writing," he said.

"On the contrary, his presence is most desirable," said the swell of St. Jim's.

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther good-humouredly. "You fellows see too much of him; we don't see enough. We never tire of studying the Bunter animal. He's a species all to himself."

"Well, Lowther! You are being wude to our guests—"

Ta-ra-ta-ra-ta-ra! The blatant notes of Herries' cornet prevented further conversation.

The rival elevens trooped merrily up to St. Jim's, each side confident of coming out top dog.

As for William George Bunter, he walked, like Eugene Aram, between two warders, though he was spared the "gyves upon his wrists."

Bob Cherry and Peter Todd, with Bunter's attempted escape still fresh in their memory, looked after him.

But Billy Bunter consoled himself with the reflection that in a short time both Bob Cherry and Peter Todd would have something else to think about; and then—well, if he couldn't get clear of St. Jim's somehow, he didn't deserve to take over the title and estates left vacant by the death of Sir Foukes Bunter!

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Gets Busy!

**T**OM MERRY did one of the finest things possible for his side by winning the toss.

The wicket was perfect, from a batsman's point of view.

"This is where we proceed to pile up the munitions," said Monty Lowther. "Keep up the glorious tradition, Tommy, and punish the bowling all you know. If you wear 'em down, you'll pave the way for me to do mighty things. I'm the top-hole batsman against exhausted bowlers."

Tom Merry laughed, and took Talbot in with him to open the innings.

Billy Bunter was left in the pavilion. The entire Remore team, as well as Blundell, being on the field, a way of escape was already open to him.

But Bunter was leaving nothing to chance. He must wait until the game reached an exciting pitch, and then steal away whilst the eyes of the crowd were diverted elsewhere.

Tom Merry and Talbot opened strongly. Everything was in their favour; and they meant to lay a solid foundation. Both hit freely; and the score rose by leaps and bounds.

Hurree Singh eventually put "Finis" to Talbot's career by means of a deadly yorker. After that other batsmen came and went, but Tom Merry remained. The captain of the Shell had thoroughly mastered the bowling, and he continued to hit viciously.

Billy Bunter, tired of his inactivity, wandered off to the outskirts of the field, where laden tables had been set out under the trees.

The fat junior made himself comfortable on the grass underneath one of the tables, taking with him half a dozen veal-and-ham pies and about a gallon of lime-juice cordial.

"This is prime!" he muttered. "Why didn't I think of it before? Somebody'll have to go short, I suppose; but it's their own fault. They shouldn't be so mad on that idiotic game—Heathens, I call 'em, worshipping stumps and balls and all that sort of thing—Hallo! What's on?"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly in his meditations. He saw Tom Merry—clean bowled at last—making his way towards the pavilion; and he heard the crowd cheering him to the echo. For Tom had made a faultless 55.

Bunter saw his opportunity. The attention of fieldmen and spectators alike was centred upon Tom Merry. If Bunter quietly slipped away at this juncture no one would be any the wiser.

The Owl of the Remore stole cautiously out from under the table, and quickly disappeared. He got two hundred yards or so without any excitement; and then somebody started the hue-and-cry. One

of the Remove fellsman must have seen him.

Bunter quickened his pace. He knew that if he were captured this time he wouldn't get another chance.

Standing against one of the old elms in the quadrangle was a bicycle. Its owner was presumably watching the cricket.

That bicycle came as a boon and a blessing to Billy Bunter. He heard—or fancied he heard—the shouts of an army of paraders; and he hopped on to the machine with amazing agility. The next moment he was whizzing along the road to Wayland.

Fear lent the fat junior wings. He dared not look behind him, but scorching on with all speed, till the perspiration rolled down his flabby face.

Fortune favoured him. There happened to be a Chuffield train standing in the station; and Bunter, leaving the borrowed bicycle to a doubtful fate on the platform, hurriedly clambered in.

"Safe!" he muttered.

And he was. As a matter of fact, nobody had thought of pursuing Bunter. He had certainly been seen to go; but the Removites didn't see the use of relinquishing the cricket-match for the purpose of indulging in a cross-country run on the track of Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove felt considerably backed. He had only lost a few hours, after all; and it really didn't matter a great deal what time he got to Chuffield, so long as he got there.

But after a while Bunter's thoughts took a more unpleasant turn. He suddenly remembered that he was practically stony.

Even with the most rigid economy Bunter couldn't quite see how he was going to manage. He had left Greyfriars with half-a-crown; and when he stepped out of the train at Chuffield he was immediately ordered to pay two-and-fourpence—the amount of his fare from Wayland. This left him with twopence; and twopence is a very slender reed to lean upon in times of emergency.

Bunter was already feeling peckish, despite the fact he had stroved away at St. Jim's; and by nightfall he would be really hungry.

But, after all, surely a little privation didn't matter, in view of the horn of plenty which awaited him when he had made good his claim to the title and estates? Surely he could keep his head above water till he had put things right, when it would mean spending the rest of his lifetime in luxury and ease?

Such were the thoughts that passed through Bunter's mind as he patrolled the narrow, winding High Street of Chuffield, where things seemed to have marked time for a generation. An infectious air of drowsiness hung over the place, and Billy Bunter blinked sleepily at the shop windows as he passed along.

"My hat!" he muttered, as another point suddenly occurred to him. "Where am I going to sleep?"

To approach an hotel proprietor and tender the sum of twopence for a night's lodging would be simply asking for it.

"There's only one thing for it," muttered the fat junior. "I must go round to Chuffield Place."

A boy riding a box-tricycle showed Bunter the way; and half an hour later the bogus heir was creeping through the shrubbery, with his little round eyes gleaming admiringly at the great mansion.

The place was quiet and still. From its appearance it might have been haunted.

Sir Foulkes Bunter had been laid to rest in the family vault, and Bunter guessed and rightly—that the only occupants of the house were the servants.

The French windows of the drawing-room were open, and Bunter, after making certain that the coast was clear, crept stealthily inside.

It was a spacious room, and there was much to see and wonder at; but the first thing that riveted the attention of the Greyfriars junior was an oil-painting which hung over the mantelpiece.

"Great Scott!" gasped Bunter.

His head seemed to be going round, and he wondered vaguely whether he was dreaming.

For the painting of a plump youth in glasses, who looked exactly as Billy Bunter had looked when he was ten years of age.

Bunter's eyes sparkled. He took the painting down and examined it closely, and his eyes sparkled still more.

The painting was of the missing heir. Of that there could be no doubt, for the inscription on the back told it.

Bunter could have danced a hornpipe in his delight. He would pass muster now, so far as personal appearance was concerned, and that was half the battle.

So interested did the fat junior become in his surroundings that he forgot his hunger. He started to explore the huge bookshelf, and studied the ancestry of the Bunters, who had inhabited Chuffield Place since the reign of King John.

Bunter chuckled as his investigations proceeded apace. He already felt as if he were one of the landed gentry.

Unfortunately, Bunter only saw things on the surface. Had he looked more closely at the room he would have discovered that most of the furniture was old and rickety; that the carpets were worn and threadbare; and that the House of Bunter had fallen upon evil times.

The short-sighted Owl of the Remove failed to notice these things, and continued his researches with a glad heart. He forgot that he was a trespasser, forgot that he ran an imminent risk of detection, and continued to pore over the ancient volumes until the rays of the sunset streamed in at the French window, telling him that the day was far spent.

Having exhausted all the volumes which he was likely to find useful, Billy Bunter made tracks for the dining-room.

This, also, proved to be deserted. It was a vast, airy room, and the walls were hung with tapestry, while brass candlesticks gleamed over the mantelpiece.

But Bunter's attention was attracted by something more immediately useful than tapestry and candlesticks.

High up on one of the shelves of the sideboard stood a large pie. It might be a meat-pie, it might be a fruit-pie; but anyway, it was a pie. And Bunter could not repress a whoop of delight.

With feverish fingers he reached up for the dish. In doing so he nearly overbalanced himself, and clutched at one of the racks for support.

The result was alarming.

The sideboard, with its stacks of crockery, lurched forward, swayed for one giddy second in uncertainty, and then collapsed, sending showers of cups and saucers in all directions. The din was deafening.

Billy Bunter hopped out of the danger-zone, stunned by the realisation of what had happened.

The next moment startled voices were raised in the hall without, and the sound of approaching footsteps filled Bunter with terror.

He was caught—caught red handed! He would be treated as a common burglar!

The perspiration stood out in beads on Bunter's forehead. He stood rooted to the floor, unable to move or speak, wondering how it was all going to end.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Man in Possession!

**BILLY BUNTER** was not the sort of person to keep a cool head in an emergency.

On this occasion however, he pulled himself together and acted differently.

He must brazen it out, he thought. He must bluff, and keep on bluffing, and trust to luck.

He was in a tight corner, and he knew it. But before the scared faces of the two servants appeared in the doorway he had decided on his plan of campaign. The servants—they were both young girls—discovered him in the act of brandishing the poker aloft.

"He's gone!" said Bunter dramatically. "I chased him off before he could lay hands on the silver! Don't be alarmed! I've given him one jolly good crack with this poker, and he's not likely to come back for another!"

"Who—who are you?" gasped the least panic-stricken of the two maids.

"Never mind who I am just now. I tracked a burglar to this house, and came to grips with him just where I'm standing now. I got the best of the struggle. He won't worry you again." "You have driven away a burglar?"

"Yes." Billy Bunter laid down the poker, and blinked reassuringly at the two maids.

"Are you alone in the house?" he asked.

The girl who had first spoken nodded. A great loud slipper from Billy Bunter's mind. He only had a couple of servants to deal with, and neither of them looked as if she could say "Bo!" to a goose.

"I expect you were—ahem!—thrown into rather a flutter when you heard that row," said Bunter. "We had a short, sharp struggle, and then the rascal got free."

"Are you hurt?" "Yes; but it's nothing—a mere scratch," said the modest hero.

"I say!" exclaimed the other girl, regarding him with a frown. "You're the living image of the boy whose portrait's in the drawing-room!"

Bunter put his finger to his lips.

"S'hush! I didn't think you'd make the discovery so quickly as that!"

"You mean to say—"

"That I am the fellow represented in the painting? Well, between ourselves, yes."

"You are Sir Foulkes Bunter's son?" "That's me!" said Bunter, puffing out his chest and feeling that he had the situation in the hollow of his hand.

"My word!" gasped the servant-girl. "This fairly takes the bun—don't it, Jane?"

Jane nodded her head in vigorous agreement.

"The master often spoke of you," she said to Bunter. "Why did you run away from him?"

"That's my business. It's enough for you to know that I've come back. From to-day I'm your master."

Jane smiled rather sadly.

"We've both been given notice to leave by the trustees," she said.

"Why?"

"Well, I ask you—what use are two maids in a big house like this? There's nobody to cook for, or wait on."

"Isn't there, by Jove!" said Bunter, who was now thoroughly self-composed. "There's me! I don't mind telling you I've come a jolly long way, and I'm peckish! I'm just going to start on this pie."

And Bunter did. He not only started on it, but finished it in record time. The maids stood watching him in blank amazement.



"They didn't quite know what to make of this weird specimen, but not for one moment did they doubt that he was the rightful heir to Chuckfield Place. Both were simple-minded country girls, and it did not occur to them that the world contained a vast number of impostors."

"Get anything else to eat?" asked Bunter, when the last remnants of the pie had vanished.

"There's some blancmange and jam," said Jane.

"Good! Trot it out, All's grist that comes to my mill. Now, tell me all about my dear old pater's last days."

Jane began to snivel. The other girl looked as if she were about to burst into tears also; then she suddenly changed her mind, and went off in quest of the blancmange and jam.

In the course of half an hour Billy learned much. He discovered, among other things, that Sir Foulkes Bunter had been a very retiring and eccentric old gentleman, who in his declining days had frequently deplored the absence of his heir.

"He fair doted on you," said Jane. "He was always a-saying that his life would end in misery unless you came back."

"Well, here I am," said Bunter. "Too late, it seems. Go on. Tell me some more about my father, and about the people in Chuckfield—that they thought about my bunking, and all that!"

In this way Bunter accumulated quite a fund of information.

Presently he rose to his feet with a yaw.

"Go and get the best bed-room ready for me," he said.

"You're going to stay here?" asked Jane.

"Of course! I'm the owner of this place, aren't I?"

"You say you are."

"Well, that ought to be good enough for you! Back up! I'm tired!"

But before he crept peacefully between the sheets that night, Billy Bunter dashed off a triumphant letter to his minor.

"Dear Sammy.—You will be pleased to hear I'm doing famously.

"There are only two skivvies in the house, and neither of them has tumbled to the little game.

"I've found out lots of things about the real here, and shall talk to the sollicitors like a Dutch uncle. Leave it to me.

"I had an awful job to get away from Wharton and the others, but I managed it by the skin of my teeth, and I'm redly for anything now.

"All the news when I return.

"BILLY."

Things certainly seemed to be shaping well for the bogus heir, and Bunter turned in that night at peace with all the world. Little did he dream that Fate would sooner or later bowl him over with a straight left; neither did it occur to his obtuse mind that, despite his initial success, there were breakers ahead.

#### THE NINTH CHAPTER Ananias Minor!

T IRED out with the exertions of the day, Billy Bunter slept soundly that night in the state bed-room.

When he awoke, and blinked at the strong rays of the morning sun, it was only by a great mental effort that he realised where he was and what his immediate aim in life happened to be.

One of the maids, with unconscious humour, had brought him up a jug of shaving-water. Bunter kicked it to one side with a grunt. He had not much

love for water, anyway, and he did not need to shave.

The fat junior, his toilet soon completed, went down the broad staircase with the air of a person who owns the earth and all that therein is.

He passed into the dining-room, and glanced with extreme disapproval at the sparsely-laid table.

"One measly egg!" he muttered. "What do they take me for? A chap can't live on air."

He rang the bell violently.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Jane, appearing in the doorway.

Bunter repressed a triumphant grin. Jane, at any rate, seemed to have resigned herself to the fact that he was her master.

"Look here," he said, "what d'you

have done."

He devoted the day to making a tour of the little town, and collecting anecdotes concerning the missing heir. These he committed to memory as far as possible, and prided himself that all was going well.

Of course, he should before now have been back at Greysfriars. But he felt sure of a victory that he did not worry about that detail.

The next day, having slept well and fed well, Billy Bunter walked boldly into the offices of Messrs. Seacombe & Fynde. A middle-looking man in spectacles rose to greet him.

"Ah! You are the son of the late Sir Foulkes Bunter?"

Bunter nodded, shook hands, and sat down.

The solicitor scrutinised the fat junior keenly.

"You claim to be the heir to the Chuckfield estates?"

"Yes, said Bunter.

"Why did you run away? Sir Foulkes was greatly distressed concerning your long absence."

"I know," said Bunter. "I—I was an ungrateful son, and I'm sorry."

"And what have you been doing during this long interval?"

"I've been at Greysfriars."

"The big public school in Kent?"

"That's it."

Mr. Seacombe, sole surviving partner of the firm of Messrs. Seacombe & Fynde, looked hard at Billy Bunter.

"I fail to understand," he said, "how you gained admission to the school. Your headmaster would not have accepted a runaway."

"Oh, I wangled it all serene," said Bunter lightly. "It was easily done."

"I think I had better write to your headmaster for information—"

"I shouldn't, if I were you," said Bunter hastily. "After all, there's no need to rake up the past. Besides, he wouldn't remember anything about my arrival at Greysfriars. Best to let sleeping dogs lie."

"Do you object," said Mr. Seacombe, "to my putting a few questions to you?"

"Not at all. Fire away!"

"Where were you born?"

"At Chuckfield Place."

"On what date?"

Bunter gave the information required of him with remarkable accuracy. He thanked his lucky stars that he had been able to glean full particulars from the library at Chuckfield Place.

When the cross-examination was over, Mr. Seacombe rose to his feet.

"Are you going back to Greysfriars?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Very well. I'll write you in the course of a few days. It is only necessary for me to get a few formalities settled."

"Good! I—I say, you won't start pestering my headmaster, will you?"

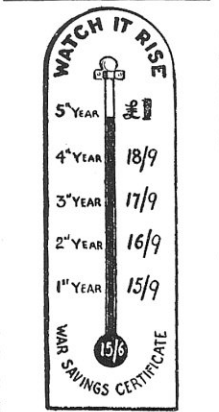
"I shall pester nobody. I shall only do what is necessary and proper. Then I will inform you when it will be convenient for you to come down and take possession of the estates."

"Thanks ever so much!" said Billy Bunter, nearly bursting with joy as he shook hands with the solicitor.

As he passed along the old High Street he seemed to be walking on air.

Everything had worked like a charm. He had imagined that the sollicitors would be very tough nuts to crack; instead, he had had no difficulty in convincing Mr. Seacombe of his right to step into the property.

Delightful visions floated before Billy



call this? Have I got to go through the day on one hard-boiled egg?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but we had no notice that you were coming. And we can't get food for you without a ration-card."

"Must I, the owner of this house, be rationed?"

"Oh, but that's all rot!" said Bunter peevishly.

"Excuse me," said Jane. "It isn't rot. There's only one grocer in Chuckfield, and he's as hard as nails. He won't supply you with so much as a dog-biscuit unless you produce your ration-card."

Bunter pondered over this extremely annoying situation.

"Is there a Food Control branch here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, in the High Street."

"Then I'll go along there and get an emergency ration-card."

And Bunter did. The idea of living for some days on hard-boiled eggs appalled him.

Fortunately, the man in the Food Controller's office was a very gullible individual. He opened his heart to Bunter, and gave him the necessary card without any argument.

In consequence, Bunter lived, if not exactly on the fat of the land, at least



Bunter's mind—visions of wealth and ease and contentment.

Only for a few more days would he sit and writhe under the gimlet eyes of Mr. Quelch. And then—then he would cease to be a downtrodden member of the Remove Form, and would pass into a high sphere of society! He would be monarch of all he surveyed, and one of the leading lights of the county.

It was all very romantic and fascinating; but Bunter would have been wiser not to build castles in the air. He had left many things out of his calculations; and, although the immediate future seemed to be a path strewn with roses, the aspiring heir of Chuckfield Place was likely to have a rude awakening.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### The Pilgrim's Progress!

**S**ISTER ANNE, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?" Bob Cherry asked that question as he stood in the old gateway of Greyfriars and looked along the stretch of white road.

The other members of the Famous Five looked, too. Then their eyes met in astonishment and curiosity.

"The wanderer's return," said Johnny Bull. "It's Bunter!"

"Can't be," said Nugent. "More like a tramp. The fellow seems too tired to live."

"It's Bunter, right enough," said Harry Wharton.

The Remove Eleven had returned from St. Jim's, after an exceptionally fine game. Tom Merry & Co. had won narrowly by five runs; but the Remove had put up a great fight.

They had expected to find Billy Bunter at Greyfriars on their return, but the fat junior was unaccountably missing.

And now he was coming along the road, dragging one leg after the other as if his feet were leaden weights. He looked the picture of utter dejection.

"Where on earth has he been?" gasped Wharton. "Just look at him!"

Slowly and painfully Bunter came on. His Etons were soiled and torn; his boots were caked with mud. He seemed to have added years to his age.

The Famous Five had intended to give Bunter the bumping of his life when he did come back. But when they saw him in his present pitiable condition their hearts melted. They could not bring themselves to punish a fellow—even a fellow of Bunter's stamp—when he was down and out like that.

Billy Bunter came on, eventually to collapse in the gateway at the feet of the juniors.

"Ow!" he gasped. "I'm done!"

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull heaved the fat junior to his feet.

"Yow! Lemme alone! I just want to go to sleep."

"So you shall, my son," said Bob Cherry. "But you can't turn yourself into a human doormat, and go to sleep here. Come along! Let's get you to the dorm."

The Famous Five came promptly to Bunter's assistance. They carried him bodily across the Close, Bob Cherry whistling the Dead March as an accompaniment to the weird procession.

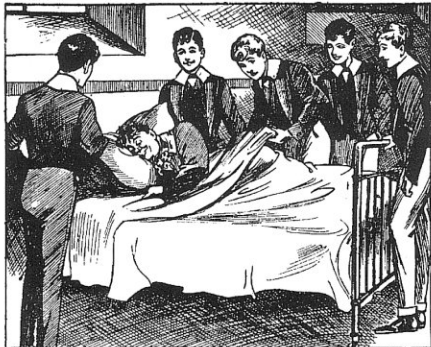
There was no suggestion of shamming on Bunter's part. The juniors could see that he was really whacked.

They laid him on his bed in the dormitory, and glanced down at him in some concern.

"Where have you been, you fat duffer?" demanded Bob Cherry.

Snore!

Bunter was already sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion.



Dead beat! (See Chapter 10.)

"Better leave him," said Wharton. "We'll hear what he's got to say later on, when he's fit."

Billy Bunter had certainly passed through some strange adventures.

During the early part of his stay at Chuckfield he had been able to borrow a small sum of money from one of the inhabitants with whom he had chatted, on the strength of his story that he was to succeed to the estates.

When the time of departure came, however, that sum was exhausted, and, try as he would, Bunter could not raise another loan.

The two servants at Chuckfield Place had no money; and Mr. Seacombe, whose office Billy Bunter visited, was absent on business.

Bunter realised with a sudden start that he was long overdue at Greyfriars, and would have to get there by hook or crook.

He attempted to board the train ticketless, intending to face the music when he got to Friarale; but a girl ticket-inspector was too smart for him. He was rude, and she told him to "get out of it." Bunter was surprised to find that what she said went. Bunter also went.

The fat junior was on the horns of a dilemma.

Unless he got back to the school that night there would be squalls, and he was particularly anxious to avoid a skirmish with the Head or Mr. Quelch at this juncture. He wished to make absolutely certain of Chuckfield Place first, then he could shake his fist at Greyfriars and all who were in it.

"I must hoof it, I s'pose," he told himself, at length.

And he had done so. (Chuckfield was a long way from Greyfriars, and Billy Bunter had found the experience far from pleasant. He was not an athlete, and his rate of progress had been painfully slow.)

He took two hours to traverse the first six miles; then a friendly farmer gave him a lift in his dogcart, and they rattled on for another eighteen miles or so before Bunter continued his tramp.

But he was still far from his goal, and hunger and exhaustion were beginning to make themselves felt.

To add to this, Bunter ran foul of a couple of tramps, who, on finding that he had no money, rolled him into a ditch, and left him to sort himself out as best he could. All of which delayed his progress considerably.

Later on he obtained a further lift—on the step of a bicycle—a workman returning home after his labours—found Bunter's weight so trying that he became fed up before they had proceeded a mile, and the fat junior had to resort to shanks' pony again.

But the goal had been won at last; and Bunter, after his dramatic collapse in the old gateway of Greyfriars, could remember very little more.

Whilst his Form-fellows were doing their prep, he lay and dreamed.

They were troubled dreams at first. He seemed to be tramping along a hard, dusty road, till he came to a signpost with the inscription, "To Friarale, fifty miles." And grinning faces peered at him through the hedges on either side, and mocking voices told him that he'd better get himself an aeroplane.

And then the dream took a brighter turn, and Bunter saw himself sitting in state in the dining-room of Chuckfield Place with the Head and Mr. Quelch, whom he had invited down for the week-end.

And then he dreamt of pigeon-pie and rich preserves and thick cream.

At this point he awoke with a start, and a babel of voices sounded in his ear.

The Remove were coming up to bed.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Shock for Greyfriars!

**H**ERE he is!"

"Where have you been, porpoise?"

"What do you mean by bunking off like that?"

A torrent of questions was rained upon the Owl of the Remove. The rest of the Renovites weren't so considerate as the Famous Five had been. Bunter had been absent on a mysterious mission, and they were curious to know the upshot of it.

Billy Bunter sat up in bed, and blinked round at his schoolfellows.  
 "I'm famished!" he said faintly. "I've had nothing to eat for hours and hours!"  
 "Poor old chap!" said Skinner sympathetically. "Pile into these chocolates. They're the real goods."

It was not Skinner's way to be generous; but if Bunter had been successful in making a rich haul, Skinner was not averse from casting his bread upon the waters.

"Thanks!" said Bunter, taking the chocolates and stuffing them into his mouth, four at a time. "These'll keep me alive till brekker, anyway."

"Where have you got 'em, you fat, gormandising freak?" demanded Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy! I'll trouble you to address me with due respect to my position!"

"M-m-my hat!" gasped the Bounder.  
 "No; my position. I'm not one of the common herd now, you know."

"Pater opened some more branches of his fried-fish shop?" suggested Boislover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Or added another jug-and-bottle department to his pub?" inquired Stott.

"Some of you seem to think I'm rotting," said Bunter. "I'm not! I'm one of the biggest landowners in England now!"

"Likewise one of the biggest fibbers!" said Snoop.

"Oh, really, Snoop! If it wasn't beneath my dignity I'd punch your head! Got any more chocs, Skinny?"

"Sorry; no."  
 "Fat lot of use you are to a fellow who's famished!"

"I say," murmured Skinner, drawing closer to the fat junior's bed, "did you work the oracle?"

"Of course I did!" said Bunter in a loud voice. "And you needn't come cadging round me for favours, Skinner. You were ready enough to hit me when I was down, and now that I'm a—peer of the realm you're eager to lick my hand! But let me tell you that I'm not giving anything away! That's flat!"

"Why, you fat worm!" howled Skinner. "After I went to all the trouble of writing that letter for you, too! I call it disgusting!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bunter. "You make me tired."

Skinner clenched his hands hard.  
 "You—you—" he spluttered. "I don't believe your rotten yarn a bit! It's all tommy-rot, like everything else you invent in your apology for a mind."

"Of course it's all tommy-rot!" said Harry Wharton. "I don't think anyone here is fool enough to believe that Bunter's a belted earl, or anything like that. We've all seen Bunter's pater—quite a decent old chap, no doubt, but with no trace of the aristocracy about him."

"It's not my pater who comes down to Greyfriars," said Bunter. "That's my uncle. My pater was Sir Foulkes Bunter, and he snuffed it a week or so back. We've always called uncle 'pater,' but that don't prove anything."

"You can't have lavished much affection on Sir What-is-it to speak of him like that," said Bob Cherry. "Shut up, and go to sleep! And think, yourself jolly lucky you didn't get a good bumping for bolting from St. Jim's!"

Billy Bunter rolled over in bed, with a fat chuckle.

"You don't believe me now," he said, "but you jolly soon will! And when you know for a fact that I'm the titled owner of a big mansion, you needn't fall on my neck for favours, because there's be nothing doing. See?"

"Rats!"

"The Magnet Library.—No. 538.

"If you don't dry up," growled Johnny Bull. "I'll toss you in a blanket!"

This dire threat had the desired result. Billy Bunter sank into slumber again, and his familiar snore sounded through the Remove dormitory.

Bunter's conduct next day was very peculiar. He swaggered and swanked more than ever, and in class he was inattentive, and even defiant. Mr. Quelch swamped him with lines; but Bunter told himself, with a grin, that those lines would never be done. Long before they were due to be handed in he would be far away, taking the air—and all the grub he could get—on his Sussex estate.

The Remove ignored Bunter. Even Skinner, who had entertained high hopes of scooping in some of the fat junior's alleged wealth, now kept his distance. The read of the Remove had not forgiven Bunter for his remark of the night before, and he meant to make things as unpleasant as possible for the Owl, if the opportunity came his way.

Bunter's conceited ways were aped in the Lower School by his minor, who had been trying to impress all the fags with his tales of a big mansion, a deer-park, an artificial lake, and a Daimler car.

Dicky Nugent and his followers speedily became fed up with these stories. They ducked Sammy Bunter in the fountain, and promised to repeat the ducking daily until Sammy gave his romance a rest.

The climax was reached two days later when the postman brought Billy Bunter a letter.

Everything hinged upon that letter. Billy Bunter had counted the hours to its arrival, and he was sure that its contents would either make him or break him.

A crowd of Removites were chatting in the hall when the letter came, and they glanced at Billy Bunter's flushed, excited face in amused surprise.

"A letter confirming your right to the property, Bunt'y?" grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter glanced feverishly at the letter; then he nodded.

"Yes!" he said.  
 "W-w-what?"

"Here it is, in black and white!" said the Owl of the Remove. "Read it, you doubting Thomases, and you'll see at last that it's true!"

He handed the letter over to Bob Cherry, and Bob pronounced the contents to the crowd, upon which a sudden hush had fallen.

"Dear Sir,—With reference to your recent visit to Chaucfield, we beg to inform you that we are now quite satisfied as to your identity.

"You appear to be, beyond all question, the heir to the property and estates laid vacant by the demise of the late Sir Foulkes Bunter.

"We understand that you are prepared to take up your new position at once, and shall be glad if you will advise us by wire if this is so.

"Your obedient servants,  
 "SEACOMBE & FYNDE,  
 "Solicitors."

"There!" said Billy Bunter. "What d'you make of that? I'm still rotting, of course! I'm still telling fairy-tales! Oh, yes, the letter's genuine enough, Bob Cherry. It's got the Chuckfield post mark, and the names of the solicitors on the back of the envelope. Don't you think it's time some of you started begging my pardon?"

The Removites were certainly flabbergasted. Not for one moment had they expected anything like this.

Moreover, the letter rang true. There could be no suggestion of its having been faked.

"Bunter—with estates!" gasped Bob

Cherry. "Fairly takes your breath away, doesn't it?"

"There must be a mistake somewhere," said Harry Wharton incredulously. "I can't swallow this, somehow."

"But this letter—"

"It's certainly a puzzle," agreed the captain of the Remove. "What are you going to do now, Bunter?"

"Make you all write!" chuckled Bunter. "You've had the whip-hand of me all the time, and you've buttoned up your pockets whenever I've wanted a little advance. I told you that the boot would be on the other foot one of these days; and now the day has come!"

"Bow-wow!"

"When Quelch takes morning lessons, and discovers I'm absent," Bunter went on, "you might be good enough to tell him the reason, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove gasped.  
 "Even if this is true, you can't walk off on your own!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, I shall get the Head's permission, of course! I'm going along to see him after brekker."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Harry Wharton.

He could say no more just then—neither could his chums. Words failed them.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.  
 Skinner Makes a Discovery!

BILLY BUNTER'S sudden ascent to fortune was the universal topic of conversation at Greyfriars that morning.

From the giants of the Sixth down to the smallest fag everybody was discussing that remarkable letter.

Bunter was leaving Greyfriars! Bunter was the son of a noble Sussex family!

Bunter's dreams of El Dorado had come true!

It took a good deal of believing. In fact, there were many fellows who still flatly refused to believe it.

But the Remove, who had been acquainted with the contents of the solicitors' letter, were forced to admit that there was something in it.

And Bunter himself seemed to have no doubt whatever about the matter.

He went along to Study No. 7 to pack his things, and Peter Todd watched him with a baffled gaze. Peter couldn't make head or tail of it.

"How have you wrangled this bizney?" he asked. "Did you knock Sir Foulkes Bunter on the head on a dark night, or what?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! You know jolly well I wouldn't do anything that wasn't perfectly square and above-board."

"Br-r-r!" growled Peter.

He could not for the life of him understand how Bunter had engineered the present situation. Bunter was not usually a genius for evolving deep, dark plots. When he tried little games of that sort he invariably came a cropper.

Yet on this occasion he seemed to have succeeded beyond all question.

Peter didn't pump his study-mate any further on the subject. He gave it up.

Bunter finished his packing, and went along to the hall for breakfast. On the way he encountered his minor.

"I hear the solicitors have written saying it's all serene!" said Sammy.

"That's so."  
 "And you're going to see the Head after brekker and get his permission to clear off?"

"Exactly!"  
 "But—but look here!" Sammy's eyes were gleaming with excitement. "Where do I come in?"

"You'll come and join me on the estate as soon as I can fix things up," said Bunter. "I haven't forgotten your share in the spoil. But you're coming down to Chuckfield as my cousin—not my brother. See?"

"But why?"

"Well, I found out from some old volumes that Sir Foulkes Bunter's youngest son died when he was quite a kid. So I can't very well palm you off as being my brother. You will be a—sort of distant cousin, you know."

Sammy grunted.

"That ain't playing the game!" he said. "You seem to have looked after yourself all right, and left me out in the cold. Still, so long as I can come down and join you soon I shan't grumble."

"I should think not!" said Bunter. "I tell you, Sammy, we're going to live like fighting cocks!"

"And supposing the Head won't let me leave Greyfriars?"

"No need to worry about that. He won't be able to help himself. Look here, I must trot along to brekker now, or I shan't get any. See you later."

And Bunter passed on into the hall.

He was the cynosure of all eyes at the breakfast-table. Never had such interest been displayed in the person of William George Bunter before. No longer was he a hard-up schoolboy, without a penny to bless himself with; but he had, at a single bound, become one of the stars of society.

"It's the absolute giddy limit!" said Bob Cherry, as the Removites trooped out into the morning sunshine. "Term after term we've pooh-poohed Bunter's jaw about titled relations, and all that sort of thing. We wrote him down as a fraud and a leg-puller. And all the time he was right."

Harry Wharton, however, was not convinced.

"I'm pretty certain we shall discover this is merely another invention of Bunter's," he said. "Goodness knows how he's wangled it! I don't pretend to be a Ferrers Locke. But it is a wangle, you can bet your life."

Billy Bunter was fairly mobbed when he came into the Close. Fellows of all Forms bombarded him with questions, and Bunter's replies were too convincing to be ignored.

"Wonder what the Head will say when he knows?" said Nugent.

"He'll have to let Bunter go," said Johnny Bull. "Can't keep a titled aristocrat here against his wish. Hallo! Here's old Wingate!"

The captain of Greyfriars pushed his way through the crowd, and stopped short in front of Bunter.

"What is this wild yarn that's going about?" he inquired.

"It's true as a wild yarn," said Bunter. "It's true as gospel!"

"You mean to say that you're the owner of Chuckfield Place?"

"Yes. And I'll invite you down there one of these days, Wingate, if you're good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate's brow grew dark.

"There's been quite enough of this absurdity," he said. "From what I know of you, Bunter, it strikes me you've made a false claim."

"No fear!" said Bunter. "I've satisfied the family solicitors that I'm the lawful heir, anyway. That ought to be good enough."

"It may be good enough for them, but it isn't for me. Look here, you silly young duffer, why don't you speak the truth? You'll land yourself in a frightful mess if you stick to this ridiculous yarn!"

"I tell you, it's not a yarn! Here's the letter from the solicitors. And I'm

just going to send a wire to tell 'em they can expect me to-day. There will be a big reception at Chuckfield when I turn up. The whole giddy population will be there to welcome me, I expect."

Wingate rubbed his nose thoughtfully. He was nonplussed by Bunter's cool self-assurance. Like Wharton, he felt that the fat junior was staking a false claim; but he couldn't quite see how to get to the bottom of the mystery.

It was at this moment that Skinner came breathlessly on the scene. Not only was he breathless from running, but he was convulsed with merriment.

"Oh, it's too rich!" he spluttered. "Altogether too rich for words!"

"What are you burbling about?" demanded Wingate warmly. His train of thought had been rudely interrupted by Skinner's sudden appearance.

"Oh, dear!" sobbed Skinner. "I shall bust a boiler in a minute. Just read this!"

The captain of Greyfriars took the newspaper which Skinner handed over, and read the paragraphs indicated to him.

A grin crept over his features as he read.

"War over, Wingate!" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha! No. It's just about to begin, I'm thinking."

"What's the news?"

"Get it off your chest, Wingate!"

The captain of Greyfriars handed the paper round for inspection.

The result was amazing. Some of the juniors laughed over the paragraphs until they were positively in pain.

"Look here!" roared Billy Bunter. "What's the joke? What tickles you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the best thing of the term!"

"Carry me home to die, somebody!"

Fired with sudden frenzy, Billy Bunter snatched the paper from the hand of Bolsover major, who held it. Bolsover was too overcome with merriment to retain his grasp, and Bunter emerged with the paper in his possession.

#### "THE HEIR OF CHUCKFIELD PLACE,"

was the headline; and, immediately below it, Bunter read the following paragraphs:

"We understand that the missing heir of Chuckfield Place, when he reveals himself, will have some stiff hurdles to negotiate."

"It has now been ascertained that the late Sir Foulkes Bunter died heavily in debt, and his liabilities are estimated at something like £3,000."

"Great and growing anger is being felt by the tenants of the estate, who have been given notice to quit by the trustees."

"Altogether, we are bound to state that, in our opinion, the missing heir has everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by remaining missing. We should advise him, without prejudice, to continue to bury himself in obscurity; for if he should show himself he will profit nothing by it."

Billy Bunter read that tragic announcement, and his jaw dropped.

All his dreams of wealth and position had come tumbling down like a house of cards.

Sir Foulkes Bunter had died not only penniless, but in debt—"in debt up to the eyebrows," as Bob Cherry put it. And Billy Bunter had been advertising himself far and wide as the heir to the property!

The fat junior's face was a picture. He tried to speak, but he could not. His

tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

"You silly fat chump!" said Wingate. "Do you realise what you've let yourself in for?"

"Oh!"

"Do you fully understand what those paragraphs mean?"

"Yow!"

"Are you in a position to stump up eight thousand quid?"

"Groof!"

Billy Bunter saw that the game was up.

There was nothing for it but to confess that his claim was false. Unless he did this he would be plunging into a sea of troubles.

Bunter faced round wildly upon the grinning crowd.

"I—I—it was only a j-j-joke!" he stammered. "I'm not the heir to the rotten estates at all! I don't own 'em. I've got nothing whatever to do with 'em! I was just—ahem!—pulling everybody's leg."

"Pulling everybody's leg," said Wingate grimly, "is not a very honest game. You get it in the neck in the long run. So you admit that you're no relative of the late Sir Foulkes Bunter—what?"

"No connection whatever," said Bunter promptly.

"If he'd died worth pots of money," said Bob Cherry, "it would have been another story."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This affair has gone far enough," said Wingate. "You will write at once to those solicitors, Bunter, withdrawing your claim to the estates. After that you'll come along to my study, and I'll endeavour to teach you that these little games are not in the best of taste. And think yourself jolly lucky that the Head knows nothing about it! If he did, you'd get pretty short shrift."

Billy Bunter rolled away with his heart in his boots. He had been beaten all along the line; and the next hour was one of mental and physical anguish to him.

Wingate did not spare the rod. He chastised the fat junior until Bunter's yells were heard all over Greyfriars. And when the Remove trooped into the Form-room for morning lessons, the victim showed a considerable reluctance to sit down.

For many days Billy Bunter was the laughing-stock of the whole school. Harry Wharton & Co. refrained from hitting him when he was down; but they could not help chuckling at the comic side of the situation.

No news ever came to hand concerning the real heir. That young gentleman wisely preferred to keep out of the limelight.

But, wherever the genuine heir might be, and whatever his reasons for having bolted, he certainly was not William George Bunter of Greyfriars.

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

## NOTICES.

### CRICKET.

WANDSWORTH C.C.—154.—J. Abel, 183, Shields Road, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

CHILTON HOME C.C.—Home matches preferred.—H. R. Bennett, Chilton Home, Maghull, near Liverpool.

SHREWSBURY C.C.—Matches wanted up to August—161-17.—W. C. Cox, 34, Durdan Street, Smithdown Road, Liverpool.

ST. LUKE'S B.S.C.C.—16.—Scouts' teams preferred.—F. Stanton, 18, Boscawen Street, Deptford, F. S. 8.

# THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 74.—DABNEY and FRY.

A FEW weeks ago Potter and Greene were dealt with together in this series. It was no use trying to separate the Siamese Twins! Practically we never hear of any without the other. And the same thing holds good of William Walter Dabney and Edward Fry of the Upper Fourth.

These two are the close chums of the lordly Cecil Reginald Temple, skipper of the Form west above the Remove. They move in his majestic orbit, as do Potter and Greene in the orbit of the magnificent Coker, or like the satellites of the planet Jupiter. But it is not at all the case that Dabney and Fry, any more than Potter and Greene—the satellites of Jupiter hardly come in here—have no minds of their own.

We often find them disagreeing with Temple. Not so often as the two Fifth-Formers disagree with Coker. It is true; but then, Temple, though he has some disposition to self-conceit, is a much more reasonable person than dear old Horace. He is very certain of the correctness of his own opinions, of course—most of us are—but he does not go about looking for trouble to quite the extent Coker does.

It cannot be said that Dabney and Fry have ever been really prominent in the Greyfriars stories. Belonging, as they do, to a Form which you only meet when it chances to be in opposition—and usually in more of

him, and that was what it would come to if he refused to lend a hand.

Fry is the more decided character of the two, I fancy. Dabney is apt to be little more than an echo. He chimes in with "Oh, rather!" very much as Vava-our of High-life does with his "Absolutely!" He seldom takes any initiative at all. Fry does now and then. But went for Ionides, the bullying Greek sixth-former, when he dropped on to Temple for refusing to fag for him. Ionides knocked Dabney down; but Fry held on till the Remove came to the rescue.

It was Fry whom Temple took in first with him at St. Jim's in "the Bouncer's match"—the game in which Vernon-Smith made a century in each innings. Smithy was to have gone in last, according to the lordly Temple's list. It did not work out quite like that, for the Removevite went in sixth wicket down in the first innings, and first with Temple in the second. Fry told Temple not to be an ass when Temple wanted to go on bowling at a time when the fine work of the Bouncer had brought victory within the range of possibility; and Temple wasn't an ass that time—he let the Bouncer continue.

Of course, Fry and Dabney were in that wicked trick of the guileless Alonzo when he returned to Greyfriars after a longish absence. They took a donkey to the station to meet him, and they got Alonzo on to the animal's back the wrong way round. It was

had put up a notice on the board, and that the object was to save an hour of daylight; and Dabney innocently asked whether the Head could make the day an hour longer.

Dabney then suggested that the notion must be that they got up an hour earlier, but that was not the usual time. Mr. Capper contradicted this. Dabney then pretended to believe that they would lose 60 minutes. He did not believe anything of the sort, naturally; he understood the scheme as well as Mr. Capper did, and as we have all come to do in the usual time. But he gave Mr. Capper lots of trouble in explaining; and the worried Form-master began to feel as if his head were turning when he thought of making a whole Form so very obtuse as Dabney seemed to be comprehend.

In the end the Upper Fourth triumphed. It was partly through Wingate's lapse of memory. Wingate forgot all about the new time, and allowed Temple and the rest to stay up an hour later than they should have done. There was a row, and through Temple's representations to the Head the scheme was postponed until the following spring—and forgotten then.

It would be easy to look up a score of instances in which Dabney and Fry followed Temple's lead, with frequent grumbles to the effect that Temple was a rotten leader, and that everything went wrong with him. I command against the Remove. But there would not be much in it. Enough has been told of these two, who are distinctly minor characters in the Greyfriars drama, yet of sufficient importance to be mixed if they had been omitted.

## The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"BOLSOVER'S WAY!"

By Frank Richards.

Percy Bolsover is not by any means a specially soft-hearted or sympathetic person. But he has his good points, and when he does feel anything he does what he can in his own blundering, obtuse way.

We have never heard very much about Ninian Elliott, the fellow from the other side of the Scottish Border, who shares Bolsover's study. He plays a prominent part in this story for the first and last time, as at the end of it he leaves Greyfriars to go to Canada with an uncle. Elliott has got himself into a very nasty scrape, and the disclosure of his wrongdoing would put his school on both Cherry and Alton at—on the Canadian plan, which afforded him a more than usually good chance of getting on in the world.

Harry Wharton finds out the trouble, and does his level best to set it right. He makes real sacrifices to that end. But he fails

Then Percy Bolsover takes it in hand. Does he fall, too? That you will learn next week. The story is one you will all like, I am sure. It is full of strong human sympathy, and it has plenty of incident. Pon and the nuts come into it; and Bolsover's way, which leaves you fairly chilly, yet leaves it—on with a conviction that there is real good in the blustering, quarrelsome bully of the Remove.

## LIST OF GREYFRIARS STORIES IN THE "MAGNET" (continued).

- 221.—"Honour Before All!"
  - 222.—"A Traitor in the School."
  - 223.—"Frank Nugent's Great Wheeze."
  - 224.—"The Road to Ruin."
  - 225.—"Out of Bounds."
  - 226.—"Down on His Luck."
  - 227.—"The Greyfriars Gardener's."
  - 228.—"Bolsover Miner's Bolt."
  - 229.—"The Remove Form's Feud."
  - 230.—"The Schoolboy Detective."
  - 231.—"The Stolen Schoolboys."
  - 232.—"The Circus Schoolboy."
  - 233.—"Under Suspicion." [day.]
  - 234.—"Harry Wharton & Co.'s Bank Hold."
  - 235.—"Spooning the School."
  - 236.—"The Kidnapped School." [friars.]
  - 237.—"The Competition." [Craze at Grey.]
- YOUR EDITOR.



less comic opposition—their minor roles have not tended to give us any of the same vivid conception of either that we all have of Johnny Bull or Peter Todd, the Bouncer or Harry Wharton, or, indeed, with a very few exceptions, of all the members of the Remove. One may feel sure that one could know Bolsover or Bunter or Alonzo at a glance; but it would be easy to pass Dabney and Fry together in the street and take them for Smith and Brown, or anyone else.

But we do know enough to be aware that they are in the main very decent fellows indeed. There is nothing wrong about either of them, even though once or twice their notions have seemed less generous and chivalrous than those of Temple. For instance, there was the Bouncer's plot to carry off the whole Remove, tricked, eleven and imprison them on a barge while the Upper Fourth went to St. Jim's to play that school's junior team instead. A wily scheme, that, with several features that might have been objected to by a fellow scrupulous about not hitting below the belt. Temple did not quite like it. He particularly disliked the employment of roughs against Harry Wharton and his team; and it certainly was going rather far. But Dabney and Fry—the latter especially—failed to see that. It was Fry who called the Bouncer back when he was going out of the room, after Temple had refused, saying significantly that Temple would not like the scheme carried out without

Fry who would not let Phipps smash Alonzo after Lonzy had dragged Phipps's ears and flung his arms wildly around his neck. But this was not because Fry had any tenderness for Lonzy. It was merely because it was funnier to be kind to him—after the curious fashion of kindness they had devised. Fry has no sense of humour and no doubt he got no end of enjoyment out of the innocent Todd.

Far back in the old stories, long before the Willett Daylight Saving Bill was put through as a war measure—we might have waited years longer for it, but for that matter, BILL, the Butcher of Berlin—there was a yarn in the MAGNET about a daylight saving scheme at Greyfriars. "Harry Wharton's Scheme," was the title of the yarn. A Form meeting was held to debate the proposal; and Wharton said that he wanted to keep the notion dark, because if Temple & Co. got hold of it they would collar it like a shot. The Head and Mr. Queech were talking over the Willett scheme when Harry came in to propose its being given a trial at Greyfriars. It was given a trial; but Temple & Co., not having had anything to do with its acceptance, were in strong opposition to it. In fact, they made up their minds to disregard it.

Mr. Capper would not allow that; but there was more argument than the short-tempered master of the Upper Fourth cared for. He called them from their beds, saying that it was a quarter to eight—or, rather, a quarter to seven, really, but a quarter to eight by the new time. He told them that the Head

## A Great New Serial Story.

## THE BROWN TORRENT.

BY SIDNEY DREW.

A Thrilling Story of Adventure, in which Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and other Popular Characters, play their parts.

## NEW READERS START HERE.

Rupert Thurston buys an idol bearing the inscription, "I am Sharpra, the Numberer, and at my awakening the world shall tremble!" Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, Maddock, Prout, and O'Rooney arrive. The idol's eyes are seen to open, and with a terrific crash the hotel collapses.

The bank India, named Gadrá Singh, is employed as cook; and the one-time rebel, Larput Raj, is the shikari. While watching the idol he sees its eyes open, but they quickly shut.

Duke Payton arrives and joins the expedition to the cactus country. They are out hunting a tiger, and Ching Lung manages to shoot it. With a start he sees that an arrow has passed through his sleeve and pinched his arm to the tree.

(Now read on.)

## The Rock-Python's Victim.

CHING-LUNG pulled the arrow out of the branch, and dropped under the shelter of the bank of the water-course. He yelled a warning to Payton:

"Be wary, Payton! I've got the tiger; but there's more dangerous stuff here than tigers! I've just had an arrow fired at me. There's two-legged game about, and it means mischief!" Ching-Lung spoke the vernacular fairly well, for the prince was a born linguist. He gave Larput Raj a hail: "Be watchful, old wolf! I have an arrow in my sleeve! We have a foe! Be watchful, shikari!"

Down the wind that shook the reeds came the echo of a shot. Ching-Lung recognised the ring of Ferrers Lord's favourite rifle as a curious, whining note that followed the first discharge. Then a gust of hot air, a rush of smoke, and a violent crackling. The reeds had been fired, and they were almost bone-dry.

The prince made a rush to where the tiger lay, and dragged it by main force to the edge of the water-course. It was a fine brute, and in magnificent condition. He pushed it over the edge of the bank, hoping that he would not have to lose one of the best skins that had ever fallen before his bullet.

He again he shouted to Payton and to the shikari, neither answered. The smoke grew thicker and thicker to Payton. The reeds were blazing furiously. To remain another moment would have been sheer insanity.

A drove of wild pigs, twenty-five or thirty strong, bolted towards Payton, and behind them, snazed and horrified, and still with the half-digested portion of its last meal bulging out like a great knot, fifteen feet of rock-python slid and slithered, hissing, and went past him faster than an ordinary course gallop.

The snake was a night prowler, gluttled with food, and in daylight as blind as a mole. As Ching-Lung ran through the smoke he had plenty of company. The bed of reeds, that seemed so quiet and deserted, teemed with living creatures, all from fright.

Ahead of him, dimly through the smoke, he could see the python. The snake was going in a straight line. A human figure darted into view right in the very path of the rock-python. Like a battering-ram the snake hit him and went on. Too an instant Ching-Lung fancied that the luckless person who had been foolish enough to get in the way of fifteen feet of python moving at the pace of twenty miles was Larput Raj. But it was not the shikari. He was a man, and he was squawking the strap of his rifle over his shoulder, Ching-Lung picked up the body and staggered on.

Someone was firing. The breeze dropped suddenly, and an abrupt bend of the water-course checked the advancing flames. As Ching-Lung emerged from the reeds Duke Payton, who had knocked over five pigs and the rock-python, advanced to meet him.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "What have you got there? You can't drop him, prince. The wind's backing, and the little flare-up's about over. Went off like gunpowder, didn't it? The stuff was as dry as tinder."

Payton took up a wisp of burning grass and applied it to his pipe. Then he reloaded his rifle, and together they bent over the

body, for the man was stone dead. His spine had been snapped by the terrific impact when the python had struck him. He was a little, brown-skinned man, wearing sandals of raw hide and a kind of goatskin kilt with a pouch full of iron coins. A raven-black hair was coiled into a short, thick tail, and confined by a piece of twisted wire. His eyes were closed, and a thin trickle of blood oozed from his lips. Then the muscles of the lids relaxed, and two pale-blue eyes opened, dull and glassy, but strangely in contrast with the dark brown of the skin.

"Mind how you handle that," said Duke Payton warningly.

The arrow, with the barb driven through the cloth, still dangled from Ching-Lung's outstretched hand.

Payton cut the arrow out, and wrapped his handkerchief round the point. "That brute of a rock-python has messed up things, prince," he said. "I wish I could have nailed this little chap alive. I suppose he's a freak. I've seen a blue-eyed native before, but he was a freak, of course—a sort of albino. In all your travels have you ever come across a fellow with a hide that colour and eyes of pale blue?"

"I don't think I have," said Ching-Lung. "He seems to be a weapon, but I suppose he let go that arrow at me, and then set the reeds on fire. I hope that tiger hasn't been cremated or singed, for he had a rattling fine skin."

Larput Raj came striding through the thinning smoke. He looked at the dead native, and made the sign that wards off the evil eye. The shikari squatted down on the scaly back of the rock-python, and picked a thorn out of his leg, and squeezed the puncture till the blood flowed to clean the little wound.

"The great sahib has killed a buck," he said. "I know other things too have died. Truly, Payton Sahib, thou art also a great shikari, and many years have I know thee as friend and foe, and a braver I have not met. By the rifle the Viceroi gave me, thou hast hunted strange game! Who is he, then, that lies there? Who is this man, thou hast slain?"

"Art thou past all thy youth and going blind?" said Payton. "The snake slew him, not I. What is his tribe?"

The shikari wagged his head. "I know not, sahib," he answered. "Round the camp-fire and at the village gate in the twilight, when the old men chatter, I have heard tales of brown-skinned people with such eyes that live yonder beyond the mists. I know neither his tribe nor his race. It is a good folk, I will swear, and a man." Larput Raj trotted away.

Leaving Barry O'Rooney to guard the buck, for the vulture, in the mysterious manner of vultures, had been joined by several comrades, Ferrers Lord and Thurston skirted the thickened smouldering remains of the reed-bed. The millionaire frowned a little as Payton spoke to him.

"It wasn't our fault," he said; "and the fellow meant ugly mischief when he fired that camp-fire at Ching-Lung. But I wish it hadn't happened. Who is this man killed at the very outset isn't pleasant. An odd-looking fellow, too. Is there anything in that pouch affair of his?"

"Only a flint and steel—just the ordinary sort of arrangement," said Payton. "I have

kept the arrow, as I thought it might be poisoned. In these times arrows are rather a novelty. In the remotest places I've visited I have always found some kind of a firearm. Perhaps he didn't aim at the prince at all, but at the tiger."

"We shall never know the truth of that," said Ferrers Lord. "It is a pity. Have him buried decently when the shikari brings his men along, Payton. Come, Ching, and we'll look for your roasted tiger."

The tiger had been too badly singed to be worth the trouble of skinning, so, like the rock-python, they left it to the vultures, and sent Nacin and a couple of bearers to relieve Barry O'Rooney and bring in the buck.

"It strikes me that our trouble will be water," said Ching-Lung. He took up a handful of sand, and let it trickle through his fingers. "The air is moist enough, but this stuff feels as dry as hot ashes. I know we've brought a pump, and it won't be difficult to drive it down, but the water is sure to be salt."

"What makes you think so?" "I splashed some into my face walking up that bit of a creek there, and got a taste of it that was like brine," said the prince. "If the surface water is like that, it's only reasonable to suppose that it will be the same below, only more so. Not that it actually follows, but it seems highly probable."

"Those are some of the little difficulties we must expect and conquer," said Ferrers Lord, smiling. "A lack of water must not turn us back. Here is a little slice of the earth that is yet unexplored in a country that has been civilised practically for ages. The world is becoming a very small place. The summit of Mount Everest will soon be the only spot where no human foot has trodden. When this little excursion is over we must prove to that haughty peak that it is not unconquerable by planting a flag on it."

Larput Raj had cut off the head of the tiger for the sake of the splendid set of teeth. He carried it before the bearers, who followed with the pigs and buck. Behind them the hungry vultures wheeled in narrowing circles, and then swooped down to the feast, and a thousand of ants, who also knew that a mighty banquet was ready, came streaming out of the jungle.

## A Nightmare Visits the Camp.

ALTHOUGH the skin of the tiger had been singed down to the bare flesh on one side, the head had creased undamaged. It was such a fine head that the prince thought it well worth preserving. The sight of it filled Gadrá Singh, the lean cook, with envy and longing. It was the ambition of his life to be thought a shikari, but until he had killed his tiger nobody would believe that he had shot

enough to face and kill anything more ferocious than a chicken. The cook watched Larpur Raj as, with a keen knife, the shikari skilfully removed the skin from the skull of the tiger.

"Some day I also shall slay a tiger—ay, many tigers, shikari," said the cook. "Let us lay out the skin," said the bony cook with a grin on his wrinkled face.

"Thou kill a tiger!" he said. "Away to thy cooking-pots and kettles! By the rifle the Viceroy gave me, I am filled with laughter! Hearest thou, Nacha? This long-legged baker of meats will kill many a tiger, and his knees would shake if he met a mongoose. Skim thy pots, Gadra Singh, and leave the slaying of tigers to men! Take thou this for the busy ones, Nacha, that they may clean it for the yellow-faced aunts who killed the Nacha took up the skull. He had not far to go to find the "busy ones," for there was an ants' nest within a hundred and fifty yards of the camp.

The cook sighed, and went back to where Gan-Waga was reclining in the shade. "You got me with me, shiny face, and the tiger I want kill is kill by another."

"Ye go and boils omons, old dears!" said the Eskimo. "I never goes shooting tigers no more with ye. I too fondness of myself. Ye takes Weeping Willie's next time. He the properful pals yo' want. Ye don'ta get me."

No further move was made that day. In the morning Nacha brought in the skull of the tiger, picked clean and white. Then, after a meal, camp was struck, and the Eskimo and the young country, Ching-Lung and Barry O'Romey forming the rearguard.

At each mile the strange, uncanny plants increased in size and assumed more grotesque shapes. Progress was not difficult, for the sand was fairly firm.

Thurston, who presided over the medicines, had dosed them liberally with quinine. They encountered neither bird nor beast, but reptiles in plenty, in the form of tortoises and sand-lizards. The misty air was warm and steamy, and Gan-Waga enjoyed it almost as much as he had enjoyed his dose of quinine, a dose which had done him good.

"Dears, dears, Ching!" he sighed, as he plodded on in the wake of the cook and Weeping Willie. "I wishes we could have a nice stormyones for a changes, or a bits of ices to slide on. What the uses of all this rottenness sand, hunk?"

"It is a most useful indeed when we want to start a sandpaper factory, Gan," said the prince. "Whoa! Let's sit down and fan each other for a bit. Here's a nice garden chair for the purpose."

Ching-Lung took a seat on the shell of a slumbering tortoise. It was the largest specimen they had met, and he lay on his back on four feet, and the reptile raised no objection.

"Phwat a loife to be an old tortoise!" said Barry O'Romey, striking a match on the shell. "O! Think O'd drop clane dead, ut is to be a tortoise. I think I'd like to phwat a place! O've seen three loike that snaky beast wid the spokes all over ut whin O've had the nightmare. Cactuses, is ut?"

"Cacti, Barry," corrected Ching-Lung. "Singular, cactus, signifying one of them; plant, cactus, the more of them. I am afraid you are forgetting your Latin, Barry. Push along, or we shall get left."

Contrary to all expectation, the millionaire and Larpur Raj had discovered a water-hole, and the water was quite fresh, though it had a slightly bitter flavor. As Weeping Willie accepted a pail of it, and they knew that the mule was a wily old beast, they felt that they could drink the water without much risk.

"Did you see any game, chief?" asked Ching-Lung.

"A track, Ching," said Ferrers Lord. "But we came across traces of wolves, and as wolves cannot live in numbers by dining off each other, there must be game. I am going on now with Payton and Thurston and the shikari. It isn't policy to push the bearers too far, as they are the best of the game hunters, not beasts of burden, and they have done very well so far with those heavy packs. Several have asked to be allowed to go hunting on their own account. You are in charge. If they ask again, let half a dozen go with me."

"All serene, chief!" said the prince. "You'll

be back before dark, I suppose? I wouldn't care to roam about here at night without a suit of armour. If you bumped against one of those spiky cactuses, as O'Romey calls them, you'd be about as happy as a hettle on a pin. Wake up, be'sun! What about the tent?"

"Some me! I thought we was gain' further, sir," said Maddock. "The anchor's down, Tom, so we'll do a bit of canvas-fizzing. Give that lazy blubberer a good hand knock and put some life into him. 'E's knockin' his head agin' ut with a sledge-hammer if I thought I could knock a bit of sense into him, but that's impossible," said Prout. "He'll do nothing but eat and sleep, so what's the good, by honey? Lend a hand, Barry, and we'll soon get finished. How are we going on for firewood?"

There was no shortage of fuel. There was plenty of dead cactus about, shrivelled up and bone-dry, that burned well, but owing to the thorns, that were as hard as steel and as sharp as needles, it required cautious handling.

As he unloaded Weeping Willie Gadra Singh discovered a sack that he had not placed on that and-eyed animal. The sack contained the skin of the tiger, and the cook flung it from him in the water.

"You took it to lose rotten!" he yelled. "I like know who stick him on my mule! I break his fat head!"

"Bedad, simmer down, now—simmer down, line-prin'" grinned Barry, as he drove in a tent-pole. "Don't be spiteful and show your teeth. O! didn't ye get O'im gaspin' for a cup of yaf, so do get on wid ut. Av any heads want punchin', old son, send for me. O've won prizes and gold medals for ut, and O'im open to win more."

Gadra Singh seized his kettle and made for the water-hole. A wild shriek burst from his lips. Ching-Lung and Prout snatched up their rifles in alarm, and Barry and Benjamin Maddock grasped their mallets more tightly.

The cook's shriek aroused the cause of it. Gan-Waga, who had been sitting on the edge of the water hole, quite heedless of the fact that the water was to be used for culinary and drinking purposes, and that some people are idiotically particular, and might object to the presence of a live Eskimo in their water supply, popped up and said:

"When ye see a wild-eyed human beings—one flourishing a kettle, one brandishing a rifle, and two waving mallets—bearing down upon him and uttering bloodcurdling yells, he though it quite time to leave. He got out of the water-hole, and scuttled across the sand, disregarding Prout's threat to shoot."

They did not follow the fugitive—it was far too hot for that—but merely yelled things after him.

"There's going to be a lonely grave in this cold desert," said Barry O'Romey. "The bastid! Av as I was drinking dead wid thirst, O'd like to taste a draught of that water! Prussic acid wouldn't poison me quicker, and ut would be a lot noicer to taste. Sure, boys, there'd be a lone lonely grave for that Eskimo!"

Mr. Benjamin Maddock shook his mallet at the vanishing figure.

"Some me, I'll help you to dig that grave, and fill it in and dance on it, Barry!" he growled. "What's to be done?"

"Ching-Lung had strolled away, chucking. There was really one thing to be done. Gan-Waga was quite a nice person in his way, but they did not want him in their soup or in their tea."

They tried bailing, but that was slow and back-breaking work, so they unpacked the buckets. By the time they had emptied the water-hole, they were in a condition of perspiration and indignation, and they made remarks about the Eskimo that would have made his tallowy hair curl if he had heard them.

Slowly the water filtered up through the sand, clear and bright, till the hole was again full.

As he ran the reason of all the excitement dawned upon Gan-Waga. He had got into the hole because it was pleasantly cool there, and he had wanted to get a drink, and he disliked. He did not consider it wise to go back at once, for some bad-tempered people make a fuss about nothing at all.

Gan-Waga, seeing that there was no pursuit, slowly down, and searched his waterproof pocket for his wand and to his great delight nearly fell from his lips as he saw something

that resembled a gigantic mushroom advancing slowly towards him along an avenue of tall and weirdly-shaped cacti. The next moment the Eskimo realised that it was only a tortoise, but a veritable monster of its kind. And a land tortoise is about as dangerous as a tiger.

As it came nearer the reptile scented danger of some kind, and drew its head, tail, and legs within its suit of armour.

Gan sat on it until he had finished his cigar. The curious mist shut out his view of the camp, but he guessed by certain clanking sounds that they were pumping out the "boils, and Gan-Waga smiled to himself.

"I gladfies they gotted some things to do to keeps them out of 'mischiefness," he thought. "Oh, dears! Ho, ho, ho, hoo!"

All seemed peaceful when Gan-Waga ventured back. The weird pumps were still taking a rest. Only the cook seemed to be stirring. He was farther along with the bears, but round him, taking their siesta, Nacha stood on guard.

Gan-Waga, watching out for danger, stumbled over the tiger's skull, hurting his toe. Then he skidded on something slippery, and sat down heavily on a little heap of wet clay that he had stepped on. He was then digging a channel to run off the water.

Gan opened his mouth to say what he thought about it, but closed it and stared.

The grinning skull of the tiger had suddenly developed an ear. It was only a piece of mud Gan had kicked up that had taken the shape of an ear, and fallen in the proper position, but it was the exact shape and looked surprisingly natural. Gan forgot he had hurt his toe, and grinned a grin of delight. Scooping up handfuls of the clay, he plastered it down on the skull of the tiger, and carried the skull along to the tent, where Ching-Lung was repairing the shirt of a sandal that he had torn.

"Ho, ho, hoo! I going to be a pulpit!" chuckled the Eskimo.

"A what?" asked Ching-Lung. "I didn't get you, Steve. Come again. What's that you've got the hoo, Wagtail?"

"A pulpit, Ching—y a smodder," said Gan-Waga. "I not sures of it's smodder or modellers. I puts the olds tiger's faces back on him agains with clay, Ching. Yo' helps, old dears, hunk?"

"O! a smodder!" said the prince. "You talk English like a gramophone run over by a steam-roiler. And the game?"

"It Sing-Songs, Ching. The old cook he madness to shoot a tigers, Chingy. I want to be kindfuls to him, Chingy, so I think I make him a nice little change. He's a bit of a gerneress. Ha, ha, hah! It a butferfuls mind. We stick his faces back, and stick a cangles inside his faces to make his eyes shiny, hunk. Then we shoves him out in the darks, and yo' roars, and I—oh, ho, ho, hoo!—I fetches Sing-Songs, and he's a butferfuls! I do want to be kindfuls to Songs!"

"Very well," said Ching-Lung. "Anything for a quiet life. It's a dirty job, but for once I'll be a modeller."

As he watched Ching-Lung's hands at work Gan-Waga's face glowed. As he had the whole framework of the skull, it was not very difficult. With a lighted candle the prince produced dark stripes on the forehead and black patches on the muzzle. Spines cut from an adjacent cactus formed bristling tufts on the sides of the head.

"We want a dust of flour now for the lighter stripes, and a chunk of red flannel for his tongue," said Ching-Lung; "and with a bit of green paper over each eye-socket and a flash-innup inside, he'll pass in the darl. Do you think the cook can hit him?"

"Prapsif, if the old gun go off, Chingy. I went once with Sing-Songs, and we fussed the tiger, but the gun not works."

"Ah, yes," he was also there, my child!" said the prince. "I do not want to be. I want to let him know he's in it. I'll attend to it tenderly, lift it with care, and put it down in the corner there; for if you drop it that sweet, sweet smile will get a bad injury, as you saw when her daughter, and I was present, and welcome to go for swim, but not to go near the water, Ching-Lung wandered out

and met the Eskimo's friend the glapt tortoise.

"Old shell-back" said the prince, addressing the reptile, "if I could only get a waddle on you as the fatal moment, you'd do very nicely indeed. Perhaps it might be worked. Don't be ill-mannered and run away for I should miss you very much. And I don't think a little perforation would do you any harm."

If the tortoise had guessed what was in store it would have tried to create a new record for the tortoise Marathon race. Only the keen eyes of Nacha, the sentry, saw Prince Ching-Lung leave the tent, carrying a bunch of yellow flags, and those to do was no concern of Nacha's. Then came Gan-Waga with a couple of pails, which he filled with clay, and then he waddled off into the mist.

"Surely," thought Nacha, as the Eskimo returned for more clay, "those be strange doings. And yet it is always so. If a man cannot understand the doings of the white sahibs, is it possible, then, to understand those of the yellow sahib and of the fat one with the shiny face? To try would give me an aching head."

To prevent the tortoise from leaving the premises Ching-Lung had bored a hole through the rim of its skull, and passed a cord through the hole. The cord he had fastened to a tent-pole.

When Gan-Waga returned the second time he hopped down on the sand and giggled. The tiger's head was already in position. A tortoise with a tiger's head is a fairly weird sort of beast, but it was not weird enough to satisfy Ching-Lung. He had studied the tortoise made of elm, staked over with cactus thorns. He plastered the rest of the clay over the skull, and pushed in more spines, the very longest he could find, till the reptile bristled like a giant's pincushion.

"Ooh, Chingy, wherrist, Chingy?" asked Gadranga, his fat legs clanking with laughter. "Dears, dears! I think I shall smile in a minutes. Whats' yo' call her, Chingy? Ho, ho, ho-o-o-o! What sorts of insect is she, Chingy?"

"It's a ligo-tor-tic-cam-poreupino," said Ching-Lung, "a sort of cross between a ligo—a camel, a porcupine, a tortoise, and a box of tin-tacks, Wagtail. It is quite intelligent, and perfectly tame. Come and stroke it, Gau."

"Not in these pjamas, Chingy. She gotten a awful nervous these coms, hunk? I like to take the old ligo-tor-tic homes, Chingy, and stick it in Barry O'Loonatic's bed. Ha, ha, hah! Oh, Chingy, it's too loveful! I feel I wants to kisses it and tie some blue ribbons round its necks. We ought to gives it a nice new name, Chingy. What's it called?"

"Presently they walked back to the camp. Prout, O'Rooney, and Maddock had awakened, and were having tea. Nacha did not ask for permission to go hunting, and Ching-Lung was not sorry, for even in daylight the tortoise might be humped to, and tanked it who a roar a shock if he happened to run against it.

The three mariners and the cook glared at the Eskimo as he seized the teapot. Gan-Waga's smile was a large and gentle one. With a prince's air he was, but he was no glad to see 'yo' all so merriness and bright," he said. "Good healths! 'Yo' enjoyed that nice pudding, hunk?"

"O'if I wrote something over that grave," said Barry O'Rooney. "O' haven't I thought up a new name for 'em, but it's not a good one, something loike this: 'Here loies an oily Eskimo, who made our loives a terror. But at last we caught him bendin', and he's dead enough, no error. 'Fallow he loved, and snow and ice. But now he's gone to pot. We grives we couldn't kill him twice. But hope he'll find ut hot.' At course, O' can improve on that," added the last of the O'Rooneys of Ballyhunnin Castle, "but—"

"Improve on it!" growled Maddock. "Some me, if you dynamited it you couldn't make it any better." "Borry, but it will go and submermin it, and mined it, and Lewisgunned it, you couldn't make it any rottener! You and your gasbly poetry! Run away, you boys! Gimme some more tea, cook, for that poem has about choked me."

"You're not taking out of a turnip, air!" grinned Prout, filling his pipe. "I don't care a rap what he steeks over the Eskimo's grave, but if anyone is startin' a collection for the

coffin, by honey, I'm ready to subscribe twice here and now!"

"Dears, and how! How kindful yo' are to me, Tommy," said Gan-Waga. "Bo, ho, boo! We not dead yetness, not muchful!"

When darkness began to gather Ferrers Lord, Payton, Rupert Thurston, and the shikari were still absent, but their absence did not hinder the work of the shikari. As to the pluck of Nacha and the bearers he had no doubts, but he knew how superstitious they were, and he did not wish to risk a stampede. Ching-Lung had a little heart-to-heart talk with the shikari's second-in-command, and Nacha nodded at any suggestion.

Gas fires were built to guide the absent ones back to the camp.

Ching-Lung entered the tent, where Gan-Waga was waiting expectantly.

"I'm going to unhitch the ligo-tort, Wagtail, and I'd like to see where the long hand of my watch is? Take it, and when the hand gets to there tell the cook about the tiger. I don't know whether I can get the ligo-tort to move after I've unhitched him, but I'll try. So long!"

Ching-Lung's piercing enough to startle a deaf man, shrilled through the camp. It was Gadranga Singh again. The ligo-tort had not waited for Ching-Lung, but had unhitched itself and come for a drink. At the very edge of the water-hole, more terrifying than ever in the glare of the gas fires, stood a most hideous and appalling monster—a veritable nightmare of horror—bumped and bristling, and shooting green flames from its eyes.

### How Weeping Willie, the Mule, did Battle with the Tiger-tort.

OLD Nacha had prepared the heaters for the day's arrival, and something startling, but his imagination had failed him to depict anything so startling as this amazing apparition. They gazed, howled, tossed their arms towards the misty sky, and fled.

Once clear of the ring of light fang by the candle, they dropped a flag on the sand, their white teeth gleaming, and peered forward to see the result of this curious feat of the yellow sahib and of the fat one of the shiny face that was to mock Gadranga Singh, the cook, who boasted himself, in his folly, that he was a shikari.

At the moment the cook's shriek pierced the dull ear of night, as the late Mr. William Shakespeare put it, Prout, Maddock, and Barry O'Rooney were sitting in their own little tent playing cards. They were the most desperate of gamblers, and for their ruinous state. They did not pay ready money, but Maddock kept an account of the transactions in a little notebook. According to the notebook Prout owed Barry O'Rooney over forty thousand pounds, and Maddock was indebted to him for a similar sum. With the exception of more than half that trifling sum, also with some wealth in prospect, Barry had some dim hopes of rebuilding Ballyhunnin Castle; but he would have accepted the price of a new pair of socks and a toothbrush down for his share of a second bottle like that.

"O'm going nap," said Barry O'Rooney, lifting the candle to light his pipe. "This'll cost ye something. Ye see—"

And then Gadranga Singh raised his melodious voice, and, in his alarm and haste, Barry exclaiming, "What's that?" he turned it against Maddock's ear, fell over the little folding table, steadied himself by placing his hand on Prout's face, and tumbled out of the tent just as the valorous Gadranga Singh, his hony knees hitting each other with fright, levelled his majestic rifle, and took aim at the blood-curdling ligo-tort.

The cook missed by a yard. The rifle kicked like a camel, and the old-fashioned black gunpowder he used belched out smoke like a factory chimney, and had the smell of a gasworks and a hot bed of coals. Weeping Willie, the mule, did not suffer from nerves. He did not mind the yelling or the bang of the rifle so much, but when he got a whiff of the smoke the mule thought that Gadranga Singh was not playing the game with snoring a second bottle like that, and lost his temper. After standing on his left eye, on his nose, and on the extreme tips of his ears, as only an angry mule can, and emitting squeals that bored holes in the welkin, Willie snapped his head-rope and went to seek a second bottle in the desert at all gallop.

Mr. Barry O'Rooney, on hands and knees, seemed to have become frozen in that lowly attitude. Mr. Prout and Mr. Reg Maddock

creased out of the tent, and also became humped to. The flash-lamp he had inserted in the place previously occupied by the brains of the tiger, the green eyes of the monster were still in excellent working order.

"A-a-a-a-a-aw! Chingy! Heaps! Save me, Chingy! I'm taking ever promgally," shrieked Gan-Waga. "Glosses, Chingy!"

The Eskimo, horror-stricken, collapsed, and began to dig himself into the sand with both hands. He did it also with great vigour, for when a ligo-tort is prowling about it is not a bad idea to take cover promptly. The cook, quite convinced that the monster was several million evil spirits knocked into, and perfectly bullet-proof, followed Gan-Waga's example, and began to dig in also.

As the cook's long arms and the Eskimo's short ones worked in the balls, a sudden and unexpected deluge of sand and grit alighted on the staring faces of O'Rooney, Maddock, and Prout. And then, while the three astonished mariners were gasping and snorting and heaving flying fragments of the ligo-tort out of their eyes, the ligo-tort, having quenched its thirst, or merely admired its own beautiful reflection in the water, turned and tripped away into the mist and gloom in that light and fairylike way peculiar to tortoises and crippled elephants suffering from humidity and heat.

"Here! What's the matter? What's all this yelling and banging?" cried Ching-Lung. "Have you all gone daft and crazy?"

It looked extremely like it to see three men scooping sand out of their eyes, while they coughed and spat and sneezed. Ching-Lung, diving into it at express speed, Ching-Lung jerked the cook out of the hole by the waist-cord, and prodded the most prominent portion of Gan-Waga with the butt of his rifle.

"Some me, it's gone!" said Maddock, getting his eye open. "It ain't there, Tom! It's scuttled!"

"What's gone? I think you've all gone clean up the loop and four or five times round it," said Ching-Lung. "What's gone?"

There was a dawdling suspicion as well as a look on the orbs of Mr. Thomas Prout.

"Well, it ain't so easy to describe it, air," he answered. "It was like a old walrus with a couple of counting-towers and two search-lights for'ard, by honey, and a 'yastack grove all over it. Down at the water-hole it was, and it was, and it was."

"Moaz' awful! Moaz' drefful! Mo-mo-pomo-moaz' awful! It said the shivering cook. "Mo-mo-mo!"

"Oh, lkey Mo'!" said Ching-Lung. "Somebody must have put whisky in your tea instead of the orb of Mr. Thomas Prout."

"But I see him, looness, Chingy," said Gan-Waga. "Oh, my, Oh, dears! It got a great, awful green eyes, Chingy, and spikes and lumps. Nacha see him, and the others, and old Weeping Willie, and they all bolts, Chingy."

Mr. Barry O'Rooney, who had received more than his full share of the sand, having been born under a lucky star, was still dredging his left eye with a large cotton pocket-handkerchief.

"Sorra a bit do O' know phwat ut was!" he remarked. "But had luck to the day O' lift wate Ballyhunnin, my happy childhood's home, and wint to say! Sure, O' must have a chunk of rock in my ole the soize of Gibraltar. There was no rock in my ole when O' saw the hunk; and, besides, O' want to see ut. Give me a bowid of a roife, Ben, ye spalpeen, and an electric-torch wid some juice left in it, and ay O' don't knock a few of those bumps off the ugly old blayward, ye can hang me up on the wall and slick brick at it."

Before Barry could obtain a rifle and pick up the trail of the ligo-tort more melody came ringing out of the gloom. Weeping Willie was the musician. It was only necessary to hear the mule's voice once not to forget it. The mule was infuriatingly temperamental, and was furiously angry. No one stirred. Every eye was fixed on the veil of shadow beyond the water-hole.

Willie came out of the shadow backwards, his tail as stiff as a poker. His head was down, and his back, neck, and legs, were all in a quiver. And the language the mule was using, if it could have been translated into English, would have made a red-herring turn pale.

The cook flung his bonny arse round Gan-Waga and proceeded to dig in again. A hair-raising vision was following Willie. Possibly the ligo-tort was fascinated by the mule's voice, but it is more likely that it only wanted another drink. Willie put one hoof over the edge of the water-hole. A horse



would have support in, but, like every mile, Waring Willie had always a leg to spare. With her foot on a pivot, he came round like a whorl in a sudden gust of wind, and placed his hind-boots with a ringing click neatly between the glaring eyes of the tigress.

The head of the monster became hardly visible. It bobbed against the first hump, and peeling it away, together with practically all the spines and the whole of the clay. Seeing that it was only a miserable tortoise after all, Willie hammered a few parting kicks against its shell, and walked into the camp. And now the two fighters and wide were the grins of Nacha and the beaters as they sprang from their hiding-places.

"Oh, holds me tightness, Ching!" moaned Gon-Waga, with tears in his beady black eyes. "Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho! Holds me tightness, while I laughs, Ching, or does I go poot! Dear, dear, dear! Oh, butterfals! Nobody had any pluck but the old mules, Ching! Holds me tightness, or I die of supplepsy! Oh, dear! Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!"

Gadra Singh looked at the nice look he had done then at the tortoise, and finally at Gan-Waga.

"Moat rotten!" he said. "Moat dirty track, Shiny Face! It would glad me to blow two or nose with my feet moat hard!"

The cook folded his arms across his bosom, shook his head, and strove away. "I'm sorry party and very amusing, sor," said Barry O'Rooney, saluting the prince. "I'll look a box for the next show."

"And if that blubberer don't stop his giggling and gurgling, rouse me," asked the bosun. "I'll look a box for the next show in his hands, or no." Well, I admit it was funny—I'll be scuttled if it wasn't! And I take my hat off to that mule. You never taught him that, sir, surely?"

"No; that was his own original turn," laughed the prince. "I didn't intend it to pass off that way at all. Gan, take a few of those creases out of your face, and make it up with the cook. I had to tell Nacha that the jape was supposed to be against Gadra Singh, though it didn't altogether happen that way. We don't want to hurt his feelings, so talk to him nicely, and give him a couple of cigars."

"You and me and Tom, Benjamin," said Barry O'Rooney, in a sorrowful voice, "don't count. Bein' whole men and civilised, all three of us, barrin' Tom and you, we ain't supposed to smoke a cigar. I'll get a joffer. Er, the love of Mike! Let me pack up and walk back home to swate ould Ballyunion, that land of pace, where there are no gigglin', putty-faced blubberers or rampagin' wild bastards! Fancy patchin' up the wounded feelings of that still-legged, black-headed chumpazine! I'll get a crown cigar, too, take me home! Oh coulda wage salt tears, only me oies is full of sand. Take me home!"

"Gan," called Ching-Lung after the Eskimo, "bring these dauntless heroes a cigar each, will you?"

"All rightness, Ching, dear!" said Gan-Waga. "But it an awful waste of good stuffs. What they wantsee, Ching, is a nice cages with a tree in it to climb up, and monkey-nuts three times a day! Ho, ho, hoo!"

An hour later Thurston, Payton, Ferrers Lord, and the shikari returned.

### The Forest of Strange Lights.

"Did I not tell thee, sahib, that it was an evil country?" said Larpuz Raj, and spat. "—Did I lie?"

"—It's the limit!" said Ching-Lung. "I was never very fond of prickly things. These chaps overdo it. They're extravagant!"

"They, stood in a glade of a forest of caeli-monsous, putty-faced, fleshy, and spoked like vegetable porcupines. At their roots grew fungi of shapes just as strange, but brightly coloured. It was a silent place, where no bird trilled, and no leaf rustled. The mist writhed overhead, with the pale sun looming through. If a troop of the little, red-capped gnomes of the fairies had come slinking along it would have hardly surprised them. It was Ebland itself.

"Some nightmare!" said Thurston. "We'd better get along and find out how far it extends. It wouldn't be so pass a night here. I'm not quite sure, but I don't know that this isn't a healthy spot. I think it would even knock over the shikari's toughs. It

ricks of fever, and I don't want to have a terrible raid on my supply of quinine."

Duke Payton nodded. "Yes, we must get through, if we have to make a forced march," he said. "Even a night march, however slow, would not be so dangerous. I'm fairly well seasoned, but I'm sure that if I sleep here my limbs wouldn't be shaking like a jelly."

"Forward, then, gentlemen!" said Ferrers Lord. "Go thou back, old wolf, and keep them from entering until I bring news. Thurston Sahib and Payton Sahib say that if my head the place would bring sickness and misfortune. We seek the nearest way out. Go thou back, then, and await us. Now, gentlemen, we had better divide. Let us toss for partners."

Larpuz Raj salaamed, and went away, rifle on shoulder, at a swifter trot. Four upsets went spinning into the air. They caught the coin as they fell.

"Heads here!" said Duke Payton. "Mine is the same," said Ching-Lung. "What's yours, Rupert?"

"The tail," said Ah-rah, the same, chief? Good! I go with the chief, then, Ching, and you with Payton. Best of luck!"

Ching-Lung wished that chance had made the coins fall in another way. It was not that he disliked Payton, but the man was a mere acquaintance, while Ferrers Lord and Thurston were old and true friends. Payton was a great hunter, and loved the sport, but from Ching-Lung's point of view he was a good deal too reticent. The prince had not forgotten the holographing at the Gate of Mist and the dropping of the aeroplane. Payton's mind was always with his friends, and he kept his eyes on the ground, and his hands on his rifle and bandolier of cartridges, might have been explained by his unexpected grant of leave and his keenness to join the expedition; but to Ching-Lung's idea, it did not explain away the aeroplane, which probably had brought him to the ground.

"They went on in silence for some time, treading down the fungi that squelched and plopped under their feet.

"Your highness heard it, of course!" said Payton suddenly.

"Evidently, we are thinking of the same thing," said Ching-Lung. "Yes, I heard an aeroplane."

"And you distrust me, I'm quick at finding out a thing like that, prince. Larpuz Raj does not like me, though I think he respects me. I hate misunderstandings. You see, prince, officially, I am only a civilian, but often in my private life I have kicked over the traces, and troops were not near, I have had to turn soldier. I have fought Larpuz Raj and his whole tribe in an emergency with anything in the shape of men I could scrape together in a terrible hurry. I thought everything was settled and quiet, and then all at once I got the crowd I was in and a murder, and this mad talk of Sharpa and the Slumberer and his awakening."

"I can sympathise with you there," said Ching-Lung. "about this old fool Sharpa. Over in China I had a bit of real trouble in that way a year or so ago. Some fakir of a saint who had been dead a thousand years or so had promised to get up at a certain date and walk round and do stunts. In all my ideas and thoughts and ways I'm so British that a good many of the priests' delirium me, and when the old fool refused to get up and do stunts the old fool the crowd I was in fault. Fortunately, the people are pretty fond of me, and when the priests suggested that he couldn't get out of his grave according to programme until my head had been chopped off, several of them lost their own heads before I got there and stopped it. So you see, Mr. Payton, I can, in a way, appreciate the position."

Payton nodded, and glanced at Ching-Lung in an interested and friendly way.

"I guess these Asiatics—the more ignorant class, I mean—are pretty much alike, whether they are brown or yellow," he said. "This Sharpa foley has got a bigish hold all at once. Nobody knows who is going to fight, and what the fighting is to be about; but if there's to be any sort of an old fight, you know, I guessed some of our boys. But I'm not sure that the shikari could have stopped them, so I was heartily glad when I learned that Mr. Ferrers Lord had taken a few of the most dangerous of them out of the way."

"You saw the lights over yonder, then?" said Ching-Lung. "Yes, I saw them, and heard about them, too. There's a bit of a volcanic eruption. It's astonishing in this country how the old stories are handed down

for thousands of years. To me it seems to amount to this. During some former eruption the tribes that lived round Sharpa fled and crossed the divide. Naturally, the tribes on our side of it objected to their company, and fought them. The whole notion arose from that. When Sharpa was in eruption there was fighting, and, of course, the Sharpa is again in eruption, there will be more fighting."

"And if there isn't they will be dreadfully disappointed," said Ching-Lung. "Phew! This isn't lavender!"

"There were stink and unpleasant scents in the air. Many of the men were bleached and shrivelled, and others were decaying from disease due to some horrible, liver-coloured fungi that grew on them in great masses and drained away their sap. They pulled harder at their pipes to counter the smell."

Ching-Lung had brought a compass and a pedometer. As time passed on it became obvious that to cross the caucis-forest in our journey a forced march would have to be made.

"If the others haven't been luckier than ourselves, prince," said Payton, "we shall have to push the stuff on as far as we can leave it, camp on the other side, and go back for it in daylight. I'm talking as if we were through, and we're not through yet. A portable wireless could have been useful here. So could a couple of gas-masks."

"I suggested to the chief that the trip across could be done quickly and pleasantly by aeroplane," said Ching-Lung; "but you must not mention these fairly modern inventions. The country bent the chief's question when he tried to get through on foot, so he means to beat it in the old-fashioned way. Good! That looks like daylight at last."

"The Gimgundra foothills," said Duke Payton; "and a little fresh air, thank goodness."

"They had come to the limit of the good earth. There was another stretch of sand, and in the hazy distance was a line of rugged, lilly country. Visibility was bad and uncertain, but the hills seemed well wooded when the two men examined them through their binoculars."

"Plenty of game there, I'll wager," said Ching-Lung, "and no fever. I make it thirteen miles across from the camp."

"Though I rather admire Mr. Lord's notion of going through on slinkers' snare, a wireless would have saved him a trouble, and also our legs. We could have sat down here, and taken our ease after sending a message to the camp for them to come through. I don't think it can be managed before dark now," said Payton. "Are they about?"

Ching-Lung fired a couple of rifle-shots, hoping that the others might hear the reports. There was no answering shot. They had been back in camp quite an hour before Ferrers Lord and Rupert Thurston returned.

"We had no adventures at all," said the millionaire. "I got quite some good things, but not more than ours. We found plenty of water on the other side, so we needn't cart any with us. I suggest that we have a sleep, and take advantage of the last two hours of daylight. Then we'll drop the stuff, push through with nothing to carry, and pick up the goods in the morning. Larpuz Raj, thou old wolf, I would talk with thee."

Ching-Lung, Payton, and Rupert Thurston lay down, and were asleep almost as soon as they closed their eyes. They had been on their feet for many hours, and walking through the slippery squelchy fungus, so carpeted the forest was not as easy as a mud-track. Mr. Benjamin Matlock's voice did not sound as sweet as a nightingale's song when it awakened them.

"Show a leg—show a leg, and tumble up!" growled the shikari. "Are some of you dead, some of you? Show a leg here!"

"Where are the rest of the brigands?" said Ching-Lung, with a mighty yawn.

"All gone, barrin' you and Mr. Thurston, sir," answered Matlock. "There's bob tea in the vacuum flask. The gas can't be used. It's a vacuum flask. If you don't care for that, have a nice refreshing dose of quinine."

"You can keep the quinine to put on your hair," said Ching-Lung, "so give me some tea. Rupert, old chap, I think we must be a bit out of training. Gee-woo! I'm quite stiff. Perhaps it's old gas creeping on us. What rotten tea! It tastes as if it'd been using the flask for petrol, or else I haven't got rid of all the ghastly smells I've smelled. I hope you've got a few clothes-pieces about you, Benjamin, for you'll need them before the dirty work is done."

(Another instantaneous next week.)