

61 THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER BOX!

Thrilling Complete Story of
Harry Wharton & Co. inside.

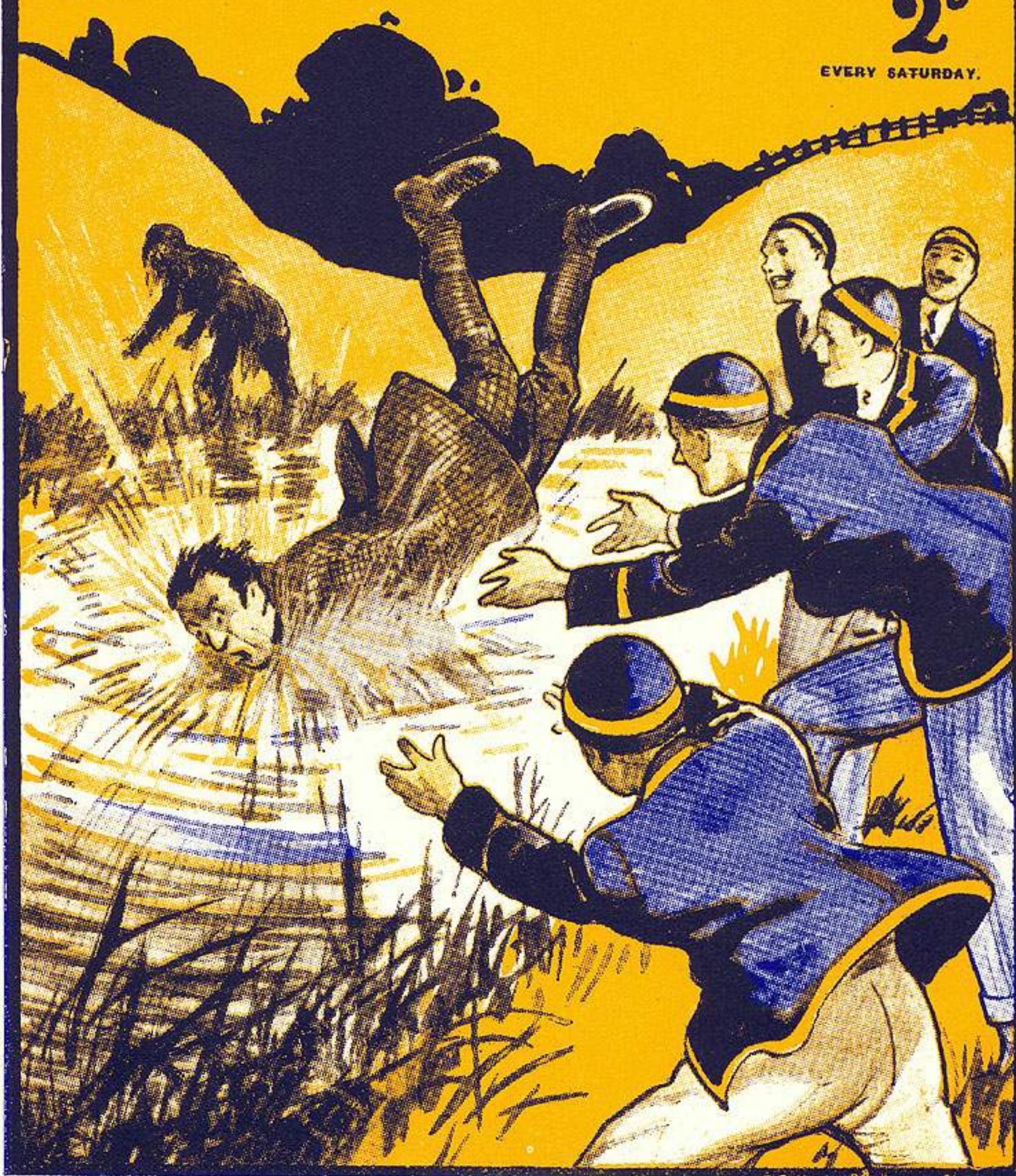
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Week Ending April 19th, 1930.

The MAGNET

2^d

EVERY SATURDAY.



A DUCKING FOR TWO!



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

ASSUMING that you get your MAGNET the day it is published (Saturday), I am going to warn you not to forget to put your clocks back an hour to-night! Summer Time begins to-morrow, chums, so you'll have an extra hour to devote to outdoor sports from now until the beginning of October, when we revert to Greenwich mean time. I wonder if you know why it is called

"MEAN" TIME,

and I wonder if you know that it is not really the correct time? Correct time is known as "apparent" time, and, as it is based on the earth's journey round the sun, it varies from day to day. Obviously we could not conduct our businesses properly if the time were different each day, so the average of the difference was taken, and the result is that we have an average, or "mean" time.

Mean time and apparent time are only the same when the sun happens to be due south exactly at the stroke of midday, and this only happens once this year—on September 1st. Sometimes the difference between the two times is only a second or two, but sometimes it is as much as sixteen minutes.

But next time you are late for school, I shouldn't, if I were you, try to persuade the master that you were reckoning by apparent time! He mightn't believe you!

Do you know of

THE GREATEST SHIPWRECK

in history? It happened eighteen years ago this Tuesday, when the famous Titanic struck an iceberg and went down, taking with it 1,503 persons. This terrible calamity filled the world with horror. The Titanic was claimed to be unsinkable, and she was on her maiden voyage to New York when the disaster happened. She struck the iceberg a glancing, sideways blow while travelling at full speed, and her plates were ripped open from stern to stern.

The shock of the collision was quite slight, and there was no panic, for her passengers believed that the ship was unsinkable. They were soon to find out the terrible truth, however, for orders were given to man the boats. It was then discovered that there were not nearly enough boats to take all the passengers, and the men were ordered to stand back, while the women and children were placed in the boats.

NO LIFEBOAT DRILL

had been carried out on board, and the result was that there was confusion in the launching of the boats, which were only sufficient to take about a third of the

people aboard. Consequently, after the boats had put off, all the people who remained were condemned almost to certain death. Wireless signals of distress were sent out, while the ship's band played lively tunes to allay any possible panic.

Then, with tragic suddenness, the end came at 2.20 a.m. The huge ship, which was nearly a sixth of a mile in length, sank by the head, the stern rising almost vertically and throwing the people into the sea. The engines were torn from their bearings and crashed forward, smashing everything in their way. Then she took her final plunge.

It was not until dawn that another ship came on the scene and the people in the boats were rescued. They totalled only 703—less than half the number of the people who were drowned. And that was the tragic end of the "unsinkable" luxury liner, Titanic.

A "Talkie," based on this famous shipwreck has been released, and if you haven't already seen it, you'll be able to shortly.

NEXT Monday is Easter Monday, so I expect some of you fellows will be

HOLIDAY BOUND

next week-end. If you come across any special adventures or items of interest, don't fail to drop me a line and tell me about them. If they are likely to interest other readers perhaps I may be able to find space in this chat of mine for them. So keep your eyes—and ears—open!

We'll take a breather here and laugh at this joke, which has earned for B. E. Shaw, of 130, Lansdowne Road, Leicester, one of this week's useful penknives.



Teacher: "Can you tell me what wasted energy is?"

Boy: "Telling hair-raising stories to bald-headed men!"



Do you know what is the

POPULATION OF THE WORLD?

D. Massey, one of my chums who lives at Bexhill-on-Sea, doesn't, and he asks me to tell him. Well, the estimated population of the world is 1,849,500,000. "Some" figure, eh? The country with the largest population is China, where the inhabitants total 445 millions. The country with the smallest population is the republic of Andorra, between France and Spain, which has only six thousand

inhabitants. But, if you include the Vatican State as a "country," that is the smallest, for only four hundred and fifty people live there, and the state is only composed of 109 acres!

HOW FAST IS A GLACIER?

asks W. H. B., of Hove. Glaciers travel at varying speeds, the Mer de Glace, in Switzerland, travelling at the rate of about two feet per day. But some glaciers travel as "quickly" as ten feet per day, while others can only manage to advance a few inches in the same space of time, so that, compared with a glacier, a snail is a greyhound!

A Newcastle-on-Tyne reader asks me to tell him something

ABOUT GLADIATORS.

They were originally malefactors, who had to fight for their lives, and were first exhibited in Rome in the year 263 a.c. Captives, taken in war, were also allowed to fight for their freedom. All sorts of weapons were used, the most picturesque contests being those between a man armed with a short sword and shield, and another armed with a trident and a net.

They boxed, also, but their "gloves" were heavily armed with lead, and a hefty blow from one of them was quite sufficient to kill an opponent. They certainly weren't "namby-pamby" in those days. Gladiatorial combats were suppressed in the year 500.

Here is an interesting question: Do you know what a "Camelopard" is? This is merely another name for a giraffe!

It's time we had a limerick now. This one has been sent in by R. C. Davey, of 23, Park Street, Horsham, Sussex, who gets a leather pocket wallet for it:

A junior at Greyfriars named Kipps,
Can bring from a hat fish and chips.
Producing live rabbits
Is one of his habits—
Could he conjure from Scotsmen fat
tips?

As I mentioned before, next week brings the Easter holidays, and you'll find that our long, complete Greyfriars yarn is topical and up to date. It is entitled:

"THE MISSING MOONSTONE!" By Frank Richards,

and when I say that it is Frank Richards at his best, you'll probably add: "Nuff said!"

There'll be another fine instalment of our serial,

"FOR THE GLORY OF FRANCE!"

and another screamingly funny St. Sam's yarn by Dicky Nugent, entitled:

"Dr. BIRCHEMALL—SCOUTMASTER!"

Our short features will appear as usual, bringing up our programme to its usual high level.

YOUR EDITOR.

MR. X'S EXPLANATION.

D. W. Angus (Welling, Kent).—Of course, no hole was bored in the man. He had a vessel containing water under his waistcoat, which was allowed to come out when he drank the glass of water. The "hand" which was supposed to be pushed through him was a "fake" hand, which was fastened to the man.

Send along your Joke or your Greyfriars Limerick—or both—and win one of our useful prizes of leather pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives. All efforts to be sent to: c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

FUN! THRILLS!! DRAMA!!! YOU'LL FIND 'EM ALL HERE, CHUMS!

THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER BOX



A Ripping Complete Story of Schoolboy Adventure, featuring Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Strategy:

“ONE dozen tarts—”

Billy Bunter pricked up his ears.

There was magic in the word, to Bunter's fat ears. Bunter loved tarts. He liked anything that was catable; but jam tarts he loved with a deep and undying affection.

But, as the poet has justly remarked, the course of true love never did run smooth. Bunter was often—only too often—separated from the objects of his affection. He never had all the tarts he wanted. Howsoever many he had, he still wanted more.

So, when Bob Cherry's voice floated out of the doorway of the tuckshop at Greyfriars, Bunter naturally took notice. Any remark, featuring tarts, would have interested Bunter.

“And a plum cake!”

“Oh!” murmured Bunter.

He was not only interested now; he was thrilled.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and in the bright spring weather most of the fellows looked merry and bright. But on the fat countenance of Billy Bunter rested a cloud. Bunter had had a disappointment that morning. A postal-order, which Bunter had been expecting, had not arrived. His financial resources were at a low ebb.

In the school shop there were good things galore. Bunter would gladly have been the best customer in that establishment. But the good things were not for him. Bunter had rolled down to the shop, but not to enter it; he had already found it futile to explain

to Mrs. Mimble the advantages of an extended system of credit. All he could do was to feast his eyes on the window, like a podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise. And while he was thus engaged Bob Cherry's powerful voice floated out.

“And five ginger-pop!”

“Beast!” murmured Bunter.

Bob was giving orders on a large scale. Evidently all that tuck was not for himself. A picnic was indicated.

On that sunny spring afternoon Bunter was ready to agree that a picnic was a ripping idea—so long as he was included therein.

But he wasn't!

The Famous Five, obviously, were

LOST!

Moonstone worth a small fortune!

going on a picnic, forgetting to ask Bunter—or, more likely, remembering not to ask him.

“And some doughnuts—say five.”

Billy Bunter's eyes gleaned behind his big spectacles. That list of good things made his mouth water. He was hungry already—it was a couple of hours since dinner, and in all that time Bunter had had nothing but a packet of toffee and a bun and some butter-scotch. Now he felt famished as he listened to the enumeration of delightful articles.

“And some of those whipped cream walnuts.”

“Oh!” gasped Bunter.

He adored whipped cream walnuts.

“I think that's about the lot,” went on Bob Cherry's voice. “If you'll make

them up in a parcel, Mrs. Mimble, and leave it ready, we'll pick it up as we go out.”

“Yes, Master Cherry!”

Bob Cherry's heavy tread came out of the tuckshop. Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

“I say, old chap—” he gasped.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” boomed Bob.

“Enjoying life, old fat man?”

“I say, old fellow, if you'd like me

to—”

“Eh? How could anybody possibly like you, Bunter?” inquired Bob, in astonishment.

“Oh, really, Cherry! If you'd like me to come—”

“Good-bye, Bunter!”

“If you'd like me—”

Bob Cherry seemed suddenly afflicted with deafness.

He walked away towards the House, leaving William George Bunter to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

“Beast!” hooted Bunter.

Bob disappeared into the House.

Billy Bunter turned back to the little window of Mrs. Mimble's shop, in the corner behind the elms.

His fat face was morose.

Inside the tuckshop Mrs. Mimble was packing up that parcel for the chums of the Remove to pick up on their way to the gates. Billy Bunter's fat thoughts ran on the contents of that parcel.

A glimmer came into his little round eyes, behind his big round spectacles.

“My hat!” ejaculated Bunter.

He blinked in the direction of the House. There was no sign yet of Harry Wharton & Co. coming out. The beasts were not starting yet.

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Bunter, with his fat heart beating fast, rolled into the tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble had just finished tying the parcel, and it lay on the counter—ready to be called for.

Bunter gave an uneasy little fat cough. He had schemed his little scheme, but he was not sure of getting away with it. Assuming as casual an air as he could, he rolled over to the counter.

"Is it ready, ma'am?" asked Bunter.

Mrs. Mimble glanced at him, not with a favourable eye. She saw more than enough of William George Bunter in her shop. Bunter, certainly, would have taken her whole stock off her hands, willingly. But he was not the sort of customer the good dame was looking for. It was true that he was expecting a postal-order, but in Mrs. Mimble's establishment he had no chance of raising anything on his expectations.

"Is what ready?" asked Mrs. Mimble coldly.

"The parcel."

"What parcel?"

"I've called for the parcel—we're just starting!" explained Bunter.

He stretched out a fat hand.

Mrs. Mimble drew the parcel back to her own side of the counter.

"Quick!" exclaimed Bunter briskly. "I shall be left behind. I'm carrying the parcel, you know."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Mimble, rather doubtfully.

Bunter turned back towards the doorway.

"All right, you fellows, I'm coming!" he called out to an imaginary party of juniors.

Then he turned back to the counter. "If Master Cherry—" said Mrs. Mimble.

"Yes, yes; that's all right!"

"Very well."

Billy Bunter could hardly believe in his good luck as Mrs. Mimble allowed him to draw the parcel across the counter.

Once it was in his possession he lost no time.

He fairly bolted out of the tuckshop.

One blink he gave round, to ascertain that the enemy were not in sight. Then he rolled away hurriedly to the gates. Swiftly he was outside the school gates; there were times when even Billy Bunter could put on speed—and this was one of the times. With the parcel under his arm, he came out of the gateway at a run and almost collided with Herbert Vernon-Smith, who was coming in.

"Look out, you fat chump!" granted the Bounder.

"Yah!"

Bunter wasted no more than that eloquent monosyllable on Smithy. He scuttled away down Friardale Lane.

There was going to be a picnic. But it was not going to be a picnic for five. It was going to be a picnic for one—and William George Bunter was going to be the one.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Five on the Trail!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! You men ready?" roared Bob Cherry, in the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

"Shut up a minute, old chap!" answered Frank Nugent.

Nugent was at the study table, hastily compiling a hundred lines of Virgil. Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were in the window-seat, waiting.

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"I've ordered the stuff," said Bob. "All ready for us to pick up as we go out. Not finished yet, Franky?"

"No! Dry up!"

"Right—no I'll sit down."

Bob Cherry sat down on the corner of the study table. The table rocked, the ink danced in the inkwell, and several blots spurted from Nugent's pen.

"You silly ass!" roared Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"

"Look at my impot, fathead!"

Bob looked at it.

"Well, it looks a bit spotty," he remarked. "Never mind, buck up and get it done. We're wasting time indoors. I say, it's lovely weather, you fellows. Shall we go down to Friardale Wood, or up the river to Popper Court? Think Sir Hilton Popper would like to see five nice boys in his woods this afternoon?"

"Fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll keep clear of old Popper's place."

"No good looking for trouble," remarked Johnny Bull.

"The no-goodfulness is terrific," observed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Nugent threw down his pen, with a grunt of relief.

"That's done!" he said. "Let's get out."

"Let's!" said Bob.

And the Famous Five got out.

They came out into the sunshine of the quadrangle, and sauntered away cheerily towards the tuckshop. The Famous Five were in a very cheery

**HANDSOME FREE
GIFTS FOR "GEM"
READERS!**

See this week's issue of the
"GEM."

mood that afternoon. Nugent's imposition had delayed the start a little, but they were going to have a glorious half-holiday, rambling in the woods, and enjoying a picnic in some shady nook. They arrived at the tuckshop with bright and smiling faces—destined soon to be overcast.

"Got it ready, Mrs. Mimble?" asked Bob, as he tramped in.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Why, you've had nearly half an hour, ma'am," said Bob. "Never mind, we'll wait, only buck up, won't you?"

Mrs. Mimble blinked at him.

"Do—do—you—you mean the parcel?" she stammered.

"Eh! Of course I do!"

"Oh, dear me!" said Mrs. Mimble. "Did you not ask Master Bunter to call for it?"

Bob Cherry jumped.

"No jolly fear!"

"Oh dear!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Has Bunter called for the parcel, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Yes—"

"And taken it?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yes! I thought—"

"The fat villain!"

"The esteemed and execrable rotter."

"Bunter!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Bunter's called for the parcel and bagged it! Bagged our picnic!"

"Oh dear! I'm so sorry," said Mrs. Mimble. "But that bad boy made me believe—"

"I'll spifficate him!" roared Bob.

"The—the—the fat bandit!" gasped Nugent. "How long has he been gone with it, Mrs. Mimble?"

"About a quarter of an hour."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You did not ask him to call for it, then?"

"No fear! Which way did he go?"

"I don't know."

"Come on, you men," exclaimed Bob.

"We've got to get after him. He can't have scooped the tuck yet!"

"Buck up!" said Wharton.

The Famous Five rushed out of the tuckshop. They started round the quad, but there was no sign of Bunter to be seen.

"He's cleared out of gates, of course," said Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Skinner!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Seen anything of Bunter?"

Harold Skinner looked round.

"Yes, too much," he answered.

"Know where he is now, fathead?"

"No, and don't want to."

"Oh, go and chop chips. Look here, he's bagged a parcel of tuck we were calling for—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

"You cackling ass! Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy, seen anything of Bunter?"

"Yes, he's gone out of gates."

"Had he a parcel with him?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, and he seemed in rather a hurry," the Bounder grinned. "Was the parcel yours?"

"Yes, our picnic—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly funny, isn't it?" grunted Bob, glaring at the Bounder and Skinner, who both seemed rather entertained.

"Which way did he go, Smithy?"

"Friardale Lane."

"Come on, you men."

The Famous Five sprinted down to the gates. Bunter, evidently, had cleared off to safer quarters after getting possession of the tuck. No doubt he was anxious to sample the contents of the parcel, but in the circumstances, he had to act on the maxim of "safety first."

At a rapid trot, the Famous Five went down Friardale Lane. It was most likely that Bunter had gone into the wood to picnic al. on his lonely own. There were a dozen openings into the wood by the side of the leafy lane, and the Owl of the Remove might have gone by any one of them.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

"What—"

"Look!"

Bob stopped and picked up a crumbled paper bag. Evidently it had contained jam tarts.

"Ten to one Bunter dropped that," he said. "It's one of Mrs. Mimble's paper bags. He stopped here to feed."

Bob gave a chuckle.

"Bet you he's left a trail behind him," he said. "We can track him down like jolly old Chingachcook. Come on, he went into the wood here."

The paper bag had been discarded near one of the openings into the wood. Just within the wood a number of sparrows were gathered, pecking busily at crumbs on the grass. That was the "sign" enough for the Famous Five, who were all Scouts.

"He finished a tart here!" grinned Nugent.

"Follow on!"

"We're only a quarter of an hour behind him," said Bob, "and once he feels safe, he won't hurry. We'll run

him down and get back the tuck—what's left of it."

The chums of the Remove followed a winding path through the wood that led towards the river. In every shady nook they passed, they half-expected to see the fat junior sitting and devouring his prey. But Billy Bunter had not halted. Probably he had expected pursuit, and was anxious to get out of reach of it before he settled down to enjoy himself. But Bunter, of course, could not refrain from a series of snacks en route. Evidently he had opened the parcel, and was helping himself to the contents as he travelled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

It was a ginger-beer bottle—empty. "The fat boulder's gone on to the river," Bob said. "We'll find him on the towpath somewhere! Buck up!"

hope grow fainter and fainter, for the sign on the trail was more and more ample.

Paper bags, empty ginger-beer bottles, and sticky crumbs, marked the trail of Billy Bunter. His burden, like that of Æsop, grew lighter as he proceeded, and it began to look doubtful whether anything would be left by the time the juniors ran the fat Owl down.

In which case, nothing would remain but the satisfaction of making a fearful example of William George Bunter.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Mr. Brown!

POP! Billy Bunter opened his fifth bottle of ginger-beer.

The Owl of the Remove was having the time of his life.

thoughts, proverbially the best, he had gone farther afield. Those beasts were sure to follow him. With their usual selfishness, they were not likely to let Bunter have his picnic in peace. So the fat Owl had cut across the towpath, followed it some distance up the river, and turned into Popper Woods. There he felt he was safe. The beasts might hunt for him all over the place without finding him, or guessing where he had gone.

Naturally, Bunter had not been able to resist sampling the tuck during that long walk. He had opened the parcel, and helped himself now and then. Naturally, he did not carry empty paper bags and empty ginger-beer bottles onward. And it did not occur to his powerful intellect that the discarded articles would furnish sign to five determined trailers. Bunter's powerful in-



"All right, you fellows," Bunter called out to an imaginary party of juniors, "I'm coming!"

The juniors ran on through the leafy wood till they reached the open towpath by the Sark. Bunter was not to be seen, and whether he had gone up or down the river, was a problem that was only to be solved by picking up a trail. But the Greyfriars Scouts were equal to that task. Bunter, in fact, had unconsciously made it easy for them.

They scattered up and down the towpath to search for sign, and in a few minutes a second ginger-beer bottle was discovered, at a little distance up the river. Billy Bunter had gone up the Sark.

"Put it on!" said Bob.

The Famous Five proceeded up the towpath by the shining Sark at a rapid run.

They still had hope of recapturing the picnic.

But as they covered more ground that

He was seated in a shady nook of the Popper Court Woods, at a little distance from the path along the Sark.

Those woods were the property of Sir Hilton Popper, who was not only a governor of Greyfriars, but an extremely irascible old gentleman, with a bitter feud against all trespassers. But the fat Owl of the Remove was taking the risk of being rooted out by one of the baronet's keepers. The risk, after all, was not great, while it was extremely important to keep out of the way of the Famous Five.

Bunter, sticky, jammy, shiny, fat, and comfortable, grinned over the last of the doughnuts.

He prided himself on his astuteness in seeking that solitary refuge.

His first thought had been to picnic in Friardale Wood. But on second

tellect had its own way of working, when it worked at all.

Now he was happy.

Most of the feed was already inside Bunter. The rest was following—a little more slowly, for the keen edge of his appetite was taken off by a feed intended for five fellows.

He was, in fact, toying with the last of the doughnuts, and he was even thinking of keeping some of the cream walnuts in hand for a later occasion. Sitting in thick grass, leaning back against the trunk of a tree, sticky and shiny. Bunter felt that life was really worth living—which he had doubted earlier in the afternoon.

The last bottle of ginger-beer popped. Bunter filled the tin mug that had been in the parcel, and guzzled ginger-beer. He laid it down, empty, with a sigh. He was warm, and he was thirsty, and

ginger-beer was grateful and comforting.

"Beasts!" he murmured. "They might have made it half a dozen bottles! I could do with one more."

A whipped cream walnut slid into his capacious mouth. On second thoughts he decided not to leave them over for another occasion. There was, after all, no time like the present.

He leaned his bullet head back on the trunk, and closed his eyes behind his spectacles. After his uncommon exertions, he was beginning to feel a little drowsy.

There was a rustle in the brambles near Bunter, and a man stepped out. Bunter's eyes being closed, he did not see the new arrival, and he did not hear the stealthy footstep.

Neither did the newcomer, for the moment, see Bunter. He was standing in a listening attitude, his head bent, his face tense. He looked as if he was listening for sounds of pursuit, as no doubt he was.

From a distance came the sound of a crashing in the thickets, and a voice calling.

The sound was at a distance, in the direction from which the silent-footed man had come. From another direction, towards the river, came another call, and from still another direction another call echoed through the thick woods.

The listening man set his lips.

"Hang them! They're all round me, and nowhere to hide!" he muttered. "Hang them! If—"

PENKNIVES AND POCKET WALLETS

He gave a violent start, as, glancing swiftly round him, he caught sight of Billy Bunter, not three yards distant, dozing under the tree.

For a second a black and savage look came over his face, his hands clenched, and his eyes glistened threateningly at the fat junior.

But his expression relaxed the next moment. He stepped towards the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter's eyes opened, and he blinked at the stranger.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "I—I say, I'm not trespassing, you know! I—I didn't know the public weren't allowed in this wood."

The man stared at him.

"I never saw the board about trespassers being prosecuted, you know," said Bunter. "I hadn't the faintest idea—"

Then he broke off.

His first idea had been that he was discovered by one of Sir Hilton Popper's keepers. But as he blinked at the stranger, he discerned that the man certainly was not a keeper.

He was a slim young man, looking about thirty, with a smooth, clean-shaven face, dressed in dark clothes, very neatly. He might have been a respectable manservant, or a dozen other things. Anyhow, he was not a keeper, and Bunter's terrors were relieved.

"Who are you?"

"I—I'm a schoolboy," stammered Bunter. "Half holiday, you know. Just taking a walk in the wood."

"You belong to Greyfriars?"

"Oh, no! Highcliffe!" said Bunter promptly. The truth and Bunter had

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long been strangers; they had not even a nodding acquaintance. And it seemed to him more judicious not to admit that he belonged to Greyfriars, in case this fellow had any connection with Popper Court. He did not want the Head to receive a complaint, on his account, from Sir Hilton Popper.

The young man made an impatient gesture.

"You've a Greyfriars cap!" he snapped.

"Oh! I—I forgot that! I I mean, I—"

"What is your name?"

"I—I—"

"Your name?" The question came in almost a snarl, and Bunter noticed a very unpleasant, threatening gleam in the sharp brown eyes in the clean-shaven, smooth face. He noticed, too, that the young man had a cast in his left eye, which added, somehow, to the menacing effect of the look he gave the fat junior.

"Wharton!" gasped Bunter.

"Wharton?"

A LAUGH A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY!

Here's to-day's daily dose!



EXTRAVAGANCE!

Captain of juvenile footer team: "Bit of luck getting 'Arry 'Awkine to play for us."

Secretary: "I know, but a whole fourpen'orth of brandy balls is the biggest transfer fee we've paid yet!"

D. C. Barefoot, of 23, School Road, Tilehurst, Berks, who sent in the above winning joke, has been awarded one of this week's useful penknives.

"Yes, Harry Wharton."

It was the first name that came into Bunter's mind. He wasn't going to give his own—not much! If any complaint went from Popper Court to Greyfriars about a trespasser, the name mentioned was not going to be that of W. G. Bunter.

Wharton, no doubt, would be able to prove, on demand, that he hadn't been in Popper Court Woods that afternoon. So there was no harm, so far as Bunter could see, in borrowing his name.

"Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars!" muttered the young man, as if memorising it.

"That's it!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, I'm doing no harm here, you know. Just taking a walk. And I assure you I never knew that trespassers would be prosecuted. I never saw that board on the path when I came up from the river."

The young man stared at him again. Bunter seemed to surprise him a little. Bunter often had that effect on new acquaintances.

A distant shout echoed through the wood again. The smooth-faced young

man turned his head for some moments and listened. Then he turned to Bunter again, and, to the fat junior's relief, the menacing look was gone from his face, and was replaced by a quite agreeable expression.

"I—I say, if—if you know old Popper, you—you needn't mention to him that you saw me here, you know," said Bunter.

"Old Popper?" repeated the young man.

"I—I mean Sir Hilton Popper."

"Never heard of him."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, in great relief.

"I am a stranger in this locality," said the young man, eyeing Bunter curiously, furtively, as he spoke in a low and distinct voice. "My name is Brown—John Brown. I am going to have a dip in the river—"

"Jolly cold for bathing in the Sark," said Bunter.

"Yes, yes! I shall have to leave my clothes on the bank, and I do not want to leave valuables in my pockets. Will you mind something for me for a little while?"

Bunter blinked at him.

Bunter's intellect was not of the brightest variety; but even Bunter realised that there was something curious about this request.

"I can see by your face that you are to be trusted," added Mr. Brown, with a smile.

Bunter grinned genially.

If Mr. Brown could read Bunter's fat face that he was to be trusted, he

GOING BEGGING!

certainly was the first person who had ever made such a discovery.

But it was very flattering to Bunter.

It was natural enough that a man going for a swim in the river should not want to leave valuables in his pockets on the bank. And if he could read in Bunter's face that he was to be trusted, it was perhaps natural that he should entrust those valuables in the keeping of a fat schoolboy.

"Right-ho," said Bunter, "I don't mind! What is it?"

"A mere trifle—valuable chiefly as a curiosity," said Mr. Brown. "A little silver box."

He drew the article in question from his waistcoat pocket as he spoke. Bunter blinked at it. It was a small oval silver box, not much larger in circumference than a half-crown.

He passed it to Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at the silver box curiously, as he took it in his fat fingers. It was worth, perhaps, a pound or so; not an article to be very anxious about, Bunter thought.

"Anything in it?" asked Bunter.

"No."

"Does it open?"

"No, it does not open," said Mr. Brown. "Put it in your pocket. Keep it for me till I come back, and I—I shall be very much obliged."

"All right," said Bunter, and he slipped the little silver box into his pocket.

"Thank you very much. If you are not here when I come back, it does not matter; I shall see you some time, and then you can give me the box. Keep it safe, it is very valuable as a curio, though its intrinsic value is small."

"I say—" began Bunter.

But Mr. Brown did not stay for more. He walked away through the under-woods towards the river, and disappeared from Bunter's sight.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter. The episode had been a curious one. Even Bunter realised that. But he did not give much thought to it. It was not, so far as Bunter could see, a matter of any consequence. He slid another whipped cream walnut into his mouth, leaned his bullet head on the tree again, and closed his eyes behind his spectacles. And in a few minutes more, Billy Bunter's snore rumbled musically among the thickets, and the fat junior slumbered peacefully.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Exciting!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"What the thump—"
"Something's up!"
"The upfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton & Co., trotting along the tow-path by the shining Sark, had reached the Popper Court Woods, where they bordered the river. There, they were a little at a loss.

Many paths led up to the woods from the towpath, and it was a question whether Bunter had taken one of them, or whether he had gone farther on.

The only thing to be done was to look for sign, and sign, hitherto, had been ample. So at each opening in the wood, as they passed it, the chums of the Remove scanned the ground for empty bottles, paper bags, or birds gathered about scattered crumbs. But all of a sudden their attention was drawn from the trailing of Bunter.

Something, evidently, was "up." A young man had strolled out of the wood, and was walking on the tow-path; a young man with a smooth face, a cast in his eye, and quite a casual and careless manner. The juniors would not have taken any special heed of him, but for what followed.

From two different points in the wood, men in gaiters emerged, and from the path farther up the river, a gentleman in shooting clothes, with a white moustache and an eyeglass, came along with swift strides. Harry Wharton & Co. recognized Sir Hilton Popper, and they were aware that the two men in gaiters were keepers. What startled them was the fact that the three, the old baronet and the two keepers, gathered with a rush round the young man with the smooth face; that the keepers seized him, one by either arm, and that the baronet shook a riding-crop in his face.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "The esteemed Popper seems to be in a terrific wax!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

There was no doubt on that point. Sir Hilton Popper's face, which was rather grim even in repose, was now purple with anger. His eyes gleamed and glistened under his knitted grey brows, and he flourished the riding-whip fairly in the smooth face of the prisoner, as if he could barely restrain himself from laying it about him.

"You scoundrel!" roared Sir Hilton, his voice booming along the tow-path. "You rascal! You're run down at last, begad! By gad, you scoundrel, I've a mind to thrash you till you howl. Yes, sir, by gad!"

"The dear man's quite cross!" murmured Nugent.

The juniors chuckled softly. In their interest in this amazing spectacle, they quite forgot Bunter.

The smooth-faced young man appeared quite cool.

"Really, Sir Hilton—" he said, in calm tones.

"Don't talk to me!" boomed the baronet. "Give me back what you have stolen, you scoundrel, before you're taken to the station and handed over to the police."

"Really, Sir Hilton—" It would have been difficult not to hear Sir Hilton. He could have been heard far across the wide river.

"I don't understand you, sir!" said the young man, calmly. "If you are making an accusation—"

Sir Hilton Popper spluttered with rage.

"You—you—you scoundrel!" he gurgled. "You dare to deny it? You dare to deny that you have stolen the Moonstone from the cabinet in my library?"

"Certainly I deny it, Sir Hilton."

"You—you rascal! It was missed immediately after you left. I suspected you at once, you rogue, and looked—and it was gone! It is in your pockets now! Hand it to me at once, Sugden—at once! You will be given into custody on a charge of theft! I shall charge you, sir—I shall charge you! I have no doubt—no doubt at all, sir—that I shall find that you entered my service with false testimonials—no doubt at all. That shall be investigated when you are in the hands of the police. Probably your name is not Sugden at all. Probably you are a professional thief, and no valet as you pretend, sir! Very probably! The police will investigate your antecedents. Give me the Moonstone at once."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Cherry. Bunter, and the picnic, had quite vanished from the minds of the Famous Five now.

They looked on with keenest interest. They had heard of the Moonstone—a diamond that was an heirloom in the Popper family.

It was quite a famous stone, and on great occasions Sir Hilton displayed that treasure to favoured guests. But for the fact that it was an heirloom, and went with the entail, Sir Hilton would probably have disposed of it, to clear off some of the mortgages that covered nearly every acre of the Popper estate. Legally, he could not part with it; but it appeared that he had now parted with it illegally!

Not that the schoolboys felt at all sure that the enraged baronet was on sure ground. They knew him to be a very hasty and hot-tempered old gentleman, and it was quite probable that he had jumped at a wrong conclusion. Certainly, the smooth young man whom he called Sugden did not appear alarmed, as he should have done if he had valuable plunder concealed about his person while the grasp of the two keepers was on his arms.

His calmness was in striking contrast to the baronet's excitement. A faint smile flickered over his smooth face.

"I am quite prepared to go to the police, Sir Hilton, if you so desire," he said. "But I warn you that you will have to answer for making a false charge!"

"What—what!" stammered Sir Hilton.

"A—a false charge! Scoundrel, you have the diamond in your pocket now!"

"Really, sir—" "Search that man, Joyce!" ordered Sir Hilton, pointing to the cool young man with his whip. "Search him in my presence!"

The two keepers were exchanging uneasy glances. Possibly they, like the juniors, were wondering whether the old gentleman's hasty temper had led him on a false scent.

"Perhaps the police had better search him," ventured Joyce respectfully.

"You will take your orders from me, Joyce!" boomed Sir Hilton. "Search that scoundrel at once!"

Sir Hilton Popper's word was law on the Popper estate. While the other keeper kept the smooth-faced young man in a firm grasp, Joyce proceeded to search his pockets.

Several articles were turned out; but a diamond certainly was not among them.

Sir Hilton snorted. "It is concealed about him somewhere! Sugden, you rascal, where have you hidden it?"

"I deny any knowledge of the Moonstone, sir!" said Sugden calmly. "I deny your right to order your keepers to search me!"

"Scoundrel! Why did you run when you were followed from the house?" he demanded.

"I was afraid that you intended to be guilty of violence, sir! You had lost your temper completely when you discharged me."

"I found you tampering with my cabinet, sir," roared Sir Hilton, "and I discharged you on the spot! Immediately you were gone, I looked for the diamond, and found that it was missing! What have you done with it? Have you thrown it away in the wood while we were searching for you?"

Sugden shrugged his shoulders. "I know nothing of it, sir. If you have disposed of that diamond yourself and desire to cover up your action by bringing this unfounded accusation against an honest servant, sir—"

"Great gad! What—what?" stammered Sir Hilton, almost inarticulate with fury.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Bob Cherry. Sir Hilton lifted the riding-whip, but Joyce hastily interposed.

The baronet lowered his arm, trembling with rage.

"Take him away!" he gasped. "Take him to Courtfield! I will accompany you and hand him over to the police! They will search him more thoroughly. Good gad, take him away!"

"I protest against this!" said Sugden, with the same exasperating

(Continued on next page.)

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coolness. "You have no right—no power—"

"Take him away!" roared Sir Hilton.

"You 'old your tongue and come along quiet, Mr. Sugden," said Joyce. And the young man was led away up the towpath between the keepers, Sir Hilton Popper following, snorting and fuming.

They disappeared from the view of the juniors in the direction of Popper Court.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob. "It was as good as a cinema while it lasted. Old Popper will burst a boiler one of these days, if he gets up steam like that too often."

And, the show being over, so to speak, the chums of the Remove remembered Bunter, and resumed looking for sign.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Put It On!

"**H**ARK!"
"Music hath charms!" murmured Frank Nugent.
"The charmfulness is terrific!"

From the shady wood, as the five juniors followed a winding path up from the river, came a deep, rumbling, echoing sound.

"That's either a foghorn in a fit, or Bunter snoring," said Bob Cherry. "And, as there isn't any foghorn here, it's Bunter! We've run him down."

"Come on!" said Harry, turning from the path into the thicket. "This way! We've got him!"

More sign on the path had led the pursuers thus far. Indeed, there had been so much sign left by Bunter en route, that it did not seem likely that he had much of the feed left when he halted at long last. The juniors had quite given up hope by this time of finding anything left for themselves. All that remained was to take it out of Bunter. And that deep and unmusical snore guided them to him.

They came through the green underwoods and under the branches of the beech where the Owl of the Remove lay in balmy slumber. They stopped and looked at him.

Bunter slept peacefully.

His bullet head leaned back against the gnarled trunk, his fat little legs were stretched out, his extensive mouth was wide open. A gnat had settled unheeded on his nose. He snored steadily, incessantly, and heftily.

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

Bunter's eyes did not open. More than a shout was needed to wake William George Bunter.

"You fat villain!" roared Johnny Bull.

Snore!

"Wake up, you podgy pirate!"

Snore!

Bob Cherry drew nearer to the sleeping beauty and inserted the toe of his boot forcibly into the fat ribs.

"Ooooooh!"

Bunter woke.

He blinked round him through his spectacles.

"Ow! Beasts! 'Tain't rising-bell!" he mumbled. "Lemme alone! I'm not getting up yet!"

"Slaughter him!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

He was wide awake now, and realised that he was not in bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. He sat upright and blinked at the Famous Five in alarm.

"Oh! I—I say, you fellows, d-d-did you fu-fuf-fuf-follow me?" he stammered. "I—I say, I—I never bagged that parcel from the tuckshop!"

"Why, you frowsy fibber—"

"I—I knew nothing about it, you fellows! I never heard Bob giving the order to Mrs. Mumble, you know. I wasn't anywhere near the tuckshop."

"Slaughter him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The slaughterfulness is the proper caper!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "Let us mop up the esteemed and disgusting Bunter, my preposterous chums."

"I—I say, you fellows— Yarooogh! Leggo!" roared Bunter.

He scrambled to his feet.

"I—I say, you fellows, keep off, you know! I'm going to pay for that grub!" gasped Bunter. "I suppose you know that! I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning—"

"Bump him!"

"Besides, I never had it! The—the fact is—"

"Collar him, and run him down to the river!" said Bob. "We'll duck him, to begin with—"

"Good!"

Billy Bunter jumped away, and ran for it desperately. The prospect of a ducking was simply horrifying. He plunged through the thickets and bolted wildly.

"After him!" roared Bob.

"Collar him!"

"Squash him!"

The Famous Five rushed in pursuit.

As a matter of fact, they did not rush very fast, having no intention whatever of ducking Bunter in the river.

"Keep him on the run!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Give him a run all the way home! If that doesn't make him sorry for himself, nothing will."

"Good egg!"

The juniors chuckled, and pursued Bunter through the thick wood. As a matter of fact, now they had found Bunter, they found also that they had walked off their wrath, as it were, and much as he deserved scragging, they were not feeling very much inclined to scrag him. They agreed that a "rag" would meet the case.

Billy Bunter, gasping and panting, blinked back.

"I say you fellows—" he gasped.

"Collar him!" roared Bob Cherry ferociously.

"Gw!"

Bunter rushed on again.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! came the juniors behind him. The fat Owl flew out on the towpath and headed down the river.

"Tally ho!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ow! Oh crumbs! Beasts! Wow!"

"Don't let him get away!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Stop! Do you hear, Bunter? Stop!"

Bunter was not likely to stop.

Gurgling for breath, he flew on down the towpath. The heavy tramp of five pairs of pursuing feet sounded behind him.

"Oh dear! Ow! Wow!" groaned Bunter.

He blinked back again despairingly.

Five fists were shaken at him; five faces gave him the blackest of scowls. In terror the fat junior turned once more and fled on.

"Put it on!" shouted Bob. "He'll get away at this rate!"

"Run!" yelled Nugent.

"Collar him!"

"Stop, you fat villain! Do you hear? Stop!"

"Woooooooooooh!" gasped Bunter. His fat little legs fairly flashed and twinkled as he flew.

Behind him was vengeance—at least, Bunter believed that it was. Beside him was the river, in which he was to be ducked if those beasts got hold of him. Panting and gurgling, puffing and blowing, Bunter ran for his fat life.

In those awful moments it did not occur to him how curious it was that he kept ahead of five of the best runners in the Remove. It really was remarkable that they did not overtake him, in spite of his frantic exertions. But Bunter was too terrified to think of that.

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Each time he blinked back the famous Five seemed to be running their hardest; and they yelled ferocious threats; and Bunter flew on again.

Perspiration bathed him. His fat legs ached, and seemed every moment as if they would drop off. He staggered and he tottered, but still he flew. He dared not halt.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow! Grooogh! Ow, ow!" gasped the hapless Owl of the Remove, as he struggled on.

It seemed ages to him before the school boat-house came in sight. Two or three fellows on the bank stared at him as he came pounding up. There was a burst of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Go it, Bunter!" yelled Peter Todd.

"Ow! Keep those beasts off, Toddy! Ow! Stop them, old chap! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter flew up the path from the bank. He was near home now. There was a yell behind him from the pursuers.

"He's getting away! Put it on!"

"Collar him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Ow, ow, ow! Wow! Gug-gug-gug!" gurgled Bunter; and all of a sudden his fat little legs gave way, and he rolled over.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oh! Keep off!" shrieked Bunter, as the Famous Five trotted up. "I say, you fellows, keep off, you beasts! Oh dear! Help! I say, I'll pay for the tuck, I will really! I say, I never touched it! Yaroooh! Keep off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The five trotting juniors reached Bunter—and passed him. The Owl of the Remove blinked at them in amazed relief as they went by.

"Enjoyed your run, old fat bean?" sang out Bob Cherry.

"You'd better go in for the school m'le Bunter!" called out Johnny Bull. "You'd win!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, dropping into a walk strolled on to the school. Bunter sat in the path and blinked after them dizzily.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Slowly it dawned on his fat brain that his podgy leg had been pulled, and that that fierce pursuit had been only a rag.

"Oh!" groaned Bunter. "Beasts! Wow!"

He sat and gasped, and gasped, and gasped till he got his second wind. Then slowly and painfully he picked himself up, and crawled on to the school. The weary Owl was bent almost double as he crawled up the stairs to the Remove passage.

Five cheery juniors, already at tea in Study No. 1 hailed him as he passed the open doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Tired, old fat man?"



The two keepers held on to the man while Sir Hilton Popper shook a riding-whip in his face.

"You look a bit winded, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter crawled on wearily without replying. His feelings were too deep for words.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Missing Moonstone!

"O H!"

Billy Bunter uttered that ejaculation suddenly.

Prep was over; and Bunter was alone in Study No. 7. Bunter had done no prep; after his hefty run home from the Popper Court Woods, he was too tired for prep or anything else; and he decided to "chance it" with Queleh in the morning.

After prep he was still too tired to go down and join the cheery crowd in the Rag; and when Peter Todd and Tom Dutton had gone down, Bunter remained alone, resting his fat, weary limbs in the study armchair.

There was only one form of exertion, of which Bunter felt capable just then. He could have eaten something. Seldom if ever, did Billy Bunter feel too tired to eat. And he ran his fat fingers through his pockets, in the faint hope of discovering some forgotten trifle in the way of toffee or aniseed balls.

His fingers came in contact with a smooth metallic surface, and then he ejaculated "Oh!"

He drew the little silver box from his pocket. Until that moment he had completely forgotten its existence.

He blinked at it very curiously.

The exciting events that had followed his picnic in Popper Court Woods had quite driven Mr. John Brown, and the silver box from his mind. He had had no time to waste thinking of Mr. Brown, when the Famous Five found

him. But he remembered the smooth-faced man with the cast in his eye, now, as he blinked at the silver box.

"My hat!" murmured Bunter.

He wondered whether Mr. Brown had returned to the spot, after his dip in the river, to reclaim his property. If he had it was his own look-out; he couldn't expect Bunter to wait for him there—even if the exciting circumstances had permitted Bunter to wait.

"It's queer!" murmured Bunter.

He could not help feeling that it was queer. A complete stranger had trusted him with an article which he declared to be of value, without making any definite arrangement for its return. Mr. Brown had said that if Bunter was gone when he came back, he would see him some time and take back the box. Undoubtedly it was queer, if the box was of any value.

Bunter turned it over in his fat fingers.

"It's bound to open somehow!" he murmured.

As the box had been entrusted to Bunter's keeping, he certainly was not entitled to open it. But curiosity was Bunter's ruling passion; and on such matters he was not particular.

He felt all over the box; but there was no sign of an opening, and no sign of a fastening. He pressed it and squeezed it, and fumbled with it, feeling certain that it opened on some hidden spring. But if there was a spring, Bunter failed to find it.

After ten minutes of that occupation, the Owl of the Remove grunted and gave it up.

If there was something in the box—and probably there was—it was securely hidden from Bunter's inquisitive eyes.

He grunted discontentedly.

"I suppose I'd better keep it for the fellow" he murmured dubiously. "If the beastly thing won't open, it can't

be very valuable! Still, it's made of silver, and silver's worth something. If I ever see that fellow again—"

He hesitated, and slipped the silver box back into his pocket.

Billy Bunter was honest; at least, he would have been very indignant had anybody accused him of being otherwise. But really, valuables were not very safe in his fat hands.

If Bunter wanted a thing, he had a weird way of considering, somehow, that he had a title to it—that it was in a manner of speaking, his! Had that silver box been an edible article, Mr. Brown assuredly would not have stood the slightest chance of ever seeing it again. But even Bunter could not eat a silver box, so it was safe, as far as that went. But it was very probable that, if Mr. Brown did not reclaim his property very soon, Bunter would grow to regard it as his own, and dispose of it accordingly. Possession was nine points of the law, and the tenth point was liable to be forgotten.

However, for the present, the silver box reposed safely in Billy Bunter's pocket, where he soon forgot it again.

He rested comfortably in the arm-chair till bed-time, reposing his fat and weary limbs. And so it happened that he missed some interesting news that was discussed in the Rag that evening—news which might possibly have enlightened him as to the real identity of "Mr. Brown," and the actual contents of the silver box.

Vernon-Smith had been in Courtfield that afternoon, and he had brought home the news, which appeared to be the talk of the town. As it concerned Sir Hilton Popper, and as Sir Hilton Popper was a member of the Governing Body of Greyfriars School, the fellows were naturally a little interested, especially Harry Wharton & Co., who had witnessed the startling scene on the towpath by the Popper Court Woods.

"Heard about old Popper, you men?" asked the Bounder, when the Famous Five came into the Rag after prep.

"Which and what?" asked Bob Cherry.

"We saw the old bean on the towpath to-day," said Harry Wharton. "He was in a wild bait, slanging a man named Sugden—"

"That's the johnny!" said Vernon-Smith. "They're detaining him at the police station so I hear."

"You fellows saw him?" asked Skinner.

"Right on the scene," chuckled Bob. "We were looking for Bunter when we happened on Popper. He was accusing the Sugden man of pinching his family diamond—"

"The Moonstone," said the Bounder.

"That's it! He made his keepers search the man, and then walked him off to give him up to the police. It was as good as a play to watch him," said Bob. "You know anything more about it, Smithy?"

"What-ho, all Courtfield's talking about it. This johnny Sugden was old Popper's valet at Popper Court, and it seems that Popper found him, or suspected him of rooting about among his things, flew into a rage, and sacked him on the spot. The dear old scout's got a temper—you fellows may have noticed that at times—"

"You bet!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The time he caught us on his island he went off like fireworks."

"Did they find the diamond on Sugden?" asked Nugent.

"No; he was searched at the police

station, but nothing that wasn't his own was found on him."

"Likely enough old Popper's made a mistake," said Peter Todd. "He's an old ass, anyhow."

"Likely enough," agreed the Bounder. "But it seems that immediately after Sugden cleared off, or was kicked out, whichever it was, old Popper went to look at his giddy diamond to make sure that it was safe, and found that it was gone."

"That looks jolly suspicious," said Squiff.

"And he started after the man, and called up his keepers to bag him, and Sugden ran for it," continued the Bounder. "He seems to have dodged them in the Popper Court Woods."

"They got him on the towpath," said Harry Wharton. "We saw that! But he didn't look as if he was bolting."

"What does the man say himself?" asked Toddy.

"He denies knowing anything about the diamond, and says he cut off when he saw Popper after him, because the old bean was brandishing a riding-whip, and he was scared."

"He looked ferocious when we saw him!" grinned Nugent.

"As they didn't find the Moonstone on him, old Popper declares that he must have thrown it away in the wood," went on the Bounder. "He knew he couldn't get clear, of course; they were all round him in the wood. So if he had it, I suppose he would have thrown it away, rather than have it found on him."

"Then it will be picked up," said Harry Wharton. "There'll be a dozen keepers hunting for it, and if it's in the wood at all, they're bound to find it sooner or later."

"That's a cert, though it may take a long time. But from what they're saying in Courtfield, it seems that the Sugden sportsman has been hinting that old Popper's sold the diamond to pay off some of his mortgages, and is kicking up this shindy to cover his tracks."

"Phew!"

"That's rot," said Harry. "Old Popper isn't a nice man, but he couldn't be a rogue like that."

"No fear!" said Bob.

"Well, it sounds thick," said the Bounder. "But it's pretty well known that old Popper is mortgaged up to his back teeth, and he owes accounts right and left in Courtfield, and he couldn't part with the diamond legally, as it's a jolly old heirloom, so—I fancy a lot of people will think there's somethin' in it, if the stone isn't found."

"And what about the Sugden man?"

"They're detaining him in custody. They'll have to let him go sooner or later, though, if they can't get somethin' plainer against him. Of course, if they find the diamond lying about in the Popper Court Woods, it will be clear enough, and he will get six months. But if they don't—the thing won't hold water."

"Poor old Popper!" said Bob. "He's made himself so disliked all over the place, that a lot of people will believe anything against him. I hope they'll find the jolly old Moonstone."

"Well, if Sugden had it, he must have left it in the wood somewhere, and they're bound to pick it up sooner or later. If they don't, they can't fix the thing on Sugden. And a thumpin' lot of people will believe that old Popper sold it privately, as Sugden hints."

"It's all rot!" said Harry. "That fellow Sugden is a rogue. Old Popper's incapable of such a thing."

"You never know—when a man's hard up!" said the Bounder cynically. "People do all sorts of things when they're up against it."

"Not decent people. Popper's an ass, but he's a decent man. They'll find the diamond somewhere in the wood all right."

"I wouldn't mind bettin' even money that they don't!" said the Bounder, shrugging his shoulders.

"Rot, old chap!"

The interesting topic was discussed for some time, but the coming Easter holidays were a still more interesting topic, so Sir Hilton Popper and his affairs were presently dismissed. When the fellows went up to their dormitory, and Billy Bunter rolled in after them, still grunting with fatigue, the Removees little guessed how much light the fat junior could have let in on the mysterious affair of the Moonstone—had he only known what was in the silver box in his pocket.

But Bunter did not know what was in the silver box, and had, in fact forgotten its existence again. When he snored in happy slumber, if Bunter dreamed of the happenings in Popper Court Wood, it was not of Mr. Brown and the silver box that he dreamed, but of the picnic.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Missive I

"MY only hat!"

Harry Wharton stood staring at the letter in his hand, with a look of blank amazement in his face.

It was quite a few days since the affair in Popper Court Wood, an affair that had quite passed, by this time, from the minds of the chums of the Greyfriars Remove.

In morning break, Wharton had found a letter in the rack, addressed to him, in a neat business-like hand he did not remember to have seen before.

He opened it carelessly enough.

But he no longer looked careless when he had glanced at the letter within. His eyes opened wide, and he stared at the letter blankly. Never had the captain of the Greyfriars Remove been so amazed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Is that news that you've come into a fortune, old bean?"

"Eh! No."

"Well, it seems to be making you sit up and take notice!" said Bob, with a grin. "Some kind uncle sent you a fiver?"

"I can't make it out," said Harry. "Must be some sort of a lark, I suppose; but if it is, I can't see the joke. Look at it, you fellows."

He passed the letter to Bob, who held it up for the rest of the Co. to read at the same time. Certainly it was a surprising letter.

"Sir,—Referring to the small silver box which you were so kind as to take charge of last Wednesday afternoon while Mr. Brown was taking his dip in the river, Mr. Brown has had to return to London, but he has authorised me to receive the box from you.

"If you will leave it with the school porter, and give him my name, I will call for it, and save you further trouble in the matter.

"Thanking you,

"Yours faithfully,

"J. JUDSON."

(Continued on page 12.)

INSIDE INFORMATION



By
The "OLD
REF."

Now that the Soccer season's drawing to a close, "Old Ref's" looking forward to a well-earned rest in his own little house at Wapping . . . which was presented to him brick by brick during his career as a referee!

DURING the course of the present season I have had several letters from lads, obviously keen on football, and doing well at the game in their junior teams, who have put to me questions on these lines:

"Should I really make up my mind to be a professional footballer? Is it worth while from a money point of view?"

As we are now nearing the end of the season, which is the time when the football managers start building for another term, plenty of young players will be receiving offers to throw in their lot with a professional side. Whether they should accept these offers or not is a question which only the particular individual can decide for himself, but as some of my readers have asked me, I can only give them the facts from the cash point of view.

Whether it is worth while to become a professional footballer depends on the point of view—depends very largely on what the individual thinks is a reasonable wage—or salary—for a grown man.

There is a maximum wage rule in existence in big football, and this means that no player can be paid, for merely playing football, more than eight pounds per week as wages during the playing season, and six pounds per week during the non-playing season. Of course, there are bonuses for wins and draws: two pounds for a victory and one pound for a draw. We can assume that on the average each player receives an additional one pound for every match, and there are forty-two League matches in the course of a season.

Just to put it in round figures we can say that the footballer who gets into a first-class side and stays there can receive about five hundred pounds a year—or ten pounds a week. That, of course, isn't bad and it is certainly much better than is paid to most workmen at ordinary trades.

For instance, during the past few years—and, indeed, for a long time—the mining industry has provided more first-class footballers than have come from any other one walk of life. There are two reasons for this. One is that to the young fellow who has started to earn his living by going down the mine, ten pounds a week for playing football—as the alternative—looks quite a lot.

I KNOW one or two football managers who are very keen on signing on young footballers from mining districts. The young fellow who, because of small facilities for doing anything else, goes down the mine knows that if he makes good at football there is, for him, an escape from the hard life of the miner and, instead, a comparatively easy life as a footballer.

In the second place, and

because of his hard up-bringing the lad from the mining district has usually the grit, the stamina, and the general hardihood of frame to stand the rough and tumble which is associated with football matches

for a longer time than the boy who is brought up in "softer" surroundings.

I believe the county of Durham, which is essentially a mining centre, has produced more first-class footballers in comparison

to its size than any other county in the whole of England. This must be more than a mere coincidence.

I HAVE assumed, in the wages figures given here, that the young fellow who takes up football rises to the top of the tree, and that he stays there for some considerable length of time. If he does that, he will be able to add to his earnings with a benefit which is equal to about £130 a year, or alternatively with a share of his transfer fee if he changes from one club to another.

This game of professional football, however, is very much like any other business. There are plenty of strugglers near the foot of the ladder, and plenty of room at the top. Associated with every big football team

there are many players who have never received the maximum wage of eight pounds per week, and who never will. They are the fellows in the reserves; the moderate players.

I have come across plenty of professional footballers who have never received more than five pounds per week, and who have certainly regretted that they gave up a trade which they had in their fingers to take up football as a career. The worst of it is, of course, that unless a player rises to the top of the tree he is not in a position to dictate in any way the terms of his contract with this or that football club.

THE player who does rise to the top of the tree can, in a measure, at any rate, dictate terms. Suppose, for instance, that a really good player has a job which he can do in addition to playing football. He can insist, when signing on for a club, that he shall be allowed to carry on with that job. Thus he has two strings to his bow—the football, and the other job.

In these cases the wages which he receives from football, plus his other job, make up a comfortable salary, and moreover leaves him with something on which to fall back should he have to give up football early owing to a serious injury.

So we now arrive at what is a more or less definite conclusion:

Football isn't bad as a way of earning a living for the fellow who gets to the top of the tree.

But the youngster who contemplates taking up football seriously would be well advised to have another job as a stand-by.

There is another of the "black side" points which must certainly be put, and this provides another good reason why no young fellow should give up a promising job to take on football. No matter how clever a player may be, there is always the risk that he won't stay long in the game.

It is said, and I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the figures, that the average "life" of the professional footballer in the top class is seven or eight years. Such a spell doesn't give much opportunity of putting away money for the "rainy day."

The risk of serious injury is always there so far as the professional footballer is concerned. Many a promising career has been cut short by an injury which has prevented the player from "carrying on," and that means he has been prevented from earning his living at football.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER BOX!

(Continued from page 10.)

"Who's Mr. Brown?" asked Bob.
 "Goodness knows!" answered Wharton.
 "Who's J. Judson?" asked Nugent.
 "Ask me another!"
 "You don't know either of them?"

asked Johnny Bull.
 "Never heard of either of them!" answered Wharton.

"Well, my hat!"
 "What's the silver box, then?" asked Bob.

"You can search me, as Fishy says!" replied Wharton. "I've never heard of any silver box."

"This letter must have come to you by mistake," said Nugent. "It must be intended for somebody else."

"It's addressed to Harry Wharton, Greyfriars School," answered the captain of the Remove. "There's no other Wharton here, and no other Greyfriars anywhere. It's addressed to me right enough."

"Then what the thump does it mean?"
 "That's what I'd like to know," said Wharton. "Is some ass trying to pull my leg, or what?"

"Last Wednesday afternoon!" said Bob thoughtfully. "That's the afternoon we were trailing Bunter. You never met any Mister Brown that afternoon. You were with all of us the whole afternoon, and we never saw any Brown."

"I never met him, or heard of him," said Harry. "As for taking charge of anything while he had a dip, I never saw anybody having a dip. Nobody was having a dip in the river, that I know of."

"Well, it's jolly mysterious."
 "The mysteriousness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "It must be some absurd and idiotic jokefulness!"

"But if it's a joke, where's the point?" asked Wharton. "There's no joke in writing a senseless letter like this to a chap."

Bob read the letter through again.
 "It isn't a joke," he said. "The man's written this seriously enough. If he'd asked you to go somewhere it might be a jape, giving you a walk for nothing. But he's only asked you to leave the silver box with the porter to be called for. He thinks you've got it."

"Why the thump should he think I've got something that I've never even heard of?" demanded Wharton.

"I give that one up!" said Bob, with a grin. "But he does think so, for some jolly old reason."

"Unless he's some giddy lunatic," said Nugent.

"My esteemed chums—"
 "Go it, Inky," said Bob. "What have you got in your old black noddle?"

"Perhapsfully," suggested the nabob, "the esteemed and absurd Brown has given the wrong name to the ridiculous Judson. Or perhapsfully the ridiculous Judson has mis-read the name in a letter from the ludicrous Brown."

"I suppose that's possible," said Harry thoughtfully.

"I should think that must be it," said Frank Nugent. "If this Brown man has gone back to London, he may have written to the Judson man to collect his silver box for him, and his handwriting may be something like Bunter's or Coker's, see? The name may be Wilson, or Wilkins, or Warburton, or something, and Judson has read it as Wharton."

"It's possible."
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"Blessed if I think it can be anything else," said Bob; "and, in that case, that letter was meant for some other man at Greyfriars."

"Which, and who?" asked Harry.
 "No good asking me." Bob looked at the letter again. "It's plain enough that the J. Judson bird thinks you've got the box, and he's going to call at the porter's lodge for it. You can leave a note with Gosling explaining that you know nothing about it. That's only fair to the man if he's been asked to collect it."

Harry Wharton reflected a few moments, and nodded.

"I suppose that's the best thing," he agreed. "There's a mistake somewhere, if it's not an idiotic joke. I'd better explain to him."

The captain of the Remove went into the Rag, dipped a pen in the ink, and wrote on the back of J. Judson's letter:

"Sir,—This letter must be meant for somebody else, as I don't know any Mr. Brown, or anything about a silver box.

"Yours truly,
 H. WHARTON."

Having placed the missive in an envelope and addressed it to J. Judson, Wharton walked down to the porter's lodge with it and left it with Gosling to be called for.

After which, he dismissed the matter from his mind as over and done with. He was far from dreaming of what was to follow.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

J. Judson Looks In!

"WHARTON!"
 "Yes, Wingate."
 "You're wanted in your Form master's study."

"Oh, all right!"
 It was after class that day, and Wharton was coming into the House when the Greyfriars captain called to him. Instead of heading for the Remove passage, Wharton started for Mr. Quelch's study, wondering what was wanted. It was tea-time; and he was due in Study No. 1; but a Form master's command was much more important than such a trifle as tea, and Quelch had to come first.

"Come in, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, as Harry appeared in the doorway.
 Wharton entered.

Mr. Quelch was not alone. There was a visitor in the study, and Wharton's eyes rested on him for a moment.

The man was not such a visitor as might have been expected in the study of a scholastic gentleman like Henry Samuel Quelch.

He was a little, rather fat man, dressed in a brown lounge suit that did not fit him well, and that was shiny and worn at knees and elbows. He had a brown bowler hat in his hand. His necktie was of crimson with green spots. His face was as shiny as his elbows, and adorned with a generous allowance of pimples. He shuffled as he stood, as if unable to keep still, and was obviously awed by the grave, formal schoolmaster. In the corner of his mouth was a straw, which he chewed uneasily. There was a sort of "horsey" look all over that shiny gentleman; something that smacked of stables and racecourses. Wharton had never seen him before, and he gave him only a cursory glance now, only feeling surprised at seeing such a character in his Form master's presence.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Harry,

stopping before the writing-table at which the Remove master sat.

"Yes, Wharton. This gentleman"—Mr. Quelch gave a slight nod towards the shiny man—"is Mr. Judson."

Wharton started.
 "Oh!" he ejaculated.
 "You know the name, apparently, Wharton."

"I had a letter this morning, signed by that name, sir," answered Harry.

"So this gentleman has stated. He informs me that you took charge, a few days ago, of an article, for a friend of his who was about to bathe in the Sark—a Mr. Brown. He states that he wrote asking you to leave this article with the school porter, to be called for."

"That's what the letter said, sir," admitted Wharton.

"Well, if you have such an article—a small metal box, it appears—in your keeping, please hand it to Mr. Judson at once, Wharton."

"I haven't, sir."
 "Now then!" said Mr. Judson, speaking for the first time.

His voice had an oily, persuasive tone.

Wharton turned to him.
 "Did you call for the note I left with Gosling, Mr. Judson?" he asked.

"I did," answered Mr. Judson.
 "Then you know from what I wrote that there is some mistake," said Harry. "I don't know anything about a silver box."

"Now then, sir," said Mr. Judson, oily and appealing. "You don't want to tell me that, sir. You're a gentleman, you are! Anybody can see what a gentleman you are. You ain't the feller to keep what don't belong to you. Oh, no!"

Wharton coloured.
 "I hope I'm not the fellow to keep what doesn't belong to me," he said. "If I had the box, of course I should hand it over at once."

"You got it!" averred Mr. Judson.
 "I've told you I haven't!" said Wharton curtly.

"That's all my eye, you know!" remonstrated Mr. Judson. "A joke's a joke, if you're joking, sir! But 'and over the box. My friend Brown is mighty anxious about that there box."

"I tell you—"
 Mr. Quelch broke in.

It was easy to see, from the Form master's expression, that the whole matter was annoying to him. The presence of such a man as J. Judson in his study was not gratifying to Mr. Quelch. Still less gratifying was an altercation between J. Judson and a Remove boy.

"Wharton, if a mistake has been made it is a very singular one. Do you know anything of a man named Brown?"

"Nothing at all, sir."
 "You did not meet such a man last Wednesday afternoon?"

"No, sir."
 "You did not take charge of any article for a Mr. Brown, or for anyone else, on that date or any other?"

"Certainly not."
 "You have never seen the silver box referred to?"

"Never!"
 The red came into the shiny face of J. Judson. His little eyes glittered. Plainly, J. Judson's temper was rising, as he listened to Wharton's quiet and explicit denials.

He was about to break out, when Mr. Quelch turned to him, coldly, icily.

"There is evidently some mistake, Mr. Judson," he said. "Possibly your friend has given you the wrong name in error."



Curling for breath, Bunter flew down the towpath, with the Famous Five hard on his heels. "Oh dear! Ow! Ow!" "Put it on!" shouted Bob Cherry. "He'll get away at this rate!"

"He ain't!" said J. Judson emphatically. "I 'ad it from 'im by word of mouth!" He fixed his little, piggy eyes on Wharton. "Look 'ere, sir! Your name's Wharton, ain't it?"

"That is my name," said Harry. "You belong to this 'ere school, Greyfriars?"

"Of course." "Then you're the bloke," said J. Judson. "You're the identical covey that Brown gave the box to to mind. 'And it over, and make no more bones about it, sir!"

"You have already heard this boy deny any knowledge of your friend or of his property, Mr. Judson," said Mr. Quelch icily.

"I got cars!" said J. Judson sulkily. "But I don't believe everything I 'ear, sir, specially when a covey is telling blooming lies!"

Wharton crimsoned. "You must not use such language here, sir," said Mr. Quelch severely. "You are making some absurd mistake, if indeed you have come here in good faith. Nothing is known here of the article you refer to, and you had better go."

"Not without that there box!" said J. Judson.

"Really, sir——" "He's got it!" snapped J. Judson. "I lay it's in his pocket at this blessed minute. Make 'im turn out his pockets."

"I shall certainly do nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "How dare you make such a suggestion?"

"He's got it." "You are really making a mistake, Mr. Judson," said Harry, controlling his anger, as he saw that the shiny man was speaking with evident belief in what he said. "I give you my word that

I know nothing whatever about Mr. Brown or his silver box."

"Stow it!" sneered Mr. Judson. Mr. Quelch made a gesture.

"This interview must end, sir," he said. "You have been given all the satisfaction it is in my power to give you. You should surely be able to see for yourself that the boy is telling the truth."

"He puts a good face on it," admitted J. Judson. "But, lor' bless you, sir, if you'd met all the liars I 'ave you wouldn't believe a word what was said to you!"

"I am glad I have had no such experience, then," said Mr. Quelch dryly. "My time is of value, sir!"

Mr. Judson gave a sort of snarl. "I've come 'ere for that box," he said. "Brown trusted it to the young gentleman. He never thought, and I never thought, that there'd be any bones made about 'anding it over. Who'd have thought that a young gent at a school like this 'ere would want to steal a box?"

Wharton compressed his lips. "Is it necessary for me to remain here and listen to this, sir?" he asked. "Certainly not!" said Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Judson, you are using the most unpardonable language. I request you to retire."

"Where's the blooming box?" demanded J. Judson aggressively.

"Really, sir——" J. Judson looked at the Form master, and looked at Wharton. Then he seemed to ruminato.

"Old on," he said suddenly. "P'r'aps there's another covey of the same name in this 'ere school. P'r'aps we've got the wrong pig by the tail, sir!"

"There is no other boy named

Wharton at Greyfriars," said Mr. Quelch coldly.

"You're sure of that, sir?" "Of course—of course."

"Then that tears it," said J. Judson. "This 'ere bloke is the right bloke, and I'm asking him to 'and over that box."

"I would hand it over at once if I had it," said Harry. "Can't you understand that you're making a mistake?"

"Mistake be blowed!" said J. Judson. "Arry Wharton, of Greyfriars School, was the name my friend give me. You're 'Arry Wharton, of Greyfriars School, ain't you? You ain't denying that, too?"

"No," said Harry, with a faint smile. "I'm not denying that, Mr. Judson."

"Then you're the covey."

"Really, sir——" said Mr. Quelch again.

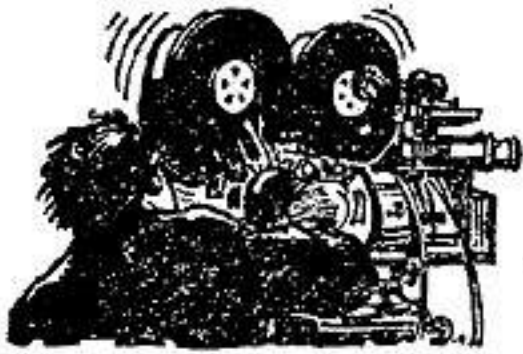
"Old on, sir! I come 'ere quiet and friendly to ask the young gentleman for that box," said J. Judson. "No offence intended, sir! I 'ope I know how to be'ave as a gentleman. If it's a question of money, I'm willing to do the fair thing. The young gentleman minded that box for Mister Brown. Well, say he's had some trouble about it—looking arter it. I ain't the man to make a fuss over anything reasonable. Let's say a pound."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wharton.

"We'll say a pound, and call it a go," said J. Judson. He took a greasy note-case from his pocket, opened it, and extracted a greasy pound-note. "I'm a man of my word, I am! I said a pound, and I mean a pound, and 'ere's the money. Now, 'and over the box, and let a bloke go about his business."

(Continued on page 16.)

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The MAGNET TALKIES



They took Jack Manley for a mutt when he first entered Larfard University. But our hero soon let 'em know what's what and who's who!

This week:
**COLLEGE
JAYS!**



"Say, boys, here's a freshman!"

"WELL, here's Larfard at last—the li'l ol' university where I'm going to make the name Jack Manley remembered! Say, you fellows!"

"You speaking to us?"

"Sure!"

"Then I guess I'll come over and smash you into li'l pieces, just so's you'll know freshmen ain't allowed to say too much to old collegers. Take that! And— Yow-ooo!"

"AND YOU TAKE THAT!"

CRASH!

"Geo! This freshman surely is asking for it, knocking out Hi Schwartz, the leader of Larfard University society!"

"Cave! Here comes the Principal!"

"Now there'll be fireworks!"

"Hum! Hah! Hum! Say, what's all the doggone row about, huh? Why, if it ain't Hi Schwartz, Larfard's social lion, showing every sign of having had the k.o. What hoodlum worked this crime, boys?"

"It was the new guy, Doc!"

"The new guy? Well, if that don't beat Barney! What's your name, new guy?"

"I'm Jack Mauley, Doc!"

"Hum! I remember the name, I guess. A champ. football player, ain't you?"

"That's so, Doc!"

"But I guess you ain't a member of the Amurrican aristocracy, huh? What I mean is, your popper ain't a canned-pork millionaire, or suthing like that?"

"I guess I'd rather not answer that question, Doc!"

"Ha! He ain't! I sorter remember now; he's a bank clerk or suthing. Well, Jack Manley, jest understand this: Hi Schwartz's popper runs the biggest chain of fish-and-chip stores in the Yewnited States, and young Hi consequently moves in the most exclusive circles of the aristocracy—don't you, Hi?"

"I suro do, Doc! Jest hand out the freezing-mixture to this guy, Manley, will you?"

"I'll say I will. You hear me yawp! Manley!"

"Yeh, Doc!"

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"Jest get your teeth into this: You're a new guy here, and there's only one reason you're allowed in. The reason is that we want you for the Larfard University football team. Get that?"

"S-s-say, Doc, you ain't serious?"

"Ain't I? Well, you got a second think coming, bo! Now, listen all ears. Your popper's only a bank clerk or suthing. These gentlemen, on the other hand, are all blue-blooded sons of the aristocracy, their poppers being corned-beef kings, canned-pork princes, and so on. Your popper merely serves the public, while their poppers flecco the public. So, of course, you gotter treat them with great reverence and respect; that's logic, ain't it?"

"I—I suppose it is, Doc. But I guess it's a disappointment to me to find I'm jest wanted for my football and nothing else."

"Well, that's facts, anyway. Now, new guy, you've made a bad start, but you can make up for it, I guess. Jest go down on your bended knees and beg Hi Schwartz's pardon—"

"What, me? I guess not, Doc!"

"You defy me, I guess? Then all I can say, Jack Manley, is that you're going to get all that's coming to you."



"We've got to crock the new guy!"

Wade in and tear him to pieces, boys!"

"Sure we will, Doc!"

"Rah, rah, rah!"

BANG! CRASH! WALLOP!

THUD!

"That'll learn him, I guess! Don't soil your aristocratic feet by kicking him! Come on, boys!"

"Sure, Doc!"

"Gee! Those guys surely did paste me! So this is college!"

"Don't do a thing
All day long,
Simply sing
This li'l ol' song:
Rah, rah, rah
Rah, rah, rah!
Larfard! Larfard!
Rah, rah, rah!"

"Say, boys, can't you quit yawping? Me and Hi Schwartz wanna talk over a dastardly plot."

"Yeh, but what else we got to do with ourselves, bo? There ain't nothing else to do at Larfard University, but play ukeles and yawp! So go to it, boys!"

"Rah, rah, rah!
Rah, rah, rah—"

"Then I guess we'll have to plot while they yawp, Hi. Let's hear you holler."

"Well, it's about Jack Manley—"

"The new football crack?"

"You've said it, I guess that guy gets my goat. He punched me first day he arrived, and now he's taken my place in the University football team, doggone him!"

"Well, what you going to do about it, Hi?"

"That's just what we're going to fix now. I can rely on you, Big Boy Hooligan. Your popper's a sausage king, and you're almost as aristocratic as I am myself. Now, I wanna give this Manley guy suthing that will keep him out of football for keeps. What can you think up, Big Boy?"

"I got it! We'll fix up a motor smash for him."

"A motor smash, Big Boy?"

"Sure, Hi! Why not? He drives his secondhand Ford from the college every afternoon. That's our chance. We'll barricade the road round the corner by the Principal's house—"

"Barricade it?"

"That's what I said, Hi! Jest put a tree-trunk across, and smash him up, so he won't never feel like playing football again. You get me?"

"Why, sure, Big Boy! And it's a great idea—jest the brainy sort of plan us aristocrats would think out, huh?"

"Aw! Don't make me blush, Hi! We gonna beat it now, and fix things up for this hard-necked football champ, eh?"

"Sure we are! C'mon along, bo! So-long, boys!"

"So-long, Hi!"

"Rah, rah, rah!
Rah, rah, rah!
Larfard! Larfard!
Rah, rah, rah!"

BANG! CRASH! BOOM!
THUD!



"That's fixed, him, Hi!"

"Rah, rah, rah! That's fixed him, Hi!"
 "You bet it has, Big Boy! Watch him come down with a bump!"
CRASH! WALLOP!
 "Yaroooop!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"



"I'm gonna kidnap Tootles!"

"Guess we'd best be beating it now, Hi. I believe I see the Principal and his daughter, Tootles, coming along. Me for home, sweet home!"
 "Me, too, Big Boy! My! I guess that stiff won't feel like playing football again. Rah, rah, rah!"

"Tootles, my dear! I guess this is an accident!"
 "I gueth tho, too, pop. Gee! What'th thith?"
 "Why, it's a body, I'll tell the world! And—and— Great snakes! If it ain't Jack Manley, the freshman!"
 "Grathiouth! Ith he dead, pop?"
 "I'll kick him and see—"
 "Whoooooop!"
 "No, Tootles, the lad is not dead; merely dazed. You can get up now, Manley; the accident is all over."
 "I guess I can't, Doc."
 "You can't?"

"I can't move my legs, Doc. They seem sorter paralysed, I guess."

"Paralysed? Where's my microscope? Why, so they are! Say, bo, I guess I got real bad news for you. You'll never be able to walk again!"

"Yawp! Say, Doc, that's real bad!"
 "Ain't it mighty awful, Mithter Manley? I'm tho thorry!"

"You ain't so sorry as I am, lady! Think what it means to me! No more football! No more fights! Jest a helpless cripple, rolling about in a bath-chair and doing handspings to get across a room—that's me!"

"You surely are the unlucky guy, Manley. How did the accident happen?"

"My auto tripped over this tree-trunk, Doc. And I guess I've a good idea who fixed the tree-trunk. I'll say I recognised a couple of coyotes hiding behind a tree jest before I crashed, and if ever I get the chance of being even with 'em—"

"Aw, forget it, Manley! Tootles, my dear, run for an ambulance!"

"Yeth, pop! Delighted, I'm thure!"
 "Dear girl! Now, keep smiling Manley; these little things are sent to try us, I guess."

"I'll do my best, Doc. But ain't being paralysed mighty awful? Yarooop!"

"Rah, rah, rah! So you got back in the team for next week's big game with Blue Sox, Hi?"

"Yeh, I sure did, Big Boy! But I ain't finished my games yet."

"You ain't finished?"

"Not this chicken—nope! I'm not resting satisfied with paralysing Jack Manley."

"Then what else you going to do, Hi?"

"I'll whisper it. Jest before the big game with Blue Sox, I'm gonna kidnap the principal's daughter, Tootles."

"Oh, Boy, you can't mean it! Why you gonna do that?"

"Because I'm the villain of this piece, Big Boy, and I guess I got to do suthing to justify the name."

"I get you, Hi. Still, I don't quite see why you wanna kidnap a cross-eyed, tongue-twisted dame like that."

"Nor do I, Big Boy. But this sort of thing is done on the pictures. Now, how we gonna do it?"

"You mean how we gonna kidnap Tootles? Why, I guess we'll jest snatch her when she goes out for her morning jaunt."

"Fine! Think we can fix it so that Jack Manley sits by helpless in his cripple chair? I feel I'd like to rile that big stiff."

"See what I can do, then, Hi. Now you get on to the field for practice."

"Here she comes, Big Boy! Jump to it!"

"Ooooooh! Help! Thave me, thomeone!"

"Shut her mouth, Hi!"

"Sure! Treat her rough till she stops yawping, Big Boy!"

"Help! Ith there nobody to thave me?"

"There jest ain't lady. The only guy in sight is Jack Manley, in his bath-chair; and he's paralysed."

"Oh, you thcoundrelth! Help! Help! Mithter Manley! Help!"



"Hey, you thugs! Lay off!"

"What's that? Say, am I seeing things, or is that a hold-up over there? I ain't seeing things. Knew I wasn't. It's a hold-up! It's— Jumping crackers! It's the principal's daughter being kidnaped! Wow! What am I to do? She's yawping to me!"

"Help! Mithter Manley, thave me!"

"Oh, if only I could; but I can't. I guess! What's the use of a guy with paralysed legs at a moment like this? If only I could use my feet again! Walking on your hands is so darned inconvenient—especially in a fight. Say, what are those thugs doing? Why, they're hitting that dame, doggone 'em!"

"Help! Thave me! Whoopee!"

"Hey, you thugs! Lay off! Jack Manley talking!"

"Aw, can it, Jack Manley! Cripples like you can't hurt us! We're gonna kidnap this dame!"

"You ain't, if I know it! Jest you wait a minute, and I'll—I'll—I'll— Jumping crackers! My legs are moving!"

"Help! Thave me!"

"Whoopee! I can walk! I can run! The excitement's cured my paralysis! Hurrah! Now for these thugs!"

"Watch out, Hi! He's coming!"

"Who's coming?"

"Jack Manley!"

"Huh? But he's a cripple!"

"He ain't a cripple no longer, Hi. I'm off! Yawp!"

"Take that, you scoundrel! And you! Unhand that young lady, and let's have your mask off!"

"You lemme alone or— Whoop!"

"Ha, so it's you, Hi Schwartz! I might have guessed as much. Not content with paralysing my legs, you now try to kidnap this beautiful cross-eyed creature—"

"Curse you, Jack Manley!"
 "You'll have reason to curse me in a minute, for I'm now on the point of giving you the thrashing of your life! Put up your fists, you cur!"
 Bang! Wallop! Thud! Crash!
 "Yarooogh! Whooop! Yawp! Murder! Groooogh!"

"There, let that be a lesson to you, Hi Schwartz! Furthermore, don't trouble to practice for the big game, Hi. I'll play myself now. Please take my arm, Miss Tootles, and I will escort you to your popper in safety."

"Oh, thank you, tho much, Mithter Manley!"

"Rah, rah, rah!
 Rah, rah, rah!
 Larfard, Larfard!
 Rah, rah, rah!"

"On the ball, Jack Manley!"

"Oh, popper, there'th only another minute to go! Can Manley win the game for Larfard, do you thuppothe?"

"Why, sure he can, Tootles! Believe me, kid there's nothing that boy can't do. Go it, Manley! Lick that Blue Sox man!"

"Rah, rah, rah! 'Nother man laid out!"

"Oh, pop, ain't it exthiting? There'th only one man he hath'nt knocked out now!"

"Believe me, that man won't last long! What did I tell you?"

"Rah, rah, rah! On your own, Manley!"

"Two seconds to go! Can he do it?"

"Sure he can!"

"GOAL!"

"RAH, RAH, RAH!"

"LARFARD WINS!"

"RAH!"

"Boys and gals, all. It's a real pleasure—I'll tell the world—to present this football medal to Larfard's greatest player, Jack Manley!"

"Rah, rah, rah!"

"As principal of his college, I can tell Manley that Larfard is proud of her son to-day. It's true he's only the offspring of a sorter clerk or suthing at—"

"Excuse me, doc, but that ain't so."

"But I thought—"

"Yeh, I know you did! But now I've won the football medal, I'm free to reveal my secret."

"Well, I swow!"

"You see, folks, my popper didn't want to give me an unfair advantage in my early days, so he sent me to school and university as the son of a bank clerk, and told me that I could tell the truth about my parentage when I gained my first university distinction."

"Then your pop ain't a bank clerk after all?"

"Nothing like it. He's the biggest tripe-canning millionaire in the world. So you see I'm jest as much an aristocrat as the rest of you."

"Rah, rah, rah!"

"Well, if this ain't the cat's meow!"



"Go it, Manley! Knock 'em out!"

Manley, my boy, come hither and be the social lion of Larfard!"

"Rah, rah, rah!"

THE END.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER BOX



(Continued from page 13.)

"Do you think I would touch your money, you silly ass?" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

"You ain't so pertickler about touching the box what don't belong to you," sneered J. Judson. "I'm offering you a pound fair and square. Take it or leave it."

"Mr. Judson—" began the Remove master.

"Old on, sir!" said J. Judson. "This 'ere is a matter to be settled friendly-like. This young gent knows 'is way about, he does. Money's money, this young gent says to himself. And I ain't blaming him. A bloke's got to look arter himself in this world. This young gent turns up his nose at a pound-note. Well, I asks him, as one man to another, what does he want?"

"You misapprehend the matter entirely, sir," said Mr. Quelch, while Wharton stood at a loss for words. "This boy would not accept any money from you, and would not be allowed to accept any money from you. It is not a matter of money, but of fact. If the boy had the box you mention it would be placed in your hands at once, to be returned to the owner."

"He's got it!"

"He has already told you, more than once, that he has not!" said Mr. Quelch, raising his voice a little. "Mr. Judson, I must request you to retire."

Slowly J. Judson replaced the pound note in the notecase, and the notecase in his pocket. The expression on his shiny countenance was distinctly unpleasant.

"So that's all, is it?" he asked.

"That is all, sir! And now—"

"You, a schoolmaster, letting that young 'ound keep what don't belong to 'im?" said J. Judson unpleasantly.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet, formidable in his wrath.

"Wharton, you may leave the study! I was in error in allowing you to enter the presence of such a man as this. Please go at once!"

Wharton left the study.

When he was gone Henry Samuel Quelch fixed his steely eyes on J. Judson.

"Now, sir," said Quelch, in a rumbling voice—"now, sir, you will kindly leave this room and this building. You have used unpardonable language and made unjustifiable insinuations. Go!"

"I come 'ere for that there box!" said J. Judson. "You can't expect me to go without it."

"No such box is here."

"Gammon!" said J. Judson.

Mr. Quelch drew a deep, deep breath.

"You will leave this school instantly, sir," he said, "or I will order you to be ejected. Take your choice."

J. Judson gave the Form master a sullen, savage look. He seemed on the

verge of an outburst of abuse. But no doubt he realised that he was in the enemy's country, so to speak, and that there was plenty of force at hand to deal with him if necessary.

He moved slowly to the door, jamming on his brown bowler hat as he went. At the door he turned, with a vicious look.

"I'm taking my 'ook!" he said. "Afore I go, I'll tell you this—you keep an eye on that young covey, Wharton. He'll 'ave your watch off you next. That lad'll end up in the stone jug, and you can lay to that. And I can blooming well tell you, old covey—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Quelch, in a voice that made J. Judson jump.

And J. Judson went.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Asking For It!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bow-wow!"

"What about Easter?"

"Nothing!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Scat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not seem keen to discuss the Easter vacation with William George Bunter.

They walked on regardless.

But the matter was important; at least from Bunter's point of view. He rolled after them.

"I say, old chaps, don't walk away when a fellow's talking to you," said Bunter. "I was going to say—"

"Rats!"

"No, I wasn't; I was going to say that I may be able to give you a look in during the holidays, Wharton. I'm not sure—but I may be able to. If I'm able to, I will."

"Let me know which day you're coming—"

"Certainly, old fellow—"

"So that I can put on a specially thick boot—"

"Eh?"

"And hoof you out."

"Beast!"

The Famous Five smiled and walked on. They were walking down to the village after class, when Bunter, in his anxiety to get that question of the Easter holidays settled, butted in. At the gates they dropped Bunter, leaving him blinking after them sourly.

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter as they departed.

And the fat junior turned and rolled back into the quad, doubtless seeking another refuge for the Easter holidays. Towards the end of term Billy Bunter was always a little anxious on this matter. Somehow or other, that magnificent residence, Bunter Court, on close inspection, turned out to be a suburban villa. Whatever the reason, it was certain that the "sweet" seemed to be left out of "Home, Sweet Home," so far as William George Bunter was concerned.

"I say, Mauly!" called out Bunter, catching sight of the elegant figure of Lord Mauleverer, of the Remove, in the distance.

He rolled towards Mauly. Mauly gave him one glance, and travelled. He was in the near distance when Bunter sighted him. He was very soon in the far distance.

While the Owl of the Remove was tracking Mauly round the quad, Harry Wharton & Co. walked away down Friardale Lane towards the village. It

was the day following that of J. Judson's visit to Greyfriars, and the juniors had forgotten J. Judson—having plenty of more important, and more agreeable, matters to occupy their minds.

They were suddenly reminded of his shiny and dingy existence, half way to Friardale.

A horsey-looking man, in a brown bowler, was strolling up the lane, and he met the juniors face to face as they reached the cross-roads.

Wharton frowned at the sight of him.

"That fathead Judson!" he remarked.

"Oh, that's the johnny, is it?" asked Bob Cherry, looking rather curiously at the man.

The Co. had not seen J. Judson on the occasion of his visit to the school, but Wharton had told them of the peculiar interview in the Remove master's study.

"That's the sportsman!" assented Harry.

"Looks as if he could do with a wash!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Put it on," said Harry. "I don't want to have a row with the fellow, and he's going to speak to us, I can see that."

The juniors accelerated. But J. Judson stepped directly in their path, and waved an oily hand to them.

"Old on a tick, gents, if you please," he said; and he touched his brown bowler civilly.

"Look here, my man, I'd rather have nothing to say to you!" said Harry Wharton bluntly.

"I dessay!" said J. Judson.

"Well, stand aside!"

"Old on! No offence intended, and none took!" said J. Judson. "I jest want a word with you, sir, in the presence of these huther young gents, fair and square, as one gentleman to another."

Wharton smiled slightly. Without being in the least snobbish, he would certainly not have taken J. Judson for a gentleman, had not J. Judson mentioned the fact.

"Well, as one gentleman to another, what do you want?" asked Harry. "And please cut it short."

"Short as you like," said Mr. Judson affably. "It's about that there little box."

"For goodness' sake chuck it!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "I've told you half a dozen times that I know nothing about the blessed box!"

"You could tell me 'arf a 'undered times, and it wouldn't alter the facts, would it?" remarked Mr. Judson.

"You mean that you don't believe me?" said Harry very quietly.

"You've got it!" assented Mr. Judson. "You get my meaning exactly, sir! You're a bright lad, you are, sir! Shows what a Public school education will do for a feller."

"Well, now listen to me," said Wharton. "I suppose you believe what you say, or you wouldn't be bothering me like this; but I tell you once again that you're mistaken, and I give you my word on that! If you can't take my word, you can please yourself. But I don't allow any man to call me a liar! And we're not in my Form study now. Keep a civil tongue in your head, or I'll pull your nose!"

Mr. Judson stepped back a pace.

"You'll pull my nose?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, just that! So if you're particular about your nose, keep civil, and keep your distance!"

Mr. Judson eyed the junior. Although

he was a man, and Wharton a boy, it was probable that the sturdy schoolboy would have proved quite a match for Mr. Judson, if it had come to trouble. J. Judson seemed to realise that; and his manner became very civil indeed, almost fawning.

"If I've said anything you don't like, sir, I take it back," he said. "I ain't 'ere to give offence! Not me! My friend Brown he says to me, says he, ask the young gentleman civil for that box, says he; and thank him kindly, says he, for taking care of it. And you can't say, sir, that I didn't ask you civil, when I wrote you that letter. Leastways, a friend wrote it for me, me not bein' a great 'ard at pen and ink."

"Yes, yes," said Harry. "But I keep on telling you, that you've got hold of the wrong fellow. Look here, if your Mr. Brown comes to these parts again, let him see me himself—he will see that I'm not the fellow he gave the box to."

"My friend Brown is detained," explained J. Judson. "Owing to certain cives, he simply can't get away. Mind you, he'd be glad to get away, and come here personal. He'd come if he could! But he jest can't, and you can lay to that."

"Well, then, you'd better ask him to describe the fellow he gave the box to," said Harry. "It may help you to find the right man—at least, it will show you that I am not the fellow."

"Owing to them cives, I mentioned, I can't see him jest now," said Mr. Judson. "I seed 'im for a few minutes when he told me about the box, and to ask Mr. Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars, for it. He's kep' away now by important business. Hutherwise, he'd come personal."

"Well, if he came, he would see that I'm not the fellow he wants," said Harry. "Now, clear off, please Mr. Judson."

The Co. looked on in silence. Mr. Judson glanced round at them.

"Ain't this 'ard on a man, young gentlemen?" he inquired. "'Ere's my friend 'eld up at a distance, by business he can't get away from, and me losing time trying to get his box back for 'im. I can't afford to 'ang about day arter

day like this. I been 'anging about your school, 'oping to meet this young gentleman and get him to 'and me the box. It's 'ard lines, and you can lay to that."

"My esteemed and ridiculous friend," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "You surely have the absurd perspicacity to perceive that my worthy and ludicrous friend is speaking with terrific veracity."

Mr. Judson blinked at the nabob of Bhanipur. That youth's flow of English seemed to surprise him.

"My eye!" he said. "Oh, my purple socks!"

The juniors grinned. It was not infrequent for Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's beautiful English to produce a startling effect upon persons who heard it for the first time.

"Come on, you men," said Wharton.

"'Old on!" exclaimed Mr. Judson. "Look 'ere, sir, a man can't keep on 'anging about. Wot about that silver box?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Can't you see that Wharton's not got the box. Do you think he's a thief?"

"I don't think—I know!" said Mr. Judson. "He's got the box."

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"You cheeky rascal!" he said.

"No offence, sir," said Mr. Judson, stepping back another pace. "No offence. But you 'ave got the box, and you know you 'ave."

"I haven't!" roared Wharton.

"Why you can't give it over to a bloke, beats me," said J. Judson. "That box ain't worth more'n a quid! Well, I've offered you a quid, fair and square. I'll make it two! What about that?"

"You silly fathead!"

"Calling a bloke names ain't business, sir," said J. Judson. "Look here, you answer a question fair and square. 'Ave you opened that box?"

"I've never seen the box!" howled Wharton.

"That there box ain't easy to open," said Mr. Judson. "There's a trick in it,

and I've seen fellers trying to open it, and they never could. You fancy there's something vallyble in that box, sir? That's why you're a-sticking to it like this 'ere?"

"The silly chump really thinks you've got it, old bean," remarked Frank Nugent. "It's not much use talking to him."

"There ain't nothing in that box, sir, except a photygraph," said Mr. Judson. "It's a photygraph of Brown's brother what was killed in a blooming railway accident, sir! That's why he prizes it, being an affectionate covey, sir, and very fond of his brother. I call it 'cartless to keep it away from 'im, and I'm sure that these young gents will say the same, sir."

"I've never even seen the box, you dummy, and never heard of it till you wrote me that letter!" hooted Wharton.

"Wot's the good of telling lies?" snarled J. Judson. "My eye! I've come across some liars in my time; but you do take the cake, you do—and you can lay to that."

"That's enough," said Wharton, his face red with anger. "Now shut up, and step aside."

"I ain't doing neither, till you 'and over that box," said J. Judson. "You young thief, you! Ooooooh!" gurgled Mr. Judson suddenly, as the exasperated junior reached out, and took his nose between a finger and thumb.

Wharton's temper had failed him; which really was not surprising. J. Judson gurgled with anguish as his nose was tweaked.

"Ooooooh!"

He jerked his nose away, and with his shiny, pimply face flaming with rage, hurled himself at Wharton.

The captain of the Remove met him with left and right.

His left came home in J. Judson's eye; his right tapped forcibly on the feature that had already been tweaked.

J. Judson sat down suddenly.

"Oh!" he roared. "Ow! My eye! Oh!"

Harry Wharton, with a flushed, angry
(Continued on next page.)

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face, walked on. His comrades followed him in silence.

J. Judson was left sitting in the dust, with one hand to his eye, and the other to his nose. And he was pouring out a stream of language that was certainly not fit for youthful ears. The chums of the Remove hastened their steps, and left him to it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Sale!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the window of Mrs. Mimble's shop, sighed, and ran his fat hands through his pockets.

It was tea-time; and a time of crisis to William George Bunter. His postal order, for some reason, had not arrived. Somehow or other, all Billy Bunter's wealthy relatives seemed to have forgotten his fat existence. He ran his hands through his pockets in the hope—the very faint hope—of discovering some forgotten coin—but in vain!

Matters were critical. In Study No. 7 Peter Todd and Tom Dutton were tea-ing out. When they tea'd out, they heartlessly forgot Bunter. Bunter seldom or never stood his whack at tea in the study; but when there was anything going, he turned up to annex the largest share possible. But when there was no tea in the study, Bunter had to go farther afield.

There was nothing in Study No. 1 for Bunter—Harry Wharton & Co. had gone out; and as they had not come in at tea-time, the probability was that they, too were tea-ing out. Bunter had looked into Vernon-Smith's study, but he had not stayed. A cushion that caught him under his fat chin hastened his departure. He looked in on Lord Mauleverer; and his lordship groaned. Bunter did not mind Mauly's groans; but Mauly's study-mate, Jimmy Vivian, picked up the poker in such a significant way, that Bunter decided to shake the dust of that study from his feet. And he shook it.

Before it was too late, Bunter had tea in Hall. But tea in Hall was nothing to Bunter. It was, so to speak, a drop in the ocean. After tea in Hall, Bunter rolled down to the tuckshop. Once more he tried his eloquence on Mrs. Mimble; once more he found that good lady deaf to eloquence. Now, gazing wistfully into the tuckshop window, Bunter sought through his pockets for coin—without finding any.

But his fat fingers came in contact with the silver box.

Bunter's fat brow grew thoughtful.

He turned, and rolled away towards the House. He was going to see Fisher T. Fish, the merchant of the Remove. Fisher T. Fish would buy anything from anybody, so long as he could get it for a tenth part of its value. Bunter felt that he could afford to let the silver box go cheap. It had not cost him much.

Nearly a week had elapsed since "Mr. Brown" had placed that box in Bunter's keeping. Bunter had heard and seen nothing of Mr. Brown.

It had slipped from his memory that, in dealing with Mr. Brown, he had not given his own name.

In his fear of being reported as a trespasser in Popper's Court Woods, he had given another fellow's name; so that if Mr. Brown was seeking his box, it would have been rather difficult for him to get into touch with the fellow who was "minding" it.

Bunter was one of those fellows who, according to the proverb, ought to have good memories.

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But, as a matter of fact, he had a very bad one for anything that was not immediately connected with himself or with grub.

Had Mr. Brown turned up and asked him for the box, Bunter certainly would have handed it over to him immediately.

But Mr. Brown had not turned up. He had told Bunter that he was a stranger in the locality; and Bunter had no doubt that he had long since gone back where he belonged and forgotten about the box. It was of no great value, anyhow, especially as it wouldn't open.

As the matter stood, it was nearly a week since Mr. Brown had handed him that box, and since then he had seen nothing of Mr. Brown; and the thing wasn't worth much; and Bunter was hungry—and stony. These were more than sufficient reasons for seeking Fisher T. Fish, with a view to raising cash on the silver box.

"After all, if the man turns up I can get it back from Fishy," Bunter said to himself, as a salve to his conscience. Bunter had a conscience—of sorts!

He rolled along the Remove passage to Study No. 14. Fisher T. Fish was alone there—Johnny Bull being out with his friends, and Squiff at tea with the Bounder and Redwing.

"I say, Fishy—"

"Beat it!" said Fisher T. Fish crisply. "I guess I ain't asking any guys to tea, you fat clam!"

"I haven't come to tea," said Bunter, with dignity. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order, Fishy."

"Can it!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"I've got something to sell—"

"I guess I ain't buying," said Fisher T. Fish. "Still, I'll look at it if you like. What is it?"

"Look!" said Bunter.

He laid the silver box on the study table.

Fisher T. Fish picked it up and turned it over in his bony fingers. He did not look interested. That was Fishy's way when he was buying an article. When he was selling it the matter was quite different. He gave a sniff.

"How does it open?" he asked.

"I can't get it open."

"What's the good of a box that doesn't open? What's the good of it, anyhow, if you come to that?"

"It's made of silver," urged Bunter.

"German silver, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, what will you give me for it?" asked Bunter.

"I guess I might go to a bob," said Fisher T. Fish disparagingly. "It ain't worth it, but I'd spring a bob to oblige you."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Take it or leave it!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"It's worth a pound at least," said Bunter warmly.

"Well, I ain't stopping you from selling it for a pound," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Go and sell it for a pound."

"Make it five bob, old chap."

"Aw, wake up!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"What about half-a-crown?" asked Bunter hopefully.

"Nothing about half-a-crown," answered Fisher T. Fish decidedly. "I guess I said a shilling, and I calculate I meant a shilling. I might have that box on my hands a whole term. I don't reckon I could sell it at all if I can't find out how to open it. Where did you get it?"

"It—it came to me from my—my uncle in India," said Bunter, after a moment's hesitation.

Fisher T. Fish looked at him suspiciously.

"You've no uncle in India, you fat clam! If you've boned that box from some fellow—"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Well, where did you raise it?" demanded Fish. "I guess I want to know, a few! There was a lot of trouble over that fountain-pen of Nugent's that you sold me, you pesky oyster!"

"It's all right, old chap," said Bunter soothingly. "I picked this box up at the second-hand shop in Courtfield. Old Lazarus, you know."

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, hand over the shilling," said Bunter. "I'll buy it back from you next term, Fishy, if the man—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Nothing! Where's the shilling?"

Fisher T. Fish closed his lantern-jaws like a vice.

"I guess that shilling's in my trousers-pocket," he answered, "and I kinder calculate that it's going to stop there, you fat jay. You take that box back where it belongs." Fishy pointed a bony, accusing finger at Bunter. "I had a dead loss over that fountain-pen of Nugent's that you sold me, you spoofing octopus. I guess you ain't catching me twice the same way! Not this baby!"

"Oh, really, old chap! It's really mine, you know," persisted Bunter. "I've told you where I got it—"

"Twice!" grinned Fisher T. Fish.

"Once from your uncle in India, and then from old Lazarus in Courtfield. Try the truth next."

"Well, look here, Fishy, suppose it was given to me to mind by—by—"

"By a blind man?" asked Fisher T. Fish.

"Eh? No!"

"Only a blind man would trust you with anything, I reckon. Take it back to its owner," said Fisher T. Fish, with a wave of a bony hand. "You ain't stringing this baby along twice in the same way. Nope!"

"Look here, you beast—" roared Bunter. "What do you care where it comes from, so long as you make a profit on it? You'll be making out you're honest next!"

"I guess I ain't having the owner of that thing getting after me," said Fisher T. Fish. "That guy Nugent kicked me till I coughed up his fountain-pen after you'd sold it to me! Travel!"

"Look here—"

"Absquatulate!"

"I'll take a tanner!" said Bunter desperately.

"Git!"

"I say, old chap—"

"Vamoose the ranch, you fat clam!"

And Fisher T. Fish, rising from the table, pushed Bunter out of the study and closed the door of Study No. 14 on him.

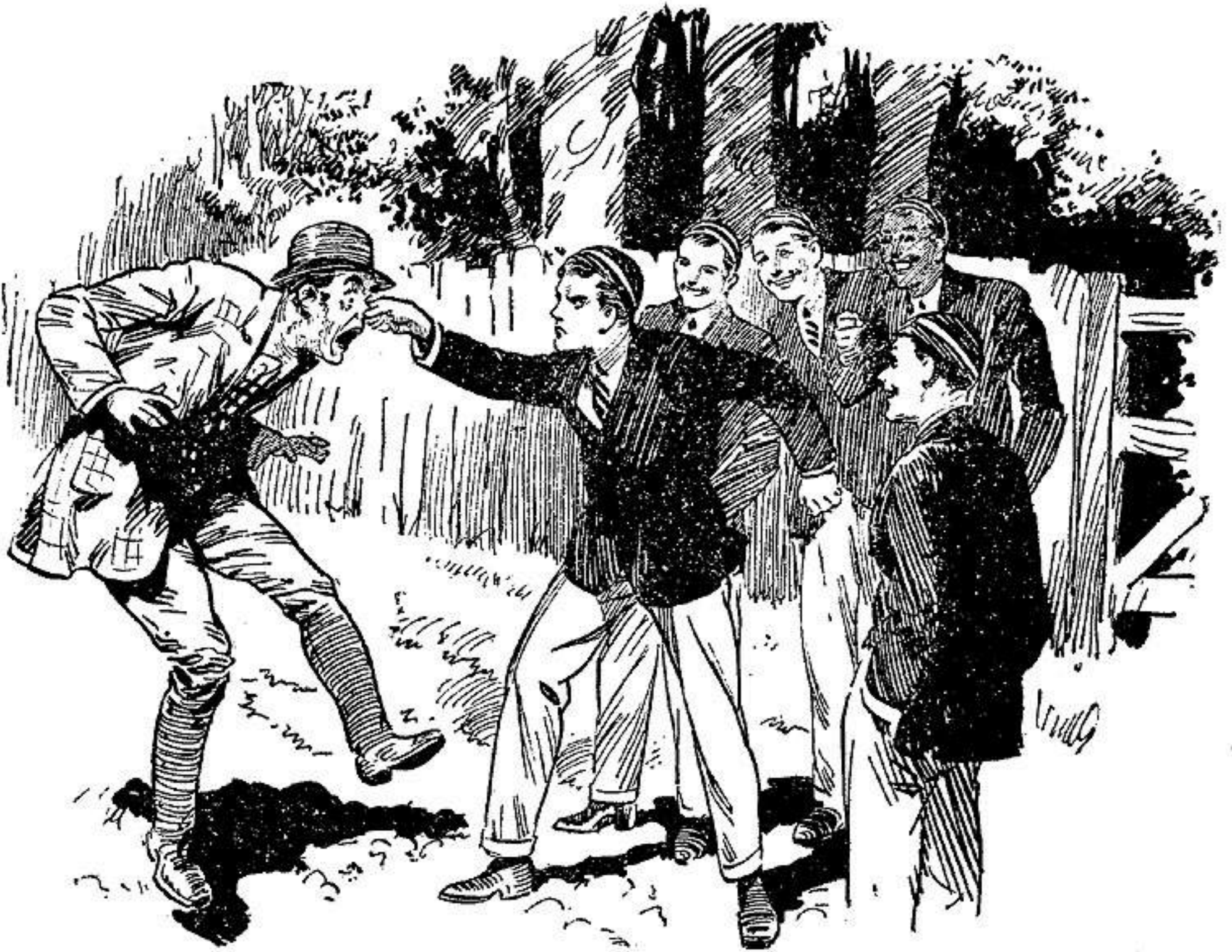
"Beast!" roared Bunter through the keyhole.

He slipped the silver box back into his pocket and rolled disconsolately away. Evidently there was nothing doing. That mysterious box still remained in Bunter's possession—safe till Mr. Brown should reclaim it. But as "Mr. Brown," under another name, was still detained in the hands of the police, it seemed likely that the silver box would remain indefinitely in the possession of the Owl of the Remove.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

THAT'S the covey!" Harry Wharton started and glanced round quickly, as he caught the husky, whispering voice in the hedge.



"You young thief!" snarled Mr. Judson. "And over that box! I— Ooooooooh!" The man broke off suddenly as Wharton, in exasperation, reached out and took his nose between a finger and thumb.

It was Wednesday afternoon, the last half-holiday at Greyfriars before the school broke up for Easter. The Co. had gone down to the cliffs; but Wharton had been kept behind by some of his duties as head boy of the Form, and he was following his friends about an hour later. He was going along Friar-dale Lane at a swinging pace, when the husky voice of J. Judson fell on his ears.

From a gap in the hedge J. Judson jumped out, landing a few paces in front of the schoolboy. A roughly-dressed man with a stubby beard followed him—evidently a friend of J. Judson, and a fellow of the same kidney.

The latter dodged behind Wharton to cut off his retreat.

The junior came to a halt, his hands clenching and his eyes flashing fire. He was more than fed-up with J. Judson.

"Old on, mister!" said J. Judson, with an unpleasant grin. "I been looking for a chance like this 'ere. Don't let him 'op it, Bill."

"Wot do you think?" answered Bill.

"Keep your distance," said Wharton.

"I'm asking you," said J. Judson, "for that there box. You got it about you, I know that. 'And it over quiet, and no 'arm will be done."

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

"Pinch him, Bill. Get him outer sight; somebody may come along the road," said J. Judson.

The two roughs closed in on the Greyfriars junior.

Wharton made a rush, and he hit out with all his force as J. Judson grasped him. There was a yell from the pimply man, but he grasped the junior all the same. And the man behind grasped him a second later.

Struggling and panting the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was dragged through the gap in the hedge into the field behind.

The two rascals dragged him some distance across the field, and stopped in a hollow, screened by willows, where the scene was safe from observation.

The schoolboy was dumped heavily on the ground; but they did not let go of him for a moment.

"Now, then!" panted J. Judson.

"I'll 'old the young 'ound, while you go through his pockets, mate!" said Bill. "Urry up!"

"Leave it to me," said J. Judson.

Harry Wharton had ceased to struggle. He had no chance against the two hooligans, and he was held fast.

He gave a breathless, angry laugh.

"You silly ass!" he said. "You can go through my pockets if you like; you'll find nothing there."

"We'll see about that," said Judson.

And while his associate held the junior, J. Judson proceeded to search him with great thoroughness.

He turned out a few letters, a pencil, and one or two other articles, and a little money—a half-crown, a shilling, and some coppers. But nothing more rewarded the search.

The ugly look on J. Judson's pimply countenance intensified.

"He ain't got it about 'im," he said.

"I've told you that, more than once," said Harry. "Now, if you're satisfied, you ass, let me go!"

"I ain't satisfied," said Judson—"not by long chalks, I ain't. You're a sharp one, you are, and I fancy you was ready for this 'ere. You knew you'd get searched for it sooner or later."

"I never thought anything of the

kind. I suppose you know you can be locked up for this?" said Harry.

"I ain't touching nothing of yourn," said Mr. Judson. "'Ere's your watch, and 'ere's your money, safe and sound. What I want is that there box."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"What you done with it?"

"Fathead!"

"You left it in the school?"

"I keep on telling you that I've never had it, and never seen it. Can't you understand that, you dummy?"

"What about twisting his arms, mate?" asked Bill. "That's the way to make a covey speak up."

Mr. Judson nodded.

"We got to know where it is," he said. "He ain't parted with it, I know that, and he ain't opened it. We'd 'ave 'eard."

This was a cryptic remark to Wharton. He could not guess in the least how J. Judson came to that conclusion.

But Bill nodded assent.

"We'd 'ave 'eard all right," he said.

"He's got it somewhere. What beats me is why the young 'ound's sticking to it like this 'ere. What's the good of it to 'im?"

"That's what beats me," said J. Judson. "If he knowed, I'd understand; but he don't know. He's jest a young rascal, and he won't give it up unless he's made. Well, we'll make 'im."

"We will that!" agreed Bill.

"You going to tell me what you done with that silver box, young feller?" asked J. Judson threateningly.

"I've told you I haven't it—"

"Oh, don't tell me any more lies!" interrupted Judson. "I s'pose you'll be going ome for Easter 'olidays soon,

and you rancy you'll get away from me, and get clear with it. I can tell you, you won't! I'm arter that box, young feller-me-lad."

"If I had the box," said Wharton, between his teeth, "I wouldn't give it to you, now! On your own showing, it belongs to a man named Brown. And I've only your word that he sent you for it. If I had the box I'd keep it till I saw Brown."

"Brown's kep' away," said Mr. Judson. "Brown can't come here. You got the box, and you're 'anding it to me. Now, then, where is it?"

"Will you let me go, you scoundrel?" "Where's that box?" demanded Judson threateningly. "Give his arm a twist, Bill, and then, mebbe, he'll speak up."

Wharton clenched his teeth in agony as the ruffian twisted his arm.

"Now, where's that box?"

"Oh, you rotter!" panted Wharton. "You cowardly beast!"

He struggled desperately to release himself.

"Give 'im another twist, Bill."

Bill gave the schoolboy's arm another twist. J. Judson was holding his other arm securely. But the junior drew up his foot with a sudden movement, and planted a hefty kick on Bill's waistcoat as he leaned over him. The ruffian gave a gasping howl and slumped over, releasing the junior's arm.

Crash! came Wharton's fist on Mr. Judson's pimply face, and J. Judson released his other arm.

In an instant the junior was on his feet, and springing away.

"Arter him!" shrieked Judson.

Harry Wharton ran like lightning across the field. Behind him raced the two ruffians, shouting threats.

With a bound the junior cleared the

hedge, and landed in the lane, and raced on towards the village. For a hundred yards or so J. Judson and his associate raced on his track; but the captain of the Remove easily kept his distance. And the sight of pedestrians in the lane checked the pursuit. The two rascals stopped, and plunged through a hedge into the fields.

Mr. Judson swore volubly.

"I'll 'ave it off 'im, if I 'ave to wring his blinking neck!" he said savagely.

"You sure he's got it?" asked Bill dubiously. "Looked to me as if the young covey was giving it to us straight."

"Course I'm sure," snarled Judson. "I had it straight from Sugden. I got a word with him when I was allowed to see 'im, to fix it up for a solicitor to defend him. Jest a whisper—but he give it to me straight—they was all round him arter he got away with it, and they'd 'ave found it on him, or picked it up where he chucked it away; but he came on a schoolboy in the wood, and he took it as a last chance. He asked the kid to mind the box for him while he had a bathe in the river, and got his name from him—Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars School. Ain't that clear?"

Mr. Judson swore again.

"They nabbed him a few minutes arter that. He hadn't any chance of getting clear—the old bloke was arter him so quick. It was the only chance he had of saving it. But who'd 'ave thought that the kid would stick to it like this 'ere? It was taking a risk, of course; but Sugden had to take the risk. I fancy that young feller suspects that there's something valuable in the box, though he certainly don't know what it is. He wouldn't dare to

keep the diamond if he found it. By gum, I'll 'ave it off him, somehow!"

He gritted his yellow teeth.

"Anyhow, I know where to look for him, after he goes home from school," he said. "That won't be long now. And it'll be easier to get at him at 'ome, than in a big school." J. Judson blinked at a letter—one of the letters that had been turned out of Wharton's pockets when he was searched. "I kep' this 'ere for the address—look! It's a letter from some relation of his, as it's signed with the same name: 'Wharton Lodge, Surrey.' It's signed James Wharton—his father, I s'pose. No, it says his uncle."

J. Judson read through the letter.

"That's where he lives. The old bloke mentions about his bringing some school friends 'ome for the 'olidays." Judson crumpled the letter into his pocket. "We can't 'ang about 'ere arter this, Bill. The coppers may be looking for us. I fancy we'll see that young rip again in Surrey."

And J. Judson and his companion lost no time in disappearing from the vicinity of Friardale, in view of the possibility that Harry Wharton had called at the police station, and having a natural repugnance to any encounter with "coppers."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Tit for Tat I

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's cheery voice greeted the captain of the Remove as he came out on the cliffs. The four juniors had been exploring the ancient smugglers' cave while they waited for their chum to join them.

Wharton hurried down the cliff path and joined his comrades on the beach.

They eyed him rather curiously as he came up. There were many signs about him of his struggle in the hands of J. Judson and Bill.

"Been through a mangle, old chap?" asked Bob.

Wharton gasped for breath.

"I've been through a shindy," he answered. "I've had my arm twisted, and it still hurts. That man, Judson—and another beast!"

"Oh, my hat! After that box again?"

"Yes."

Harry Wharton explained what had happened on his way to the cliffs.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"That man Judson is a sticker," he remarked. "He certainly believes you've got that idiotic box. I wonder what's in it, to make him so jolly anxious about it."

"Something valuable, I should say," remarked Johnny Bull. "But if it's really valuable, why did the man Brown trust it to a stranger, without knowing who he really was, either?"

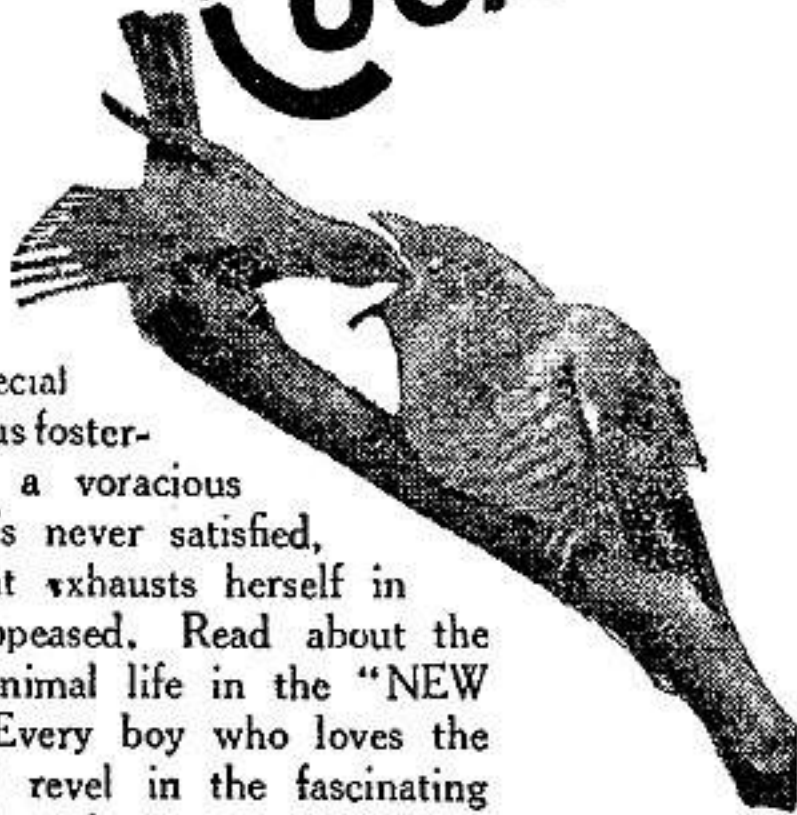
Wharton shook his head.

"I can't understand it at all," he said. "But Judson is a ruffian and a rascal, and I wouldn't give him the box now if I had it. There's no proof that he really comes from Brown. As likely as not he's a thief, who's heard of something valuable and is after it; and he's got the wrong name, or the wrong school. There may be a Wharton at Redclyffe. Whoever's got the box, I hope that rotter won't get hold of it."

"But look here, this is getting thick!" said Frank Nugent. "You ought to go to the police about this, Harry. Did they pinch anything?"

"No; only, some letters were dropped when they turned out my pockets.

CUCKOO! CUCKOO!



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They're of no value, though. They weren't after robbery."

"Still, they ought to be run in," said Johnny Bull.

"I'd rather give them a jolly good hiding apiece," said the captain of the Remove. "While they're keeping up this game it won't be safe for a fellow to walk about alone outside the school."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "They've been looking for you; now let's look for them, and give them toco!"

"The tocofulness is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That's what I was thinking," said Harry. "But I suppose they've made themselves scarce by this time. No good looking for them anywhere near the spot where they collared me."

"We'll take a stroll round," said Bob. "If we get anywhere near Judson I should know his shiny face and his pimples a mile off."

The juniors left the beach by way of the fishing village of Pegg, and walked along the Pegg road, which bordered one side of Friardale Wood.

Now that he had his friends with him, Harry Wharton was extremely anxious to meet Mr. Judson again, and, as it happened, chance favoured him.

Mr. Judson and his friend, judiciously losing no time in getting away from Friardale Lane, had taken the path through the wood. They were heading for Pegg, to obtain some liquid refreshment at the Anchor there, before proceeding farther on their way and disappearing from the neighbourhood altogether.

And so it happened that as the Famous Five came along the Pegg road Mr. Judson and Bill emerged into that road from the footpath through the wood and came on the Greyfriars juniors fairly face to face.

Bob Cherry gave a yell as he spotted them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What luck! There they are!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Wharton.

J. Judson stared round, and at sight of the Greyfriars party seemed in doubt whether to take to his heels. But the Famous Five did not give him time to decide. They came up with a rush and gathered round the two ruffians.

"Fancy meeting you!" said Bob Cherry affably.

"The pleasurefulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Rag 'em!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ere, you keep off!" exclaimed Bill, in alarm. "If you young blokes want a good 'iding I— Oh! Ow! Whooop!"

Bill was up-ended before he could finish his remarks.

He came down with a heavy bump, and Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent sat on him and kept him there.

Meanwhile, J. Judson was having the time of his life.

He hit out wildly as the juniors collared him; but three pairs of hands were too many for J. Judson to deal with.

Near the gate of the footpath was a wide ditch, well filled with water by the spring rains. J. Judson was hooked towards it, struggling wildly, and he went over backwards into it.

There was a terrific splash.

J. Judson disappeared beneath the surface for a moment. He came up spluttering, smothered with oozy mud.

"Groooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Now come out, you rotter, and have another dip."

"Oooooch!"
"Our turn now, Mr. Judson," said Harry Wharton. "Step out! You're keeping us waiting!"

J. Judson stood in the middle of the ditch, water flowing round him, and mud clothing him like a garment. With three juniors ready for him on the bank he hesitated to clamber out, but he was decidedly uncomfortable where he was.

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Here's a nutshell history, in verse, of George Bulstrode, who once captained the Greyfriars Remove.



TIME was when Bulstrode ruled the Form

By methods wild and woolly;
He made his rule the "Power of Brawn,"

For Bulstrode was a bully.
The poor Removites, oft scared stiff,
Felt limp and weak and wobbly;
They knew they could have whacked him, if
His knuckles were less knobby!

By fisticuffs he held his sway;
Each incident was fought on—
Until there came the happy day
That brought young Harry Wharton.
George Bulstrode smiled a heavy grin;
Thought he: "An easy victim.
A single swipe beneath the chin,
And I shall know I've licked him!"

But things were not, as Bulstrode planned,
An easy proposition;
Young Wharton soon had made a stand,
And formed an opposition.
His following quite quickly grew,
While Bulstrode's soon diminished;
And almost ere the bully knew
His reign of terror finished.

Young Bulstrode minor's sad demise
Brought qualities long latent
From Bulstrode; and to other eyes
Soon made them clear and patent.
Chaps found him quite a decent sort
When he had knuckled under;
A solid, beefy help at sport—
On footer pitch a wonder!

With Hazeldene and young Tom Brown,
Bulstrode's a study sharing;
And since he's learned to settle down
Quite decently he's faring.
He's not what you would call a star—
His brain power's not excessive;
But he's as good as others are
When shorn of the aggressive.

So let us toast this beefy lad,
Our one-time mighty bully.
We find that he is not so bad,
So let us praise him fully.
He'll never be what once he was;
I doubt if he aspires
To fight his way to being boss
Of the Remove—Greyfriars!

"Ere, lend a bloke a 'and, Bill!" he yelled.

"S'elp me!" gurgled Bill, wriggling vainly under Nugent and Johnny Bull. "I can't 'elp you, yo' fathead! I want you to 'elp me!"

"Sit on that merchant, you chaps!" chuckled Bob. "Keep him where he is. We'll look after J—dson."

"Look 'ere—" gasped J. Judson.

"Come out!" said Bob invitingly.

J. Judson scrambled out on the farther side of the ditch into the wood. On the farther bank he stood, dripping, gouging mud and water from his features.

"Now shove the other rotter in!" said Bob.

"Ere, you let a bloke alone!" howled Bill.

"My esteemed and disgusting rascal, the duckfulness is the proper caper!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "And to judge by your atrocious looks, a wash will do you terrific benefit!"

"You blooming nigger—" gasped Bill.

In the grasp of the Famous Five, the struggling and objurgating Bill was dragged to the ditch and bundled in.

He sprawled in mud and water, spluttering frantically. He crawled out on the opposite side, out of reach of the avengers.

The two ruffians gave the Greyfriars party muddy and infuriated glares across the ditch. Their aspect was simply deplorable as they stood, streaming water and mud.

Mr. Judson shook a muddy fist at the juniors. Bill spat out mud and water and gurgled.

"That's a lesson for you, Mr. Judson!" said Harry Wharton. "And if you hang about the school any more you'll get the same again if we come across you. I tell you once more that I know nothing about your idiotic box, and you'd better take my word for it. Come on, you chaps!"

And the juniors walked on their way, leaving two drenched and muddy ruffians spluttering and gasping by the ditch.

"I fancy that will warn them off!" remarked Bob Cherry. "They won't want another wash. I dare say that's the first they've had for years!"

"I hope we've seen the last of them," said Harry. "I'm more than fed-up with Judson and that silly box."

Probably the warning was not lost on Mr. Judson and his friend. At all events, nothing more was seen of them in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton & Co. had almost forgotten their existence by the time the school broke up for Easter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter!

"**B**UNTER!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"He, he, he!"
"You fat ass!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you doing here?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, really old chap—"

Wharton gazed at the Owl of the Remove with mingled feelings of amusement and exasperation.

It was an April afternoon, and Wharton had alighted from the train at Wimford station, a couple of miles from Wharton Lodge.

After a few days, his friends were to join him at the Lodge. Until then, Wharton had not expected to see any Greyfriars faces.

But it was the unexpected that happened.

From the next carriage in the train, a fat figure alighted and rolled towards him.

Twice Wharton had changed trains on his way home, and he had seen nothing of Billy Bunter on the journey. The Owl of the Remove had been exercising strategy.

Now, however so near his destination, Bunter felt that it was time to show up. So he showed up, with a fat and ingratiating grin on his plump countenance.

"You fat chump!" said Harry. "You've come a long way past your station, if you're going home."

"The fact is, old chap, that I'm not going home just yet," said Bunter. "The pater's got the decorators in at Bunter Court, so I told him I'd stay a few days with a friend."

"Then you'd better go and look for the friend."

"He, he, he!"

That cachinnation implied that Wharton was the friend in question.

"Well, good bye, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Wharton turned and walked along the platform. After him rolled William George Bunter. A rebuff had no effect whatever on William George; it glided from him like water from a duck.

"Taxi, sir?"

A driver hailed Wharton before he left the station. There were two or three others outside, but this driver was waiting inside the station, as if on a keen look-out for a passenger.

"Yes," said Harry. "Put my things on."

"Yes, sir!"

"Hasn't your uncle sent the car, old chap?" asked Bunter.

"No, ass!"

"My pater would have sent the Rolls for me, if I'd gone home," remarked Bunter.

"Then you'd better go home and roll into the Rolls. You can telephone from this station."

"He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton walked out after the man. Billy Bunter rolled out after Wharton.

"I say, old chap—"

"For goodness' sake, sheer off!"

"If you don't want my company, Wharton—" began the Owl of the Remove, with a great deal of dignity.

"I don't!"

"He, he, he!" Bunter decided to take that candid reply as a joke. "I'd rather your uncle had sent the car, but a taxi is all right. After all, the old josser—"

"The what?"

"The old josser. The old josser's got only one car. We keep three at Bunter Court. Still, the old josser might have sent it."

Harry Wharton gazed at the Owl of the Remove. If he had, in a moment of weakness, thought of allowing the fat Owl to inflict himself on him for the holidays, this reference to his uncle would have "toru" it, so to speak.

"Do you want me to pull your fat nose, you podgy freak?" demanded Wharton.

"Eh? No!" ejaculated Bunter, jumping back.

"Then you'd better take it out of reach, or I jolly well will!" said Harry.

"Oh, really old fellow—"

"Seat!" snapped Wharton.

"Beast!"

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Harry Wharton crossed the pavement. Billy Bunter rolled on in pursuit. He blinked curiously at the car on which the driver was placing Wharton's luggage.

"I say, this ain't a taxi," he said.

"It's a car. I say, Wharton—"

"Good-bye."

"Make room for a chap, old fellow."

Wharton stepped into the car. As Bunter had said, it was not a taxicab, but quite a comfortable car, looking like a private car. There was no taximeter to be seen.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver, coming up to close the door. His eyes were curiously on Wharton's face as he asked the question.

"Wharton Lodge, a mile outside Wharton Magnus," said Harry. "But this isn't a taxi—"

"The clock's gone to be repaired, sir," said the driver civilly. "But I'll do it for three bob."

"That's all right," said Harry.

"This gent going, sir?" asked the driver, with a dubious look at Bunter. It struck Wharton rather strangely that the chauffeur objected to Bunter's presence somehow, though how it could concern him, was rather a puzzle.

"No!" answered Harry.

"Oh, really, old chap—"

"For goodness' sake, roll away, Bun-

.....

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LEATHER POCKET WALLET**
for sending in the following
Greyfriars Limerick:

When you hear Bunter's weird
cachinnation,
See his sides heave with sup-
pressed elation.
I think you'll agree
That the fat W. G.
is concocting some new
machination.

Sent in by Joseph R. Kerr,
6, Woodville Terrace, Whitehaven,
Cumberland.

.....

ter!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently.

"Let the man shut the door."

Bunter stood in the way of the closing of the door.

"I say, old chap, I really can't go home, after arranging to spend the next few days with you, old fellow. You see, the house is shut up while my father's on the Riviera."

"Oh crumos! Has he got the decorators in while he's on the Riviera," ejaculated Wharton, "and is the house shut up while they're there?"

"Oh! I—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean. Sheer off."

"Look here, sir, if you ain't going with the young gentleman, stand clear, and let a man start!" exclaimed the chauffeur impatiently.

"I'm going!" snapped Bunter. "You mind your own bisney! I say, Wharton, old fellow—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Look here, you ungrateful beast, after all I've done for you—"

"Sheer off, you fat ass!"

"If I've got to wait about—"

grumbled the driver.

"Shut the door and start!" said Harry.

The chauffeur pushed Bunter aside, much to the fat Owl's indignation, closed the door, and mounted to his seat. The engine buzzed.

Bunter grabbed at the door-handle.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Fathead! Buzz off!"

"But you see—while the decorators are on the Riviera—I mean, while my father's shut up—that is—"

The car started. Bunter had to let go the door-handle, which Wharton was holding firmly on the inside. He shook a fat fist at the window.

"Beast!" he roared.

Harry Wharton smiled and waved a hand from the window.

"Good-bye, Bunter."

"Yah! Beast!"

Wharton laughed and sat down, and the car rolled on out of Wimford.

Billy Bunter stood glaring after it, with a wrathful and indignant glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Beast!" he gasped. "Talk about ingratitude! Old Spokeshave was right about an ungrateful serpent being sharper than a child's tooth! After all I've done for him!"

The car grew smaller in the distance. For some moments Billy Bunter stood gazing after it. Then he looked round, and beckoned to one of the waiting taxi-drivers.

"Where to, sir?" asked the man.

"Follow that car!" said Bunter, pointing. "Keep it in sight! My friend's in it, you see."

"Yes, sir."

Bunter stepped into the taxi, and it started after the car. Bunter sat down and grinned. Billy Bunter was a sticker. And he was sticking!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Ruthless Hands!

"WHAT the dickens—" murmured Harry Wharton.

The car, having left Wimford behind, was going at a good speed. For some time Harry Wharton took no heed of the direction, taking it for granted that the driver was heading direct to his destination.

But after a time it dawned upon him that the car was not heading for Wharton Lodge.

He knew every road and lane for a good distance round the lodge, and he became aware that the chauffeur was taking a very roundabout course. Had there been a taximeter on the car he might have suspected that the man was running up the fare; but as the drive was done for a fixed price, he concluded that the chauffeur was ignorant of the way.

He tapped on the glass, and the man glanced over his shoulder. Wharton put his head from the window.

"You're on the wrong road," he said.

"That's all right, sir—road up!" said the chauffeur. "I've got to go round a bit."

"Oh!" said Wharton.

He sat down again.

A few minutes later the car turned from the road into a narrow, steep lane, between high banks of earth, crowned with hedges.

Wharton knew the lane, and knew that it was a couple of miles from the lodge, and also that it led nowhere. Farther on it dwindled into a cart-track across a field.

He tapped on the glass again. Evidently, so far as he could see, the man did not know the way, and was ignorant of the country roads. The car was bumping horribly over uneven ridges of mud and deep cart-tracks. It was probably the first car that had ever taken that route.

The chauffeur this time did not heed the tap.

He did not look round. Keeping his eyes before him he drove on at accelerated speed, the car rocking on the ruts.

Wharton put his head out, the wind lashing by, from the speed of the car, almost bringing the water to his eyes.

"Stop!" he shouted.

The driver certainly heard, but he did not heed.

"Stop!" roared Wharton. "You'll be running into a field in a few minutes! Stop, I tell you!"

Still the man drove on unheeding.

Wharton dropped back into his seat, amazed, and a little alarmed now. It was impossible to jump from the car at such a speed; and the driver evidently did not intend to stop. Wharton wondered whether the man was some lunatic.

There were no buildings in the narrow, lonely lane. Only a small cottage appeared in sight at last, almost at the end of the lane where it degenerated into a track.

The car slowed down, and stopped in front of the cottage.

Harry Wharton jumped out.

"What the thump do you mean by this?" he exclaimed angrily. "You've brought me miles out of my way. What are you up to?"

"I dessay you'll know soon, sir," grinned the chauffeur. "Don't you be frightened—"

"Frightened!" exclaimed Wharton disdainfully.

"You ain't going to be 'urt, if you do the right thing. There's a bloke here wants to see you—name of Judson."

Wharton fairly jumped.

He had forgotten J. Judson. Evidently J. Judson had not forgotten him. The cottage door had opened, and a man with a shiny, pimply face appeared on the weedy path, hurrying down to the car.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

He understood now how he had been tricked. J. Judson, somehow, had found out where his home was, and laid this trap for him when he came home for the holidays. That was why a car, which was not a taxi, had been waiting at Wimford Station. That was why the driver had been hanging about inside the station watching for a passenger.

"You got him, Ted!" grinned J. Judson.

"I got him Joel!" answered Ted. "Bill pointed him out to me when he got out of the train. It's the bloke you want."

"Jest the covey I'm anxious to see," answered J. Judson. "I dessay the young gent will be more reasonable this time. You got the box about you, Mister Wharton?"

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"You silly fathead!" he said. "I keep on telling you I know nothing about your fatheaded box."

"You wouldn't have left it at the school," said J. Judson sagely, "You

Bunter caught hold of the sacking, and was dragging it aside when he got a glimpse of the interior of the room. "Oh crikey!" he gasped, for on the floor lay Harry Wharton, bound hand and foot, with a rag tied in his mouth.



got it about you, or it's in your traps somewhere."

"I've never seen it, you dummy."

"You can tell that to the marines," said J. Judson. "You'll save trouble, sir, by 'anding over that box peaceable. I don't want to 'urt you, though you 'andled me rough, and ducked me. I don't want to waste time on you. I jest want that box."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"You won't be 'urt if you 'and it over," said Judson. "But you'll mebber get 'urt if you don't, young feller-me-lad."

Harry Wharton backed away, and clenched his hands. But the chauffeur was watching him to see that he did not bolt. There was no chance of escape, and little chance of resistance. And help was out of the question. There was no other habitation within half a mile of the lonely cottage.

"Bring him into the cottage, Ted," said J. Judson. "It ain't likely that anybody will pass 'ere; but it's safer out of sight."

"You bet!" said the driver.

"Hands off!" said Wharton, between his teeth.

"Nail 'im!" growled J. Judson.

Two pairs of hands were promptly laid on Wharton. He struck out fiercely; but his arms were quickly pinioned to his sides, and he was half-carried, half-dragged, up the weedy path to the cottage.

Still struggling the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was bundled headlong into the cottage, and the door was closed.

J. Judson picked up a rope, which had evidently been placed in readiness for such an emergency. The junior's hands were dragged together, and bound tightly at the wrists. Then the other end of the rope was knotted about his ankles.

Wharton lay gasping on the earthen

floor of the cottage. J. Judson bent over him, and he lay unresisting now, while the nimble fingers of the pimply gentleman ran through his pockets.

"He ain't got it on 'im," said Judson disappointed. "It'll be in his bags. Get them off the car."

The two rascals gave Wharton no further heed. He lay, still gasping for breath, hardly able to move a limb, while his luggage was carried from the car into the cottage, and dumped down.

In silence he watched them searching it.

The search was a thorough one. Had the silver box been concealed among Wharton's things, certainly they would have unearthed it. But it was, of course, not there.

J. Judson gave up the search at last, and came back towards the bound schoolboy with an ugly look on his face.

"I ain't found it," he said, gritting his discoloured teeth.

"Of course you haven't, you silly fool!" snapped Wharton. "It's not there. If you had the sense of a bunny rabbit, you'd know that I've told you the truth, and that I know nothing about the rotten thing."

"That won't wash!" said Judson. "You'd better tell me what you done with it. I s'pose your people is expecting you 'ome to-day?"

"Yes."

"And getting anxious if you don't turn up?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, you won't turn up in a 'urry," said J. Judson menacingly. "If you don't shell out that box, young feller-me-lad, you ain't likely to turn up at all. Why, blow you!" went on the man, snarling. "You don't know whose 'ands you're in. I'd wring your neck like a spudger's, and not think twice about it! You 'ear me?"

Wharton felt a chill as he looked at THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,157.

the savage, threatening face. He did not need telling that he was in the hands of a gang of criminals. What the whole affair meant was a mystery to him. But it was clear that he was in desperate hands.

"What you done with that box?" hissed Judson, bending over the bound schoolboy.

"I can only say what I've said before—I don't know anything about it!"

The man snarled at him like an animal.

"Still keeping up that yarn, are you? Mean that you've parted with it? If you've parted with it, tell me the name of the bloke, and I'm done with you."

There was a touch of J. Judson's old oily persuasiveness in his voice now. His anxiety to know what had become of the silver box was evidently very keen.

"Jest tell me who's got it now, and you're let off easy!" he said. "Ted 'ere'll drive you 'ome safe and sound. Now, ain't that a fair offer?"

"I've never had it," said Harry. "If I had, I'd tell you. But I can't tell you anything about a thing I've never even seen."

Judson spat out an oath.

"Well, keep that up!" he hissed. "Keep it up till to-morrow; I'll see you again to-morrow, and arter a night here, maybe you'll sing to a different tune. You won't be so cocky in the morning, I fancy."

Wharton panted.

"You're not going to leave me here, like this?"

"Ain't I just?" jeered J. Judson. "You'll see. You still got time to tell me where the box is, if you like."

Wharton made no answer. Judson looked round the bare, unfurnished room, and picked up a rag. Forcing the schoolboy's jaws open, he stuffed it into his mouth, and then wound a cord about his head and neck, knotting it, to keep the gag in place.

"I don't fancy anybody would 'ear you if you 'owled," he said; "but I ain't taking chances. That'll keep you safe till I come back. You got twelve hours afore you to think it over; and if you ain't come to your senses then, you'll get worse nor this, and you can lay to that."

With that, J. Judson and his companion quitted the cottage, and Wharton heard the key turned in the door outside and withdrawn. As he lay on the chilly earthen floor, scarce able to stir his bound limbs, half-choked by the gag, he heard the car drive away.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter to the Rescue!

BILLY BUNTER blinked.

"That's the car!" he ejaculated.

Bunter had not been favoured by fortune in his pursuit.

It had seemed quite an easy thing to follow Wharton's car in a taxi, and trail him home, as it were. Bunter had not expected any difficulties.

But they cropped up, all the same.

The taxicabs at the little country station of Wimford were not the newest articles in that line. Bunter's taxi had seen service for about twenty years in a bigger town before it meandered to that secluded corner of Surrey to drowse out its old age. Engine trouble accrued.

It was frightfully exasperating. The car had vanished along a country road, and Bunter had howled to his driver to

put on speed. Perhaps it was the putting on speed that did it!

Something did it, anyway. For a quarter of a mile the old taxi hummed along at a rate worthy of its far-off energetic youth. Then something went.

It had passed the narrow opening of a lane that led away into the wilds; it did not occur to him for a moment that the car he was following had turned into the steep and rutty lane. He was anxious to get on along the high road. But a score of yards past the lane the taxi conked out.

The driver descended, and undertook the renovation of the mysterious works with a cheerful demeanour. No doubt he was used to these little occurrences.

But Bunter fumed.

How long the Wimford man was occupied with tinkering at the engine Bunter did not know; but it seemed like years. There was no hope now of overtaking Wharton and arriving at the Lodge with him. Bunter had felt that, in a household where he was not expected, it was more tactful to arrive with Wharton, and not on his lonely own. But there was no help for it now. When the taxi got going again—if ever it did!—he had to head direct for Wharton Lodge, and chance it.

He had got out of the cab, and he mooched drearily about the road, while the Wimford man cheerily tinkered.

Then all of a sudden he heard the buzzing of a car, and, blinking in that direction, he saw a car turn out of the narrow lane a score of yards back along the road, and turn towards Wimford.

He blinked at it in astonishment.

It was the car he had been following from the railway station. Evidently it had not gone on by the road, but had turned down that steep lane, and now had come back and was returning to Wimford.

But the surprising thing was that Wharton's luggage was no longer on it and Wharton was no longer inside.

Bunter had a glimpse of a passenger within—a man in a bowler hat.

The car disappeared towards Wimford, leaving Bunter blinking.

"I say, that was the car!" he ejaculated.

"That was it, sir!" assented the driver. "I seed it waiting at the station a long time; but it don't belong to Wimford, that car don't."

"Where does that lane lead to?" asked Bunter.

"Nowhere, sir—only into the fields."

"It doesn't lead to Wharton Lodge?"

"Course it don't," said the Wimford man. "Colonel Wharton's place is two mile away; and you can't get out the other end of that lane with a car. It's jest a footpath farther on."

"Then, where's Wharton?" exclaimed Bunter.

He was utterly perplexed.

Wharton had been going home, he knew that. Yet evidently he had stopped, with his luggage, somewhere in that solitary lane, two miles from Wharton Lodge.

"How many houses are there in that lane?" he asked the driver.

"There ain't any, sir; only an old tumble-down cottage."

"But Wharton must have stopped somewhere!" said Bunter bewildered. "I don't want to miss him. We'll go down that lane when you're ready. How long will you be?"

"Might be ten minutes, sir!" said the Wimford man cheerfully. "Might be 'arf an hour."

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter decided to walk down

the lane. Wharton's proceedings were utterly mysterious to him; but he had a vague suspicion that the beast might have guessed that he was in pursuit, and that this was some sort of trick to dodge him.

He rolled away to the lane, turned into it, and walked along it, blinking round him through his big spectacles.

About a quarter of a mile from the road he came on the cottage, standing solitary beside the little lane.

Evidently it was the only building in those parts, and it looked uninhabited.

But Wharton must be somewhere. That was certain. The car must have landed him in that lane, since it had gone back without him. It must have landed him at the cottage, as there was no other building visible. Indeed, there was proof of it, for the thick mud showed plainly where the car had stopped, and backed, and turned at the little gate.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter blankly. "He must be there. But what he's up to—" Bunter shook his head. The mystery was beyond him.

He rolled up the weedy, untidy path to the cottage door, and knocked. Whatever might be the explanation of this mystery, obviously the cottage was the place to inquire.

Knock, knock, knock!

Bunter's knocking echoed through the empty building. But there was no answer to it, and the door was not opened.

"Nobody there!" muttered the Owl of the Remove. "But he must be there! The beast is pulling my leg somehow, of course. I say, Wharton!" Billy Bunter bawled at the top of his voice. "I say, old chap! Beast! I say, old fellow, where are you? Where are you, you beast!"

There was no answer to his shout; but as he paused and listened he heard a heavy dragging sound inside the cottage.

Evidently it was not unoccupied.

Bunter listened in amazement.

The sound was that of a heavy body dragging clumsily towards the door, like a fellow rolling over without the use of his limbs.

"What the thump!" ejaculated Bunter.

He was so astonished that his fat brain seemed to be turning round. If this was a "lark," Bunter could not make it out.

He moved along to the little window, but it was thickly covered by sacking nailed up inside, and he could not get a glimpse into the room. He tapped on the window.

"I say, Wharton! Are you there, you silly ass?" he howled.

The dragging sound recommenced.

Billy Bunter felt a palpitation at his fat heart. It dawned upon him that something must have happened, and he had a vague feeling of alarm.

Several of the little panes in the window were cracked and broken. After listening for a minute or two, Bunter pushed his elbow through the nearest broken pane and made room to pass a fat hand through. He caught hold of the sacking that hung within, and dragged it aside.

Then he had a glimpse of the interior.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

On the floor lay Harry Wharton, bound hand and foot, with a rag tied in his mouth.

Bunter's little round eyes almost started through his spectacles.

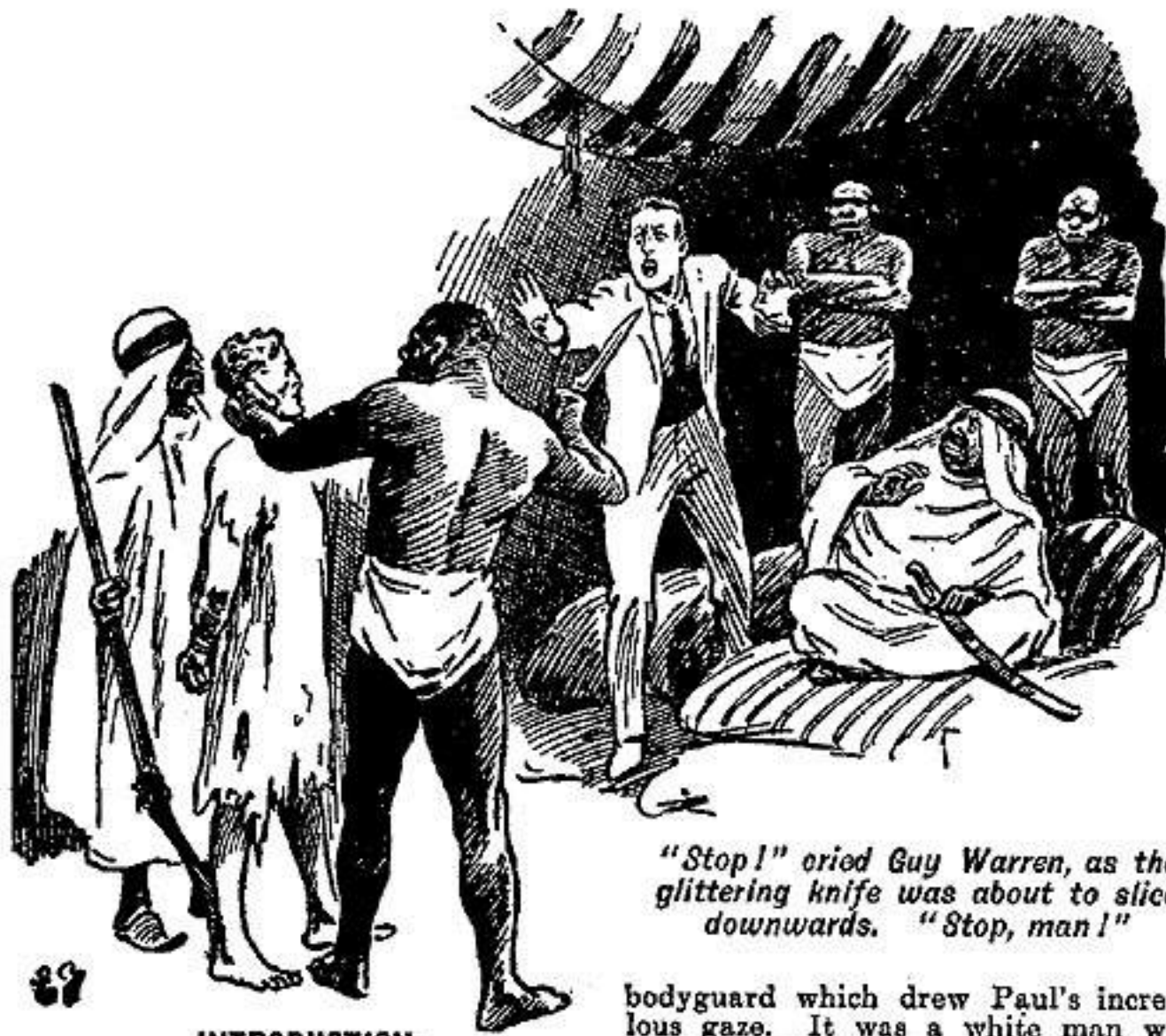
"Oh crumbs!"

The dragging sound was explained now. The bound junior had been

(Continued on page 27.)

FOR THE GLORY OF FRANCE!

By
**Geo. E.
ROCHESTER.**



"Stop!" cried Guy Warren, as the glittering knife was about to slice downwards. "Stop, man!"

INTRODUCTION.

To save his rascally cousin, Guy Warren, from expulsion on a charge of theft, Paul Blake, Fifth-Former of Greystones, takes the blame on his own shoulders by running away from school. Fired by its promise of adventure, Paul joins the Foreign Legion of France and is sent to the desert station of Sidi-bel-Abbes, in North Africa. There he forms friendships with Lemarne, a hard-bitten Legionnaire, Esterharn, a former officer in the French Army, and Desmond, once captain of Greystones. When, a few weeks later, a strong force of the Legion is sent into the desert to quell an Arab rising, these four go with it. After a terrible hand-to-hand fight with the fanatical tribesmen, Sergeant-Major Bolke learns that a party of British tourists, including Guy Warren, who has now succeeded to the title and fortune of his father, and his sister June, have fallen into the hands of Ali bu Sadi, the leader of the great revolt. Nothing can be done to help them until the depleted force of the Legion has been reinforced, and Bolke sends Lemarne and Blake on a perilous journey to the garrison at Kesh-el-Kabar. Fate is against the two daring Legionnaires, for they are captured by a band of Touaregs. Lemarne escapes, while Blake, who succeeds in shooting the Touareg leader, is escorted to the tent of Ali bu Sadi the merciless.

(Now read on.)

Warren Makes Amends I

THE interior, dark and warm, was heavy with a scent of perfume which gave the boy a momentary feeling of nausea. Between his guards he was marched to where a man, clad in magnificent silken robes, was seated cross-legged on a throne of piled cushions.

Behold him then! Ali bu Sadi, the Chosen One of Allah; he who had sworn to sweep the French from out the Sahara into the sea. Fat, gross, with leering, slobbering mouth, his little, evil eyes half-hidden by pouches of fat, he sat there like some great, bloated spider who had gorged to beastly repletion.

Behind him, arms tolder across their massive chests, stood four gigantic negroes, naked save for their loin-cloths. They were his personal bodyguard.

But it was not Ali bu Sadi nor his

bodyguard which drew Paul's incredulous gaze. It was a white man who, clad in cool and immaculate linen, was seated on the left of the Chosen One; a white man who was leaning forward, peering at Paul with burning eyes.

"Blake—Paul Blake!" whispered the white man hoarsely.

Paul had got a grip on himself, and he answered steadily:

"Yes, it is I, Guy Warren!"

Ali bu Sadi nudged Warren with a fat elbow and indicated Paul.

"You know him?" he grunted, with sudden interest. "You know that Legionnaire?"

He spoke an oily, fluent English, for, degenerate though he now was, he had been at one time a student at a famous University.

"You know him?" he repeated.

"Yes," nodded Guy Warren, and his voice was strained, "I know him!"

"He is English, like you, I suppose?" commented Ali bu Sadi. "There are many English in the Legion. But, tell me, how do you come to know him?"

"We were at school together!" replied Warren.

Ali bu Sadi shook like a jelly with silent laughter.

"Truly," he said, "the roads of destiny, traced by the divine finger of Allah, lead to strange meetings. And have you no greeting for this school companion of yours?"

Guy Warren shook his head.

"None," he answered, in a low voice.

From out the corners of his little eyes, Ali bu Sadi studied him curiously for a moment, then turned to Paul.

"My servant Azbar," he said, with sudden venom, "informs me that you are a Legionnaire. Do you deny that?"

"No," replied Paul.

"Then what"—and the words came with a snarl—"are you doing in Arab guise?"

Paul was silent. He heard, but scarce understood the question. He had expected to find Guy Warren at the camp of Ali bu Sadi; but as a hostage, and certainly not seated alongside that

black fiend as though he were an honoured guest.

What was the explanation?

"You heard my words?" The savage voice of Ali bu Sadi cut in on the boy's thoughts. "Why are you, a soldier of accursed France, in Arab garb?"

Paul surveyed him coldly.

"I am not likely to tell you!" he retorted. "So you can save your breath!"

The words galvanised Ali bu Sadi into fury. Whipping out a fat arm, he pointed a dirty, quivering forefinger at Paul.

"Shall I tell you why you are wearing it, you dog?" he screamed. "You are a spy from Zukra. Zukra has fallen to your cursed Legion. My garrison massacred—my work there all undone! By Allah! But I will take payment in blood—"

He broke off, choking, and seemingly on the verge of a fit. Little flecks of foam appeared at the corners of his thick wet lips, and he shook as though with the ague.

Recovering himself somewhat, he went on harshly:

"Where were you making for when you were captured by Telama, brother of my servant, Azbar?"

"I shall tell you nothing!" answered Paul, coolly.

Ali bu Sadi thrust forward his great head, eyes blazing with murderous passion.

"Will you not, you dog?" he screamed. "By the teeth of Allah, I'll loosen your cursed tongue for you!"

Turning, he snarled out an order, and one of the negroes leapt forward, drawing gleaming knife from out of his loin cloth. Gripping Paul's ear between finger and thumb, he raised the knife.

"Off with it!" commanded Ali bu Sadi, gratingly. "The dog will lose the other one as well if he still refuses to answer!"

The knife was glittering on the downward slicing stroke, when, Guy Warren, white-faced and shaking, leapt to his feet.

"Stop!" he cried hoarsely, with outstretched trembling hand. "Stop, man!"

The negro checked, staring with hand poised. The seated Ali bu Sadi struck with clenched and podgy fist at Warren's leg. There was something absurdly childish about that ineffective blow.

"How dare you interfere?" he demanded querulously, glowering up at Warren. "You heard the dog refuse to speak—"

"Listen!" Guy Warren bent and touched the fat shoulder of the Chosen One with pleading hand. "I did not tell you before, but not only is he of my race—he is of my blood—"

"What?"

"It is true! That Legionnaire is my cousin!"

For a long moment Ali bu Sadi stared up suspiciously at the white drawn face of Warren. Then again he shook like a jelly with inward laughter.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he gurgled. "But this is interesting, my friend! Your cousin, you say? But why have you not mentioned it before?"

"Because we quarrelled!" answered Warren. "We are enemies. Yet I cannot calmly see kinsman of mine put to the torture! Neither could you—no man could—"

"I would not say that!" grunted Ali bu Sadi. "I cut off the eyelids of my uncle and pegged him out like a starfish to sun-dry on the desert sand. He went blind within the hour, and raving mad within the next. He was, however," he added, "a bloated pig who would have done the same by me had opportunity offered. We, also, you see, had quarrelled!"

"But my quarrel with this Legionnaire was a trivial thing at best," pleaded Warren. "Grant me ten minutes with him alone, and I will bring him to a more reasonable frame of mind."

"You mean, you will persuade him to talk?"

"Yes," answered Warren. "I will!"

"You won't!" out in Paul, coldly. "Nor do I wish you to plead for me, Warren!"

"There!" took up Ali bu Sadi, eagerly. "Note the attitude of the stubborn whelp. To your face he tells you he will not speak. Let the knife cut the truth out of him—and the tongue, also, if he remains of the same mind."

"He is talking wildly," replied Warren. "Look at him! He is about all in. I beg of you to grant him ten minutes alone with me!"

With fat, perspiring hand, Ali bu Sadi caressed his wealth of chins. His little eyes, fixed now on Paul, were reflective. Then suddenly he gave tongue.

"The ways of Allah are passing strange," he intoned piously, "and beyond the understanding of man. Even beyond the understanding of me, His Chosen One. And who knows but what you, Guy Warren, and not the knife, may be intended to be the weapon by which this whelp's tongue be oosed!"

He paused, then went on gratingly:

"For loosened I mean it to be. There is information I want, and information which I intend to have. Ten minutes I grant you with him alone. And if by that time he still refuses to speak, then he will die a thousand deaths before the dawn comes!"

In a small curtained ante-chamber of the tent, Paul Blake and Guy Warren faced each other alone; faced each other for the first time since they had stood in Warren's study in the Sixth Form corridor at Greystones so short a while—and yet so long—ago.

It was Paul who spoke first. He had been released from his bonds, and his hands were clenched.

"Where is June?" he demanded hotly. "I thought that you and your party were being held here as hostages!"

"June is safe at the coast," replied Warren. "I saw to that."

"Oh, did you?" responded Paul, grimly. "You must be very pally with that fat beast in there."

"I am pally with him!" retorted Warren, defiantly.

Stepping forward, he gripped Paul roughly by the shoulders.

"Listen to me!" he rapped. "Once

you did me a great service. Well, now I am in a position to do you one. Do you realise that I am the one man in Africa who can save your life?"

"No. I certainly don't!"

"It's true, none the less," returned Warren. "Ali bu Sadi, whilst not exactly eating out of my hand, is distinctly friendly towards me—"

"Why?"

Warren laughed harshly.

"I will tell you why," he answered. "I am backing him financially in this campaign of his against the French. It was in consideration of five thousand pounds in gold, drawn from my bankers in Algiers, that he sent June to the coast under safe escort. On the promise of another ten thousand I have been given his friendship and the offer of rich trade charters when he has swept the French from the Sahara!"

"You filthy renegade!" blazed Paul.

"Out that out!" snarled Warren.

"And don't be a cursed hypocrite. Ali bu Sadi and his kind have more right to the desert than the French ever had. It is the French who are the usurpers, the oppressors. If you've got the pluck to get down to bed-rock and face facts, you'll have to admit that I'm right. The desert is the Arab's home—his own country. He is fighting to throw out an invader!"

"He is fighting to throw out a white man who is guiding him along the path of peace and prosperity," retorted Paul. "And you, a white man, are aiding him!"

"We're not going to argue about the ethics of the case," responded Warren.

"The Legion's warped your views. Why don't you quit it?"

Paul laughed shortly.

"Because I'm not a quitter!" he replied. "And in any case, isn't it a bit too late to talk of that now?"

"No, that's just what it's not," said Warren eagerly. "Listen! Tell Ali bu Sadi all he wants to know. Answer his questions, and I guarantee that no harm will come to you. If you refuse you're doomed. Say you will, man—say you will!"

There was a desperate earnestness about him which puzzled Paul.

"You were not always so concerned for my safety, Warren," he said quietly.

The effect of those words on Guy Warren was remarkable. With a sharp intake of breath he stepped back, staring at Paul with frightened eyes.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded huskily.

"You know what I mean," answered Paul, and in his mind was recollection of that night when, as a self-confessed thief, he had fled from Greystones to save the honour and good name of Guy Warren.

But in the guilty mind of Warren was another picture—that of a private room in an hotel in Sidi-bel-Abbes, where, one evening, he had offered Sergeant-Major Bolke the sum of one thousand pounds to see that Paul Blake did not return from the desert alive when his company had marched out on active service.

And it was of this that he thought Paul was speaking.

But how had the boy found out about that vile compact? Had Bolke spoken? No, that was impossible!

"The night I left Greystones," the voice of Paul cut in on Warren's thoughts, "you didn't care a rap what happened to me. I might have been

caught and sent to prison for all you cared. But now you seem very anxious as to my welfare."

Guy Warren's gasp of relief was almost a sob. Paul did not know about the compact. That much was evident now.

"Don't be a fool!" said Warren shakily. "The night you cleared out of Greystones your life was in no danger. Now it is—it's in deadly danger. A fellow called Fraser is here with me. He was one of my party when we were captured by Ali bu Sadi. Tell all you know—answer all questions—and you'll be able to join us. I can promise you that. I swear it!"

"I'm not going to join you!" responded Paul steadily. "I shall tell Ali bu Sadi nothing!"

Haggard-faced, Guy Warren stared at him.

"D'you know what he'll do to you?" he whispered.

"I can guess!" answered Paul. Warren shuddered.

Then the curtains parted and two of Ali bu Sadi's massive negroes stepped into the ante-chamber.

"Our master wishes to see the Legionnaire!" said one gutturally.

Guy Warren nodded dumbly. His eyes were on Paul, and they remained fixed on the hangings, which dropped back into place as the boy passed through into the main tent in the grip of the negroes.

Thus he stood, plucking at livid lips with shaking fingers. Then suddenly he straightened up, turned, and quitted the ante-chamber almost at a run.

It was to the tent which he shared with Fraser that he dashed. Fraser, fair-haired, weak-chinned and languid, was lying at ease on his back on a pile of cushions, his hands clasped behind his head and a cigarette drooping elegantly from his lips.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, sitting up at sight of Warren. "What's the giddy rumpus? You look as though you've seen a ghost!"

"I've seen my cousin!" rapped Warren. "He's a Legionnaire, and that fat rascal's got him, and is going to torture him!"

"Good gad!" gasped Fraser.

By the light of the crude oil lamp Warren rapidly scribbled something on a sheet which he tore from the writing-pad. Then, folding the paper, he dropped on his knees by Fraser's side.

"Listen, Fraser!" he said, speaking rapidly. "I've been a rotter—a thousand times worse rotter than ever you've guessed. You followed me into this business of siding with the Arabs because you thought it a good rag. You're decent, at the bottom of you; I'm not. But to-night, when I saw the boy standing there, a soldier of France, I came up against realities—saw myself for the criminal fool that I am—"

"But, Warren, old bean—"

"Shut up! Fraser, on your honour, swear that if the boy is living you will get him out of the camp to-night. Get him out and give him this"—Warren thrust the folded scrap of paper into Fraser's hand. "Tell him to make what use of it he likes. Swear you will get him out, Fraser! Swear!"

(To release Paul from the merciless clutches of Ali bu Sadi is no mean task. And it is up to the weak-chinned Fraser to do it—if he will! You simply must read next week's stirring instalment!)

THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER BOX!

(Continued from page 24.)

trying to make his presence known, and he could not speak.

Bunter blinked at him in horrified astonishment for some moments. The eyes of the bound schoolboy turned on him, and his look was as eloquent as words could have been.

Billy Bunter would have felt flattered had he known how glad Wharton was to behold his fat face and glimmering spectacles.

Bunter's fat intellect did not, as a rule, work quickly. But even Bunter realised that this was a time for action. He blinked round him, picked up a large stone, and started on the window. Crash, crash, crash! In a few minutes the flimsy sashes were knocked in, the sacking dragged down, and Billy Bunter clambered in.

"I say, old chap—" he gasped. He stopped, and dragged the gag from Wharton's mouth. The captain of the Greyfriars Remove gasped for breath.

"I say, old fellow—" "Get me loose," gasped Wharton. "You've got a pocket-knife?" "Yes, old chap."

Bunter opened his pocket-knife and sawed at the cords. In a few minutes Harry Wharton was free.

"I say, old bean, who did this?" ejaculated Bunter.

"That villain Judson!" "Who's Judson?"

"Never mind now! Let's get out of this!"

"But what did they leave you here for, tied up like a turkey? Is it a jape, or what?" asked Bunter. "I say—"

"Let's get out," answered Harry. There was no way out by the door, and Harry Wharton scrambled out of the window. He gave a helping hand to Bunter to follow.

"How on earth did you get here, Bunter?" asked Wharton, when they were outside.

Bunter grinned. "I wasn't going to lose sight of you, old chap! You see, as I'm staying with you for Easter—"

"Oh!" "Rather lucky for you, what?"

grinned Bunter. "I turned down several rather pressing invitations, old chap, to come to you for Easter. I think it's lucky for you I did, if you ask me. What?"

Wharton smiled faintly. "I was jolly glad to see you, anyway," he answered. "You can come

for Easter if you like, old fat bean. Come on! We've got a long walk."

"I've got a taxi," said Bunter. "I'll get the man to fetch your luggage. He can bang in the door. Lean on my arm, old fellow!" added Bunter considerably.

Harry Wharton laughed. A considerable amount of leaning would have been required to obtain the support of Bunter's arm.

"That's all right. Let's get to the taxi," he said.

And they hurried up the lane to the road.

An astonished taximan helped to "bung" in the cottage door and carry the luggage to the taxi. And the engine having proved amenable at long last, Wharton and Bunter entered the taxi, and drove away for Wharton Lodge. Harry Wharton was looking rather pale and perturbed, but the fat face beside him was irradiated with satisfaction.

What had happened to Wharton was, no doubt, extremely uncomfortable and alarming for him. But Billy Bunter could not help regarding it as a real stroke of luck. Billy Bunter was safely landed for the Easter holidays, so that was all right. And as that was all right, everything, so far as Bunter could see, was all right!

THE END.

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