

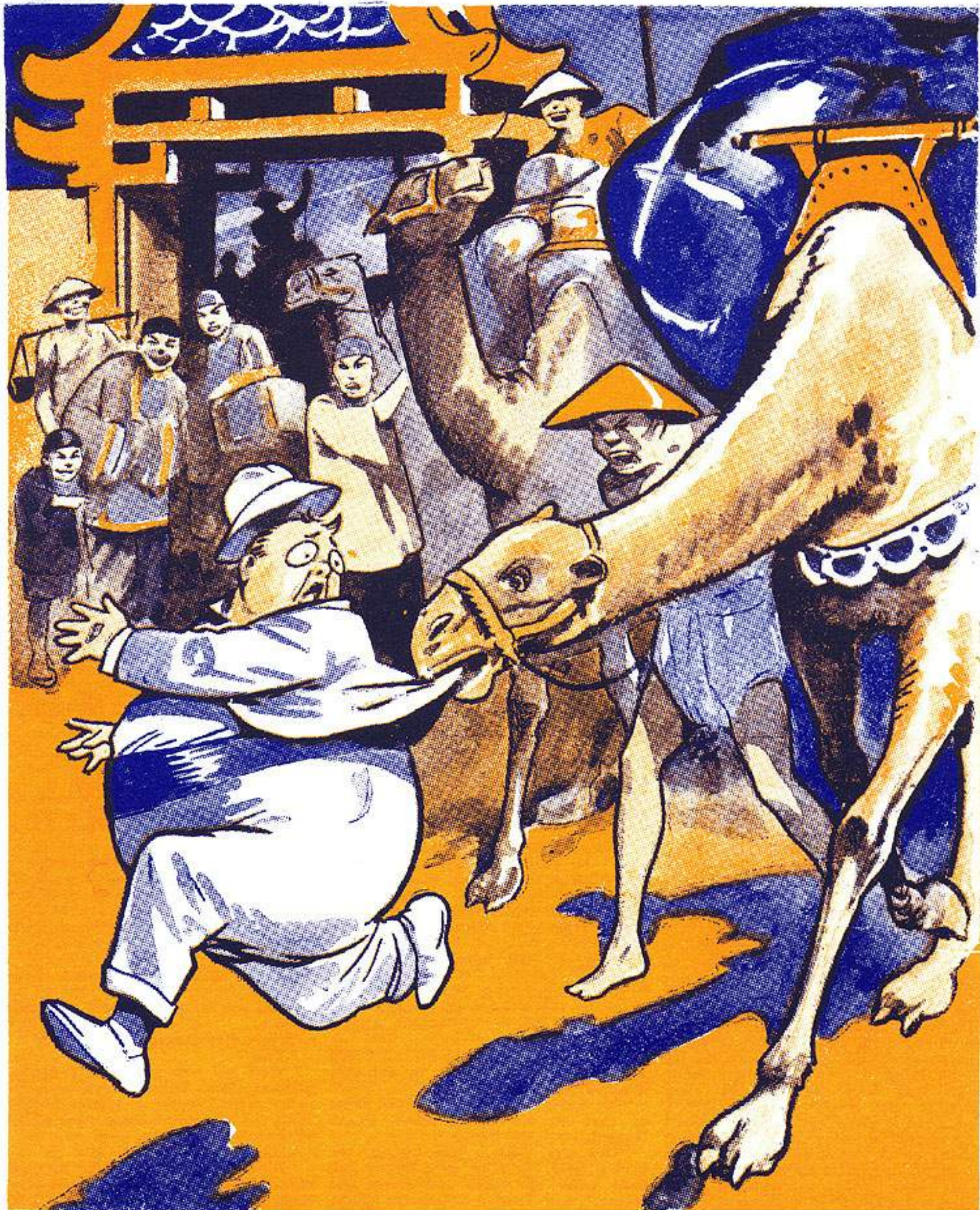
GREAT NEW
FOOTER SERIAL

“UP, THE ROVERS!”

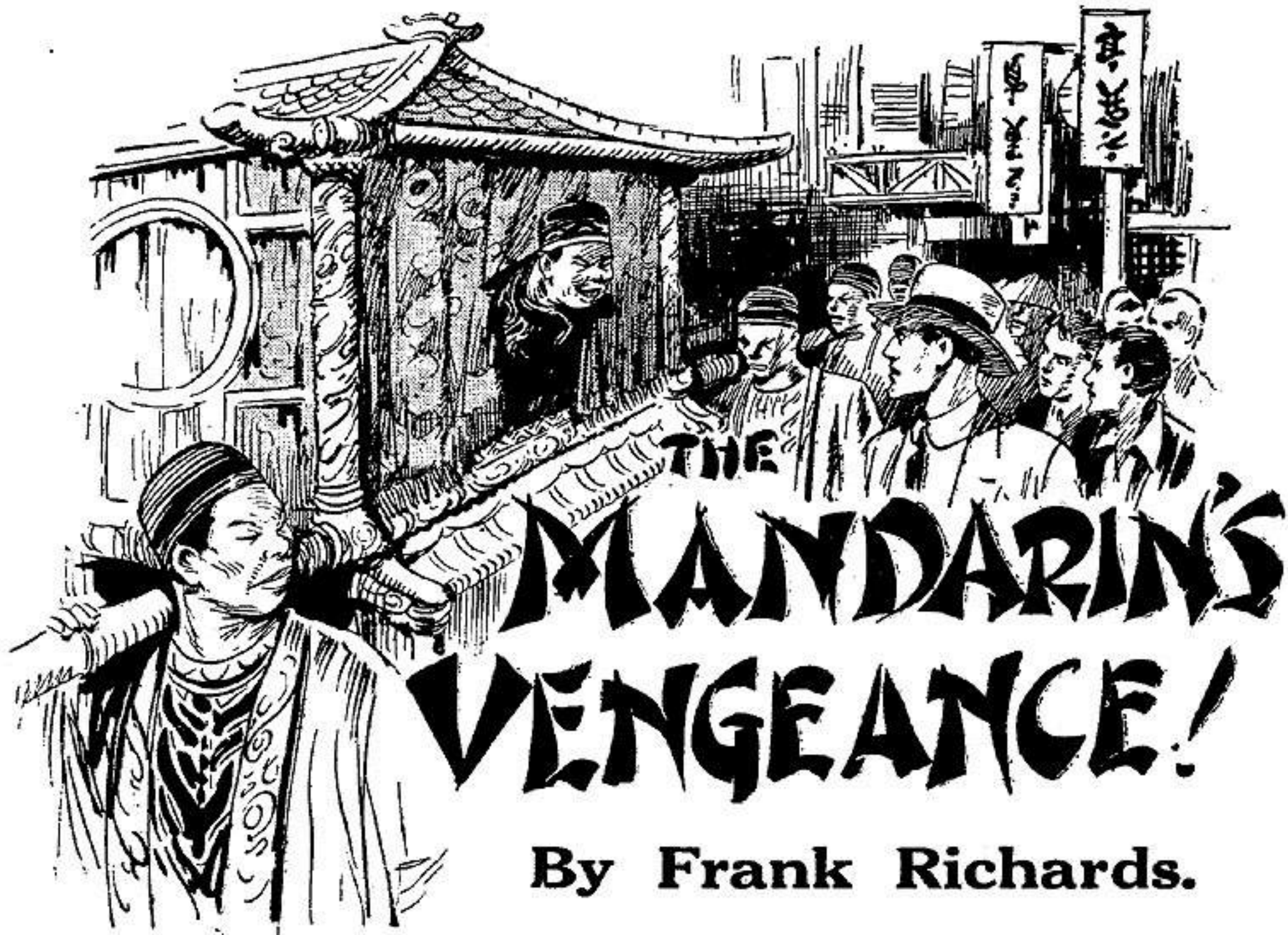
KICKS OFF
IN THIS ISSUE.

The MAGNET 2^D

EVERY
SATURDAY.



BILLY BUNTER BEATEN BY A NECK!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Going Up to Canton!

THE grub's good!" said Billy Bunter, breaking a long silence.

Bunter had been reflecting.

This, apparently, was the outcome of his reflections.

The hour was growing late; and Harry Wharton & Co. were growing sleepy. But they were not in a hurry to turn in. The strange new scenes about them still held their attention.

The huge Chinese houseboat floated slowly up the Canton river, under a spread of embroidered silken sails.

The far-off banks of the great river were lost in the night—unseen, save where a light twinkled from some Chinese village, or from some hong or go-down.

Hong Kong and the China Sea lay far behind the Greyfriars party—thirty or forty miles behind. But the city of Canton, where lay the home of Wun Lung, was still a greater distance ahead.

Gliding sampans and junks appeared and disappeared in the shadows of the night. Coloured lanterns tied to their masts and rigging glimmered through the darkness. And the eyes of the Greyfriars-juniors rested on every one as it appeared, and followed it till it disappeared. Once already since leaving Hong Kong, Mr. Wun Chung's houseboat had been attacked by river pirates; and Harry Wharton & Co. wondered if there was more to come.

A forest of coloured lanterns glimmered on the houseboat. Serving-men in highly-decorative Chinese garb came and went with soft-padding feet. Ferrers Locke sat in conversation with Mr. Wun Chung Lung, sneaking

Chinese, incomprehensible to the juniors. They sat on crimson silk cushions, stuffed with softest down, and watched the scene about them; silent, till Billy Bunter broke the silence with a remark on a subject that was, to Bunter, the most important in the universe.

"The grub's good!" he repeated. "That's all right!"

"If that's all right," said Bob Cherry gravely, "then everything is all right!"

"The all-rightfulness," murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, "is truly terrific."

"Of course, a fellow has to be careful," said Bunter. "I came jolly near eating some of their beastly snails."

"Snail plenty nicey!" murmured Wun Lung.

Bunter sniffed.

"Nice for a beastly heathen, I dare say!" he said. "I say, you fellows, you'd better be careful what you eat while we're in China. That stuff I thought was chicken at supper was really frogs! I found out just in time."

"Floggee velly nicey!" said Wun Lung.

Another sniff from Bunter.

"Well, the French eat frogs," said Harry Wharton. "So do the Americans."

"Well, I'm not going to," said Bunter; "and my opinion is that only a horrid beast would do it."

"My hat! Are you always as polite as that on a visit?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Oh, rats! As I was saying, the grub's good, so long as a fellow can steer clear of snails and frogs and things," said Bunter. "On the whole, I'm satisfied with the grub."

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors

through his big spectacles, as he made this statement. Apparently he expected it to cause general relief and satisfaction.

But the question of grub did not loom so large in the minds of the Famous Five as it did in Bunter's. They did not seem to care much whether Bunter was satisfied with the grub, or whether he was not satisfied. Indeed, they did not care much about Bunter or his views at all; though he was, in his own fat opinion at least, the only fellow on board the houseboat who really mattered.

"But grub isn't everything!" added Bunter.

"What?"

Harry Wharton & Co. sat up and took notice at that statement.

It was a surprising one from William George Bunter.

Certainly, hitherto, the chums of Greyfriars had believed that Bunter considered that grub was everything, and a little more, and a few over!

"Grub not everything!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"No!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Did you think it was?" demanded Bunter.

"No. But I thought you did!"

"Yah!"

"Wait till you get hungry again!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You've just eaten seven suppers, one after another. Wait till you get hungry again—about an hour—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! As I was saying, grub's not everything. I'm sleepy. Where am I going to sleep?"

The interior Bunter being crammed

—YARN OF SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURE!

to capacity, the fat junior was naturally thinking of sleep, which came second in Bunter's estimation of the joys of life. Talking came third.

"So far as I can see," went on Bunter, "there's no sleeping accommodation on this jigger. I never thought about that at first. I was thinking about the grub—"

"Go on thinking about it, and shut up!" suggested Bob.

"I'm ready to go to bed. Where's the bed? If you fellows think I'm going to sit up all night, you're jolly well mistaken. I've come out to China with you," continued Bunter, with a thrill of indignation in his fat voice, "to look after you and protect you. I've done it! The least you can do is to see that I have common comforts. That's the very least, after all I've done for you! If you're thinking that I'm going to sit up—"

"My dear old oyster, we're not thinking about you at all," said Bob Cherry affably.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Forgot your existence, till you began to make a row with your chin," said Johnny Bull. "Keep it quiet, old fat bean, and let's forget your existence again."

"The forgetfulness would be an esteemed boon and blessing!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter snorted with indignation.

As a matter of fact, gorgeous and magnificent as Mr. Wun's houseboat was, sleeping accommodation seemed to have been overlooked when it was designed. There were no cabins, no state-rooms — no separate rooms at all, in fact, no bedsteads or beds or bunks. Now that the attention of the other fellows was called to the subject, they wondered a little.

On the principle that when in Rome, one does as Rome does, the Greyfriars fellows were prepared to fall in with Chinese customs so long as they were in China. But they wondered what the custom was, in this case.

Bunter was indignant. His comfort was threatened. So was the other fellows' comfort, for that matter; but that was a trifle light as air to William George Bunter. He did not give that trifle a thought. His thoughts were concentrated on his fat self.

"Where do we snooze, Wun Lung?" asked Harry Wharton.

Wun Lung grinned.

"Allee light!" he said. "Plenty loom along boat! Sleepes anywhere likee."

"What about a bed-room?" demanded Bunter.

"No bedloom along boat."

"What about a bed?"

"No beddee."

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter. He gave the Famous Five a reproachful blink. "This is the sort of thing you've landed me in, you rotters."

"Allee piecee velly nicey!" said Wun Lung.

"Yah!"

Ferrers Locke came across to the group of juniors.

"Time you boys turned in," he said. "You may sleep soundly; watch will be kept in case any more river pirates turn up."

"But where are we to sleep?" hooted Bunter. "This blessed heathen says there are no bed-rooms or beds or anything."

"There never are, on a Chinese houseboat," said Locke, with a smile.

"There is one large room, and one large deck; and at night you spread your quilt wherever you like. If it rains, there is shelter; if it is fine, it is very pleasant to sleep on deck. The houseboys will bring you any number of quilts. I think you will find yourselves quite comfortable—especially as it is for only one night."

Bunter opened his mouth—and closed it again. There was a look in the Baker Street detective's eye that frequently closed Bunter's mouth when he was going to open it very wide.

"Right as rain, sir!" said Bob Cherry cheerily.

"The rightfulness of the esteemed rain is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We'll be all right, sir," said Harry.

"Pleasant slumbers!" said Mr. Locke, with a kindly nod, as he left the juniors. Bunter did not speak till he was gone. Then he spoke with considerable emphasis.

"If Locke thinks I'm going to stand this sort of thing—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"If they can't find a fellow a decent bunk to sleep in—"

"Dry up!"

"It's all very well for you fellows! You're used to roughing it in your humble homes. But a fellow brought up at Bunter Court feels it."

"Oh crikey!"

"And I can jolly well tell you," hooted Bunter, "that if I don't have a

There was a deep and steady breathing round him.

Soft down quilts, piled on the lacquered deck, formed the beds of the juniors; cushions of the softest down were under their dreaming heads. The quilts glowed and blazed with colour under the glimmer of the many lanterns.

All over the wide, long deck, there seemed to be sleepers, rolled in gorgeous quilts. A look-out man in the bow was nodding; two or three men aft were awake, but drowsy. Once or twice, a soft, padding footstep was faintly heard, as someone moved quietly about the glimmering deck.

It was a quiet, and peaceful scene. But Wharton had been dreaming of the attack of the river pirates, and he remembered how peaceful the houseboat had seemed on the waters of the Canton river, till that sudden attack had come rushing out of the shadows.

He was feeling uneasy, he hardly knew why. His dream had been vivid, picturing the savage chief of the river-pirates who had been shot down by Ferrers Locke, with his great, two-handed sword in his yellow hands. Perhaps that was the cause. At all events, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, having opened his eyes, did not feel disposed to close them again. He lay wakeful for some minutes, and then lifted his head and glanced round him at the quiet, slumberous scene.

Soft, padding feet, almost soundless, were moving.

Wharton glanced at the man who moved on the deck, in the glimmer of light from the coloured lanterns, carelessly.

On board the houseboat Mr. Wun's attendants seemed innumerable, and to Western eyes, one Chinaman was very much like another. The man who was moving across his line of vision was of squat figure, in native Chinese garb, and Wharton took it for

granted that he was one of Mr. Wun's many servants.

The man was moving slowly, almost noiselessly, and glancing at the quilt-covered sleepers on the deck.

Harry Wharton gave a sudden start. There was nothing in the man's looks, or in his actions, to excite suspicion; and it was clear, too, that he was seen by some of the men who were awake on the houseboat, and that they saw nothing suspicious about him.

But a glimmer of wet on the lacquered deck behind the man had caught Harry Wharton's eyes.

No man belonging to the houseboat could have had his shoes wet, leaving a trail of water behind him as he moved.

The man had come from the river!

Wharton's heart beat fast.

The man was wet—wet from the river! It was easy enough for a swimmer to reach the slowly gliding houseboat, and drag himself over the low side, in some shadowed spot where the lantern-light did not fall.

The Chinese boatmen who were keeping watch were at a respectful distance from Mr. Wun's guests. At that distance they might very easily take a stranger for one of the numerous servants on the boat if they had not seen him draw himself from the water.

Wharton, with his heart beating fast, lay still, watching the man. He was sure, or almost sure, that the man was a stranger, an intruder, who had come from the river in the shadows. Yet he

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THE WAY INTO CHINA LIES STRAIGHT AHEAD FOR THE GREYFRIARS ADVENTURERS! BUT

all along the route await

TONG TERRORS | PIRATES ORIENTAL MYSTERIES | DEATH!

decent bed to sleep in, I'm chucking up this party, and going back."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob Cherry heartily. "Let's hope there won't be any beds in Canton. Let's hope there aren't any beds in China at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, snorting. Bob Cherry picked up a cushion and took aim; but he dropped the cushion again, remembering that Mr. Wun's Chinese houseboat was not the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

The Owl of the Remove disappeared, seeking cosy quarters under shelter, while the Famous Five remained on deck, preferring to camp there under the shining stars. The huge boat glided on, slow and leisurely, almost at a snail's pace, and from somewhere the sweet strains of a lute tinkled softly through the night, to lull the slumberers. And from somewhere else came a deep, rumbling, resonant snore. Bunter, whether he was satisfied with his sleeping quarters or not, was fast asleep, and signifying the same in the usual way.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Attack in the Night!

HARRY WHARTON'S eyes opened.

All was silent and still.

Faintly he could hear the swish of water along the heavy hull of the Chinese houseboat, slowly moving.

hesitated to give an alarm, which might prove to be a mistake, after all.

It could hardly mean another attack of the river-pirates. River-pirates would come in a bunch, sword in hand.

If the man did not belong to the houseboat, more likely he was some night-prowler, looking for a chance to pilfer, on a houseboat belonging to a rich merchant of Canton.

And then, as Wharton watched him, something familiar about the man, about his squat figure, dawned on the junior. He had seen that thickset, squat figure before somewhere.

He could not see the man's face, which was turned from him. But the feeling that he had seen the man before grew on him.

The squat Chinaman ceased to move. He was standing with his eyes fixed on one of the sleepers on the deck. And now his face was turned a little more towards Wharton, and a glimmer from a coloured lantern that swung on the mast fell on it.

Wharton caught his breath.

He knew the man now! It was the squat Chinaman who had watched Harry Wharton & Co. at Macao a few days before; who had attacked them in the Portuguese hotel in that city. It was Kang, the agent of the Mandarin Tang Wang, a member of the Red Dragon tong—the secret society who were ruthless enemies of Mr. Wun and Wun Lung.

Wharton understood now.

The river-pirates who had attacked the houseboat had been merely ruffians in search of plunder. But the agent of the mandarin had crept on the houseboat with one single, deadly purpose—the slaying of the Canton merchant's son!

Across half the world, from far-off England to the Flowery Land, the agents of the mandarin had dogged the Greyfriars party, and attack after attack on Wun Lung had been defeated. Now, almost on the threshold of his home, the hand of the mandarin was reaching out to him again, and death hung over the Chinese junior of Greyfriars as he slept.

For some seconds Wharton was almost dazed by the certainty of it—the knowledge that a ruthless assassin was hovering over the sleeping junior, unknown to anyone on board excepting himself. The man stood very still, his slanting eyes gleaming, his hand hidden in his loose garments, obviously grasping a hidden weapon. His purpose was unmistakable. The chums of Greyfriars were now in a land where life is cheap.

There was a glimmer of drawn steel.

At the same moment Harry Wharton leapt up, and, with the same movement, flung himself at the Chinaman.

He stumbled over Wun Lung, and there was an exclamation from the Chinese junior as he awakened. But he reached the squat Chinaman, and before Kang knew what was coming, he struck with all his strength, catching the man under the jaw.

A knife clanged on the deck, and Kang staggered helplessly away, staggering a couple of yards before he fell heavily.

Crash!

"Wake up!" shouted Wharton.

"Help!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What the thump—"

"Whattae mattee?"

The Greyfriars fellows wore on their feet at once, all of them exclaiming together.

Kang scrambled to his feet.

Wharton hurriedly clamped his foot

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on the knife the villain had dropped. The squat Chinaman crouched like a wild beast, glaring at him. But there was a rush of feet along the deck, and the tong-man, who had evidently been about to spring at Wharton like a tiger, changed his intention and leaped to the side.

Voices shouted in startled Chinese. A deeper voice in English called—the voice of Ferrers Locke:

"Wharton! What—" The Baker Street detective was at his side, an automatic in his hand.

"The Chinaman!" gasped Wharton. "The man who attacked us at Macao—Kang—the man from Tang Wang—"

Splash!

Barely escaping several grasping hands, the squat Chinaman threw himself over into the river. Ferrers Locke rushed to the side.

Wharton's words, and the glittering knife on the deck, told him all that he needed to know. With a steady hand, and a glint in his eyes, the Baker Street detective fired after the man who fled.

He had a glimpse of a yellow face, of black, rolling eyes, in the dusky water as he pulled trigger. There came back a cry—and the yellow face vanished.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wun Lung At Home!

"CANTON!"

"Looks jolly!"

Bright sunshine streamed down on the great river and the great city.

Harry Wharton & Co., in a group on the deck of the houseboat, watched the city of Canton as they drew nearer.

Low-built houses stretching far; here and there a tall square building higher than the rest; buildings which the juniors later on discovered to be pawnshops!

Boats, sampans, junks, all sorts of craft, moored along the banks, moored to one another, stretching far out into midstream—a town on the water adjoining the city on the land; for nearly every craft was inhabited by a numerous Chinese family.

Streets, narrow and noisy, shaded from the sun by a screening of bamboos or matting, crowded with jostling Chinese, continually getting in one another's way, but generally with the greatest good humour.

Shops, with strange signs in strange colours, and noise! Noise, as the juniors had already learned, was the department in which the Chinese excelled.

From somewhere came the roar of fire-crackers. It might have meant a wedding, or a funeral, or just an exuberant Chinese having a good time. Every day in the year, in China, is rather like the Fifth of November in England.

Wun Lung's almond eyes were dancing. Every sight and sound was a delight to the Chinese junior of Greyfriars, who was home at last.

"You fellee likee?" he asked. "You fellee likee plenty nicey Chinese citee? Yes?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton.

"Topping!" said Johnny Bull.

"The topfulness is terrific!" assured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, there's a frightful row going on!" remarked Billy Bunter. "I can't stand this awful row!"

"Leave off talking, old fat bean, and there won't be half so much!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Yah! Looks a slovenly sort of place, doesn't it?" said Billy Bunter. "Pretty slummy, what?"

"Buntee no likee?" asked Wun Lung.

"Can't say I think much of the place. Still, I suppose one mustn't expect too much of blinking heathens!" remarked Bunter, with his usual polished politeness.

"Shut up, you fat idiot!" said Bob.

"Kick him, somebody!" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, you fellows! My hat! Of all the benighted heathens!" said Bunter. "Look at the wheelbarrow! He, he, he!"

A coolie was wheeling a barrow along a path by the river; and to English eyes it was an odd enough sight. In a Chinese wheelbarrow the wheel is in the centre, taking the weight of the barrow; it is a large wheel, turning in a slit cut in the bottom of the barrow for the purpose.

The juniors glanced at it as the grinning Owl of the Remove pointed it out. One man was wheeling the barrow. Two men sat on it, on one side of the big wheel; on the other side of the wheel baggage was stacked. Travelling by wheelbarrow is a common mode of locomotion in China.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "They call that weird thing a wheelbarrow, I suppose. Benighted heathens!"

The juniors smiled, for the contrivance was odd enough to their eyes; but Johnny Bull gave a very thoughtful nod.

"These Chinese know something," he remarked. "That barrow is centuries ahead of an English wheelbarrow."

"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Look at it!" said Johnny Bull. "The weight falls on the wheel, instead of on the man pushing it. That's the right principle. I'll bet that barrow-man can take ten times the load a barrow-man at home could take, and with less trouble."

"Ole Johnny plenty clevee!" said Wun Lung. "Plenty all light!"

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Right as rain!" he said. "A wheelbarrow at home couldn't carry two men and their luggage; but that fellow is wheeling them along as if they amounted to nothing."

"Sometimes cally sixee, seven people," said Wun Lung.

Bunter snorted.

Everything that was strange to Bunter's eyes was inferior to everything to which he was accustomed. He was not likely to admit that anything in the East was ahead of anything in the West.

"Are we landing at the wharf, Wun Lung?" asked Harry.

"No. We goey along canal."

Mr. Wun Chung Lung, and many of his gorgeous attendants, had already left the houseboat. No doubt Mr. Wun was already at his house, preparing a welcome for his distinguished guests.

Instead of approaching the crowded wharves, the houseboat was poled by innumerable hands into a narrow canal, which apparently led to the residence of Mr. Wun.

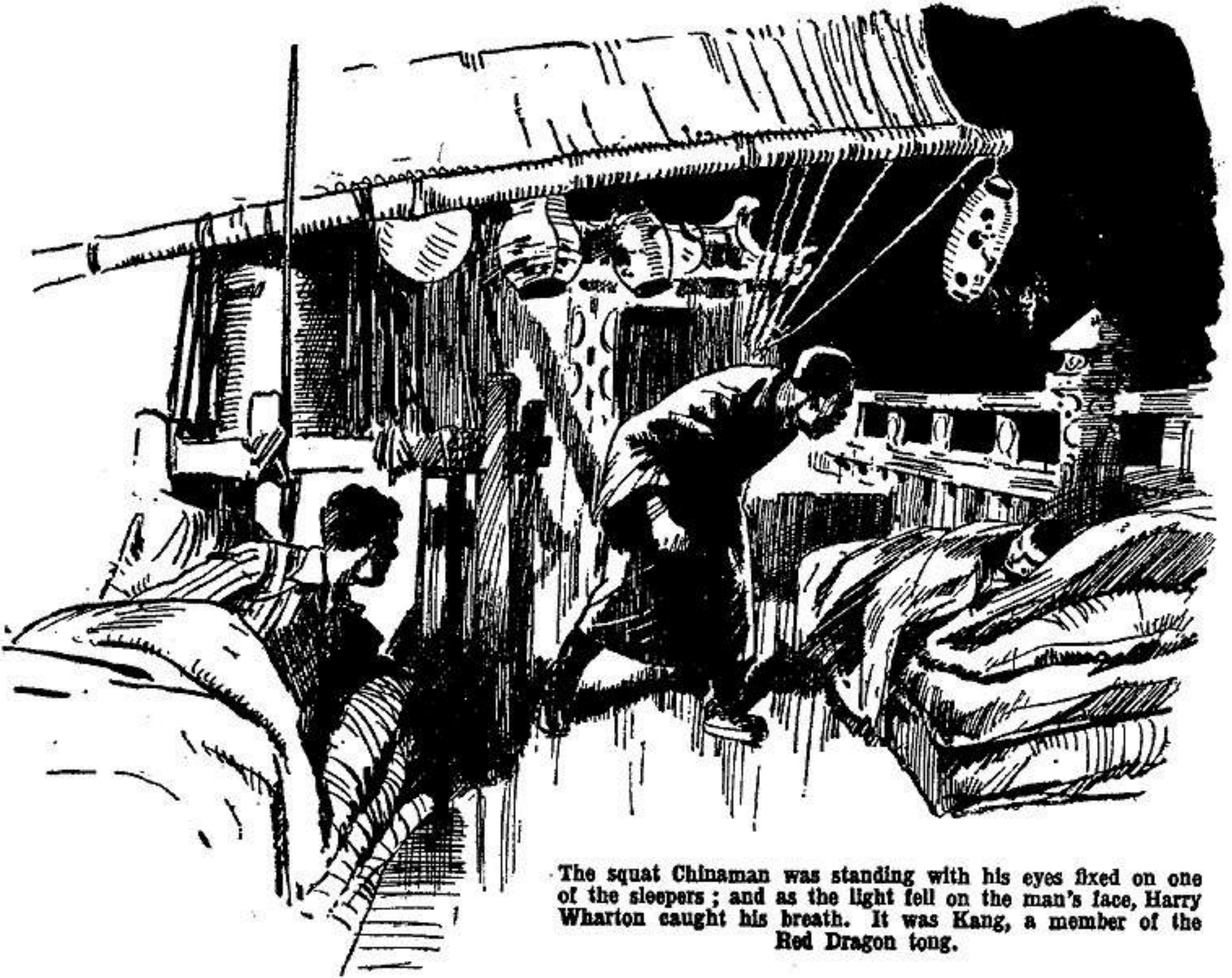
The swarming river was left behind.

After threading the canal for a considerable distance, the houseboat was poled through a water-gate set in a high wall.

Behind it, after it had passed in, the water-gate was closed.

The houseboat poled on to the landing-place, in the gardens that surrounded Mr. Wun's house.

The Greyfriars fellows looked about them with eager eyes. Wide gardens.



The squat Chinaman was standing with his eyes fixed on one of the sleepers; and as the light fell on the man's face, Harry Wharton caught his breath. It was Kang, a member of the Red Dragon tong.

brilliant with flowers, dotted with pagodas, summerhouses, lakes, streams, artificial cascades, surrounded them. It was a scene of gorgeous beauty.

Across the gardens they could see the house of Mr. Wun, which looked rather like a collection of houses joined together by courtyards and passages. The roofs of the different sections were mostly on different levels; and every roof had its curled-up edge, and glowed with colour in the bright sunshine.

Here and there an upper room rose above the rest; but the buildings were almost all on one story. The place looked as if a regiment could have found plenty of accommodation within its walls. For Mr. Wun was one of the richest merchants in Canton, the city of rich merchants; and he "did himself" as magnificently as any girdle-wearing noble of the Manchu days.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "You never let on at Greyfriars that you lived in a giddy place like this, Wun Lung."

The Chinese junior smiled. "Not so bad!" admitted Bunter, with a critical blink through his big spectacles. "Rather reminds me of Bunter Court."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The houseboat was moored, and the Greyfriars party stepped ashore, with Ferrers Locke. They were met by a gentleman in enormous horn-rimmed glasses, a black skull-cap, and a black silk robe, whose yellow face beamed with respectful cordiality.

This gentleman shook hands with Ferrers Locke—from which the juniors guessed that he had had a European training; for the Chinese in his natural state does not shake hands.

"Who's that johnny, Wun Lung?" asked Bob.

"That johnny So Fat" answered the Chinese schoolboy.

"So Fat?" repeated Bob. "He doesn't look very fat. Rather on the thin side, I should say."

Wun Lung grinned. "Namee So Fat!" he explained.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter. "Mean to say that So Fat is a Chinese name! He, he, he!"

"Velly good namee along China," answered Wun Lung.

"He, he, he!" "Cut the cackle, you fat chump!" said Bob.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter, greatly taken by the name of the gentleman in black silk. "He, he, he! So Fat! He, he, he!"

It was rather difficult for Harry Wharton & Co. not to smile. Such a name as "So Fat" really was rather droll to their ears.

"Him scetaly belong fathee," said Wun Lung. "Plenty good scetaly; speakee English all samee English-man."

Mr. So Fat was speaking to Ferrers Locke in Chinese. But when he addressed the juniors, in their turn, he broke into eloquent English, which rather reminded them of the language as spoken by Hurree Singh.

"Mr. Wun make request I meet you and take you along house," said Mr. So Fat gracefully. "Top of an afternoon to you!"

This was, evidently, English; but Harry Wharton & Co. were a little puzzled by the top of an afternoon. But they worked it out that Mr. So Fat

must have heard the expression "top of the morning" during his European education, and was innocently suiting it to the time of day.

"Mr. Wun wait to greet you in the poor hovel his house," went on the secretary to Mr. Wun Chung Lung. "His heart will expand with delight if you will condescend to walk with your sweet-smelling footsteps into his dismal and miserable abode."

This was Chinese politeness.

"Will you stoop to accompany this humble person, O born-many-years-before-me?" pursued Mr. So Fat.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

As Mr. So Fat was more than twice the age of any fellow there, that Chinese form of courtesy had its droll side to the juniors. A Chinese cannot compliment a visitor more than by attributing to him a venerable age.

Bunter's chuckle was quite out of place. Chinese politeness is, perhaps, a little overwhelming; but there are many European customs equally absurd. A Spanish gentleman will tell a visitor that his house and all it contains are at his absolute disposal; but he would be very much surprised if the visitor took him seriously and asked for the title-deeds. An Englishman will sometimes sign himself, "Your obedient servant"; but he would be astonished at being treated as one. The Chinese gentleman carries the same game to a further extent, representing himself as a miserable worm crawling at the august and venerable feet of his visitor; but the worm would certainly turn if trodden upon.

Mr. So Fat glanced at Bunter, apparently surprised by his fat chuckle. Bob Cherry bestowed a surreptitious kick on the Owl of the Remove, which changed Bunter's chuckle into a sudden yelp.

"How well you speak English, Mr. So!" said Harry Wharton, to draw the secretary's attention off Bunter and his bad manners.

Mr. So beamed.

"You think so?" he exclaimed. "Yes. In your country, sir, I consumed large quantities of midnight oil in abstruse study, and it is true I speak this language pure and undefiled. I have employed considerable thought in this department. Also, I have had the advantage of commingling hugely in British association. This has given final glittering polish to my English speech."

Mr. So was evidently proud of his English.

"But if you will have the overwhelming condescension to dog my wretched footsteps, I will indicate way to house," he added.

"Come!" said Ferrers Locke.

And the Greyfriars fellows followed the bowing, smiling secretary. It was some distance to the house, by paths brilliant with flowers, or shaded by beautiful shrubberies. They arrived at the grand entrance at last; the house had many entrances; but it was evidently the grand entrance to which Mr. So Fat led these distinguished visitors.

Before the entrance stood the devil-screen.

It was a huge and magnificent erection, with three great panels of wrought copper covered with strange devices.

To enter the house it was necessary to walk round the end of the huge

screen. Devils—in China—always follow straight lines, and never think of going round the end of a screen. So that devil-screen guarded safely the house of Mr. Wun; devils cannot turn corners like human beings.

As an additional precaution against these troublesome creatures, a large lean cat was chained by the screen. Cats keep off devils—in China—almost as effectively as the screen itself.

The cat was howling rather dismally, trying to get its head out of the collar. Probably it did not realise what a useful purpose it was serving.

The juniors had already noticed that cats were chained up in China, and they could not help thinking it a cruel custom. Yet a moment's reflection told them that there must have been as many dogs chained up in Europe as cats in China. It was wise to keep an open mind when observing the manners and customs of a foreign country.

Having walked round the devil-screen, the Greyfriars party entered the house by the great doorway with the doorkeeper's room beside it, across two wide, low halls to the ko-tang, the guest-room.

Ordinary guests would have penetrated no farther than the ko-tang; but his son's friends were persons whom Mr. Wun delighted to honour; so they were conducted farther, into more sacred regions.

So Fat had now received the aid of many gorgeously-dressed servants and officials of the household, in bowing the visitors in. They backed and bowed, and bowed and backed, with grave, respectful faces. The juniors could not help feeling that the scene was more like a comic opera than real life; but they were careful to keep serious, for

it was all very serious indeed to Mr. Wun and his many myrmidons.

Through files of backing and bowing figures in gorgeous garb the juniors passed through a wide doorway at the end of the ko-tang, into a courtyard decorated with palms in tubs, and strange dwarf trees in pots. Across this wide court, So Fat & Company bowed them, through another doorway, into a hall which was evidently a very special apartment, where guests of honour alone had the entree.

To their eyes the extensive apartment seemed rather bare, the furniture being very sparse, the decorations little more than two or three tall jars and a couple of pictures. Each of the jars, had they known it, was more than five hundred years old, and of priceless value. Crammed with rose-leaves, they spread a pleasant scent through the room.

Here Mr. Wun awaited them.

Behind Mr. Wun, at a distance, were musicians, with drums, bells, gongs, and strange instruments the juniors knew nothing of. From this cheery band burst forth a musical welcome—a roar of sound that was absolutely deafening to ears unaccustomed to Chinese "music."

From outside, roaring fire-crackers joined in the welcome; an explosion of crackers that made the noisiest Fifth of November at home seem like a murmuring whisper.

The house seemed to rock to the din.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, longing to stop his ears, but restrained by politeness. "This is giving us musical honours with a giddy vengeance."

Possibly Mr. Wun, thoroughly Chinese as he was, and was proud to be, had some perception that "foreign devils" did not appreciate these honourable attentions so much as natives to the manner born. The crackers ceased to roar, the music ceased to howl and groan; and there was blessed silence.

Then Mr. Wun addressed his guests.

In flowery language he crawled at their feet and basked in the august sunshine of their condescending presence.

After which they were seated on low seats, and innumerable attendants brought in refreshments.

Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big glasses. This was a part of the performance that Bunter could understand and appreciate.

True, he had to be on his guard against such delightful things as snails and frogs. But there was no doubt that the grub was good. There was still less doubt that there was plenty of it.

Mr. Wun pressed his guests to eat—and they ate; but he evidently desired them to eat too much. Harry Wharton & Co. did their best; but they had to draw a line somewhere. Bunter was the fellow who, for once, upheld the honour of the party. He ate at least as much as all the other fellows put together; and when they could do no more Bunter was still going strong.

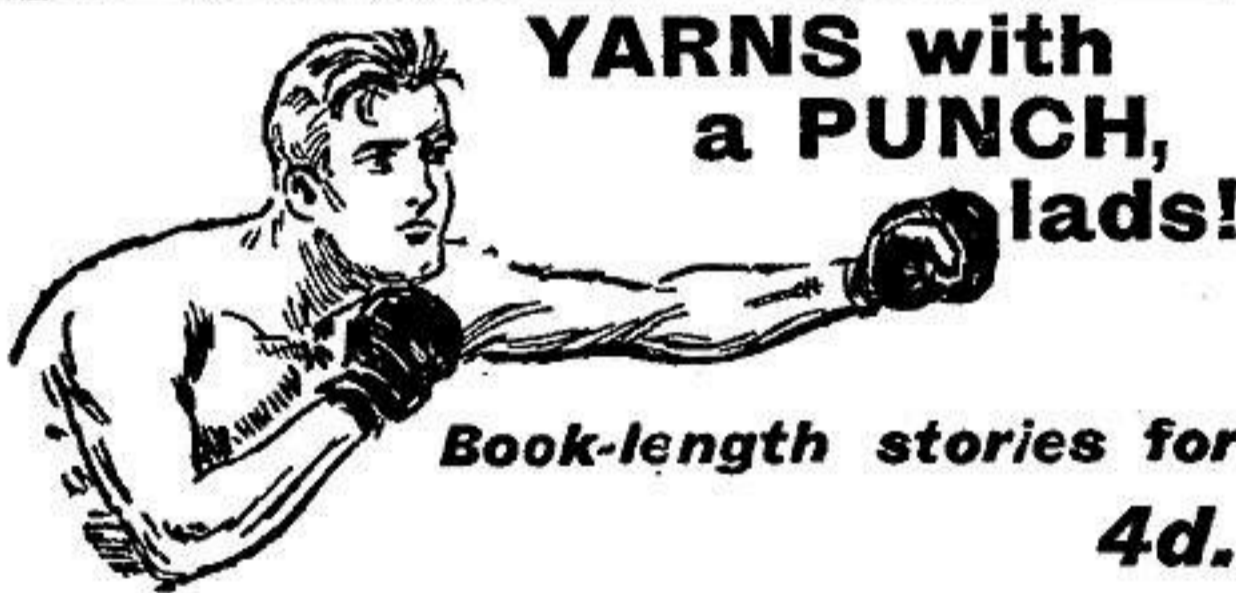
Mr. Wun smiled on him genially, plainly pleased. A Chinese guest must eat much, in compliment to his host. Bunter was the fellow to pay a host in China the very highest compliment in that line.

Where Bunter put it all puzzled his companions, and perhaps puzzled Mr. Wun. But there was no doubt that Mr. Wun was delighted.

He fairly beamed on Bunter.

The glance of his slanting eyes was almost affectionate.

Bowl after bowl of varied foods was pressed on William George Bunter;



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and his answers were seldom in the negative.

His friends began to entertain serious fears that he would burst.

He showed signs of exertion. His fat face was red; perspiration trickled down his podgy face; he grunted considerably, and gurgled a little.

But these sounds, horrid enough at a European table, were music to the ears of his host. For it is a Chinese custom to make noises in order to indicate how much one enjoys a meal.

Bunter, undoubtedly, impressed Mr. Wun as the best-bred member. For the others made no noise at all in eating; and Bunter made enough for the whole party.

Every grunt, every gurgle, brought a smile to Mr. Wun's face, and a fresh order to the servitors to help Bunter.

But everything comes to an end at last; and Bunter's gargantuan meal ended. There came a time when even Billy Bunter had no more room for a single mouthful.

Then tiny cups of boiling hot tea completed the meal, and the ceremony was over; and all the members of the party—excepting Bunter—hoped that Mr. Wun's hospitality on subsequent occasions would be on a rather more limited scale.

Bunter had a feeling that he had landed in the seventh heaven. His opinion of the Chinese rose very considerably. People who fed a fellow like this might be benighted heathens, but there was a lot to be said for them. And Billy Bunter, at least, would have been satisfied never to see Greyfriars again, but to settle down among the fleshpots for ever. When Bunter rolled out with the others to look at the

gardens under the sunset, he moved with some difficulty; but on his fat face there was an expression of dreamy happiness.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Saw!

BILLY BUNTER was not asleep.

He was in a happy state between sleeping and waking.

Life seemed good to Bunter that golden afternoon. He had enjoyed such a feed as he had often dreamed of, but seldom eaten. It was true that he found it rather heavy to carry out with him. But it had been gorgeous—great!

Harry Wharton & Co., conducted by Wun Lung and Mr. So Fat, were exploring the vast gardens of the Canton merchant's mansion, with their endless walks, and flower-beds, and shady shrubberies, and rockeries, and cascades, and pools, and hanging baskets of mosses, and singing birds in gilded cages. Bunter, however, had soon tired of walking. And he had found a cosy corner for a rest.

There was an old stone seat, almost hidden from sight by oleanders and wistaria, and flowering shrubs; and Bunter rooted it out, sat down there, and gave himself up to happy repose. The other fellows walked on, and were lost to sound and sight; but they were going to pick Bunter up on their way back, after exploring the gardens.

Bunter leaned back, his eyes half closed behind his big spectacles, and rested after his exertions in the feast-hall.

Through the oleanders came red glimmers of the setting sun, sinking

beyond the walls of Canton, over the distant hills of Yun-nan. Save for the twittering of birds, and the occasional soft note from a frog among the pools, all was silent.

Bunter, in a happy dreamy state, was thinking of nothing in particular. Vaguely, but pleasantly, he reviewed in his fat mind the many delicious things he had eaten.

When there came a soft rustle in the thickets round him, Bunter did not heed.

Through an opening in the shrubberies, he had a glimpse of blue, as someone moved there.

He concluded that it was one of the blue-clad gardeners who seemed innumerable in the gardens of Mr. Wun Chung Lung.

He did not stir.

He only hoped that the man would not disturb him. Bunter did not want to move. He did not want to speak. Enjoyable as that tremendous feed had been, it was telling a little on Bunter. He felt that he did not want to move for a very long time.

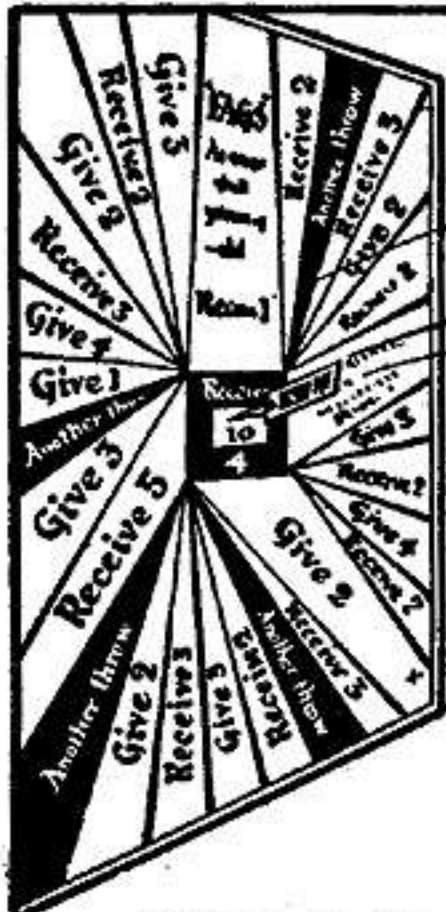
The man in the garb of blue cotton could not have observed Bunter there. He was quite hidden from sight in that shady nook, and no one could have seen him without coming close up to the seat.

The man had backed into the shrubbery where it bordered the path, at a little distance from Bunter, the seat being well back from the path with thick growths between.

His back was towards Bunter, and his back did not move. It remained as immovable as if it were a fixed part of the surroundings.

It penetrated into Bunter's fat mind at last, that the man was crouching

(Continued on next page.)



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there, hidden from view, but watching the path. Obviously he had no suspicion whatever that anyone was behind him in the hidden nook.

Bunter sat up a little.

A vague feeling of alarm banished the fat and happy satisfaction which had hitherto reigned in his podgy breast.

Long minutes had passed; and the Chinaman in blue was still crouching there, motionless, noiseless, hidden from all eyes but Bunter's. Billy Bunter peered at him with growing uneasiness.

If he was one of Mr. Wun Chung Lung's gardeners, what the dickens was he up to? If he was not, who and what was he?

Bunter's eyes were wide open behind his big spectacles now.

It was borne in upon his mind that the crouching, stealthy man in the shrubbery was not one of Mr. Wun's numerous retainers, but that he was there for mischief. By that path, the Greyfriars party would presently be coming back towards the house. With them would be Wun Lung, whose life was sought by the Red Dragon tong. Bunter remembered the incident on the houseboat the night before—the surreptitious visit of Kang.

He caught his breath suddenly as he remembered. For the figure crouching only a few yards from him was thickset and squat; and Bunter realised that the man was Kang himself. The squat Chinaman had not perished under Ferrers Locke's fire in the waters of the Che-kiang.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bunter silently.

Happy satisfaction was gone now, for good. That enjoyable feast faded from Billy Bunter's mind. Within nine or ten feet of him was a man who, if he learned that Bunter's eyes were upon him, would kill the fat junior with as little compunction as if he had been a mosquito. A shudder ran through William George Bunter from head to foot.

He dared not move.

One movement might have alarmed the squat Chinaman, and drawn the glare of those fierce slanting eyes on Bunter. The Owl of the Remove sat frozen on the stone seat.

Bunter had been in no hurry for his friends to return. Now he longed to hear the sound of their footsteps and voices. In the silent, spacious garden, he seemed to be alone in a wilderness with the ferocious tong man. And yet he realised that, when the juniors came back along the path, Kang was ready for them—watching and ready. What was going to happen then?

The squat, blue-clad figure stirred. In a red glimmer of the sun that came through the leaves, there was a gleam of bare steel. A knife was in the hand of the man who crouched.

Bunter felt his fat heart sicken within him. Kang's yellow hand was thrown back behind his head, the knife in it; evidently in readiness for hurling the knife.

In that attitude, motionless, the Chinaman waited. And Bunter, frozen with horror, blinked at the gleaming knife, and at Kang's back, his eyes distended behind his spectacles.

Evidently the tong-man knew that the juniors would be coming that way; no doubt he had been spying on them. He was waiting and watching for them to pass, the knife poised in readiness for a cast. Silent, swift, it would fly, when Wun Lung came within its range; and the Chinese merchant's son would

fall transfixed, slain in his own home where he had come for safety from far-off England. Bunter sat frozen, his eyes glued on Kang. Faintly, from the scented gardens, came the sound of footsteps, of voices, of a laugh. Harry Wharton & Co. were coming.

Bunter shivered.

Bob Cherry's voice came to his ears. Bob's powerful voice had great carrying powers.

"Wun Lung, old bean, you're a lucky bargee! Never saw a show like this in my life! Of course, I've never seen Bunter Court!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The merry ring of laughter came through the oleanders.

"Mo plenteo glad you liked this placee."

"It is indeed a commodious and desirable residence, dear sirs!" came the voice of Mr. So Fat.

"Where did we leave Bunter? He curled up about here," said Frank Nugent. "Listen for his snore!"

Billy Bunter heard every word. The party, merry and unsuspecting, were coming up the path between the thick shrubberies; coming at every step, closer to the wretch who crouched with poised knife.

Bunter saw the knife move a little. Then it was immovable again. A quiver had run through the watching Chinaman. A few moments now, and the Greyfriars party would be walking by under his eyes, and then—

Billy Bunter leaped up.

He did not think—if he had stopped to think he might not have done it. He acted as if by a volition not his own. He made a frantic leap towards the crouching Chinaman, and even as Kang started at the sudden rustling behind him, Bunter reached him and drove his boot into the middle of the crouching back.

The sudden, unexpected kick took the squat Chinaman completely by surprise, and overturned him headlong. With a gasping cry, he rolled out through the shrubbery and sprawled in the open path, almost at the feet of the astonished Greyfriars juniors.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hunting the Tong-Man!

"LOOK out!"
"Great Scott!"
"It's Kang!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Oh, my hat!"

The squat Chinaman sprawled headlong, but in an instant, almost, he was on his feet. The knife was still in his hand.

He glared round him furiously. Bunter with a squeal of fear, jumped back, terrified out of his fat wits by what he had done, and by what might follow.

But the tong man did not even look towards Bunter. His slanting eyes gleamed at Wun Lung, round whom all the juniors instinctively closed.

He leaped at the son of Wun Chung Lung.

It was then that Mr. So Fat astonished the Greyfriars fellows. So Fat, in his black silk gown, his black skull-cap, and his enormous horn-rimmed spectacles, with his weird and wonderful method of speaking English, had seemed rather a droll gentleman to Harry Wharton & Co. Now the chubby, beaming face of So Fat took on a sudden grimness, his black eyes

blazed through the big glasses as fiercely as Kang's own; his hand flashed out again with an automatic in it.

Crack!

In his European education, Mr. So had not neglected to acquire the art of handling the deadly weapons of Europe.

It passed in a few seconds—grim tragedy among the oleanders and the flowering shrubs. And it was well for Wun Lung and his friends that Mr. So was swift with his European weapon.

Kang, leaping forward with brandished knife, would have been on the juniors in a moment, and they were unarmed; clustered round Wun Lung to protect him, but little able to protect the Chinese boy or themselves. But as the tong-man came leaping, the bullet struck him fair and square, and he plunged forward, falling on his face.

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton breathlessly.

Kang lay where he had fallen.

Mr. So stood still, leaning forward a little, his eyes on the tong-man, the automatic ready.

But Kang did not stir.

The Greyfriars juniors stood breathless. Mr. So relaxed his tense attitude. The grim fierceness vanished from his chubby face; the good-humoured expression returned.

"This disreputable person has hopped a twig," he said. "As you say in English, he has kicked one bucket! Yes."

"Is he—is he—" stammered Bob Cherry.

"Oh quite, I think," said So Fat. "But the eye of watchfulness is on him, and if there is movement of finger, he goes pot."

"Samee fellee comoy along houseboat," said Wun Lung calmly. "This time he plenty catchee."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, his eyes large and round behind his spectacles. "I say, you fellows! Oh dear."

"How did you spot him, Bunter?"

"Oh dear! The beast was crouching in the shrubs, with that knife all ready to chuck," gasped Bunter. "He would have got one of you—Wun Lung, I suppose. I biffed him in the back with my boot and rolled him over, just in time."

Bunter was still shaking.

"You played up jolly well, old fat bean," said Bob Cherry.

"Velly good, ole fattee Bunter!" said Wun Lung.

"Of course, I wasn't scared!" Bunter was recovering a little. "Nothing of that sort, you know."

"H'm!"

"Cool as ice!" said Bunter. "Like an iceberg, in fact."

"You looked it!" said Johnny Bull, with a grunt.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Mr. So beamed on Bunter.

"This stately and venerable person, born many years before me, undoubtedly performed useful purpose in delivering blow with foot at psychological moment," he said. "The presence of mind of this honourable one was most exuberant."

Bunter grinned complacently.

"That's where I come out strong," he explained. "Presence of mind, and pluck—that's my long suit."

"Oh, scissors!"

Servants of the household and gardeners were running up from all sides, alarmed by the shot.

So Fat spoke to them in Chinese,



Before the crouching Chinaman could carry out his foul deed, Billy Bunter reached him, and drove his boot into the middle of the man's back!

evidently giving them directions to lift the tong-man and take him away, for half a dozen of the blue-clad servitors surrounded the still figure in the path, and bent over it.

The figure in the blue cotton seemed quite inert, as they lifted it from the ground; but a moment later it seemed to be suddenly endued with life. The slanting eyes opened, the yellow hands clawed, and Kang broke from the grasp of the servants and leaped away. The cunning tong-man had been playing "possum" so cunningly that even So Fat had been deceived. That he was badly wounded was plain, from the blood that drenched his cotton garments, and stained the path where he had lain. But the strength and activity of a tiger seemed to be in the squat frame.

With desperate energy, Kang tore himself loose and fled through the shrubberies.

"Ow! Look out!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Crack! Crack!

So Fat, with fury on his face, fired twice; but the tong-man, leaping swiftly among the oleanders and the drooping wisteria, escaped both shots.

The secretary shrieked to the serving-men, and there was an excited rush in pursuit of the tong-man. It was led by Mr. So himself, brandishing his automatic.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Come on."

"Lun!" shouted Wun Lung. "Lun jelly fast."

And the juniors ran, joining in the

pursuit of the escaping assassin. In the distance, they saw Kang reach the high garden wall and make a desperate leap at it.

High as the wall was, the desperate clutch of the tong-man reached the tiled top. But the wound had sapped his strength, and he failed to draw himself up. Again Mr. So's automatic spat fire, and a bullet crashed on the wall an inch from the tong-man.

Kang dropped back, with a husky, enraged cry. He sprawled on the ground, but as the crowd of Chinese closed in on him he scrambled up again and ran.

Crack!

It was a shot from another direction. Harry Wharton & Co., staring round, saw the tall, lean figure of Ferrers Locke, automatic in hand. The Baker Street detective had been drawn to the scene by the wild uproar.

Kang dodged and ran on, along the foot of the wall. He left a trail of crimson behind him, on trampled ferns and dwarf-trees, as he ran. There were forty or fifty Chinese in the gardens now, yelling like demons, brandishing swords, knives, or clubs, as they hunted the tong-man. The escape of the wretch was out of the question, but he dodged and ran and twisted like a hunted beast. Five or six armed men appeared ahead of him, and he left the wall and out across the gardens, almost into the arms of a body of his pursuers. But he eluded them and dashed into a little pagoda. One pursuer, rushing in after him, barely escaped a knife-slash, and sprang away again.

The wretch was cornered now. Round the pagoda circled half a hundred excited Chinese with fierce faces and brandished weapons.

"They've got him now!" panted Bob Cherry.

"The gotfulness is terrific."

"Me tinkee that tong-man no livee plenty, too much long!" murmured Wun Lung.

Wharten glanced at the Chinese junior.

"I—I suppose he can be collared now, and handed over to the Canton police," he said.

Wun Lung chuckled.

"Policey man along Canton, plenty too much flighten along Red Dragon tong," he answered. "No trouble policey man."

"But—but what—"

"Fathee comey!" said Wun Lung.

Mr. Wun Chung Lung was approaching. Ferrers Locke came with him, and they joined So Fat in front of the pagoda. The yelling voices of the crowd of Chinese were stilled in the presence of Mr. Wun.

Within the pagoda the desperate man crouched, knife in hand, with no hope but to sell his life dearly. Ferrers Locke turned to the Greyfriars fellows.

"Wharten!" he called.

"Yes, Mr. Locke."

"Go back to the house with your friends."

The juniors exchanged glances.

"Very well, Mr. Locke," answered Harry quietly.

And the juniors left the spot, realising

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that Ferrers Locke's view was; that what was to follow was no sight for their eyes. Wun Lung went with them, and Mr. So joined them, leaving his master to deal with the desperado in the pagoda.

"I—I say, you fellows, wh-a-at are they going to do?" gasped Billy Bunter, joining the juniors on their way back to the house.

"Better not ask, I think," answered Harry.

"Oh, sirs, it is nothing!" said Mr. So in an airy way. "That disreputable person will probably hop a twig! Yes! But from respect for feelings of estimable English friend, Mr. Wun will not torture him. No! He will merely send his head in wrapped parcel, this side up; with care, as you say, to the Mandarin Tang Wang. Oh! Yes! This small matter you may dismiss immediately from your honourable notice."

It was not so easy for the Greyfriars fellows to dismiss the small matter, as So Fat called it, from their honourable notice. In the house, Mr. So conducted them through a magnificent armoury of ancient Chinese weapons, incessantly talking in his flowery English, explaining to them the uses and the history of the strange objects displayed there, with the evident good-natured intention of drawing off their thoughts from what was passing in the garden. But in spite of Mr. So's inexhaustible eloquence, Harry Wharton & Co. could not help thinking of it, and their thoughts lingered with the desperate man cornered in the pagoda.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Walk Round Canton!

"**B**ETTER take chairs!" said Billy Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"If you fellows think I'm going to waik my legs off—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

It was a couple of days later.

The affair of Kang—however it had ended—had been dismissed from the minds of the Greyfriars party.

Two days had passed in the magnificent residence of Mr. Wun, and the juniors had found the time pass swiftly.

The immense rambling house, full of odd nooks and corners, was open to them, except, of course, the women's apartments. The gardens were at their command, with their lakes and streams and ponds, bridges and pagodas.

They had seen Wun Lung's sister, little Wun San, as she was still a child and not yet in seclusion. They had been presented to the grandfather, Mr. Wun Ko, a rather terrible old gentleman, more thoroughly Chinese, if possible, than Mr. Wun Chung Lung, and they had been rather entertained by the awe and respect with which the rich Canton merchant treated the testy old gentleman.

Mr. Wun Ko carried a bamboo cane, which, according to Wun Lung, he sometimes laid about the members of the household when he was displeased—including Mr. Wun Chung Lung, whose ripe age of fifty did not exclude him from an honourable beating if his honourable parent was cross with him.

The Greyfriars fellows learned much of China and Chinese ways in Mr. Wun's establishment, and they learned that though the establishment was the property of Mr. Wun, his aged father was undisputed master of it, and Mr. Wun would never have dreamed of opposing a single wish of the ancient gentleman.

There was something the juniors

rather liked about all this, for, after all, respect for age was undoubtedly a good thing, though carried in China to inordinate lengths.

Mr. Wun had insisted that his son's friends should remain his guests for at least a couple of weeks—Mr. Wun Ko no doubt having been consulted first, his will being law in the house.

The chums of Greyfriars were glad enough to stay, all the more because it might be very long before they saw Wun Lung again, after they had parted with him.

So long as the threat of the Red Dragon tong hung over the Chinese junior, he was to remain with his family, and his friends had no doubt that he would be safe there. The fate of Kang was not likely to encourage further emissaries of the mandarin to penetrate within the carefully guarded walls.

On the third day the juniors were going out to see some of the sights of Canton.

But what happened at Singapore and at Macao caused Ferrers Locke to take

JUST A MOMENT!

You're bound to laugh at this amusing joke which wins a pocket knife for W. Cross, of 6, Boycott Street, Everton, Liverpool.



Mike: "Well, Patrick, and phwy don't ye let the doctor operate on ye?"
Patrick: "Shure I won't. Don't ye know his name's Kilpatrick?"

Let me have a funny yarn from YOU, chum; I'll exchange a pen-knife for it if it's a good one!

plenty of precautions. He was going with them himself. Mr. So Fat was going also, to point out objects of interest in the city, and six of the Wun retainers were to walk behind—armed. In these circumstances it did not seem likely that harm could befall the Greyfriars party.

Wun Lung did not go with his friends. Now that he was safe at home, perhaps his father might have allowed him to walk abroad under guard, but Grandfather Ko decided otherwise.

Grandfather Ko stated that Wun Lung was to remain within the walls, and there was no appeal from Mr. Wun Ko's decision—no thought of any appeal from it. It would never have crossed the mind of Wun Lung or his father, to entertain a contrary thought, after Grandfather Ko had decided. And had Wun Lung possessed a great-grandfather, Mr. Wun Ko himself, though over seventy, would have rendered him the same unquestioning obedience.

The chums of the Remove looked forward to a stroll round a city like Canton. Bunter liked the excursion—

indeed, he was going to do a lot of shopping, being in funds again, the generous Mr. Wun being the source of his prosperity. But Bunter did not like walking. Bunter preferred to be carried.

Bunter, however, was over-ruled. Being carried in chairs through the narrow Chinese streets was all very well by way of a novelty, but the Famous Five wanted something a little more active. So Billy Bunter grumbled and groused, and rolled forth on his little fat legs.

Narrow streets, mostly paved with stone slabs, were sheltered from the sun by roofs, or screens of bamboo. Glimpses of bright blue sky came through the openings.

Big wooden sign-boards hung out from the walls of shops inscribed with words in Chinese characters in black or gilded letters. Most of the shops had open fronts, many of them being stocked with Chinese curios and antiquities specially prepared for purchase by "foreign devils."

Mr. So Fat, his flow of English more exuberant than ever, was a great guide. His English was not always easy to follow, and he told the juniors about ten times as much as they could understand or remember. But the chums of Greyfriars enjoyed every minute of the ramble among the jostling, good-tempered crowds.

"Here we make great and striking modern improvements!" Mr. So would say, when the party came on a spot where a wide new street was being run through a congeries of ancient, narrow alleys. "Here all will be palatial, commodious, and much to be desired! Poor and inconsiderable persons turned out of hearth and home will complain piteously; but is it not the case that progress must march in an advancing direction? Yes!"

"Road Up!" is a sign of jolly old civilisation everywhere!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The juniors laughed; but Mr. So took the remark quite seriously.

"All over China, in these progressive periods, roads are universally up!" he said. "We make new roads, new railways, regardless of spirits of honourable ancestors disturbed by puffing engine! China is now pretty considerable devilish go-ahead! Oh, yes!"

Mr. So Fat, although secretary to a merchant of "old China," was evidently in sympathy, personally, with the reform party.

The juniors had noticed that he wore no pigtail. But he had not advanced so far as European trousers. Mr. Wun would not have tolerated them in his establishment. Like so many rich Chinese, Mr. Wun clung to old customs so far as he could. Grandfather Ko would have ordered the instant dismissal of So Fat, had he seen him in Western clothes.

So Fat had to suppress the bubbling exhilaration of his advanced exuberance, as he would have expressed it in his own English, while he was in the service of Mr. Wun.

But to the Greyfriars fellows, as representatives of a civilised Western country, Mr. So made no secret of his extreme advancement.

Trousers he approved, pigtails he abhorred; roads and railways and telegraphs and telephones, he would have spread all over China, whether needed or not. The cost he would have paid out of foreign loans, and the loans later on he would cheerfully have repudiated

(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



Don't argue, it's a waste of time
Let "Old Ref" settle your Soccer problems.
He's a walking encyclopaedia where the great
winter game's concerned.

I WANT to advance in football," writes an ambitious MAGNET reader, "but don't seem to find it easy. How can I do it? I am afraid that is one of those questions to which it is impossible to give a cut and dried answer. I think it is quite possible that in spite of all the organised searching for good young football talent some of the good young players are never noticed.

On the other hand, I don't think the foregoing applies to many players in these times, and with so many of the scouts of the first-class clubs out and about, any footballer showing exceptional talent is sure to be spotted sooner or later.

In regard to this getting on in football, however, the young player would do well to remember that it doesn't do much good merely waiting. He must help himself to progress.

It doesn't help the advancement of a player much, for instance, to keep on playing with a club when he is ever so much better than the majority of his colleagues

and the players to whom he is opposed. Take gradual steps upward; ask for a trial with a club meeting better opponents than the one with which you are now associated.

Most important is it to remember this—always do your best, because you never know who may be watching. In this connection I should like this week to tell you stories of two footballers who have already earned distinction during the present season. They are stories which, in my view, merely prove the truth of the old adage that truth is stranger than fiction.

THE first of these players about whose start in the game I want to tell you is William Harrison. He is the goalkeeper of the Bury club, and his special claim to mention in these notes is that of all the goalkeepers in the big Leagues he was the last to be beaten during the present season. His "fort" remained unbroken through more games than that of any other "keeper. Harrison joined Bury from Lancaster Town, and the manner of it was quite interesting.

When this goalkeeper was quite a boy he kept goal in a match at Lancaster, and as it happened the secretary of the Bury club was present. This gentleman made a note of the promise of the boy goalkeeper, but Harrison was then, of course, much too young to be signed on.

A few years later—in 1926—Bury had need of another goalkeeper, and while they were talking about this need in the office of the club one day the secretary's mind suddenly switched back to that boy he had seen keeping goal in a school side at Lancaster. Off the secretary went to make inquiries; found that the promise of the boy had been fulfilled, and

that he had advanced so that he was playing for the premier club of his native town. Forthwith he was booked for Bury.

THE second story concerns a centre-forward who has done very well this season—Waring, of Aston Villa, the club many people are expecting to win the championship this season. As a boy, Waring sold chocolates on the ground of the Tranmere Rovers club, and I rather fancy that he spent some of the time when he should have been doing business watching the football and picking up tips from the players.

Anyway, there came a day when certain boys were getting up a scratch eleven, and they asked young Waring if he would play. He wanted to play very badly, but he hadn't any football boots really worth playing in. So he went to the secretary of Tranmere Rovers, begged the loan of a suitable pair of boots, and off he went to play in the "scratch" eleven. The interest of the Tranmere secretary had been aroused by

the chocolate boy's enthusiasm, and he went to see the match, was impressed by the play of Waring, and the player was signed on.

Both those true stories of prominent footballers of to-day, drive home with real force the point I ask you to bear in mind if you want to progress at this game of football—

Always do your best because you never know who may be watching.

There are other reasons for always doing your best, of course, but I thought of this one in reply to my young reader who wants to get on.

NOW to deal with the letter of a young reader who has a grumble about a football rule. "I went to watch a First Division match last month," he writes, "between Arsenal and Blackburn Rovers. During the game the Rovers would certainly have scored if an Arsenal full-back had not fisted the ball out from under the bar. Why didn't the referee award a goal instead of a penalty kick, from which, as a matter of fact, no goal was scored?"

The reason why the referee did not award a goal on that particular occasion was because he has no power to award a goal in any circumstances unless the ball has actually crossed the line between the posts. I gather that my young reader thinks that the referee should have power to award a goal—instead of a penalty kick—on occasions such as the one he mentions and let me say right here that I agree with this contention.

A side which does everything needful to score a goal, including the delivery of a shot which has the goalkeeper beaten, but is prevented from counting that goal because a defender breaks a rule and handles the ball gets less than justice. A goal may be scored from the penalty kick, but goals aren't always scored from penalty kicks, and no goal was scored in the particular incident to which my attention has been drawn.

I CERTAINLY think that the referee should have power to award a goal even if the ball does not actually enter the net if he is

absolutely certain that a goal would have been scored but for some infringement by a member of the defending side.

People have argued that such power might be abused by the referees; that they might give goals in doubtful circumstances. Such an argument, however, is really an insult to referees in general. These fellows with the whistle are so conscientious that I do not believe any of them would give a goal unless he was absolutely certain that a goal would have been scored but for a breach of the rules by the opposition.

When a full-back fists the ball out from under the bar there shouldn't be the slightest chance of his side thus escaping the full penalty of a goal against.

A case could be made out against the sportsmanship ideas of a player who thus tries to stop a goal, and I agree that it is not the sort of action which should be encouraged. On the other hand, don't let us be too severe on the defender who breaks the rules in this way. Remember that he is strung up to a big effort, and that seeing the ball going into the net he may put out his hand instinctively. If he is a good sportsman he will be sorry afterwards.

"OLD REF."

THE MANDARIN'S VENGEANCE!

(Continued from page 10.)

and left unpaid; after the example set by the Russian Bolsheviks.

The juniors listened to Mr. So's bubbling talk with interest; but they wondered whether there was not something more solid and permanent in "old China" than in "new China."

"Later," said Mr. So Fat, waving an enthusiastic hand, which narrowly missed the nose of a Tartar gentleman passing by, and caused the Tartar gentleman to jump—"later, we sweep away all this; we have new, grand roads, and motor-cars by the honourable myriad! In this city, so far, there has not been one motor accident! Later, we have our accidents, same as in honourable London—great, new hospitals shall be erected, to accommodate the victims of immense traffic! Yes, China is slow—but China advances! Oh, yes, I am ashamed to say that we still cut off the obnoxious head of criminal in China! Later, we hang one another with excellent ropes, as you do in England! Oh, yes!"

"Fine!" grinned Bob.

"Here there is little wheeled traffic," said Mr. So Fat. "In the South of China wheels are few; once they were almost unknown. In the North, plenty! Later we have immense quantity of wheeled traffic! Oh! Yes! Where there is a wheel there is a way, as you say in English."

"Oh!"

The party walked on into the fish-mongers' street. The sights in that quarter did not raise their spirits. They shivered at the sight of slices cut from living fish for sale.

Johnny Bull gave an angry grunt.

"Brutes!" he growled. "Let's get out of this!"

"It is not pleasant sight!" agreed Mr. So Fat. "In Europe, I have seen the same—in honourable Norway. In England you would not do this cruel thing. No?"

"Certainly not!" said Johnny Bull. "And only rotten brutes would do it, if you ask me."

"I agree with whole heart!" said So Fat. "In England you boil your lobster alive! But perhaps he like it! Yes?"

Johnny Bull started, and coloured uncomfortably. There was a twinkle in the beaming eyes behind Mr. So's enormous spectacles. Johnny was justly indignant at the cruelty he saw round him; but it dawned upon him that at home there were customs equally unfeeling; and that, in fact, dwellers in glasshouses should not throw stones.

"Let's get out of it, anyhow!" said Harry Wharton, rather hastily.

And they got out.

In another street, devoted chiefly to goldsmiths' and ivory work, the sights were more agreeable. The little open shops, each with a solemn Chinaman sitting in it like a graven image, were full of interest for the Greyfriars fellows.

In every street the crowds were thick. When a "chair" came by, carried by coolies, there were shouts and yells and shovings, to clear the way; but good-humour prevailed on all sides.

An unusual hullabaloo, showing that some personage of unusual importance was passing, made the Greyfriars fellows look round.

A magnificent palanquin was borne on the shoulders of half a dozen sweating coolies, and followed, and preceded, by several serving-men in rich

attire. Silken curtains screened the occupant from the sun and air, and from the gaze of common people.

"Some jolly old grand duke in that, I suppose!" remarked Bob.

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton suddenly. "Look!"

The blue silk curtain at the side of the palanquin was drawn aside, and a face that seemed carved in yellow ivory looked out. It was a face the Greyfriars fellows knew. And the name leapt to their lips.

"Tang Wang!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Meeting With the Mandarin!

FERRERS LOCKE made a swift stride forward.

The palanquin had halted.

As it swayed on the shoulders of the coolies, the Mandarin Tang Wang looked out, and his slanting eyes seemed to devour the Greyfriars party.

Ferrers Locke stood between them and the mandarin.

The eyes of the English detective and the Chinese mandarin met. Locke's face was a little grim. A slow smile crept over the ivory features of the descendant of the royal Mings.

A crowd of Chinese surged round the palanquin, gazing at the mandarin, with evident respect. Many of them bowed or kow-towed to Tang Wang.

China is now—in name, at least—a republic, and Jack is as good as his master. The Manchu dynasty is gone, and the power of the mandarins broken. But the claim of the past is still strong on the Chinese, in spite of telephones and trousers and cigarettes and cocktails, and other wonderful new institutions. The juniors noticed that even Mr. So Fat seemed awed by the sight of Tang Wang, ruthless enemy as he was to Mr. So's master.

"Greeting, Mr. Locke!" said the mandarin, in smooth, polite tones and faultless English. "We have the pleasure of meeting once more."

He smiled again.

"How happy I should be to meet you in my own city of Pan-shan!" he said. Locke smiled grimly.

"No doubt!" he assented. "But you will never see me within one hundred miles of Pan-shan, I hope, Mr. Tang."

"Who knows?" said the mandarin. "I may persuade you to visit me there—or some of your young friends."

The slanting eyes glittered for a moment at the juniors.

"It will not be easy!" said Locke.

"I am glad to have a few words with you, Mr. Locke," said the mandarin. "Will you honour me by approaching nearer?"

Locke stepped towards the palanquin. His right hand was in his pocket, and all the juniors knew that it grasped an automatic. Tang Wang knew it, too. Law and order in the streets of Canton was a rather doubtful quantity; and Locke was ready for any treachery on the part of the mandarin.

"Fear nothing, my friend!" smiled Tang Wang. "Here, in Canton, I am nobody—merely a citizen of our new and glorious republic! I have no power to harm you here."

"If your followers begin any trouble you will be a dead man," answered Ferrers Locke calmly. "At the first sign of it I shall put a bullet through your heart."

"Ah, you English!" sighed the mandarin. "There is no mistaking your meaning when you speak! A little

crude, perhaps—but unmistakable! But my intentions are not hostile. A few words only! Mr. Locke, I admire the way you have beaten me and brought the boy Wun from England safe to his father's house. For I know that he is safe there—I have received, at my yamen in Pan-shan the head of Kang in a basket—a polite hint from Mr. Wun to keep my men away from his establishment."

"Take the hint, and save further lives!" said Locke.

"The chief of the Red Dragon tong does not take such hints," said the mandarin. "The boy Wun is safe—for the present. But I have not abated a jot of my demands on his father. Indeed, the ransom has risen! I now demand thirty thousand silver shoes from Mr. Wun."

The juniors listened in silence. A silver "shoe," as they were aware, was an ounce of silver in Chinese currency. Obviously, the demands of the tong had gone up.

"The boy Wun may be safe," said Tang Wang. "But his English friends—are they safe from my vengeance, Mr. Locke?"

"I think so."

"Yet you are still in China!" said the mandarin. "In China many things may happen. Did you know, Mr. Locke, that my son, Tang Lao, perished in the attack that was made on your yacht in the Red Sea?"

"I guessed as much."

For an instant the mandarin's eyes burned. But his ivory face was perfectly calm.

"I regret it," said Locke calmly. "But he perished in making an attack that was intended to sink my yacht and all on board. An assassin must take his chance."

"The lives of all the foreign devils in the West are not worth the life of one descendant of the Mings!" said Tang Wang.

Locke smiled faintly.

"The line of the Mings will not end with the death of Tang Lao," he said. "I am aware that he left a son in China, a little boy who plays in the kwei at your yamen in Pan-shan! My advice to you is to give up your villainy, Mr. Tang, and train your grandson, Tang Sing, better than you trained his father." Locke's voice had an earnest note. "Listen to me, Tang Wang. In the present state of China, it is not impossible that you may realise your ambition, and restore the dynasty of the Mings."

The mandarin looked at him curiously.

"You think so?" he asked.

"I think it is possible. I think it might be a good thing for China," went on Ferrers Locke. "But you will not succeed by the methods you have adopted. Honesty is the best policy, even in a Chinese mandarin who seeks to occupy the vacant throne of the Manchus."

The mandarin smiled.

"For all things money is needed," he said. "There must be a war-hest, money is the sinews of war, as you English say. The merchants must pay. And by the power of my tong they will be made to pay. Few have defied me like Mr. Wun, and they have paid for their defiance. Mr. Wun must pay thirty thousand silver shoes."

"He will pay nothing."

"But if his friend Ferrers Locke, should be a prisoner in my yamen at Pan-shan?"

"I shall never be a prisoner there"

"Or one of your young friends?"

"I shall take care of them."

"Perhaps even you will fail to take

care of them!" smiled the mandarin, glancing at the silent juniors. "Perhaps, some time, one of them will be missing, Mr. Locke! Then you may tell Mr. Wun that the English boy hungers and thirsts and dies—unless he pays thirty thousand silver shoes! Do you understand, my friend?"

"I understand," said Ferrers Locke. "I do not think it will happen; but if it should happen, not all your guards at Pan-shan shall save you from a bullet through your heart, Tang Wang."

The mandarin laughed.

"It shall happen, Mr. Locke, if only to draw you to the city of Pan-shan!" he said. "I shall be delighted to see you there; you know much of Chinese tortures, but on that occasion you shall learn more."

He dropped the silken curtain and disappeared from sight. The coolies moved on, and the palanquin passed down the crowded street.

With shouts and cries, and raps of their bamboo canes, the mandarin's attendants cleared a way for the great man.

Ferrers Locke stared after the palanquin, his grip hard on the automatic in his pocket.

In spite of his iron nerve the mandarin's threat had sent something like a chill to Locke's heart, and he was tempted to send a bullet through the silken curtains, regardless of consequences.

Mr. So touched his arm. The Baker Street detective smiled, and relinquished his grasp on the revolver.

"A very powerful and wicked man, sir!" said So Fat, glancing after the palanquin with mingled respect and apprehension. "It is said that Tang Wang has an understanding with the war-lords in the south—he is very powerful, and in Pan-shan his word is law. For the sake of the goodness, honourable sir, go not near to that city."

"I'll watch it!" said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

And the walk round Canton was resumed. But the faces of the Greyfriars juniors remained overcast for a time. The hard and ruthless face of the mandarin, his eyes like black jewels set in a yellow mask, haunted their minds. It was not easy to forget Tang Wang.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Bolt!

SO FAT halted by a wide, dusky archway, under which the street ran. Several Chinese soldiers, lounging idly under the arch, glanced curiously at the Greyfriars party. So Fat waved his hand.

"You like to walk on top of city wall?" he asked. "You obtain from thenceforth fine aerial view, the view of the eye of a bird! Great city of Canton is spread at your honourable feet, with river and boats and junks, all extremely visible. What?"

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

Billy Bunter gave a snort.

"You silly asses!" he exclaimed.

"Do you think I'm going to clamber up all those steps? Blow the view!"

"Fathead! Get a move on!"

"Shan't!" hooted Bunter. "Catch me going up!"

"We'll roll you down after we've been up!" offered Bob, "and we'll help you up, if you like."

"How will you help me up?" asked Bunter suspiciously.

"We'll take it in turns to kick you."

"Hear, hear!"

"Beasts!"



As the tong-man made a desperate clutch at the high wall, Mr. So's automatic spat fire, and a bullet crashed perilously near the man's head!

Bunter sat down on a stone under the arch. Aerial views, and views of the eye of a bird, as Mr. So called them, did not appeal to Bunter. Not for any consideration would he have mounted to the top of the city wall. Even a spread would not have drawn him there.

"Leave him here," suggested Johnny Bull. "He won't come to any harm unless he wanders away."

"Better ask Mr. Locke," said Harry, glancing round for the Baker Street detective.

"Oh, blow Mr. Locke," said Bunter, without observing that the detective was almost at his elbow. "Bother Locke! Locke's rather a nuisance! I don't see what he wants trotting round looking after you fellows when I'm with you. I'm quite capable of looking after the party."

"You frumpious ass—"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I've protected you so far, anyhow. The fact is," explained Bunter, "I'll be glad to be shut of you for a time. While you're clambering over that silly wall I'll look round for a fan-tan place."

"You burbling jabberwock—"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Owing to you fellows mainly refusing to lend me your money, I never broke the bank at fan-tan, when we were in Macao. Well, I'm going to try again in Canton. I'm in funds now, and this time, I can

tell you, I'm going to make the fur fly. Don't tell Locke."

The juniors chuckled.

Ferrers Locke was within three feet of Bunter's elbow as the Owl of the Remove was speaking. Bunter did not observe him. After all, a fellow had no eyes in the back of his head.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. "I mean it! Better not tell Mr. Locke because he might have the check to interfere. Of course, I shouldn't let him, but—"

"Shut up, you blithering ass!" said Nugent.

"Shan't! You fellows get on, and I'll look round for a fan-tan place. I'm just keen on another little flutter. And take that interfering ass, Locke, with you. I don't want him meddling. Yaroooh!" added Bunter, in a wild howl, as a finger and thumb closed like a vice on his fat ear. "Ow! Wow! Beast! Leggo!"

He spun round, and blinked at Ferrers Locke.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He realised that the Baker Street detective had heard all his observations.

"You young rascal!" said Locke.

"Oh, really, you know! Leggo! I—I say, I was only j-joking, of course!

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I—I don't really want—ow!—to play fan-tan! Leggo my ear! Ow!"

Ferrers Locke released the fat ear, and Bunter rubbed it tenderly. The detective turned to the grinning juniors.

"I will remain here with Bunter," he said. "You may go on to the city wall with Mr. So."

"Right-ho, sir!"

Mr. So Fat spoke to the guards in Chinese, and the juniors heard a jingle of coins. Then they passed on their way.

The city of Canton had a double wall, and the inner wall is pierced by streets that run under archways. It was the inner wall that Harry Wharton & Co. ascended. They followed So Fat, and Mr. Wun's retainers followed them.

Billy Bunter remained sulkily on the stone seat.

Ferrers Locke, leaning on the old wall, did not seem to be heeding him, but Bunter knew that the detective's eye was very watchful.

He grunted discontentedly.

Since his disastrous "flutter" at the Chinese game of fan-tan, in the Portuguese city of Macao, at the mouth of the Che-kiang, Bunter had yearned to try his luck over again.

Having lost all his money on that occasion the fat junior might have been expected to realise that he was not a past-master at that game. But lessons were lost on William George Bunter.

He still dreamed of winning huge sums at that delusive game; and he felt a deep sense of injury because he was not allowed to woo fickle fortune once more.

Unless he could get away from the other fellows, he had no chance of a flutter at fan-tan; and even an ass like Bunter might have understood that it was dangerous to separate himself from the rest of the party. But Bunter could only understand dangers that he could see; and his self-confidence was unbounded. He fancied that he was the fellow who could take care of himself, and so long as danger was round the corner, Bunter was as brave as a lion.

Now that the Famous Five were gone up the city wall, it seemed to Bunter that he had a chance of carrying out his scheme. But that beast Locke was keeping an eye on him, and was evidently prepared to take him by his fat ear again if he tried to make a break.

Bunter blinked at him morosely through his big spectacles.

It was like the beast's cheek, Bunter considered, to interfere with his personal liberty of action in this way. As if Bunter couldn't take care of himself!

Bunter wasn't going to be looked after and kept on an apron-string; not if Bunter knew it.

"I say, Mr. Locke!" he ejaculated suddenly.

Ferrers Locke glanced at him.

"I think I heard Wharton call!" explained Bunter.

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"I did not!"

"I'm sure I did!" said Bunter. "Hadn't you better go after them, sir? They may be in some fearful danger! Of course, I'm not thinking of bunking while you're gone! Nothing of that kind."

"You young ass!" said Locke.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You are a foolish, in fact excessively stupid boy!" said Locke. "If you should wander alone in Canton you would almost certainly be snapped up by some tong-man under the orders of Tang Wang. It might cost you your life. You heard what he said to me only an hour ago."

Bunter sniffed.

"I'm not afraid of any heathen Chinese, especially an old jossler like that," he answered. "I fancy I can take care of myself."

"You will remain where you are!" said Locke, frowning.

Evidently words were wasted on the obtuse Owl of the Remove.

Bunter grunted.

He was quite determined not to remain where he was. This might be his only chance of getting a flutter at fan-tan. In Bunter's fat brain there was room for only one idea at a time, and at the present moment the idea was fan-tan.

He leaned back on the wall behind the stone seat, and half-closed his eyes. This was to give Locke the impression that he was going to sleep. As soon as Locke's vigilance relaxed Bunter was going to bolt.

Traffic was passing through the gateway under the arch; and Bunter needed only a chance to mingle in it and escape. After which, being on his own, he would seek a fan-tan dive, win a fortune by the exercise of his wonderful gifts of nerve and keen intellect, and then turn up at the house of Mr. Wun, safe and sound, thus demonstrating that he was quite able to take care of himself. That was Bunter's programme.

Unluckily, fortune favoured the fat junior. Through the gateway, from the gate in the outer wall, came a camel-party. Nine or ten tall, swaying camels, loaded with merchandise, swung and snarled after a couple of coolies, who led them by ropes attached to their nose-rings. They filled the gateway, and one vicious brute—vicious from fatigue, heat and dust, and hard driving—made a snap at Bunter!

If Bunter had not intended to move he would have moved then!

He moved with amazing celerity.

As if moved by a spring the Owl of the Remove leaped away.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

The coolie, shouting and cursing at the camel, dragged the brute back. The bunch of animals swayed and trampled and lurched, and two or three of them interposed between Ferrers Locke and Bunter. One of them bumped into the fat junior, and he staggered and yelled. The next moment he was running.

Bunter's first idea was more to get away from the camels. But as Ferrers Locke's voice shouted behind him, he realised that this was his chance!

"Bunter!"

He heard the detective's voice calling. Like the ancient gladiator, he heard but he heeded not! He fairly whizzed round the nearest corner.

He bolted into a crowded street—crowded with Chinese, Tartars, Indians, all sorts of Asiatic denizens. In a moment or two he was lost in the swarm.

"Bunter!"

Once more he heard Locke's voice, calling, but at a greater distance. If

Locke called again, Bunter did not hear him. He turned another corner, and another; and then he slackened pace, and grinned with satisfaction. He was not likely to be found now.

Bunter was on his own at last!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Curtained Chair I

HARRY WHARTON & Co. emerged on the summit of the city wall, in bright sunshine. So Fat waved his hand towards the city spread at their feet, rather like a showman.

"Honourable and teeming city is all seen from advantageous coign," he remarked. "Here you observe Canton with the eye of a bird! Pretty fine devilish big city—what?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"Yonder tall building is celebrated Five-Story Pagoda!" said So Fat. "That other is top-side missionary jossman's cathedral! Yes! Far off you see White Cloud Mountain! The city, you observe, is flat—most houses being one story. These buildings are not impressive like buildings in honourable London and New York! No! But China moves; some day there shall be tiptop amazing sky-scraping erections of great size. There shall be gigantic factory chimneys! Yes! At present the atmosphere is pellucid! But China moves! Later, there shall be immense chimneys of factories galore, belching blackest smoke! Yes!"

"Is that a fire?" asked Frank Nugent, pointing to a column of smoke rising in a distant part of the dense city.

Mr. So Fat gazed through his huge horn-rimmed glasses and nodded. Being an advanced Chinese, So Fat nodded assent like a European, instead of shaking his head in the Chinese way.

"Yes, that is fire," he said. "There are many fires in Canton; sometimes a whole street will go upward in smoke, as you say. This is often caused by a lamentable accident to kerosene lamp, which is fast driving out the native Chinese lantern. We pay for progress!"

The juniors walked along the city wall for some distance, looking down at the city within, and at the vast paddy-fields that fringed the Canton river beyond.

After an hour or so, they had had enough of Canton from the birdseye point of view, and they descended again to the archway where they had left Bunter with Ferrers Locke.

Locke was waiting for them there with a grim expression on his face. Of Bunter there was nothing to be seen.

Harry Wharton glanced round for him.

"Bunter—" he began.

"He is gone," said Ferrers Locke quietly.

"Gone!" repeated the juniors.

The detective's lips were compressed.

"Yes; he found an opportunity of dodging away. I lost sight of him nearly half an hour ago."

Harry Wharton set his lips.

"The awful fathead!" he muttered.

"He disappeared in the traffic; and I waited here for you," said Ferrers Locke. "He must, of course, be found before harm comes to him."

"If we all search—" began Johnny Bull.

Locke smiled faintly.

"I fear that that might lead to further trouble," he said. "There are many agents of Tang Wang in this city, and we are known to them, but

they are not known to us. Probably at this very moment we are being watched. I am afraid I must ask you boys to cut your excursion short and return immediately to Mr. Wun's house, then I shall be at liberty to search for that foolish boy Bunter."

"Of course, sir! Just as you think best," said Harry.

His comrades nodded assent. It was disappointing, but they did not want to add to the trouble that Bunter's folly had brought on the Baker Street detective.

Locke's face expressed little, but they knew how deeply he was disturbed. The threat of the mandarin was still in their ears. Wun Lung was safe from him in his father's house, under the watchful eye of Grandfather Ko. But vengeance remained if he could lay his hands on any of the Greyfriars party. And Bunter, wandering "on his own" in the swarming streets of Canton, was at the mercy of the enemy, though in his fatuous self-satisfaction he did not realise it.

"I suppose the Canton police will be able to help, sir?" suggested Nugent.

"Little, I think," answered Locke. "Chinese police are not much like what we know in Europe."

"In near future," said So Fat, "gigantic reorganisation will revolutionise political institutions, rendering them clean as a whistle and bright as new penny."

"No doubt," smiled Ferrers Locke. "Now, Mr. So, if you will take the boys home—"

"With immediate prompt dispatch, honoured sir," answered So Fat; and

the juniors followed him. When, a few moments later, they glanced back Ferrers Locke had disappeared.

The Greyfriars fellows had grave faces as they walked with Mr. So, followed by the Wun retainers. Bunter's fatuous folly had a deeply exasperating effect on them; and mingled with that exasperation was fear of what might happen to the exasperating Owl.

"The fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The frightful chump!" said Bob Cherry.

"The frabjous, footling foozler!" said Frank Nugent. "I hope Locke will kick him jolly hard when he finds him!"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bunter is born to cause trouble, as the absurd sparks fly upward. The ludicrous ass ought to be led about dogfully on a chain."

The juniors kept their eyes well about them as they walked through the busy streets, hot under the bamboo awnings that kept off the blaze of the sun.

They would have been glad to search for the missing Owl; but they realised that Locke was right, and that it was better for them to return to the safety of Mr. Wun's house and leave the task in the experienced hands of the detective.

Still, there was a chance of spotting him as they went, and they watched for him in the ever-shifting crowds of Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, Hindoos, Tartars, Tibetans, half-castes, and the rest.

"The fat chump is looking for a fan-tan dive, ten to one!" remarked Bob Cherry. "He won't know where to look, and he may be wandering about anywhere. If we spot him he won't wander long."

"No fear!" said Harry. "If you get an eye on him, you men, just bag him at once, and we'll yank him along."

"You bet!"

"The bagfulness will be terrific."

"And the yankfulness will be still more terrific if I get a grip on his silly, fat neck!" grunted Bob Cherry.

So Fat was also watching the crowds for Bunter. Some of the secretary's cheerful exuberance had faded away. It was easy to see that he was alarmed. The narrow streets swarmed, and down the middle of the streets were borne "chairs" containing passengers who did not care to go afoot. No wealthy Chinese goes afoot if he can help it.

Any one of the chairs, with its curtains and bamboo roof, might have hidden Bunter from sight if he had already been picked up by the enemy.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" muttered Bob Cherry suddenly.

"What—?" began Wharton, stopping and looking round.

"See that chair?" breathed Bob.

He made a gesture towards a chair that was being carried along through the crowds by four coolies in loin-cloths. The curtains were closed, and no glimpse of the occupant was possible, but the exertions of the carriers showed that it was not vacant.

"What about it?" asked Harry. The

(Continued on next page.)

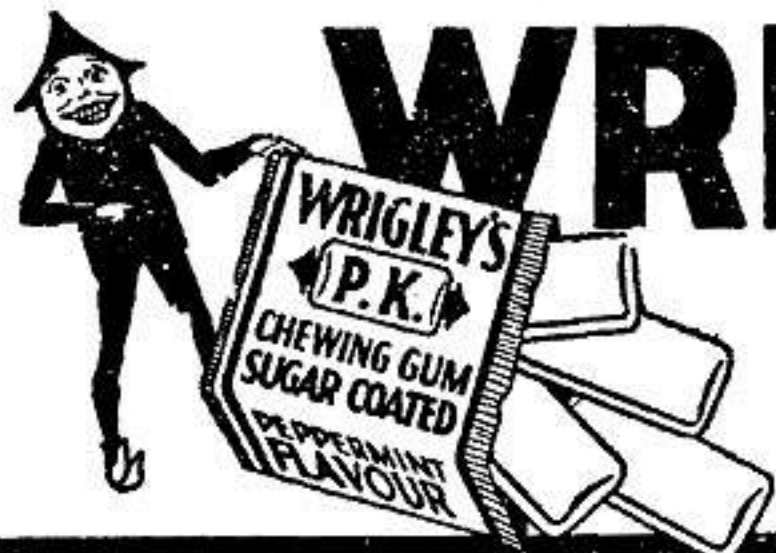
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E.K. 44

chair, to his eyes, seemed exactly like a hundred others they had seen.

"One of them—one of those coolies—was with Tang Wang when we met him," whispered Bob. "One of the men in front—with a scar on his face."

Wharton started and stared at the man.

He looked like any other chair-carrier, except that on his yellow face was a long scar left by some old sword-cut, probably in a tong fight with some rival tong.

"Sure?" asked Wharton.

"Quite! I noticed him; he was one of the coolies carrying the mandarin's palanquin!" said Bob.

The Greyfriars fellows halted. It might mean nothing; but it was certain that one of the coolies, at least, was a servant of Tang Wang.

The chair swayed slowly through the throng in the middle of the narrow, hot street. And Wharton, watching the scarred Chinese, saw a sudden glitter leap into his black eyes at the sight of the English schoolboys. He saw him sign to the other coolies, and they pressed on more hastily.

"If Bunter's in that chair—" muttered Bob.

"It's a chance, anyhow," said Harry. Mr. So Fat called to them.

"If you honourable ones will please to assume the promptness of immediate dispatch—" he said.

Harry Wharton made a sudden dive through the crowd and reached the side of the chair. It would have taken but a moment to seize the curtain at the side window and drag it away to get one glance into the vehicle.

His hand was on the curtain, when the scarred coolie interposed and shoved him fiercely back.

"O born-before-me, what are you to do?" exclaimed So Fat, in dismay. "It is by possibility a woman in the chair; and to look on Chinese lady is disastrous offence. O honourable sir—"

The scarred coolie snatched a knife from his loin-cloth, and Wharton leaped back. The man snarled at him like a tiger.

So Fat grasped his arm and pulled him away.

"August and venerable one—" he gasped.

"I believe Bunter's in that chair!" panted Wharton. "That rotter with the knife is one of Tang Wang's men."

So Fat stared. The four coolies with the chair hurried on. For a moment or two So Fat seemed nonplussed, then he nodded.

"The following of that chair is the present desideratum," he said. "But please to exercise extreme carefulness, for a scrapping shindy with Chinese mob would be incalculable disaster."

The juniors exchanged quick looks. The chair was heading for one of the city gates—as it was likely to do if it contained a prisoner. They followed on behind, pushing through the crowd, wondering whether it really was the fatuous Owl who was hidden by the curtains, and determined to discover whether it was or not.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs For It!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round him cheerfully as he wended his way through the crowded streets of Canton.

Bunter was feeling merry and bright. Mr. Wun had been very generous to Bunter, and the fat junior had a couple of hundred silver dollars in his possession. With a capital like that

Bunter had no doubt of being able to break a fan-tan bank.

The question was to find one. Undoubtedly there were many dives in Canton where the fascinating Chinese game was played. But the Chinese city did not teem with them like Macao. No doubt they were there, but they had to be looked for.

Bunter was looking for them.

In any other city he might have inquired his way; but in the streets of Canton white men were few and far between, and it was not much use speaking to natives whose language he did not understand.

But William George Bunter was capable of bright ideas. If you lost your way in a European city you would call a cab, and the driver would solve the problem for you. In Canton you took a chair instead of a cab. Bunter's bright idea was to take a chair and tell the coolies to take him to a fan-tan establishment.

Many, if not most, of the chair coolies spoke "pidgin" English. Anyhow, they all knew the word fan-tan. To call a chair, and to say "Fan-tan" to the carriers was an easy resource.

It was so simple that Bunter, after half an hour of roaming through the swarming streets, wondered that he had not thought of it before.

He blinked round in search of a chair.

There was one fairly on the spot, and the drawn-back curtains showed that it was vacant. It was quite near to Bunter, and the four coolies who carried it had their eyes on him. Perhaps they were merely looking on him as a possible customer.

Bunter was not aware that they had been following him, with the chair, for some little time, totally unaware that his "bolt" from Ferrers Locke had been observed by spying eyes, which had not lost sight of him since. His fat brain was full of fan-tan, and he had almost forgotten the existence of Tang Wang.

Bunter beckoned to the coolies, and the chair came to him at once. And the coolie with the sword-cut on his face grinned.

He had probably been wondering how he could get Bunter into the chair in the crowded street. Bunter had solved the difficulty for him.

"Here, you, what's your name?" asked Bunter.

The scarred coolie bowed deeply.

"Me namee Chong Lo, sar!" he answered.

"Oh, good! You speak English," said Bunter, with satisfaction.

"Speakee allee samee foreign devil, sar!" answered Chong Lo. "Plenty good chair, sar. You takee chair, you payee ten piecee cash, sar."

Bunter nodded cheerfully. Ten cash was a negligible sum, for the copper cash of the Chinese had a value of about twenty to a penny.

"Right-ho!" said Bunter.

The coolies lowered the chair for him. Bunter certainly did not recognise Chong Lo as one of the mandarin's bearers. Had he done so, even Bunter would have been alarmed.

"You sit in this nicey chair, honourable sar!" said Chong Lo. "Takee you along any places, sar."

"I'm looking for a fan-tan house!" explained Bunter.

Chong's slanting eyes dwelt on him for a second.

"Allee light, sar! Me savvy plenty."

"Get going, then!" said Bunter.

He rolled into the chair.

Chong closed the curtains on him.

"Plenty too muchee sun," he said.

"Right you are!"

The four coolies grasped the poles, and picked the sedan-chair up—not a very easy task with Bunter in it. They exchanged a grin before they started. Never had a fat bird dropped so easily into the net of the fowler.

Bunter leaned back comfortably in the chair.

He smiled cheerily.

His bright idea was evidently a good one. No doubt these coolies were quite used to acting as guides to white visitors who wanted to see the sights of Canton—the sights that did not appear on the surface. As for danger, Bunter did not dream of it for a moment.

He had not quite forgotten his adventure in Singapore, when he had been carried off in a rickshaw. But he was not thinking of that now. Here in Canton you called a chair just as you called a taxi in London, and that was all there was about it.

The chair swung on, jostling through the traffic, amid many others. After a while Bunter moved the curtain that screened him from the sun, and blinked out.

"Here, you, Chong!"

The scarred coolie looked round at him.

"How far?" asked Bunter.

"Velly soon now, sar," answered Chong. "Big, fine fan-tan house closee by city gate, sar! Inside city he no be. Closee city gate, sar."

"All right. Get on."

Bunter let the curtain fall into place, and sat back comfortably again. He had glimpsed ahead of him an embattled gateway, and it was likely enough that the fan-tan house was in the suburb outside.

Suddenly there was some commotion round the chair. Bunter, with a jump, recognised the voice of Harry Wharton.

"Beast!" he gasped.

His little round eyes glittered behind his spectacles.

He drew back the curtain a fraction of an inch, to peep out of the chair without revealing himself.

"Beasts!"

In the sunlight, quite near at hand, he sighted the Famous Five, and Mr. So Fat, and the Wun retainers beyond them. He dropped the curtain at once.

If these beasts had spotted him—and it looked as if they had—they would stop him if they could! Bunter, on the trail of a flutter at fan-tan, was not to be stopped—not if Bunter knew it.

He noted with satisfaction that the chair was proceeding more rapidly now. Somewhat excited voices were heard as the coolies jostled through the crowd. It passed out of the bright sunlight, that came in shafts through openings in the bamboo screens above, into the cool dusk of a great archway. This was the city gate.

The chair halted, and the curtain was pulled aside, and a Chinese soldier looked in.

Bunter blinked at him.

But it was only one of the guards of that particular gate satisfying himself who, or what, was being taken out of the city.

After one stare at the fat junior, the soldier dropped the curtain, and the chair moved on. The gates were wide open, as was customary until sunset, and Chong Lo and his companions hurried the chair on at a run once they were outside the walls.

From somewhere behind came a shout; the well-known voice of Bob Cherry. Bunter realised that the beasts had been following him. Evidently they knew, or suspected, that he was in the chair.

"Bunter! Bunter!
Danger! Get out,
if you're there,
Bunter! Danger!"

Bunter heard every word distinctly.

And he grinned.

This was a trick—a rather transparent trick—to get hold of him before he had had his flutter at fan-tan! Bunter had no doubt about that!

He did not answer.

Again came a shout:

"Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove grinned serenely. And Chong Lo trotted on faster than before.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

After Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

were keeping the chair in sight. They were almost convinced that Billy Bunter was inside it, from the evident haste with which the coolies were trying to get away. But it was not easy to follow the chair. The jostling crowds in the narrow streets impeded them, and when they came into one of the new modern streets of Canton, where motor-cars hooted and buzzed, and rickshaws rolled by the dozen, and chairs were innumerable, their task was more difficult than ever.

At the city gate there was a heavy stream of traffic, in the midst of which the chair almost disappeared. Mr. So Fat hurried along with the juniors, but evidently in a disturbed and distressed frame of mind, uncertain whether to follow the scared coolies, or to convoy his charges safely to the shelter of the house of Mr. Wun.

The six retainers of Mr. Wun, who had hitherto followed the party as a guard, were separated from them by the thronging traffic, and were lost to sight. So Fat, however, kept on with the Famous Five, more and more worried at every step.

Near the gateway through which the chair had passed, So Fat called the juniors to a halt, catching Wharton by the arm.

"It is complete injudiciousness to remove ourselves outside the city, Born-before-me!" he gasped. "To such an idea I cannot give adhesion."

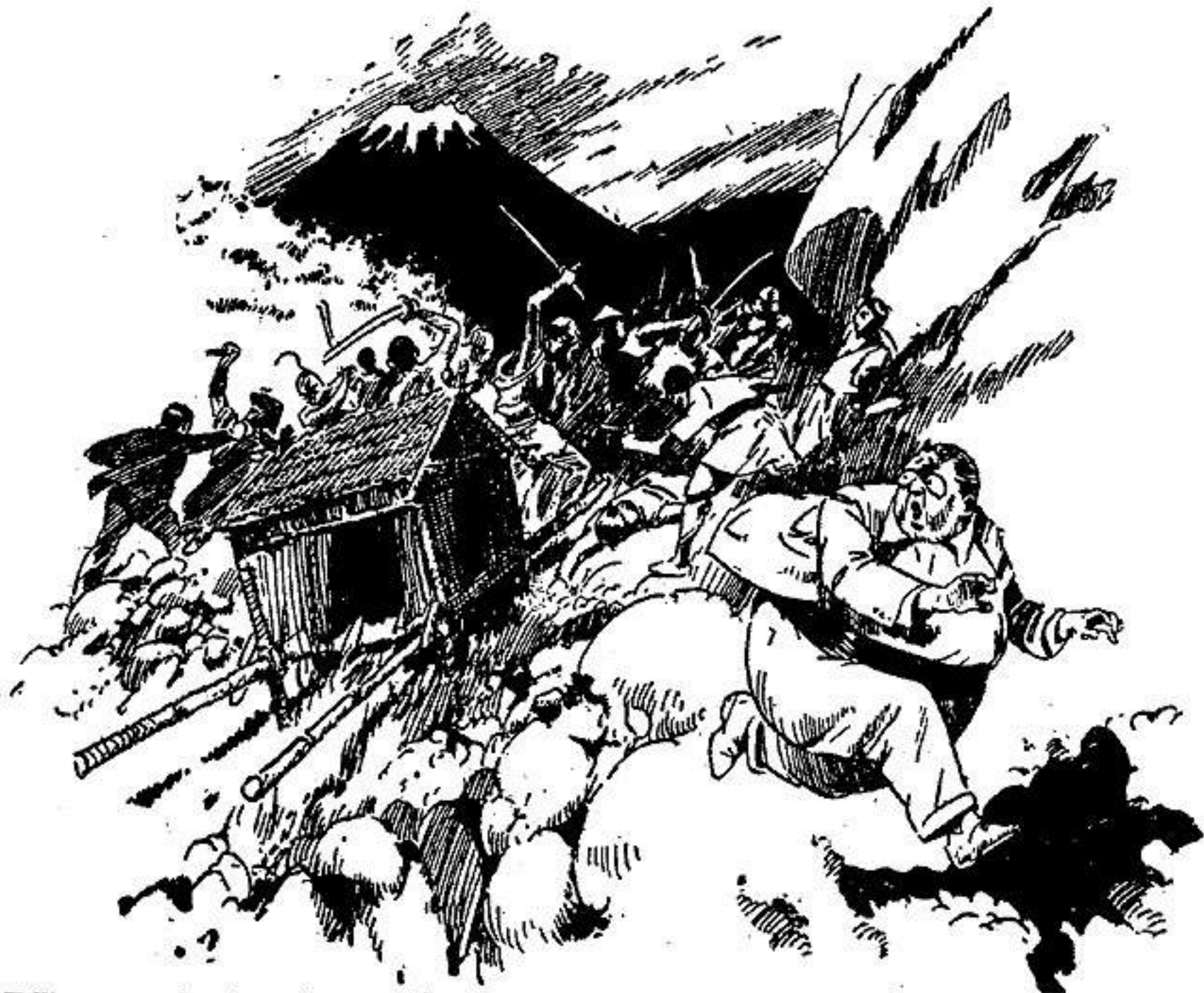
"We must find out if Bunter's in that chair," said Harry. "I'm practically certain of it!"

"But he did not make answer when estimable Cherry called with loud voice," said So Fat.

"He's fool enough for anything!" "Look here!" said Johnny Bull. "There's a military guard at the gate. They may be able to tell us something. Ask them in Chinese, Mr. So."

So Fat brightened up.

"True! That will perhaps settle the dubiousness beyond shadow of dubiety!" he assented.



Yelling, screaming, trampling, and the clashing of steel on steel, rang far and wide on the lonely hill-side as Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry attacked the "foreign devils." Dragging himself to his feet, the terrified Bunter made a bolt for safety.

As it happened, it did!

Mr. So's inquiry made his face assume a very grave expression. He turned to the juniors with outspread hands and distressed countenance.

"I learn that within the chair sat a white youth with adornment of spectacles and excessively plump physiognomy!" he said.

"That settles it!" said Bob Cherry. "It's Bunter!"

"It would appear dead cert and of a surety that it is Bunter," assented So Fat. "Yet the honourable orders of the long-ago-born Mr. Locke were to convey you with safety, this side up with care, along the house of Wun."

"Mr. Locke would not wish us to lose sight of Bunter, now that we've spotted him," said Harry.

"We're bound to keep after him," said Bob. "This is the only chance—once he is taken out of the city, we shall never see him again."

So Fat gasped with worry and indecision. But Bob Cherry's remark was evidently well founded. They knew now, for a certainty, that Bunter was in the chair; and it was undoubted that if he once disappeared, he would not be seen again.

"We must go on!" said Harry decidedly.

"No doubt this is correct judgment!" said So Fat. "But I am experiencing the most lively uneasiness and perturbation."

In spite of So Fat's uneasiness and perturbation, the party kept on, and passed through the gateway. Chong Lo and his chair were in sight in the distance, and they broke into a trot. There was plenty of traffic on the road, but outside the city it thinned. The juniors found themselves on a broad road, with motor-cars passing every few

minutes. So Fat would no doubt have expatiated, at any other time, of these visible signs that China was advancing, but at present he was too worried and alarmed. Moreover, he found it a little difficult, in his long black silk robe, to keep pace with the active Greyfriars fellows.

The coolies ahead were going at a quick trot now, and they turned from the road into a narrow path between rice-fields.

But the juniors, no longer impeded by thronging traffic, were gaining fast on them. Behind them So Fat panted and puffed and blew.

"We'll get them!" said Bob Cherry, between his teeth. "Keep up with us, Mr. So. We may want your gun when we reach them."

The Famous Five were unarmed, and one of the coolies, at least, had a knife. Overtaking the chair was not the only problem to be solved.

"That is quite so!" gasped Mr. So. "These are desperate tong-men—they will handle knife in murderous manner. In case of necessity, I will shoot them extemporaneously. Yes!"

So Fat, with all his queer English, and his weird ways, was a handy man with a revolver, as the juniors had already seen. There was little doubt that he would be needed, when they overtook the chair.

For what reason Bunter was going quietly with the kidnapers, Harry Wharton & Co. could not guess; but they could guess that the kidnapers would not part with him if they could help it. They were hunting Bunter, and hunting trouble at the same time.

But it was impossible to leave the fatuous Owl of the Remove to his fate. They were assured that Locke would

not have desired them to do so, had he been aware of the circumstances.

The coolies had taken to the paths among the rice-fields near the river; narrow tortuous paths, where perhaps they hoped to dodge the pursuit. But encumbered by the chair, with Bunter's weight in it, they had no chance in a foot-race with the active Greyfriars fellows.

The juniors came panting up behind the chair, and Wharton grabbed at a sweating shoulder.

"Stop!" he panted.

And as the coolie did not heed, Wharton grasped his loin-cloth, and dragged him over, and the chair plumped to the ground.

Instantly the four coolies were standing between it and the breathless pursuers, and Chong Lo had his knife in his hand, and a very ugly look on his yellow face.

"What you wantee along me?" he snarled.

"Wantee fiend belong us, along that chair!" answered Wharton, in the same "pidgin" English.

"No can do!" snapped Chong.

"I say, you fellows!" The curtain was drawn aside, and Billy Bunter's fat face appeared in view. "I say, you clear off! What the thump do you mean by running after a fellow like this? What?"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Get out of that chair, you burbling chump!" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Got out!" yelled Nugent.

"Shan't!"

"You benighted fathead——"

"I don't want any check from you fellows," said Bunter. "I'm going to have a flutter at fan-tan, same as I did in Macao. And if you fellows don't like it, you can lump it, see?"

"Fan-tan?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes; that's where I'm going—these chaps are taking me to a fan-tan house outside the city. They say it isn't allowed inside the town now."

"You—you—you——"

"You'll see me later," said Bunter.

"I dare say I shall be home by dark. Now leave a fellow alone! Get on, you Chinks."

The chums of the Remove glared at Bunter as if they could have eaten him. They understood now what was his motive for falling into an obvious and palpable trap.

"So—so you think these coolies are taking you to a fan-tan dive?" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"Yes; I've told them to."

"Fan-tan is now suppressed in Canton by recent government," said So Fat; "there is no more any fan-tan. They deceive you."

Bunter gave a fat wink.

"You can't pull my leg, you know," he remarked.

"I speak with assurance of absolute fact——"

"Gammon!" said Bunter.

"If you were going to play fan-tan, you born idiot, we'd yank you back by your silly ears, and stop you!" snorted Johnny Bull. "But you're not, you piffing porpoise. You're going to Tang Wang."

"Keep it up!" said Bunter derisively.

"You fat fool, these Chinese are kidnapping you——"

"He, he, ho!"

"We've come after you to save you, you blithering idiot, not that you're worth it!"

"Well, mind your own bisney!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"You can't frighten me with a yarn about a silly, old mandarin! I'm not scared of Tang Wang, as you fellows are! Leave me alone!"

"Get out of that chair!"

"Shan't!"

"Then we'll jolly well hook you out, you born idiot!"

"Beasts!"

Harry Wharton & Co. advanced towards the halted chair. Hitherto, the coolies had stood silent, waiting to see how the argument would end. Now they lined up between the rescuers and Bunter, and each of them had a knife in his hand.

Bunter jumped a little at the sight

of the flashing steel. Perhaps it dawned, at last, on his fat brain, that Chong Lo and his companions were not ordinary "chair" coolies, as he saw them produce deadly weapons so promptly.

"I—I say, you fellows, keep off!" he gasped. "I say——"

So Fat had his automatic in hand now. His yellow face took on the expression the juniors had seen on it, on the occasion when he had fired on Kang in the merchant's garden.

He raised the weapon to a level. His slanting eyes gleamed over it. He rapped out sharp Chinese to the coolies.

Bunter blinked from the chair in terror.

"I say, mind what you're about!" he yelled. As Bunter was behind the coolies, he had an excellent chance of stopping a bullet that missed them.

So Fat rapped out Chinese again. The juniors did not understand the words, but they understood the threatening tones. And the four coolies were evidently daunted by the white man's weapon in the secretary's hand.

"I think this will be a bit of all right!" said So Fat. "I tell them I shoot them like canine quadrupeds, suppose they handle knife in murderous manner. Yes! I think we get off with it, as you say."

He spat Chinese at the coolies again.

Billy Bunter began to scramble out of the chair. Even his fatuousness was not proof against the plain evidence that he was in the hands of desperadoes.

Chong Lo turned on him with a snarl, and struck him with his clenched left hand, sending him sprawling inside the chair. Bunter gave a yell that rang far over the paddy fields.

Bang!

So Fat pulled the trigger, and Chong gave a yell of agony as a bullet ploughed through his arm.

He leapt away, his yellow face convulsed with rage. The three other coolies leapt after him, and squashed into the thick mud of the rice-fields beside the path. All four of them disappeared from sight in a few seconds; and Harry Wharton & Co. were left victorious.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Enemy!

BILLY BUNTER sat up in the chair, trembling in every fat limb. His podgy face was like chalk.

Even Bunter understood now.

"I—I say, you fellows——" he gasped.

"You fat dummy!" growled Johnny Bull. "I've a jolly good mind to kick you all the way back to Canton."

So Fat glanced round anxiously.

"We must return with excessive speed!" he said. "We are now in lonely, solitary spot, and indubitably those unpleasant and disgusting ones have associated scoundrels at beck and call. Hurry!"

"Come on, Bunter!"

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Get a move on, dummy!" snapped Wharton.

"Look here, don't be a silly ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "You know jolly well that I can't walk back in this heat. You fellows take hold of those poles."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You've turned off my coolies," said Bunter indignantly. "I suppose you are going to carry the chair."

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"C-c-carry the chair with you in it!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather! Think I'm going to walk?" hooted Bunter. "It's too jolly hot, I can tell you. Don't be rotten slackers! Four of you can carry the chair, just like those Chinks! Yarooooooh!"

The Famous Five did not argue the point with Bunter. They grasped him, and dragged him headlong out of the chair.

There was a fearful yell from Bunter as he landed on the path.

"Now, you fat chump——"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Get a move on!" roared Bob.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Kick him along!"

"Yooooop!"

The chums of the Remove had no patience to waste on Bunter.

It was only too probable that Chong had help within call; and that they might be attacked by a crowd of Chinese before they could emerge from the tortuous paths among the paddy-fields into the road.

Two or three hefty kicks caused Bunter to leap to his feet, with a wild howl. Two or three more started him homeward.

"Owl! You! Leave off, you beasts!" roared Bunter. "I'm going, ain't I? Yow-ow-ow! I'll jolly well lick you! Yow-ow!"

"Get on, you fat fool!"

"Buck up, you burbling bandersnatch! Do you want a gang of Chinks to grab us in this lonely place?" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"The excessive speed is the indispensable sine qua non!" gasped So Fat. "I hear whistling sound, which is certainly signal of lawless and desperate characters. Hurry!"

The juniors understood the need of haste.

They were at a good distance from the city, but two or three high buildings in the distance were a guide. They hurried on by the narrow path, Bunter snorting and grunting and grumbling. But a path in a Chinese paddy-field is not easy to get out of for a stranger in the land. Often it is intentionally made to wind, either to avoid some sacred spot where a path must not be laid, or to baffle evil spirits that might dog one's footsteps. But for the presence of So Fat, the Greyfriars juniors would have been hopelessly lost.

And Mr. Wun's secretary seemed every now and then in doubt. In the excitement of chasing the coolies the juniors had given little heed to the way they had followed. It was far from easy to retrace their steps.

"Yarooooogh! Help!" came a sudden yell from Billy Bunter.

"Oh, you dummy!" gasped Nugent.

"Owl! Help!"

Bunter had slipped from the path into the field adjoining. He went down into thick, juicy mud, which covered his fat little legs over the knees.

He strove frantically to scramble out. But as fast as he pulled out one fat leg the other sank deeper and jammed tighter.

"Owl! Help!" yelled Bunter. "Don't you beasts go on and leave me! I say, you fellows! Help!"

With angry exclamations the juniors gathered round to help Bunter. It was just like the fatuous Owl to have an accident like this, when every moment was precious.

"Quick!" panted So Fat. "I see

persons in rice-fields! Only excessive quickness will save our personal bacon."

"Get hold of that fat chump!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Owl! Mind how you go!" howled Bunter. "Leggo my collar! You're chook-chook-choking me."

"Serve you jolly well right!" gasped Bob.

"Groogh! Owl! Beast!"

It was not easy to extract Bunter from the clinging mud. All the five got hold of him somewhere, and dragged hard. Bunter yelled frantically.

"Owl! Beast! Leggo my ear! Leggo my hair! Yarooooogh! You're breaking my arm, Cherry, you rotter! Owl!"

"Go it!" gasped Nugent.

"Yarooooh!"

"Heave away!" panted Bob Cherry.

Bunter was extracted, like a cork from a bottle. He staggered on the edge of the narrow path, reeking with foul-smelling mud, and gasping for breath.

"Come on!" panted Nugent.

"Owl! Groogh! I'm all muddy——"

"Fathead! Come on!"

"Owl! Help!" yelled Bunter, as he slipped again and splashed into the mud, this time in a sitting position.

"Oh crumbs!"

"You benighted idiot!"

"Look out!" came an alarmed yell from So Fat; and the bang of the automatic followed.

"Oh crikey! The Chinks!"

From three or four different directions dark, fierce faces appeared among the growing rice.

Only too plainly, Chong Lo had had associates at hand.

The chums of the Remove spun round from Bunter, to see So Fat retreating backwards along the path, firing as he retreated, with five or six Chinese attacking him. They saw a Chinaman fall, yelling—they saw another plunge headlong into the mud, shot down by So Fat; then the secretary disappeared from their sight, his assailants still following him with savage cries and brandished knives.

But Harry Wharton & Co. had no time to think of what was happening to So Fat. A moment more, and they were themselves attacked.

Eight or nine Chinese were upon him, knife in hand; grasping them. Among them was Chong, his wounded arm hanging helpless at his side, his face a yellow mask of rage.

"Back up!" shouted Wharton.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" panted Bob Cherry.

Shoulder to shoulder, the Famous Five made a rush to join So Fat. Harry Wharton felt himself seized, and he closed with the Chinese who grasped him, and rolled on the path with him.

Had the ruffian used his knife it would have been all over with the captain of the Remove. But it was evident that the tong-men had been ordered to take the schoolboys prisoners. The knife flashed before Wharton's eyes, but did not strike. But the Chinaman grasped him with muscular hands, and pinned him down. Strong and sturdy as he was, Wharton was powerless in that herculean grasp.

He struggled furiously, but he struggled in vain. As he fought he had glimpses of the others. Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had broken through the tong-men; but Bob Cherry, in the grasp of two muscular ruffians, was fighting

like a lion. Faintly, through the wild excitement of the fight, came the howling voice of Billy Bunter, jammed helplessly in the mud of the rice-field, unable to extricate himself, and almost out of his fat wits with terror.

Bob Cherry went down; and Wharton, still struggling, saw two of the tong-men binding him with a rope. Then ropes were run round his own limbs, and knotted fast.

Then came a sound of running feet, and he saw Frank Nugent coming back up the path, his face white, his eyes blazing.

Wharton shrieked to him.

"Run! Franky! Run for it! you can't help us—run for your life." Get to Ferrers Locke and tell him—it's the only chance for us! Run!"

At that moment, Wharton did not know, or care, whether Ferrers Locke would ever be able to help. His one desire was to save his chum from the tong-men.

Nugent halted.

"Harry——"

"Run!" yelled Wharton. "Quick— you can't help us—run for your life."

Five or six of the tong-men were already leaping towards Nugent. Still for a second he hesitated to leave his chum. But it was clear that if the grasp of the enemy closed on him, he would be a helpless prisoner like the others; and he turned and ran up the narrow path.

After him, yelling, went the tong-men.

Bang, bang, bang! came floating from the distance over the green rice-fields. So Fat was still firing—maintaining a running fight against heavy odds. Harry Wharton hoped and prayed that his three friends were with the secretary, and that they would escape with him.

Four of the tong-men remained with the prisoners. Bunter was roughly dragged from the mud, and a cord knotted round his fat arms. Then the three of them were hurried away in a direction opposite from that where So Fat was still resisting. By winding paths through the green rice, they went, driven on by blows and curses when they lagged; and faintly, from the far distance behind them, came the last crack of So Fat's revolver.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Lost Chums!

HONK! Honk! Honk!
The motor-horn hooted loudly.

Strange enough sight on a Chinese landscape, a motor-bus came honking and careering along the road. It was crowded with Chinese, who stared at the little, dusty, muddy, breathless group by the roadside.

Perhaps it was the appearance of the swarming motor-bus that stopped the pursuit of the tong-men; added to So Fat's prowess with the automatic. Four of the party had reached the road—So Fat, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Bitter as it was to leave their comrades in the hands of the enemy, they had no choice in the matter; for heavy odds pressed on them, and so far from being able to rescue Wharton and Bob Cherry they were unable to defend themselves. Had the attack of the tong-men been pushed to extremity, the whole party must have been overwhelmed. But as the swarming motor-

bus came careering along, the tong-men paused and hesitated, and finally backed away from the road out of sight. They were at a good distance from Canton; but still too near the city for open brigandage.

Once out of the tangled paths of the rice-fields in full view of passing traffic, Chong and his men gave it up.

So Fat, with the perspiration running in streams down his face, panted for breath.

His last shot had been fired; and it was an immense relief to Mr. Wun's secretary to see the enemy vanish.

"This is stroke of luck and too much of a good thing," he exclaimed, with a gesture towards the motor-bus. "We shall obtain lift back to city on this happily encountered vehicle."

And he signed to the Chinese driver. The motor-bus slowed down as it came on. Every face in it was turned curiously on the group by the roadside.

Johnny Bull gritted his teeth, staring back across the fields.

"We can't leave them!"

"The honourable necessity knows no law!" said So Fat. "It is passing traffic that has scared off lawless tong-men, but they are too extensive numerically, for us. We must remove ourselves with rapidity to other places. Yes."

The three juniors exchanged looks. To penetrate into the tangled fields again in search of their friends was madness; merely delivering themselves into the hands of the enemy. But to go, leaving the prisoners, was bitter.

"Sink or swim together!" muttered Johnny Bull, clenching his hands.

"The sinkfulness of the swimfulness is the proper caper!" said Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "But—"

"Oh, honourable one, born before me by many years!" exclaimed So Fat, in alarm, "remain in my miserable company. The other estimable ones are already beyond reach; even if there were no tong-men watching for us in the rice, you would never approximate to their present locality."

"That's true!" muttered Nugent. "They've got them away by this time, you fellows. We'd better get to Ferrers Locke—he's the only man that can help—no good playing the goat. That's what Wharton called out to me when I was going back for him—"

It was obviously the only thing to be done. A moment's reflection told the three juniors that they could not have found the prisoners, let alone have rescued them. The task was up to Ferrers Locke, and it was useless to add to its difficulty.

"Very well!" muttered Johnny Bull. "You're right. I know. But—" He gritted his teeth and said no more.

The motor-bus had halted at So Fat's beckoning.

It was going towards the city, fortunately, and it was easy to find room on it. When it rolled away, grunting and honking, the three juniors and So Fat were inside, stared at by innumerable Chinese.

Eyes of hidden men watched them as they went. But the tong-men did not appear in sight again. Chong Lo, probably, was satisfied with the capture he had made. The mandarin's orders had been to seize at least one member of the English party, and Chong had succeeded in capturing three of them. Chong was in luck; and he had a very pleasing report to make to the chief of the Red Dragon tong.

Johnny Bull and Nugent and Hurreo

Singh had grim faces, as they rolled away towards the city in the motor-bus, scarcely conscious of the curious staring of the Chinese passengers.

This was China—modern China; and the thought struck them very forcibly. A lawless kidnapping by desperate tong-men on one hand: on the other, a modern motor-bus grinding and honking along, for all the world like a bus going down Oxford Street. East and West were strangely mingled, in the confusion of "old China" shaking off ancient ways and adopting new ones, slowly and confusedly transforming itself into "new China."

The bus turned off near the gate of the city, and there they left it, and entered the city on foot.

With heavy hearts the juniors followed So Fat back to the house of Mr. Wun. They wondered whether Ferrers Locke would blame them for having followed Bunter out of the city; but, after all, there had been nothing else they could have done. Even towards Bunter, whose fatuous folly had caused all the trouble, they could not feel angry now, for the fat junior was evidently a prisoner of the tong, like Wharton and Bob, and his fate was hardly in doubt. The Canton authorities might lend their aid; but it was certain that the prisoners were already on their way inland, and were already, or would soon be, out of the jurisdiction of the city. Once they were at Pan-shan, no power in China could save them from the mandarin. For in Pan-shan, Tang Wang was lord and master.

Could Ferrers Locke save them?

Could even the Baker Street detective help the prisoners who had been swallowed up in the interior of mysterious China.

They could not help doubting it.

But if Ferrers Locke could not save them, they were lost beyond redemption, and their three friends would never see them again. It was no wonder that the three juniors had dark faces and heavy hearts, as they arrived at the house of Mr. Wun with So Fat.

Ferrers Locke had returned; and he was in the ko-tang when the three grim-faced juniors arrived.

Evidently he was waiting for them. His face expressed little; but they knew that he was deeply disturbed.

"What has happened?" he asked quietly. "You did not return directly to this house as I told you."

The juniors explained in a few words. Locke's brow grew darker and darker as he listened.

"Then Wharton, Cherry, and Bunter are prisoners?" he said.

"Yes."

Ferrers Locke compressed his lips.

"We couldn't leave Bunter to it, Mr. Locke!" said Nugent. "We had to try to save him."

The Baker Street detective nodded.

"I do not blame you," he said. "It was right to make the attempt, but it has turned out very unfortunate. Tang Wang has now three prisoners instead of one. It is fortunate however, that all of you did not fall into his hands."

"There must be some way of getting at that villain," said Johnny Bull. "There's some sort of Government here."

Ferrers Locke smiled faintly.

"No doubt; but it will not be useful to us," he said. "The scene of action is now transferred to Pan-shan, a city far inland, over the border in the province of Kwang-si."

"But—" said Nugent.

"Tang Wang has an official position at Pan-shan, under the protection of the Tu-chun—the war-lord—who is powerful in Kwang-si," said Ferrers Locke. "The Canton authorities could not touch him, even if they desired to do so. You must remember that China is now split up into sections, many of them at war with one another. It is by no means impossible that this province, and the city of Canton itself, may be overrun by an army from the north—not impossible that it may be sacked by an army from the west—from Kwang-si or Yun-nan. Everything is in the melting pot now. A white man who leaves the beaten track in China takes his life in his hands; in many places there is no established authority at all; and where authority exists, it is not over-anxious to help 'foreign devils.'"

Nugent set his teeth.

"Do you mean that there's no chance for them, Mr. Locke?" he asked.

"Not in the least!" answered Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "No stone will be left unturned to save them, and I hope that they will be saved. But there is no force that can be used against Tang Wang in his own city."

"If they can't be saved we're going after them," said Frank. "I'm not going to leave China alive, if—if—"

"We need not imagine the worst till we hear that the worst has happened," said Locke quietly. "Keep a stiff upper lip, and hope for the best. For the present, at least, I am assured that the lives of the prisoners are safe. We have time to act, and I shall not lose a moment. I am going to consult now with Mr. Wun. In the meantime, I trust you will remain within the safety of these walls."

The detective left the juniors with that. Wun Lung joined them in the ko-tang, his little yellow face clouded.

"This plenty too much bad news," he said. "Fattee ole Bunter plenty too much big fool. But me tinkee Tang Wang askee plenty big lansom along our fiends. Me tinkee plaps he askee thirty—forty thousand silver shoes. Plaps allee light!"

It was some faint comfort to the chums of Greyfriars to think that possibly the captured juniors would be held to ransom. But that comfort was faint, and in the house of Mr. Wun the sun went down on heavy hearts and clouded faces.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Away Into China!

"O H dear!"

It was, perhaps, the hundredth time that Billy Bunter had made that remark.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were silent.

It was futile to grouse; though Bunter did not seem aware of that obvious fact.

The chums of Greyfriars were uncomfortable enough. Cords bound them hand and foot. They lay helpless in the swaying, swiftly-moving palanquin.

The three of them had been tossed into a palanquin, and the curtains dropped into place, shutting them off from view.

Eight brawny Chinese coolies carried the palanquin, four ahead and four behind, the poles resting on their shoulders, making little of the weight they carried.

Chong Lo, his arm in a sling, walked beside, at a rapid pace, burdened as they were, which the juniors could not have equalled on foot over a long distance.

Sometimes, as the palanquin jolted or shifted, the curtains swung a little, and the prisoners had a partial view of the surrounding country.

Several times they sighted a flowing, shining river, without knowing whether it was the Che-kiang, the Pearl river, or the West river, or another of the many streams in the locality of Canton. Chiefly they saw vast rice-fields that stretched away, apparently to infinity.

From the direction of the sun they knew that they were being carried westward—that is, into the interior. But they saw nothing of the many towns and villages that lay to the west of Canton; and it was easy to guess that Chong was avoiding them, and keeping to unfrequented country paths.

It was not likely that any Chinese who had seen them would have interfered; but the kidnappers were taking no risks. In the Kwang-tung, or Canton province, Tang Wang was no more than any other Chinaman of wealth and rank. Not till they crossed the border into Kwang-Si would the coolies reach country where he was powerful. And until they came into the region where the descendant of the Mings was lord and master, Chong & Co. were taking all precautions.

Many blue-clad Chinese passed them on the way, and some glanced curiously at the closed palanquin; once or twice a question was asked by a passer-by, and answered by Chong. But a closed palanquin was a common enough sight on any road in China, and the passers-by did not seem unduly curious.

How many miles they covered as the tireless coolies trotted on towards the setting sun the juniors did not know; but they knew that they were many a long mile from the city of Canton.

On and on and on, seemingly tireless, trod the bearers. Another shifting of the blue curtains showed the prisoners that the character of the country round them was changing. Cultivation was more sparse, and the road wound upward, hilly and steep.

Through gaps in the hills the sunset came with a red glare.

The palanquin swayed and swung. The path was very steep in places, and huge slabs of granite were laid across it, forming a kind of steps. Up and up swung the tireless coolies.

On the mountain road passers-by were fewer. But even here there was cultivation; little fields glimmering among patches of rock, terraced out of the hillside. The Chinese, with their teeming millions of population, cannot afford to leave ground uncultivated, and patient men could be seen bending to hard labour as the dusk thickened.

More than once the juniors had thought of calling out, but it was evidently useless. Chong and his gang were armed, and the tired, overworked Chinese peasants were not likely to think of coming into conflict with them, especially for the sake of "foreign devils." Indeed, it was clear that if

Chong had anticipated any trouble on that score he would have gagged the prisoners, which he had not troubled to do.

Had a white man appeared on the road, Wharton and Bob Cherry would have taken the chance. But in all the glimpses of the road they had through the swaying curtains, they sighted no white man.

Suddenly, in a lonely hill-path, where the coolies laboured up the granite steps laid across the road, there came an interruption. From the rocks five or six wild-looking figures leaped, and there was a sudden flashing of swords in the sinking sunlight.

On the steep path the palanquin was held at an angle, and the curtains had fallen aside, giving the juniors a clear view of their desolate surroundings. There was a shrill squeak of terror

"Foreign devils" had nothing to hope for from Chinese bandits. It was only too likely that if they fell into the hands of the wild-looking outcasts they would be murdered out of hand.

Chong was screaming to the bandits, and amid the incomprehensible stream of Chinese the juniors caught the name Tang Wang several times repeated. Probably the scarred Chinee was warning the outlaws not to attack men in the service of the mandarin. If so, his warning had little effect; they were still far from Pan-shan, and probably Tang Wang and his soldiers had little terror for the bandits. The ruffians paused, but their savage and ferocious looks hinted that the pause was only momentary. Their leader, a gigantic man with black moustaches curled up to his eyes, shouted back to Chong—words that the juniors could not understand, but in tones of contempt and mockery. It was



Panting and cursing the gang of Chinks swept by the spot where the three Greyfriars juniors lay concealed, and raced on down the winding path. Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep. "Safe!" he muttered. "We're out of their hands now!"

from Billy Bunter at the sight of the half dozen wild figures leaping from the rocks.

Wharton and Bob felt their hearts beat faster.

There had always been bandits in China, and the present disturbed state of the country had greatly increased their numbers. And the juniors had no doubt that Chong & Co. had run into a gang of bandits watching the hill-road for passengers and plunder.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

The palanquin stopped, and was set abruptly down. Chong Lo and his men flashed out their long knives, and Chong shouted to the bandits in shrill Chinese.

"I—I say, you fellows!" stuttered Bunter. "Oh dear! Oh crikey! Ow!"

"What now?" breathed Wharton, his face tense.

evident that a deadly conflict was coming.

Watching from the palanquin, the juniors could see Chong's face almost grey with alarm and rage. In laying his plans, Chong had evidently not counted on a meeting with bandits on the mountain road on his way to Kwang-si.

"There's going to be a scrap!" breathed Bob. "These rotters—they'll be cut to pieces!"

"I—I say, you fellows! Oh dear!" wailed Bunter. "I wish I was back at Greyfriars! Oh crikey!"

Chong Lo, knife in hand, still screaming at the hesitating bandits, backed closer to the palanquin. The curtain was jerked aside, and his knife-hand was thrust in. For a moment the prisoners were chilled by the fearful

thought that the wretch intended to murder them out of hand, rather than lose them. But Chong, suddenly ceasing to scream Chinese, hissed over his shoulder in pidgin English:

"Cuttee lope! You fightee along us fellce. Savce life blong you."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

He held up his bound hands to the knife. The keen blade sawed through the rope almost in an instant. Chong dropped the knife into the palanquin, and Wharton seized it instantly. In frantic haste he cut loose Bob Cherry's bonds, and the rope round his own legs. A few more seconds and Bunter was freed, though his freedom was not of much use to the Owl of the Remove, who lay in the bottom of the palanquin stuttering with terror.

"Back up, Bob!" muttered Wharton. "You bet!"

They scrambled out of the palanquin; Wharton with the knife in his hand, Bob catching up a jagged stone from the road. Chong Lo had a long curved sword in his grasp, which he had drawn from some recess of the palanquin.

The bandits were not yet attacking, though they crept and crouched closer, like wild beasts about to spring, brandishing their swords, and uttering ferocious howls, and contorting their faces into hideous expressions. That was a common Chinese trick for putting the wind up the enemy, practised even by regular soldiers in that strange country. Chong yelled back at them, uttering again and again the name of the Mandarin Tang Wang. But it was only too clear that even that potent name was not a name to conjure with in this instance.

There was a louder and more savage yelling from the bandits at the sight of the two white faces. If Wharton had doubted, he would have realised then that the "foreign devils" had less mercy to expect from the bandits than from Chong, or even the mandarin himself. Only the victory of Chong & Co. could save their lives, and they braced themselves to back up the scarred Chinese in the fight.

A rush came suddenly, led by the gigantic bandit with the black moustaches. In an instant a wild and furious struggle was raging on the narrow mountain path.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Escape!

IT was like a scene from the Inferno for several wild minutes. The yelling and screaming filled the air with deafening sound. No Chinaman can fight, or do anything else, without making a noise, and the din was terrific. Yelling, screaming, trampling, clashing of steel on steel, rang far and wide on the lonely hillside. Billy Bunter, in the palanquin, palpitated with terror. Wharton and Bob Cherry were fighting hard. Wharton dodged, hardly knowing how he did so, a slash from the tall, black-moustached bandit's sword, and slashed back with the knife, laying the ruffian's arm open from shoulder to wrist. Bob Cherry crashed a jagged rock into a wild, fierce face, sending his assailant staggering away. Chong Lo, with a slash of his sword, sent a head spinning from a bandit's shoulders, and it bounded away among the rocks like a football. Two of the coolies were cut down; another of the bandits was stabbed, and another rolled on the ground in savage struggle with one of the bearers.

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Through the gap in the hills the last red glare of the sunset lighted up the demoniac scene. Darkness was falling; only through that one opening in the hills, the sunset glared like a crimson lamp. From the fallen palanquin a fat face looked out, with little round eyes bulging with terror behind big spectacles. Bunter crawled out of the palanquin and dragged himself to his feet, and started to run down the steep road by which they had ascended.

Like pandemonium broken loose, the deadly struggle raged, and then, with kaleidoscopic suddenness, it was over, and the bandits were running.

Wharton, in expectation of a slash from the bandit chief's huge sword, was amazed to see him turn and scuttle back to the rocks.

The slash of the junior's knife had temporarily disabled his arm, and the big bandit was evidently satisfied with what he had received. In Chinese warfare the proportion of fighting to running is generally about one per cent. The victor is the one who does not run first. In this case the bandits ran first—two of them remaining dead on the ground, however.

Two of Chong's coolies lay on the earth, two more were wounded. Several of them, yelling with triumph, dashed after the bandits, though not very far. One of the fleeing bandits whirling

again instantly—if he could. The fact that their help had saved the situation for him was not likely to make any difference to Chong Lo.

But the juniors had a chance now, and they made the most of it. They raced down the steep path, leaping from rock to rock, from granite slab to granite slab, and so swift and sudden was their flight that the scarred Chink was not aware of it till they were fifty yards away. Then a shrill, enraged yell from Chong warned them.

Wharton glanced back over his shoulder.

Darkness was falling thick on the shadowy hillside; the figures of the pursuing Chinese stood out black against the red glare through the hill-gap. The juniors tore on.

They overtook Bunter, and Wharton grasped him by one fat arm. There was a squeal from Bunter:

"Ow! Leggo! Spare me! Ow! Wow!"

"Fathead! Get on with it! Take his other fin, Bob!"

"Oh, it's you! I say, you fellows, I—"

"Don't talk! Run!"

"Oh dear! Ow!"

The path turned round the base of a great cliff. The panting juniors raced round it.

"This way!" breathed Wharton.

He plunged among a mass of irregular boulders by the side of the steep path. Bob Cherry followed his lead instantly, and Bunter was dragged between them.

Among the rocks they crouched, in deep shadow. Wharton placed his hand over Bunter's mouth.

Patter, patter, patter! came the footsteps of Chong & Co. They were less than a minute behind; but less than a minute had been enough. Panting and cursing, the gang of Chinks swept by the spot where the juniors lay concealed, and raced on down the winding path.

With their hearts almost in their mouths the juniors listened. Chong had no suspicion that they had stopped and taken to cover, and every moment the darkness was thickening. Faintly, far down the hill-path, echoed back the pattering footsteps of the yellow men, dying away at last into silence.

Wharton breathed hard and deep.

"Safe!" he muttered. "Safe—just now, anyhow! We're out of their hands!"

"Good egg!" breathed Bob.

Billy Bunter sat up.

"I—I—I—say, you fellows! Are they gone?"

"Yes."

There was a brief silence. Darkness now lay like a cloak on the hill, and there was little danger of the enemy finding them. In the darkness Billy Bunter was heard to move.

"I say!" Bunter was fumbling in his pocket. "I'm frightfully hungry! I say, isn't it lucky—"

"Eh? What is lucky?"

"That I've got a bit of sugar-cane in my pocket."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've got it here. If you fellows don't want any, I'll eat it all."

And, without waiting to ascertain whether the fellows wanted any, William George Bunter ate it all!

THE END.

(Boys, whatever you do, don't miss the next topping yarn in this grand new series. It's entitled: "THE BEGGAR OF SHANTUNG!" and you'll enjoy every line of it.)

OUR LEATHER WALLETS ARE PERFECT FOR THE POCKET!

All you've got to do to win one is to compile a Greyfriars limerick like Jack Fenster, of 271, Benson Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, who has sent in the following winning effort:

When Bunter wants money
for tuck,
It's time for the fellows to
duck.
They know him of old,
As a borrower bold,
So Billy's not often in luck!

Get busy on a limerick and let
me have your effort by the next
mail!

round with brandished sword sufficed to stop the pursuit.

Wharton and Bob Cherry, for a moment, stared round them blankly, taken by surprise by the sudden cessation of the conflict. They could hardly believe for the moment that the enemy really were running. Chong Lo, leaning down, was stanching the blood from a cut on his leg.

Wharton caught his comrade by the arm.

"Now's our chance!" he breathed.

Bob's eyes gleamed.

"You bet! Hook it! But—Bunter, what—"

"Look!"

Wharton pointed to a fat figure labouring down the steep hill-path. Bunter was already a hundred yards away, going strong.

Bob grinned breathlessly.

"Just like Bunter! After him!"

The two juniors tore down the path.

Chong Lo, for his own sake, had freed them; and, likely enough, he owed his success to it, for it was Wharton's lucky blow at the bandit chief that had set the cowardly crew running. But it was certain that now the conflict was over Chong would secure them

PHEEEP! THE GAME'S STARTED, and forty thousand footer fans cry:

UP, *the* ROVERS!



Grand Opening Instalment of JOHN BREARLEY'S Stirring Footer Yarn.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Disastrous First Half!

HERE they come!"
"Come on, Rovers! Up, the Rovers!"
"Hurray-ay-ay!"

A cheer, small at first, but swelling rapidly into a throaty roar, flamed through the stands and crowded banks of Railton Rovers Football Ground, as a practice ball soared high into the air from the players' entrance, followed by the Rovers themselves at the double.

"Rail-ton! Hurray-ay-ay!"

Again and again the welcome sounded—the typical, joyous greeting of a first-match-of-the-season crowd, eager to let fly the enthusiasm stored up since last May. The sight of the fresh green turf, unworn as yet by stabbing, slithering studs, the crisp fluttering flags, and their own lads in the famous black-and-white jerseys went straight to the heads of the throng like wine.

Railton v. Redburn United—the first match! The start of another long fight for League or Cup! All apelt footer joy to the Railton folk, and they let themselves go with a vengeance. Forgotten were the disasters of last season already; like all home crowds, they were optimistic at the start of the season. Whether they remained so depended on the team.

For, although the gate was a big one, everyone knew the Rovers were "on trial." There were loyal supporters present who remembered when they had been a proud First Division team, with three Internationals fighting in their ranks, and these stuck to the club through thick and thin. But the majority of the onlookers had rolled up because it was the first match; and if the team did no better than last season—well, there was the Melborough Athletic ground only ten miles away, and the Railton "gates" would suffer in consequence.

However, the town was there to give the club a chance. That was something, anyway, after the disappointments of the last five seasons.

Briskly the Rovers trotted to their goal for five minutes "shooting-in," and expert eyes studied them eagerly. The team looked mighty fit and well, as was to be expected with a trainer like "Uncle" Bill Nye; but there were plenty of veterans among them—too many, it was whispered—and most of the players were old stories to the Railton crowd.

All the defenders, save the left-half, promoted from last season's reserves, had seen years of first-class football, and burly George Harvey, the centre-half and skipper, had been with the club for over twelve seasons, to everyone's knowledge.

TOP-SPEED JIMMY, THE NEW INSIDE-RIGHT, TURNS A TEAM OF CROCKS INTO CRACKS!

On the other hand, the forward line was as green as grass—a fact which had given James Brennan, the genial but masterful owner, plenty of sleepless nights. Thomas, the centre-forward, was the only experienced man among them, a sound man and a fine shot—providing others did the donkey work. Under pressure, however, he became surly and flurried—by no means an ideal man to lead a raw attack.

Of the other forwards, the two left-wingers and the outside-right were all youngsters, fast, willing and tough. Which was all. What they didn't know about the finer points of League football added a few more furrows to the dour, weather-beaten face of "Uncle" Nye, and made him utter strange words as he danced on the touchline.

Rumours were flying around that a new star forward was to be brought in to strengthen the line, but so far, he

had not materialised. Altogether, for the first match of the season, at least, the Rovers raiding squad was a distinctly creaky proposition.

Still, there was young Jimmy Brennan, and the watching crowd raised a chortle of delight as they saw the strapping youngster with the crisp red hair and neat movements of a born footballer, trap the ball prettily and ram home a scorcher into the net.

"Wow! That's the stuff, boy!"

There was no secret about it—he was the player they had come to see. Fast, clever, and as hard as nails, Young Jimmy had always been a general favourite in the town, and the club's mascot ever since he was able to toddle on to the turf.

For the last three seasons his lightning raids and deadly shooting at inside-right had been the mainspring of the powerful Clayton School team, making them the most formidable college side in the country. Now, with three English School caps to his credit, people were talking of him as another Billy Bastin.

Born and bred in Railton, it was only natural that one day he should step into the team whose fortunes his family had ruled since its foundation; and Railton football fans had followed his school triumphs with open joy. Despite the difference in the class of football, they expected a lot from the boy, even in his first "big" season. And, although his cheerful freckled face hid the fact, Jimmy knew it.

"Good shot, Jimmy!"

"You do that in the match, or I'll tan your hide!" threatened Reynolds, the giant 'keeper, as he heaved the ball at the grinning youth.

"Yah!" chuckled Jimmy, nodding the leather to Payton, the tall, leggy youth who partnered him on the right wing. "Call yourself a goal—"

Pheep!

It was the referee's whistle calling for the toss. Harvey turned and ran towards the centre, where he shook hands with the Redburn skipper, and tossed the coin into the air. Forty thousand pairs of eyes followed it anxiously, and another cheer broke out as Harvey smiled and selected his goal.

Railton had won the toss!

"Gosh, Jimmy, I'm windy!" muttered Payton, as the men ran to their places. It was his first game with the seniors, too, and though he was three years older than Jimmy, his face was white and strained. Jimmy gripped his arm.

"So'm I, chump!" he breathed. "Don't show it, though! Remember our stunts, and we'll be O.K."

Next moment he was at the circle, face grim, as he glued his eyes to the Redburn inside trio. There was a moment's silence, a shrill whistle. The Redburn line swayed. To the tune of a solid roar, both sides snapped into action.

Instantly, the bellow of the crowd, rising swiftly to a high note, made Jimmy's head reel. He saw the ball running in front of the Redburn inside-left, flicked out a foot instinctively, and looked it away; flipped it to Thomas, and started for a gap between the half-backs. Somehow the ball came back to him, a red shirt appeared at his shoulder. But in that split second, he saw Payton streaking along the touch-line like a deer, and—whump!—his own foot hit the leather.

Like a brown line drawn across the turf, the ball whistled flat and true a few yards in front of the racing winger. It was a glorious pass, just far enough ahead to draw out Payton's best speed, and send him rioting round the full-back.

In a body, the other Rover forwards raced towards goal, ready for the centre; the crowd roused themselves in a mighty cheer, and then, as the Redburn right-back came across, Payton grew nervous and lost his head. With yards to move in, and plenty of time, he drove a wild kick at the ball, mistimed it, and—

"Oh-o-o-o!"

A wail of disappointment rose to the heavens as the ball sliced harmlessly behind the posts.

Payton's face looked ghastly. But steady George Harvey's voice boomed across the field.

"Bad luck, young 'un. Try again!"

And the Redburn defenders, startled to the core by that lightning attack from their own kick-off, grimaced at each other.

"Mark the redhead!" whispered their skipper to his halves.

They nodded grimly.

Mark him they did. But they had their hands full. The kick-off came to Harvey, who drew a man and slid the leather to Thomas. Instantly Jimmy darted to a clear spot, took the ball, feinted to sling it outside, and, instead, rapped it across to Miller, the inside-left. The criss-cross movement opened the Redburn defence badly, with Thomas heading straight for goal; but just as the centre steadied himself for a shot, a back came desperately into the picture and cleared.

"Will you mark that red-head!" hissed the Redburn skipper. "That's twice he's started something."

"Go it, lads! Sock it to 'em!"

The Railton stands were blazing with enthusiasm, and up in the pavilion

James Brennan nodded to the man next to him.

"He'll do, Phil!"

Philip Brennan, his brother and Jimmy's uncle, chuckled quietly.

"He's great! Oh, well done, Jimmy!"

The youngster had the ball again. This time he dribbled clear and gave it to Payton a second before he was grassed. Away raced the winger, only to lose control once more at the critical moment and see the ball sail downfield again.

Back came the Rovers, left-wing running the ball now. For a moment it looked as though Miller would do something, but just when a neat pass to Thomas might have led to something the lad stumbled and muffed it badly. The ball was lost. Railton's luck was right out.

Then Atkins, at outside-left, tried a run, hung on too long, and was forced into touch. Some brisk midfield play sent Jimmy and Payton away together, and a good centre swung across the field to Miller.

As one man the Railton stands leapt to their feet, cheering hoarsely. It was a goal—it must be, for the inside-left had the ball to himself, and Thomas, at centre, was unmarked. An accurate through-pass was all that was wanted. Instead, a miskick bumped the ball tamely against the centre-forward's heels, and a groan went up as a frantic defender whacked it out of play.

Red with anger Thomas whipped round.

"Call that football!" he bawled; at which Miller winced and fell back, disheartened.

Looking round quickly Jimmy noticed that Payton looked hopeless and Atkins sulky. A sudden sick dismay filled his heart.

That last failure was disastrous. With true footballing instinct he realised that, within ten minutes of the kick-off the forward line was going to pieces.

And the home supporters realised it, too, in the next five minutes. So far, their forwards had had all the play, yet chance after chance had gone begging. The Redburn defence, badly hustled and sore, seized their opportunity, pulled themselves together, and shut down on the Rovers savagely. Tackling and intercepting cleverly, they turned every clumsy mistake to advantage.

A good centre-forward might have rallied the youthful forwards and welded them into a line. But, blocked at every turn by the visitor's centre-half, Thomas grew disgruntled and wild—tried to break through on his own. The Miller-Atkins wing faded right away. Payton had lost himself completely. Time and again Jimmy, fiery-eyed, stormed his way through the defence by sheer pace and footwork that brought down the house, yet at the finish he found every colleague marked or out of place, and the Redburn goal hopelessly covered.

Gradually the visitor's half-backs took charge, and their long-neglected forwards began to see the ball. Before long play had settled permanently in the Rovers' half; attack after attack weaved and swayed towards their goal.

In quick succession Reynolds scooped a shot behind the posts, fisted out another, went full length to a third. The veteran defence, making up in judgment what they lost in speed, fought gallantly and well. But the Redburn forwards were an efficient lot, who knew each other's play, and their ball-control was deadly.

With four minutes to half-time lightning inter-passing on the right-wing tangled the Rover's defence. The ball came into midfield like a bullet, the pivot pulled it down, changed feet quickly, and whipped it to his inside-left. And the inside man, coming up like a train, took it gloriously on the run, whirled between the Rovers' backs, and crashed in a drive that left Reynolds helpless.

"Goal! Goal!"

One down! Two minutes to half-time! The crowd let out a half-hearted cheer as the Rovers lined up again. It seemed plain that the team was no better than last year. The attack was putrid. Now, if the defence was going to break—

A sudden joyous yell—the thunder of forty thousand people roaring at once. The Rovers were attacking again—at last!

Stung by that goal, their forwards had burst through the Redburn line straight from the kick-off, and now were gliding between the halves.

Thomas had the ball. He passed it to Jimmy, who swerved giddily round two men and pushed it out to Payton. Racing ahead the winger slammed it across to Miller, and at full speed the inside-left uncorked a rousing first-time shot.

Boomp!

With a cat-like leap the Redburn keeper got to it and punched it out. The ball fell at the feet of a full back, who turned in a twinkling to clear. His boot hit the leather solidly; but even as it flew upwards Jimmy flashed past and the ball hit him in the ribs, knocking the breath clean from his lungs.

Half-dazed and gasping, the lad went stumbling through, the ball at his toes, the field spinning horribly. Yet, through the mist before his eyes, he could see Thomas sidling in towards goal, unmarked, a few yards ahead.

How he managed it he never knew; but somehow he pulled himself upright, steadied the ball just long enough, and then guided it prettily through the maelstrom of legs and red jerseys—straight to that waiting figure in black-and-white.

Came the thump of a boot meeting leather, a rocking, bellowing chorus all round the ground, then the referee's whistle.

"Goal! Goa-oal!"

Jimmy went down in a heap!

The Rovers' New Star!

"ARE you all right, Jimmy?" Lying on the dressing-room table, with Bill Nye massaging his ribs vigorously, Jimmy looked up, to see his father and uncle come bursting quickly through the door.

At sight of the former a faint shadow came into the youngster's eyes. James Brennan's complexion, always somewhat florid, had a curiously unhealthy and purple stain in it now, brought on by intense excitement, and for a moment Jimmy frowned anxiously. Then he grinned.

"Calm down, dad!" he chuckled rudely. "I'm only winded. We got that goal, so why worry!"

He looked up again.

"Hallo, uncle!"

Philip Brennan pressed forward, smiling.

"Hallo, boy! Great work, that! It



By a fraction of a second only, the custodian's despairing fist beat the forward's head, and the ball sailed away—to where Jimmy Brennan was racing in at top speed!

was your goal, though Thomas scored it!"

He spoke in his usual quiet drawl and patted his nephew's bare shoulder with a strong brown hand.

"He's all right, Jim!" James Brennan growled with relief.

Apart from their size, and a certain likeness about the jaw, there was little to tell that the two tall men were brothers, for "Mr. Philip," as everyone called him, with his grizzled hair and dark, suntanned face, made a strong contrast to the bulky rubicund owner of the Rovers.

Very different, too, had been their careers up to now. Unlike James, who had never left England in his life, Philip Brennan had spent most of his time in Africa, where he had married and—it was rumoured—piled up a neat little fortune, trading in Zululand. Up till a few months ago, Jimmy had never set eyes on him, but then his uncle had returned to the Old Country to settle down in his native town for good.

And with him came his twenty-year old son, Tony, a handsome and hefty South African, Jimmy's cousin. Tony was going up to Cambridge to study law.

In the short time he had been in Railton, Philip had made himself quietly popular with everyone and although he knew a little about Soccer, he soon proved himself a typical Brennan in his support of the Rovers.

It was a new team that trotted out for the second half, amid a tempest of cheering; a forward line that was charged with new spirit.

That last minute of the first half, and the dashing, combined goal had

told its tale. Thomas looked slightly flushed about the gills, but Atkins, Miller, and Payton were alert and confident as they lined up. The Rovers' raw attack had tasted blood.

"Rovers! Now, then, Rovers!"

"On the ball, Railton!"

Straight from the kick-off, the whole line whirled goalwards in a smashing foray. They were beaten off, and the ball sailed back again, but in a second Harvey had cleared his lines and Jimmy was darting and side-stepping through the Redburn attack once more like a red-haired fury, his finishing shot scraping the bar with the goalie beaten a mile.

Those who watched that game that afternoon were lucky, for they saw a new star dawn on the football world! Boy though he was, all Jimmy's natural talent came into its own, lending magic to his twinkling feet.

The crowds round the ground roared his name continuously, yelled to him to score, chuckled with hilarious delight as he tricked the United's left-half time and again, to draw the full-back, and pass accurately, always to an unmarked man. In veteran style, he nursed Payton along, changed places with him, came back again, bobbed up everywhere he was least expected.

The badly rattled Redburn defence, playing grimly together under the strain, waited for the pressure to relax. But it didn't! Instead, ten minutes from the re-start, a dazzling, tricky stunt by Jimmy and Payton opened up a wide gap in the United lines, through which Thomas raced to score his second goal—and put the home side ahead.

Before the cheering had quite died away, a corkscrew dribble, a neat backheel, and a quick centre saw Jimmy

out on his own near the penalty line. On the run, he banged the ball across, Miller got his head to it, the keeper jumped, and—

"Go-al! Goal! Well done, Jimmy. Well played!"

The Rovers were three up.

Time went by; the United's defence began slowly but surely to crack. A slip by the Rover's full-back let the visitors in to score a second goal, but within a minute Railton had their advantage back, Atkins racing in from the wing like a streak of light to pick up a cross-pass from Jimmy and smash it home at two yards range.

And then the Redburn defence went definitely phut! 4-2, and a few minutes to go! The crowd were shouting to Jimmy now to "score one for himself," and Jimmy, hot face aglow, was doing his best. For the last half hour he had been a tightly marked man, and his shoulders and legs ached from Redburn's heavy tackling. But his long, clean limbs were full of life yet, and he meant to break his duck or bust.

His chance came less than a minute from time. Down the left wing came Atkins, with the Rovers' forwards tearing into position and the United doggedly packing their goal. Over came the centre. Miller and the goalkeeper rose together. By a fraction of a second only, the custodian's despairing fist beat the forward's head, and the ball skidded wildly away—to where Jimmy raced in at top speed.

Then from every Railton throat round the ground rose a loud triumphant hoot:

"Shoo-oo-oot, Jimmy!"

Jimmy shot. The ball, with every

ounce of his weight behind it, hissed through the crowd of players. He had barely a foot square to aim for; but that was sufficient; and, straight as a string, the leather hissed past the 'keeper's arms and nicked in beneath the cross-bar.

Through the bedlam of riotous cheering came the shrill squeal of the final whistle. The Rovers had won their first match.

That evening in Railton there was but one topic of conversation—Jimmy Brennan, the new star, who had transformed a weak forward-line into a sparkling, dashing attack.

But two men, at least, in the town discussed the victory with uneasiness and venom in their voices.

The Forged Cheque!

THE villain—the low cur!" Mr. James Brennan, the owner of Railton Rovers, lay back in his padded chair, staring at the wall before him with unseeing eyes.

It was Tuesday night—three days after the Rovers splendid victory—and in half an hour midnight would strike. Long ago the great house had relapsed into slumber and darkness, for Jimmy and the servants had gone to bed. Only from Brennan's own private room came the faint glow of a reading-lamp, whose beams were so shaded they scarcely reached the tall french windows.

Outside in the night the faint rumblings of an approaching storm rolled across the sky. But the man, in his despairing anger, was deaf to the noise, blind to the comfort around him. He could only mutter over and over again in bitter whispers:

"The villain—the low cur—the villain!"

His brain ached with weariness, for the day had been long and arduous. Apart from the usual training on the Rovers' ground, a special practice had been arranged, and afterwards there had been long consultations with "Uncle" Nye and George Harvey—the

only men whose football advice the jovial but headstrong owner ever heeded.

Bill Nye's words had been emphatic.

"A new centre forward, sir; that's what we want. Thomas is our best man; he's a fine shot but a rotten leader. And a leader we must have. With one good, experienced man in the middle and young Jimmy to back him up, we'll have the youngest, finest, and fastest line in football."

James Brennan had agreed. He knew the man for the job, too—Cowan, of Oldham Athletic. The transfer price would be pretty stiff, it was true, but he thought he could just manage to find it.

"Anything to set us right again!" he had growled, and sent Jimmy to the bank for his books, planning to wrestle with the figures that night in the peace of his study.

And now— A grim chuckle suddenly burst from his lips. Cowan, of Oldham Athletic, would not play for the Rovers this season!

On the old-fashioned bureau beside him a small pile of documents lay—bank receipts, a balance-sheet, and his passbook. In one burly fist he gripped a pink slip of paper, with his signatures on back and front.

"Ruined—ended!" he whispered softly. "A good run—but finished! And all through a treacherous bound!"

The cheque in his hand was an open one, made payable to bearer for three thousand pounds—practically all the money he had in the world. The signatures on both sides were forgeries.

And the cheque was dated yesterday! Skillful, beautiful forgeries—the work of a master hand. No wonder the bank had been deceived into paying up! Yet who had presented the cheque? He knew, who had forged it well enough, but who had actually collected the money? It must have been someone well-known to the officials, or otherwise they would surely have made inquiries before handing over so large a sum!

The questions churned monotonously in his brain. Bitterly he cursed him-

self for not having gone through the books before, when the bank had been open; but he had been too busy. It was too late to do anything now—he would have to wait until the morning.

Then his big muscles rippled.

"This finishes him, too!" he muttered. "There'll be no mercy this time!"

Picking up the scattered papers and the cheque, James Brennan plodded wearily to the great oak mantelpiece. His fingers fumbled at the carving and immediately a panel slid back, disclosing a small safe from which he drew out a faded snapshot.

It was the photo of a young man, handsome, but with something weak and sullen about his face; and as Brennan studied it, his own darkened savagely.

"Well, you've done it; stabbed me in the back!" he muttered, his eyes like slits. "But if I go into the gutter, by Heaven, I'll see you in gaol first, you dog! Thank the saints Mary never lived—"

His head went up quickly; his body grew rigid. For a moment he listened intently, then quick as lightning he thrust papers, photograph, and the incriminating cheque in the safe, closing the panel. A swift, silent leap took him to the lamp; the room was plunged in darkness. Still as a statue, he waited beside the desk.

The sky outside was suddenly rent by a vivid streak of flame; a clap of thunder followed. Another flash came swiftly, and this time Brennan tensed himself and smiled, tight-lipped.

Somebody was breaking in. The french window clicked and opened softly.

(Well, chums, you've met sparkling Jimmy Brennan, and I guess you like him no end. With ruin staring his father in the face it looks as though there's some very hard times ahead for this fleet-footed forward and his club-mates. There are, too; and Jimmy's going to be in the thick of 'em! Make sure of reading next week's gripping instalment by ordering your MAGNET well in advance!)

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