

**TWO SPLENDID SCHOOL STORIES AND STUNNING SOUTH SEAS YARN—
INSIDE!**

The **MAGNET** 2^D



**THE
HOLD-UP!**



Come Into the Office, Boys!

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

I HAVE received a large number of letters this week concerning our popular "Greyfriars Herald" and "Doctor Birchermall" features. My readers seem to be rather uncertain as to which of these they prefer.

One reader, who signs himself "Disappointed," tells me that he and his chums are not very keen on the "Greyfriars Herald." Doubtless, then, they will be pleased to see that "Doctor Birchermall" has replaced the "Herald" supplement. I have made a note of other suggestions which this reader makes, and I will bear them in mind, and see if I can accede to his requests in the near future.

The very next letter I opened, however, which is signed "A Magnetite," asks me not to drop the "Herald," as he prefers it to the St. Sam's stories. Then from "A Constant Reader," of Hounslow, comes another letter which hails the Birchermall stories with delight, but regrets that the "Herald" must make room for them, and suggests that the two features should appear alternately.

These letters—and several others which I have received—show you that an Editor's task is

NOT QUITE SO EASY AS YOU MAY IMAGINE!

Of course, I want to please *all* my readers, and will do my best to do so. One reader says, "It is impossible to please everyone." Still, I am going to attempt the seemingly impossible, and I can assure you that the stories I have in hand are real top-notchers. Whenever I alter a feature in the MAGNET it is because a large number of my readers have asked me to do so. Your letters are the only indication I have as to what you prefer in the way of stories, and that is why I ask you to send along any suggestions or criticisms you may have. Remember that the MAGNET is your very own paper, and don't hesitate to write to me as often as you please.

The "Disappointed Reader," incidentally, says that he does not think for a minute that I will answer his letter. Well, he is wrong. I like answering reader's letters, and if a stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed, I will always be pleased to send a personal reply by post. Owing to the fact that this paper goes to Press several weeks before it reaches your hands, some time must elapse before answers can appear on this page.

My Hounslow reader has also

A FISHY QUERY

to ask me, which might interest other readers who are interested in angling. What is the right time of year for fishing in the River Thames? The "close seasons" for fish are the same in practically every part of the country. March, April, May, and June are the months during which you must *not* catch the following fish:

Barbel, bream, carp, chub, dace, grayling, gudgeon, lampern, perch, pike, and tench.

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THE next query this week comes from a reader who asks for information as to

HOW TO JOIN THE AIR FORCE.

It depends, of course, on which particular branch he wishes to join. Every now and again advertisements appear in the "Situations Vacant" columns of the principal newspapers. These give details of special vacancies for which examinations are held. If this particular reader will apply at his local post-office, they will provide him with a booklet giving full particulars of the Air Force, and how to join. Or he can, if he wishes, write to the Recruiting Department, Gwydyr House, Whitehall, London, S.W.1, and they will provide him with the information he requires.

Will readers who wish for information regarding joining the Navy or the Army also note that booklets may be obtained at their local post-office, giving full particulars?

Here is a "rib-tickler" which wins a Sheffield steel pocket-knife for Edward Kirby, of 5, Primrose Terrace, Thornaby-on-Tees.

Little Willie: "Ma, Bobby's broken my wooden spade."



Mother: "How did he do it?"

Little Willie: "He didn't duck when I hit him on the head with it!"



Finished laughing? Good! Now what about raising a laugh yourself? I've got heaps more prizes to hand out in exchange for winning efforts.

ONE of my chums, who signs himself "Amicus," sends along the following

CLEVER CARD TRICK

which may enable you to puzzle your chums.

Deal out the 52 cards into four packs of 13 each, and ask someone to think of a card in any one of those packs. You then ask which pack it is in, and pick up the four packs, putting two packs in front of the chosen pack and one behind. Deal the cards into four packs again, and repeat the above. Once more deal the cards into four packs, find out which pack the chosen card is in, and gather them up. This time place one pack in front and two behind. The card thought of is then the thirty-first from the back of the pack.

Try it on your chums—and keep them guessing!

Here are a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to various readers who have written to me:

Relative Rank of the Navy, Army, and Air Force. (John T., of Horsham.)

An Admiral of the Fleet ranks with a Field Marshal in the Army, and the Marshal of the R.A.F. A sub-lieutenant of the Navy ranks with an Army lieutenant, and a R.A.F. Flying Officer or Observer. A Commissioned Warrant Officer of the Navy ranks with an Army second-lieutenant and an R.A.F. Pilot Officer.

A Railway Query. (S. H. G., of Luton.) I should think the railway station inquiry office at Luton will give you the information you require. Or you could, if you wished, write to the principal inquiry office of the L.M.S. Railway, at Euston Station, London.

Why are Horse Shoes Supposed to be Lucky? (P. K., of Lincoln.) Old horse shoes were usually provided with seven nail holes. The number seven has always been looked upon as a lucky number from the very earliest times, and, therefore, anything with seven holes in it is supposed to be lucky!

Why Does a Large Shell Make a Noise like the Sea? (C. M., of Nantwich.) A large sea-shell doesn't make a noise—people only imagine it does! Actually it acts like a loud speaker. It picks up the slight noises that are always going on, and amplifies them until they become audible.

How High Do Waves Rise? ("New Reader," of Chiswick.) It is only rarely that they exceed forty feet in height, measuring from the trough to the topmost point. But in hurricanes in the North Atlantic, waves nearly eighty feet in height have been seen. In British waters, however, they do not often rise higher than ten feet or so.

Owing to lack of space, I have had to hold over a number of replies—but I will deal with them as soon as possible.

ONE of our splendid leather pocket wallets goes to D. Smith, of Victoria Ward, N.S.B. Hospital, Margate, in return for the following winning Greyfriars limerick:

Said Snoop to Harold Skinner one day:
"To cheek Wharton I'm sure will not pay."

But Skinner, unheeding,
Said: "Rats! I'm proceeding."
Of what happened we'd rather not say!

Now for next week's programme!
When you have sampled:

"BILLY BUNTER'S BANKNOTE." By Frank Richards,

you'll say it is one of the finest stories you have ever had the pleasure of reading. Frank Richards has excelled himself in next week's fine yarn, and there is just the correct proportion of thrills and fun in it. You'll revel in it, I can assure you!

What do you think of our new Frank Richards' serial? There'll be another first-class instalment next week, which will hold you spellbound. Don't forget that I would like to hear your opinion of this splendid story—so next time you write to me, let me know exactly what you think of "The Island Traders!"; won't you?

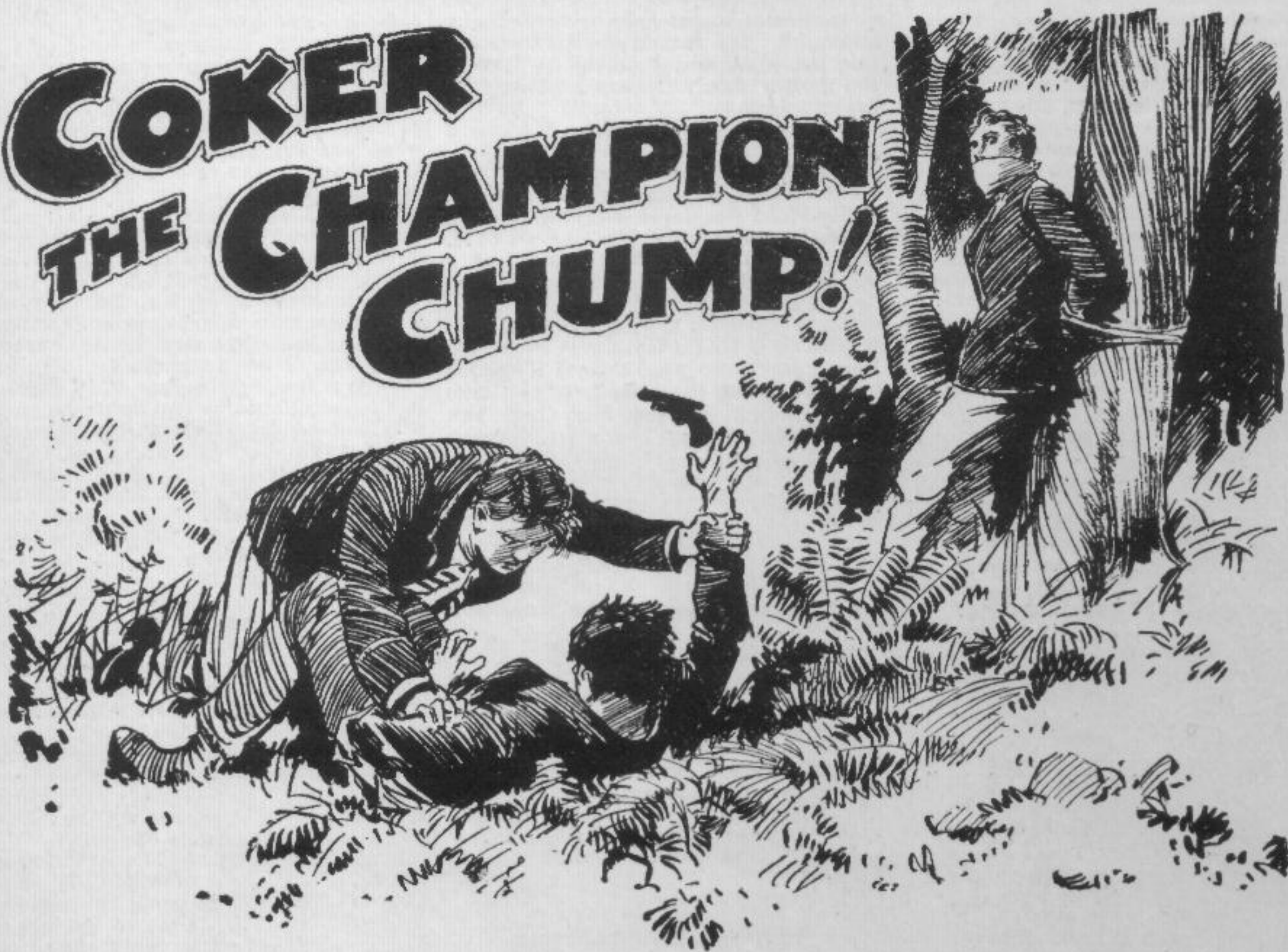
Doctor Birchermall will keep you chuckling in "The Masked Marvel of Muggleton!" which is the title of Dicky Nugent's next "St. Sam's" story. Better loosen your waistcoat buttons before you commence reading this yarn—in case you burst some of them off with laughter!

Of course, there will be more winning jokes and Greyfriars limericks, and I shall be "in the chair" as usual.

Cheerio, then, till next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

COKER THE CHAMPION CHUMP!



Featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Shifting Coker!

"SHIFT!"

"What?"
"Get out of the way!"

Coker of the Fifth neither shifted nor got out of the way. He was standing in the middle of the doorway of the bike-shed, and he continued to stand there.

Harry Wharton might, perhaps, have addressed Coker more politely. But the junior was in a hurry, and had no time to waste on Coker of the Fifth.

Coker had been standing there, with a frowning brow, staring in the direction of the House, when Harry Wharton arrived for his machine. The Remove fellow walked round Coker to get into the shed. But he could not wheel his machine round Coker to get it out.

Horace Coker's bulky form almost filled the doorway, and there was no room. Wharton was strongly tempted to wheel the machine into Coker's back, and thus shift him out of the doorway. However, he resisted that temptation and asked Coker to shift. Coker did not shift.

He glanced round at the junior in the bikeshed.

"Don't be cheeky, Wharton!" he admonished. "Look here, have you seen Potter and Greene?"

"Blow Potter and Greene!" answered Wharton. "I haven't seen them, and don't want to! Let a fellow pass, Coker, will you?"

"I told them to be ready at three!" said Coker, unheeding. "It's past three

now. Look here, kid! Cut off to the House—"

"Eh!"

"And tell them I'm waiting."

Coker was annoyed. Having told his chums in the Fifth, Potter and Greene, that he would be ready to start at three, he naturally expected them to turn up on time. They could hardly have anything more important on hand than obeying the behests of Horace Coker.

True, they had mumbled something

When brains were served out, Horace James Coker was at the "wrong end of the queue." But what he lacks in brains Coker makes up for with brawn. In this grand yarn Coker's brains let him down badly, but his brawn gets him out of a tight corner!

about going over to Highcliffe to see the First Eleven playing cricket there. Coker had declined to listen to that. He was going on a spin that afternoon on a push-bike, and his chums were going with him. So Coker had decided, and from Coker's decision there was no appeal—or Coker fancied there wasn't!

But Potter and Greene had not materialised. Either they had forgotten to turn up—or they had remembered not to turn up. Coker did not like waiting, and he was annoyed.

"Tell them I've waited ten minutes, and that I jolly well won't wait much longer!" he said. "Cut off!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

The Remove did not fag, even for the Sixth; and if Coker fancied that he could send a Remove man on a message it was only one of Coker's many unfounded fancies.

"Will you get out of the way, Coker?" asked Wharton. "I want to get this jigger out."

"Don't be an ass!" said Coker. "You can't go up to the House on a bicycle!"

"You silly owl!" roared Wharton. "I'm not going up to the House! I'm going out on my bike!"

"I've told you not to be cheeky, Wharton," said Coker. "If you want a thick ear, you won't have to ask for it twice! I've a short way with cheeky fags!"

Harry Wharton breathed hard. His friends had gone over to Cliff House an hour ago, Wharton having to remain behind to attend to some of his duties as head boy of the Form. When his Form master, Mr. Quelch, was done with him, the captain of the Remove was, naturally, in a hurry to get after the Co. Certainly he had no time to carry messages for Coker of the Fifth, even if he had had the inclination, which equally certainly he hadn't.

Again he resisted the temptation to shift Coker by rushing the bike into him. Coker was the biggest and beefiest man in the Fifth Form; and rather too large an order for a Lower Fourth fellow to tackle on his lonely own, if he could help it. Coker was facing him now, and was

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not so easy to shift as he had been a minute or two ago.

"You'll find them in the House—in the study, most likely," said Coker. "Cut off, and don't waste any more time!"

"Will you let me get this bike out, Coker?" asked the captain of the Remove, in concentrated tones.

"You won't want the bike! Cut off!"

Evidently Coker did not intend to let the junior get the bike out. If he got the bike out, he was only too likely to mount and ride away, heedless of Coker—that was the sort of cheek Coker was accustomed to from the Remove.

"You silly chump!" breathed Wharton. "Shift!"

"That's enough!" said Coker.

He turned away from the Remove to stare once more in the direction of the House, to see whether Potter and Greene were coming. If they were, it was all right, and the Remove kid could go to the dickens. If they weren't, Wharton was going to fetch them. That was how Coker mapped it out. The Remove fag behind him mapped it out quite differently.

Now that Coker's back was once more turned, he was favourably placed for shifting by means of the jigger.

Wharton did not fail to seize the opportunity.

With a firm grip on the bike he rushed it through the doorway at about 40 m.p.h.

As Coker's burly figure filled the middle of the doorway, there was bound to be a collision. Coker really was asking for it.

Crash!

Bump!

"Ooooooooooh!"

Coker did not seem to be expecting it. Things often happened that Coker of the Fifth did not expect to happen. He was taken quite by surprise by that sudden attack in the rear.

Coker's legs doubled up under him, and he pitched forward, and landed on his face on the hard, cold, unsympathetic earth. His nose landed first, with a fearful jar, and the rest of Coker landed after it, bumping.

Coker sprawled and spluttered.

Wharton did not wait for him to get up. He rushed the bike on, running with it, and perhaps by chance—and perhaps not by chance—he ran over Coker, treading on the Fifth Form man's back as he sprawled. Then he was clear, and running the bike along towards the open gate.

"Whooooooh!" gasped Coker.

He sat up dizzily.

Wharton had a leg over the machine now. He looked back for a moment to laugh. Coker leaped to his feet and rushed. Wharton was on the bike in a twinkling, whizzing out of the gateway. Coker made a terrific rush and a frantic clutch, which barely missed the rear mudguard. His grasping hand swept the empty air, and the impetus of that frantic clutch landed Coker once more on his already damaged face. He sprawled in the dust behind the bike.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Ow! Wow!"

Wharton glanced back again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared. "Good-bye, Coker!"

"Ooooooh! Oh, my hat!"

Coker scrambled up, red with wrath. He did not rush after the bike again. He rushed back to the bikeshed and dragged out his own machine. Potter and Greene and the intended spin were forgotten now. Coker was dusty and bumped and shaken, and his nose was red and raw.

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Horace Coker's one desire at that moment was to get hold of that cheeky Remove. He rushed his machine out into the road, and pedalled in pursuit, the pedals fairly whizzing under his brawny legs.

Wharton gave another backward glance.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated.

He put on speed, and went down Friardale Lane as if he were on the racing track. After him came Coker. Wharton was a sturdy cyclist; but a big fellow on a big machine was bound to run him down.

But it was easy to dodge Coker. The way to Cliff House lay across Friardale Wood, and there were several footpaths leading up into the wood from the lane. The winding of the lane hid him momentarily from Coker's sight, when he turned into a footpath and went pedalling on under the leafy trees.

At the opening of the footpath a fat junior had stopped to rest under the shade from the blaze of the July sun. He blinked at Wharton through a pair of large spectacles as the captain of the Remove turned out of the lane, and squeaked:

"I say, old chap! Hold on! I say, old fellow—Beast!"

Wharton was not likely to hold on at that moment. He whizzed past Billy Bunter, leaving that *podgy* youth blinking. The green wood swallowed him from sight, and a minute later Coker of the Fifth swept by. And Horace Coker, going strong, whizzed on towards Friardale village in a cloud of dust.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Fallen Among Foes!

"STOP!"

Harry Wharton braked.

Half a mile in the wood, by the grassy footpath winding under the branches of old oaks and beeches, he rode more slowly. Fellows were not supposed to cycle on the footpaths; there were local by-laws on the subject, and all sorts of pains and penalties.

On a special occasion like this, however, Wharton had felt that he might stretch a point in his own favour—the local dignitaries who drew up the local by-laws had not allowed for the special circumstances of this case. They had not considered the possibility of a fellow being pursued by a ferocious Fifth Form man whose nose was red and raw, and whose temper was redder and rawer!

Still, he was now secure from Coker, who had evidently gone whizzing on down Friardale Lane; and certainly he did not want to run into any pedestrian. So he slowed down, and when two men suddenly emerged from the trees and shouted to him to stop, he put on his brake and jumped down. There was not much room to pass them, and they had the by-laws on their side.

Jumping down, the Greyfriars junior wheeled on the machine. To his surprise, the two men gave him no room to pass. They stood side by side, blocking the footpath, and Wharton had come to a halt. One of them, a hard-faced man in gaiters, and a bowler hat cocked rakishly over one ear, held up his hand.

"Hold on, sir!" he said quite civilly.

"I'm holding on," answered Wharton. "Lots of room for you to get by."

"You're young Wharton, ain't you?"

The man in gaiters was looking hard at the junior. The other man, who had a black patch over his left eye, scanned

him equally keenly, with his single available eye, and gave a nod.

"It's 'im!" he said.

"My name's Wharton, certainly," said Harry. "What—"

"I fancied so," said the man in gaiters. "I had you pointed out to me, when you was playing cricket one day; I reckoned it was you. I'm glad to see you here."

"Walked right into our 'ands!" said the man with the patch. "I told you we'd get him if we waited."

Harry Wharton's face set.

He had wondered, for the moment, what these two rough-looking fellows, whom he had never seen before, wanted with him. Now he guessed.

Only a few days before Billy Bunter had been collared by two unknown men, who had supposed him to be Wharton, whom they did not know by sight. Who they were, and what they wanted, nobody knew; but the queer incident had put the captain of the Remove on his guard.

He scanned the two rough faces; but there was nothing familiar about them. He had never seen either of the men before. But they had evidently taken measures to know him; they were not making a mistake a second time. The junior breathed hard.

He could not begin to guess what these two utter strangers wanted with him. But what had happened the other day looked as if they intended kidnapping, though their object was far to seek. Harry Wharton was not the fellow to fall into their hands easily.

It was impossible to get past them on the bike, and they were already stepping towards him; he could not turn the bike and mount in time to get clear. The outstretched hands were almost on him, when the captain of the Greyfriars Remove acted with prompt decision.

With a swing of his arms, he sent the bicycle crashing at them, and the next second turned and darted away down the footpath. He had to take the chance of recovering the bike afterwards; for the moment he was thinking only of saving himself.

With the speed almost of a deer, Harry Wharton raced back the way he had come, a loud and savage shout ringing out behind him.

The man with the patch had stumbled over the bicycle, and fallen with a heavy bump across the machine as it rolled. His fierce yells told that he was hurt.

The other man jumped clear and raced after Wharton. With a series of gasping howls and oaths, the fallen man scrambled up and followed him, leaving the machine lying where it had fallen.

"Stop! You hear me! Stop!" yelled the man in gaiters.

Wharton was not likely to stop.

Behind him rang the rapid footsteps of the pursuers. He could hear their panting breath as they put on speed.

He ran his hardest.

It was a half-mile back to Friardale Lane; but if he reached it they were not likely to pursue him in the open. On a half-holiday there were Greyfriars fellows up and down the lane, and Wharton would have been glad, just then, of the sight of even Coker of the Fifth. He ran hard, with the tramping feet thundering behind him.

"Stop!"

The man in gaiters shouted savagely.

The two ruffians were running hard, but the active junior was keeping his distance, though he was not gaining. He was a good six yards ahead, and the distance did not diminish by an inch.

"By gum, we'll lose him, Hookey!" panted the man with the patched eye.

The man in gaiters gritted his teeth. "We ain't losing him!" he snarled. His hand whipped to his hip-pocket—and came out with something in it that glimmered in the sunlight through the branches. "Hookey, you fool, hold on!" panted the man behind. "Don't—you'll be heard—"

"Don't be a fool, Mick!" snapped Hookey.

He held the automatic by the barrel as he ran, and swung it up into the air. With all the force of his arm he hurled it after the running schoolboy.

Harry Wharton felt a sudden blow on his shoulder as he ran, and it pitched him forward.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Hookey. "By gum, you give us any more trouble, and I'll give you a crack on the head that will keep you quiet enough! You ain't going to be hurt, you young fool! 'Old your row!"

With a grip on either arm, the Greyfriars junior was dragged to his feet. Hookey and his associate cast an anxious glance up and down the leafy path. There was no one in sight.

"Get him away!" muttered Hookey.

"You rotters!" panted Wharton. "What do you want with me?"

"You'll find that out when you see the guv'nor!" growled Hookey. "You keep quiet, if you don't want your head cracked! I'd knock you out as soon as look at you!"

The two rascals left the footpath,

feet away, stuffed tobacco in a pipe, and lighted it, smoking unconcernedly. And Harry Wharton, helpless and silent, could only wait for Hookey to return with the "guv'nor"—whoever the guv'nor might be—and wonder what was going to happen when that mysterious personage arrived on the scene.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Coker on the Track!

"I'll smash him!"

Thus Coker of the Fifth.

"I'll spifigate him!"

Coker was wrathful.

Like the prophet of old, Coker was angry, and like that ancient prophet



The outstretched hands of the two strangers were almost on Wharton, when the Greyfriars junior acted with prompt decision. With a swing of his arms he sent his bicycle crashing at them!

He staggered over on his hands and knees.

The two ruffians raced on, and their grasp was on the junior as he scrambled up.

"Now, you young 'ound—" panted Hookey. "Oh, strike me pink!" he roared, as Wharton's clenched fist dashed into his stubbly face. "Hold him, Mick—hold him!"

"I got him!"

Harry Wharton struggled desperately. But two pairs of hands were on him; and he was hardly a match for one of his assailants. The two of them dragged him down in the path, and Hookey picked up the automatic and slipped it into his pocket again. He glared savagely at the schoolboy, and rubbed his nose, which was trickling red.

"Help!" shouted Wharton.

A rough hand was clapped over his mouth.

"'Old your row, you!" snarled

plunging into the trees, dragging the schoolboy between them.

Deep in the wood, fifty yards from the path, in the midst of trees and tangled thickets, they came to a halt. Harry Wharton was slammed against a beech, and a cord was run from one wrist to the other, effectually securing him there, the cord passing round the trunk. Then Hookey drew a pear-shaped gag from his pocket, forced open the prisoner's mouth, and jammed it in. Wharton's eyes gleamed at him, but resistance was impossible.

"You'll do now!" growled Hookey. "Now you keep an eye on him, Mick, while I get word to the guv'nor."

"Leave him to me!" said the man with the patched eye.

Hookey vanished through the trees.

The man with the patched eye looked to the cord and looked to the gag, to make sure that they were secure. Then he sat down at the foot of a tree a few

again, he considered that he did well to be angry.

Coker had rushed on down Friardale Lane at terrific speed, his brawny legs driving at the pedals like machinery. He had almost reached the village when it dawned on Coker's powerful brain that he must have missed his quarry. No junior kid could have equalled the speed at which Coker's long and hefty legs drove his jigger, and had Wharton continued on his way down the lane, Coker would indubitably have run him down. This dawned on Horace Coker rather late; but when it dawned on him he whirled round his bike and charged back up the lane.

There was a pain in Coker's nose where it had tapped the earth. It had never been a handsome nose, and now it looked more like a tomato than a nose—an over-ripe tomato that had seen better days. But the state of Coker's temper

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was worse than the state of his nose. He was simply yearning to get his hands on that cheeky fag, and the cheeky fag had evidently dodged into the wood and left Coker on a false scent. The cup of his offences had been full, and now it was overflowing. Coker charged back, with the fell intention of smashing and spificating the cheeky fag.

He remembered that he had seen Bunter loafing under the trees as he passed one of the footpaths. Very likely Bunter had seen Wharton dodge out of the lane. Coker raced back to the spot where he had passed the fat Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter was still there. It was hot that July afternoon, and Bunter, who had stopped in the shade for a rest, could do with a great deal of rest. He blinked at Coker through his big spectacles, as the great man of the Fifth came charging back, jumped off his bicycle, and shouted to him.

"Here, Bunter! Have you seen Wharton, you fat idiot?" That was Coker's polite way of asking for information.

Bunter blinked at him.

He had wondered whether Coker was after Wharton. Now he knew. But Bunter was not going to give a Remove man away to a Fifth Form man.

"Wharton!" he repeated. "Did you say Wharton, Coker?"

"Yes, you blithering ass! Deaf?" hooted Coker.

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Have you seen him?" roared Coker.

"I saw him at dinner."

"You potty porpoise, I'm not asking you whether you saw him at dinner. I want to know where he is now!" roared Coker.

"I think he's gone over to Highcliffe," said Bunter cheerfully.

"Highcliffe!" repeated Coker.

"Yes, to see the cricket. In fact, I'm sure he has," said the fat Owl. "The First Eleven's playing at Highcliffe, you know."

Billy Bunter was not a stickler for the truth. In fact, it never seemed to occur to Bunter to tell the truth, if a "whopper" would do. But there were two serious drawbacks to Bunter's whoppers. Morally, they were indefensible. Practically, he never got away with them.

Coker gave him a deadly glare. As Wharton must have passed the fat Owl, Coker was not likely to believe that Bunter thought he was at Highcliffe watching the cricket.

"So you haven't seen him?" hooted Coker.

Bunter shook his head.

"Not since dinner," he answered. "He never passed me while I was standing here, Coker, and I never saw him. And—yaroooooop!"

Bunter broke off with a fearful yell as Coker captured a fat ear with a finger and thumb that seemed like an iron vice.

"Now, you fat tick!" roared Coker.

"Yoooooop!" yelled Bunter. "Leggo! Oh crikey! Wow-wooop!"

"Where's Wharton?" demanded Coker, compressing his grip. "You haven't seen him, haven't you, you fat scoundrel, when he must have passed right under your nose? Now, what have you got to say?"

"Whooooop!"

"Did he turn up this path, you fat villain?"

"Ow! No! He turned into the next path, father on! Wow!"

"The next path, farther on, is out of sight!" snorted Coker. "How do you know he turned into it?"

"Oh, I—I mean—" stuttered Bunter.

"Well, what do you mean?" asked

Coker, giving the fat ear a ferocious twist.

"Yaroooooop!"

"Did he pass you and turn up this path?"

"Ow! Wow! Yes! Beast!" yelled Bunter. "Leggo my ear! You're pulling it off! Yow-ow-ow-woooooop!"

"I thought so!" said Coker grimly. "Take that, you fat tick!"

Billy Bunter sat down in the grass with a heavy bump. He yelled as he sat. Leaving him yelling, Coker remounted his jigger and rode up the leafy footpath into the wood.

He was on the right track again, but he was a good quarter of an hour behind Wharton. He put on tremendous speed to make up for lost time. If any pedestrian had been on that winding, foliage-shaded footpath, it would have gone hard with him. No pedestrian, fortunately, was on the path. But half a mile in the wood a deserted bicycle lay across the path, and Coker was going at too tremendous a speed to see it before he hit it.

He did not, indeed, see it when he hit it. He saw nothing but stars, whole constellations of them, quite suddenly.

What happened he hardly knew. His whizzing bike crumpled up and hurled Coker into the trees beside the track. There was a crashing and a clanging and a jingling, and Coker discovered himself sprawling in the thickets, breathless and gurgling.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker.

He sorted himself out in a rather dazed state. His bike, with a buckled wheel, a twisted pedal, and a snapped chain, lay mixed up with a smaller bike, which was also rather damaged. Coker leaned on a tree and gasped and gurgled, and rubbed the places where he was hurt—their name was legion. He was breathless, he was damaged; and if Coker's temper had been red-hot before, it was white-hot now.

"The—the—the young villain!" gasped Coker. "I'll smash him! I'll spificate him! I'll pulverise him! Oh, my hat! Ooooh!"

He glared at the bicycles. His own machine was a wreck, and was not to be ridden again. It needed some expert hand to take it up tenderly and treat it with care. The other jigger, evidently, was Wharton's. He had left it on the path and taken to the wood on foot. That was clear to Coker of the Fifth. Of what had happened to Harry Wharton in the wood, Coker, of course, knew nothing. But he had no doubt of what had happened. That young rascal had dodged into the wood on foot to escape him—Coker. There seemed no other explanation of the abandoned bicycle. It was quite clear to Coker.

With more damages accumulated on his burly person than he could possibly have counted, Coker was not to be dodged. He was going to comb that wood for the elusive junior till he found him, and then stern justice was going to be done. Having recovered his breath, Coker started.

Coker, who fancied that he could do many things, fancied that he could scout. But he failed to pick up "sign" where the junior had gone into the wood. As a matter of fact, Wharton had been chased more than half-way back to Friardale Lane by Hookey and Mick before they captured him, so on this spot there was no sign for Coker to pick up. But Horace Coker was a stickler. Sign or no sign, he was going to run down that cheeky junior and wallop him as he deserved. He tramped away among the trees with his eyes and his ears on the alert.

According to Potter and Greene of the Fifth, there was such a thing as fool's

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luck, and it specially favoured Horace Coker. This was proved by the number of times he smashed up his motor-bike without getting smashed up along with it. Luck befriended Horace Coker once more. He was relying on his nose and his ears to find the elusive Removeite; but it was his nose that unexpectedly guided him.

Up and down and round about Coker tramped, eyes and ears on the alert; and when he stopped at last, quite at a loss, he was conscious of a strong scent of tobacco from somewhere close at hand. Somebody was smoking in the wood, quite near to Coker, though hidden from sight by the thick hawthorns that grew tangled among the oaks and beeches.

Coker sniffed!

He stared round him, but he could see no one. He listened; but he could hear nothing! But the scent of tobacco—a strong shag—was unmistakable. It could hardly be a Remove junior who was smoking shag in a pipe. Even Coker realised that. But it was somebody, and that somebody might have seen Wharton dodging through the wood!

It was a chance, at least, and Coker, who was now at boiling point, was not going to lose the smallest chance. He followed his nose through the thick hawthorns, and a sight suddenly burst on his startled eyes that made them almost bulge from his head.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker to the Rescue!

HARRY WHARTON'S heart gave a throb. For nearly an hour he had stood bound to the beech, the gag in his mouth, while the ruffian with the patched eye sat under an adjacent tree, smoking and watching him. How long it would be before Hookey returned with the man he called the "guy'nor," he could not guess. But he was helpless, and could only wait. When there was a rustle in the thickets at last, Mick knocked out his pipe, and rose to his feet, evidently under the impression that his associates were coming.

Wharton's eyes fixed on the rustling hawthorns, in the expectation of seeing Hookey emerge with the mysterious guy'nor. And his heart throbbed at the sight of a rugged countenance, with a nose that was red and raw. Seldom had the captain of the Remove been glad to see Horace Coker of the Fifth Form. But he was overjoyed to see him now. Coker stared from the hawthorns.

He stared like a fellow who could hardly believe his eyes, as indeed Coker hardly could for some moments.

He had found the junior of whom he was in search—quite unexpectedly. Still more unexpectedly, he found him bound to a tree, and watched by a hulking ruffian with a patched eye.

"Great pip!" gasped Coker.

Mick swung round towards him. He had expected his associates, and he stared at Coker in surprise and alarm. In that remote recess of the wood, screened and hidden by thick hawthorns, the crook had never dreamed of a chance visitor. It had naturally never occurred to him that a vengeful Fifth Form man was hunting Wharton in the wood.

Wharton strove fiercely to speak, but the gag choked his voice, and he could utter only a faint mumble.

But there was no need. What he saw was enough for Coker. He came striding out of the hawthorns, amazed, but warlike. For the moment Coker of the Fifth quite forgot that it was his intention to "whop" Wharton. The Greyfriars junior was bound to a tree and gagged, and that was enough. Coker was transformed at once from a wrathful avenger into a rescuer. He glared at the patched-eyed ruffian, who glared at him in return.

"What the thump's this game?" demanded Coker. "What the thump have you got that kid tied up like this for, what?"

Mick did not answer. He came at Coker with a sudden spring. Who the burly fellow was, and how he had come there, the ruffian did not know, but he knew that he had to overpower him if he was to keep his prisoner safe. He was on Coker with a spring like a tiger.

Coker might really have expected it, considering what he saw. But Coker was not quick on the uptake. He was taken by surprise, and he went down heavily in the ruffian's grasp.

But Coker, if he did not shine in the intellectual line, had received from Nature ample compensation in the way of beef and brawn, and he had unlimited pluck. He crashed down on his back under the spring of the crook; but the next moment he was hitting out. And Coker's blows, when they got home, were like unto the taps of a steamhammer.

His knuckles crashed into Mick's stubbly face, and the ruffian grunted, and rolled off him. Coker twisted over on his assailant, and landed another terrific jolt in the ruffian's eye, and another on his jaw. The man with the patched eye, snarling like a savage animal, grasped him fiercely, and they struggled, the bound junior watching the struggle, with breathless anxiety. Over and over they rolled, fighting furiously, but the burly Fifth-Former had the upper hand. A smashing blow jarred the ruffian's head against the earth, half-stunning him, and Mick's grasp on Coker relaxed.

"Now, you rotter!" panted Coker.

The dazed ruffian was struggling to get his hand to his hip pocket. Wharton strove frantically, as he watched, to shriek a warning to Coker, but he could only mumble behind the gag. The bluish barrel of an automatic glimmered as Mick dragged his hand free. Coker grasped his wrist and gave it a twist that drew a howl of agony from the ruffian, and the automatic dropped in the grass. The next moment Coker grasped it by the barrel, and brought down the butt on the ruffian's head. It was a crashing blow, and the ruffian gave one gasping moan, and lay stunned.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

He jumped up, the pistol in his hand. With a swing of his arm he sent it whirling away among the treetops.

He turned to Wharton.

"What on earth does this mean?" he gasped. "I thought that brute was a tramp, but—he had a revolver! What the thump does it mean?"

Wharton mumbled. It dawned on Coker that the junior could not speak while he was gagged, and he untied the gag and jerked it away.

"Get me loose!" panted Wharton.

"But what—"

"Get me loose! They may come any minute!"

"Who?" asked Coker.

"Cut me loose!" shrieked Wharton. "Don't waste time, Coker—"

"But who—what—?"

"Will you get a move on?" yelled Wharton. "Cut me loose, you ass!"

"Don't be cheeky, Wharton!" said Coker. "I don't take cheek from Remove fags! I was looking for you to whop you—"

"Will you get me loose?" raved Wharton.

Coker opened his pocket-knife and cut through the cord. Wharton staggered away from the tree.

The sprawling ruffian was already showing signs of returning consciousness. Wharton caught at the Fifth-Former's arm.

"Cut!" he gasped. "There are two others—they may come any minute—run for it!"

Coker sniffed.

"I'm not likely to run from a lot of tramps!" he answered disdainfully. "You can run, if you like, you young ass! This brute ought to be walked off to the police station—"

"I tell you the others may be here any minute—and they are armed!" yelled Wharton.

"Oh!" said Coker. Even Coker understood that his head, thick at it was, was not impervious to firearms. "Perhaps we'd better clear! But I don't understand—"

The ruffian in the grass was stirring. Harry Wharton picked up the cord, ran to him, and knotted it round his wrists and ankles.

"That will keep him safe while we clear," he said. "Now, for goodness' sake, get a move on, Coker!"

"But I don't see—"

"Do you ever see anything?" hooted Wharton. "Cut, I tell you! Do you want to stop a bullet?"

"Look here, you cheeky young sweep—"

"Come on, fathead!"

Wharton started through the trees, and Coker followed him. Coker was in a state of astonishment and bewilderment, but he realised that it was wise to get off the spot without delay. And though Coker of the Fifth disdained to run, he walked very quickly—very quickly indeed—his long legs fairly whisking. His walk, in fact, was as rapid as Wharton's run, and they reached the footpath together. Wharton, who knew every inch of Friardale Wood, headed direct for the spot where his machine had been left. Coker's wrecked jigger lay beside it.

The junior dragged up his bicycle.

"Quick!" he panted.

"I shall have to wheel my jigger," said Coker.

"Leave it there, then, and hoof it!"

"Rot!" said Coker.

"Look here, you ass—"

"Shut up, Wharton!"

Coker picked up his damaged jigger and started to wheel it. It gave forth a musical sound of clinking and clanking. Wharton, who had a leg over his machine, withdrew it. He was anxious to get out of the wood into the open road, but he would not leave Coker on his own.

"Buck up, for goodness' sake!" he gasped.

"If you fancy you can give me orders, you cheeky little tick—"

"Idiot! Buck up!" roared Wharton.

"I'll jolly well—"

"Fathead!"

Wharton rushed his machine on, and Coker followed. In a few minutes they were out of the wood, in the sunshine of Friardale Lane, and Wharton gasped with relief.

"And now——" said Coker grimly. He leaned his dilapidated jigger against a tree by the roadside and came towards the junior, with a very expressive expression on his rugged face.

"Now what?"

"Now you're going to have your whopping——"

"Oh, my hat!"

Wharton put a leg over his machine and the pedals flew. Coker made a rush—too late. And Harry Wharton, with a cheery wave of the hand, disappeared in the direction of Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Rogue and a Fool!

"BEASTS!" murmured Billy Bunter.

It was hot!

A fellow might naturally have expected it to be hot in July. But it seemed to Billy Bunter that the weather was intentionally serving him an ill turn—or so one might have supposed, from his grunting, growling, and grouching. The fattest junior at Greyfriars had an unusual amount of weight to carry, and in the blazing summer heat he felt every ounce of it.

On a half-holiday at the school Bunter was not accustomed to taking long walks. And he had already repented him of having started on this walk, though there was, he hoped, a feed at the end of it. Even the prospect of tea at Cliff House School lost some of its attraction as the fat Owl plugged on wearily, dusty and perspiring.

"Beasts!" said Bunter, for the tenth or eleventh time.

Bunter had not wanted to walk. He had asked Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in turn for a lift behind a bike when they had started for Cliff House that afternoon.

Each of the four juniors had returned an answer in the negative—an emphatic negative. It was in vain that Bunter pointed out that Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends at Cliff House would be disappointed if he did not come to tea—that it would spoil the afternoon for them if he didn't come. The Co. were firmly of the opinion that it would spoil the afternoon if he did.

So, after they had vanished on their bikes, Bunter started to walk. He was a quarter of a mile on his way and had stopped for his fifth rest, when Harry Wharton had passed him at the corner of the footpath. He had called to Wharton in the hope of getting a lift, and the captain of the Remove had passed him by like the idle wind, which he regarded not.

After that, Horace Coker had happened, and Bunter was left with a pain in his fat ear, which he rubbed for a long time before he re-started after the interval. But he rolled on down Friar-dale Lane at last and clambered over the stile that gave on the main footpath through the wood leading to Pegg Lane and Cliff House. But the stile tempted him, and he sat and rested for a quarter of an hour, and wiped his streaming brow, before he started again. And when he rolled onward once more his pace was that of an old and tired snail.

At this rate, he did not seem likely to reach Cliff House in time for tea. But it could not be helped. Exertion had never had any appeal for Bunter. And in the blazing heat of a July afternoon it had less appeal than ever. He crawled on and grouched and groaned.

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"Beasts!" said Bunter, for the umpteenth time.

It was just his luck, he reflected bitterly, that it should be so jolly hot when he was taking a long walk. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera of old, and Bunter had a feeling that they were up to the same game with him.

If one of those beasts had given him a lift behind the bike he need not have walked at all. Dragging Bunter's enormous weight up hill and down dale in order to land him where he was not wanted had not seemed to attract the chums of the Remove, somehow. Billy Bunter plugged on, feeling as if he was melting away. Perspiration ran down his fat face in trickles, and incessant flies settled on his fat little nose as if they loved it. He turned from the path to take a short cut; but it seemed hotter than ever in the thickness of the wood, and tangled roots and bracken made the going hard.

Billy Bunter sat down at last, resting his fat, weary limbs in the grass and his fat, weary head against the trunk of a big oak. It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and Bunter had to rest. Tea or no tea, the fat Owl had to rest before he rolled farther on his way.

He intended to rest for ten minutes. At the end of half an hour he was still there, leaning on the oak, disinclined to move.

He was, in fact, more inclined to go to sleep than to finish his trek to Cliff House, and he was nodding, when he heard a sound of rustling and brushing in the thickets, and his eyes opened again behind his big spectacles.

Through the openings of the thickets he had a glimpse of flannel bags and a blazer, and then a glimpse of a face, and he recognised Carne, of the Greyfriars Sixth. The Sixth Form man disappeared the next moment without having glanced in Billy Bunter's direction, and evidently unaware that the fat junior was there.

Bunter would have given him no heed, but a moment or two later the rustling in the bracken stopped and he was aware that Carne had come to a halt not more than ten feet away. Bunter felt a little uneasy. Carne of the Sixth was a bully, and his face, when Bunter had glimpsed it for a second, had looked savagely ill-tempered. Bunter did not want to fall in with the bully of the Sixth, especially when he was in a bad temper.

But Arthur Carne, evidently, had not seen him. He had stopped, and Bunter heard the scratch of a match, and then the scent of a cigarette floated to his fat little nose.

He grinned.

Greyfriars men were not supposed to smoke, especially prefects of the Sixth Form, but no doubt Carne considered himself safe from observation in the remote recesses of the wood.

Billy Bunter sagely decided to remain very quiet. He knew what to expect if the bully of the Sixth found a junior who had caught him smoking.

Several times he heard a match scratch. Carne was smoking cigarette after cigarette without moving from the spot where he stood, only a mass of hawthorns hiding him from Bunter and Bunter from him. It was not till there was a fresh sound of rustling and footsteps that Bunter guessed that the senior had not come there especially to smoke cigarettes, but that he was there to meet somebody. That big oak-tree was a place of appointment.

There was a murmur of voices.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

Curiosity was Bunter's besetting sin. Carne of the Sixth had come to that hidden spot, under the branches of the big oak, to meet someone—evidently someone whom he could not venture to meet in the open. It did not concern Bunter in the very least, but the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars wanted to know. Cautiously he raised himself and peered through the hawthorns till he found an opening through which he could glimpse Carne and his companion. And his eyes opened wide behind his big spectacles as he beheld the greasy, red face of Mr. Joey Banks, of the Cross Keys.

"Oh crikey!" muttered Bunter.

It would have been the "sack" for Carne at Greyfriars had his headmaster learned that he had dealings with such a man as Mr. Banks. Bunter knew that there were rumours about the sportsman of the Sixth; there were a good many fellows at Greyfriars who could have told the Head things that would have surprised that unsuspecting old gentleman.

Bunter held his breath. He felt almost dizzy at the thought of what Carne would do if he found that a Remove junior had witnessed this meeting. But while he quaked at that awful thought he listened with all his fat ears. It was rather irritating that the two spoke in low tones, only the murmur of their voices reaching his inquisitive ears. But suddenly Mr. Banks spoke more loudly, evidently in an angry mood.

"That's all very well, Mr. Carne! You've told me that before, more than once. A man wants his money. Ain't I given you time—weeks and weeks? You'd 'ave took my money fast enough if the horse had won. What?"

"Oh scissors!" murmured Bunter.

He knew now why Carne of the Sixth had met the bookmaker in that lonely spot. Evidently the sportsman of the Sixth had been backing his fancy, not wisely, but too well.

The murmur of Carne's voice followed. Joey Banks' gruff voice broke out again.

"Don't tell me all that over agin! I've 'eard enough of that! Pay a man his money! Well, then, look out for trouble! I dessay you'd like me to walk up to the school and see your 'eadmaster and show him a bit of paper, with your fist on it. What?"

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bunter.

Carne's voice came, louder now.

"Don't be a fool, Banks! You'd get nothing if you got me turfed out of Greyfriars. I tell you, if you'll wait——"

"I'm done with waiting."

"Give me till to-morrow!" Carne's voice was cracked and husky. "I—I'm expecting something—a—a birthday present from home. I owe you thirty pounds. I—I've been promised a bank-note for fifty."

Joey Banks' eyes opened wide.

"A fifty-pun' banknote?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, yes!" panted Carne.

"Gammon!" said Mr. Banks.

"I—I swear it," said Carne huskily. "A fifty-pound note—a birthday present—it—it's promised!"

Billy Bunter, fairly palpitating with excitement and curiosity, peered through the hawthorns. He saw Mr. Banks eyeing the pale, harassed face of the Greyfriars senior with doubting, suspicious eyes. It was no wonder that the racing man doubted. For weeks he had dunned Carne for his debt, receiving



Coker was going at too tremendous a speed to notice the deserted bicycle in his path. All he saw was a number of stars as his machine suddenly crumpled up while he himself went sprawling in the thickets, breathless and gurgling. "Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

nothing but excuses and promises. Fifty pounds in a lump was rather a surprise.

"Oh, come off!" said the racing man, roughly. "Gammon, Mr. Carne! You're getting no fifty-pun' note! And I'm telling you—"

"It will come to-day!" gasped Carne.

"Gammon!"

"Give me till to-morrow—only to-morrow—I—I will send it you by post this very night, Banks—I swear it, and you can let me have the change—afterwards—"

Joey Banks stared at him doubtfully. If it was true that Carne was getting such a birthday present from his people, he was not a fellow that Joseph Banks wanted to quarrel with. Joey Banks doubted. Billy Bunter did not doubt; Bunter was quite certain that the wretched sportsman of the Sixth was only playing for time, and pulling Banks' leg for that purpose.

"Another day won't hurt you, Banks," said Carne, licking his dry lips. "Leave it till to-morrow—"

"How often 'ave you said them very words?" grunted Mr. Banks discontentedly.

"I—I mean it this time."

"If you don't," said Mr. Banks, in a low, meaning voice, "look out for trouble, Mr. Carne! You'll find that I ain't a man to be made a fool of! I'll wait—till to-morrow. If that money don't come along to-morrow, look out for trouble at your school!"

With that, Mr. Banks turned, and tramped away sullenly through the trees, evidently in a very bad temper. Carne remained standing under the oak, and the inquisitive Owl, blinking through the hawthorns, saw that his face

was white as chalk, and trickling with perspiration. He was still standing there, long minutes after Banks had disappeared, and Bunter wondered whether he would ever go. He went at last, with unsteady steps, and the rustling in the wood died away.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Billy Bunter.

And the coast being clear now, the fat Owl heaved his weight out of the grass, and rolled off once more in the direction of Cliff House School.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Horrid for Horace!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Billy Bunter.

Four juniors were wheeling bicycles out of the gateway at Cliff House, when a fat and weary figure came in sight, plugging up the hot, dusty road.

The Co. grinned at the sight of William George Bunter.

Bunter looked tired.

Marjorie and Clara waved good-bye to their friends from the gateway and turned back. Perhaps they did not see Billy Bunter arriving. Or, perhaps, they did not want to see him. At all events, they heeded him not.

The fat junior came to a halt, and blinked at the four. They were grinning; but the Owl of the Remove was far from grinning. At long last, Billy Bunter had arrived at his destination, but his many rests on the road had landed him there very late.

"I say, you fellows, you ain't going?" gasped Bunter.

"We jolly well are!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Have—have you had tea?"

"The teafulness was delightful and preposterous, my esteemed Bunter," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter collapsed against a wall, and fairly groaned. After all his fearful exertions, he had arrived too late for tea! It was a crushing blow.

"Seen anything of Wharton, Bunter?" asked Frank Nugent. "We thought he was coming on after us, but he never turned up!"

Groan!

"You look tired, old fat bean," remarked Johnny Bull. "Have you walked all the way from Greyfriars? How did you do it?"

Groan!

"Three miles in two hours!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "No wonder the poor chap's tired!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Groan!

Billy Bunter blinked at the grinning quartette with lack-lustre eyes behind his big spectacles. Bunter was not only tired, but he was hungry. He was not only tired and hungry, but he had the walk home before him. Life to William George Bunter seemed hardly worth living.

"I say, you fellows. I—I'm late for tea!" he groaned. "I—I thought I should get in, in time for tea! Oh dear!"

"That's all right," said Johnny Bull.

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"Saved us the trouble of kicking you out, old fat man."

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I suppose one of you is going to give me a lift back?"

"The supposefulness is an absurd error, my idiotic Bunter."

"Oh, really, Inky?"

"Dear old bean," said Bob. "When I change my bike for a ten-ton lorry, I'll give you a lift, with pleasure. Not till then."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Haven't you seen anything of Wharton, Bunter?" asked Frank.

"Blow Wharton!" grunted Bunter. "What does Wharton matter? I suppose Coker got him, and whopped him. Serve him right!"

"Coker!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter grinned faintly. As he had missed tea at Cliff House it was a consolation that somebody else had missed it, too.

"Didn't Wharton get here?" he asked.

"No, ass! Did he start?" asked Frank.

"He jolly well did, and Coker of the Fifth was after him," said Bunter. "I called to him to stop, and he wouldn't. Serve him jolly well right! If he'd given me a lift, I'd have protected him from Coker. I dare say Coker's whopped him black and blue! He looked frightfully wild!"

"Well, if he's had a row with Coker, Coker can't have damaged him enough to keep him from coming on," said Bob.

"Looks as if he has!" grinned Bunter. "Serve him right! I say, you fellows, I can't walk back to Greyfriars! If you won't give me a lift—"

"You've got it!"

"Well, one of you lend me a bike," said Bunter. "You fellows make out that you're better walkers than I am. Well, one of you can walk back, see, and lend me his jigger!"

"I can see us doing it!" grinned Bob Cherry, and he put one leg over his machine.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ta-ta, old fat bean!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

The four juniors pedalled away, leaving Billy Bunter to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

They swept away down Pegg Lane in a bunch, and the fat Owl was left to solve the pressing problem of transport on his own. They turned into the bridlepath through the wood, and came out into Friardale Lane, going at a good speed. The chums of the Remove were rather anxious to see Wharton, and learn why he had not turned up at Cliff House as arranged. According to Bunter, Coker of the Fifth had been on the warpath, and Coker of the Fifth was a heavy-handed fellow. Any junior in a scap with Coker of the Fifth was likely to collect considerable damages.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's jolly old Coker!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the burly Horace came in sight in Friardale Lane.

The cyclists slowed down.

Horace Coker was not looking good tempered as he strode along the leafy lane. Coker, in fact, was cross. Things had gone wrong with Coker that sunny July afternoon. In the first place, Potter and Greene had not turned up as directed by the great Coker. In the second place, a cheeky Remove fag had cheeked him, and escaped a whopping. In the third place, his jigger was wrecked, and Coker had to leave it

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at a cycle shop for repairs. His motor-bike was already laid up for repairs. Now his push-bike was laid up for repairs. Coker was really fortunate in not being laid up for repairs himself! But he did not think of that consolation. He was regarding the universe with wrathful and disapproving eye, when the chums of the Remove came on him. They jumped down.

"Seen Wharton, Coker?" asked Bob.

Coker frowned. He did not even deign to answer the question. It was sheer cheek for a Remove fag to question Coker of the Fifth, just as if he were a common mortal. Coker frowned and stalked on.

Bob Cherry swung his bicycle in the way, and Coker had to stop.

"Hold on a minute, Horace!" said Bob cheerily.

Coker's frown became thunderous.

"If you're asking for a whopping—" he breathed.

"I hear that you were after Wharton this afternoon," said Bob. "He never turned up at Cliff House, so we want to know. Have you seen him?"

"Yes. Get out of the way!"

"Well, where did you see him?"

"In the wood. Take that bike away, or I'll smash it!"

"We want to know why Wharton didn't come on—"

"Well, he wouldn't, you young ass, after what happened," said Coker. "He went back to Greyfriars. Now shift, before I shift you!"

Coker's words left no further doubt in the minds of the juniors.

Coker had been on the warpath. He had seen Wharton in the wood; and "after what happened" Wharton had gone back to the school instead of coming on to Cliff House. The juniors could draw only one conclusion from that. It was, as it happened, a wrong conclusion. But that was Coker's fault, due to the fact that he was too lofty to waste words on mere fags.

"Oh," said Bob Cherry, "that's enough! Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen, we know why Wharton didn't turn up now. Pile in!"

Four bicycles went running into the hedge. Four Remove men jumped at Horace Coker as if moved by the same spring.

"Here, what—" roared Coker.

Bump!

Coker of the Fifth went down in the dust, roaring.

"Why, you, you— Yaroooh! Gerroff! Yooooop!"

"Give him jip!"

"Mop him up!"

"Scrag him!"

"Give him terrific beans!"

Coker, had he been asked, would have replied without hesitation that he could have handled these four cheeky juniors with one hand tied behind him. But, as a matter of fact, he couldn't, even with the use of both his hefty hands.

Coker put up a terrific scrap.

But four pairs of hands were too many for Coker. The hapless Horace hardly knew what was happening to him. He was rolled, and ragged, and ruffled, and bumped, and bounced till he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. He struggled and roared and yelled and raved and shrieked and spluttered. Five hectic minutes left the juniors breathless, and Coker in a deplorable state.

"There, I think that will do!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yoooooop!" spluttered Coker.

He sat up. His coat was split up the back, his collar and tie were gone, his hair was a dusty mop, standing on end. He was smothered with dust, and he had

barely wind enough left to splutter with. He sat and gasped and gurgled and groaned while the chums of the Remove remounted their jiggers and rode on their way. Leaving Coker for dead, as it were, they pedalled on, breathless but cheerful, to Greyfriars. It was long, long minutes before Horace Coker picked himself up, and then he was still rather doubtful whether he was on his head or his heels.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Coker!

HARRY WHARTON was in Study No. 1, in the Remove, when his friends came in. As he had lines on hand he was improving the shining hour by getting them done. He had reported to Mr. Quelch, his Form master, the strange happening in the wood, and Mr. Quelch had immediately reported the matter to the police station at Courtfield, and he had given Wharton a strict injunction not to go out of gates again that day. "Gating" was rather irksome; but the captain of the Remove realised that in the circumstances his Form master was right, and he took it as cheerfully as he could.

Amazing as it was, it was clear that persons unknown to him were watching for a chance to get hold of him outside the school, and he agreed with Mr. Quelch that it was a case of "safety first."

He was glad to hear the tread of the Co. as they came tramping into the Remove passage. Bob Cherry hurled open the door of Study No. 1.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are!" roared Bob.

"Here I am," answered Wharton.

"You don't look much damaged," said Frank Nugent.

"Not at all."

"Well, we thought we should see you looking knocked out after what happened," said Johnny Bull.

"You've heard about it, then?"

"Yes. We got it from Bunter, and then we met Coker. Luckily, we dropped on Coker coming back from Cliff House."

"And I fancy jolly old Horace is sorry for himself by this time!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We ragged him bald-headed—"

Wharton jumped.

"You've ragged Coker?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob. "Ragged him right and left! Wrecked him! Mopped him up!"

"The mopfulness was terrific!"

"What's left of Coker will have to crawl home on its hands and knees," said Johnny Bull. "He doesn't seem to have damaged you much, after all. But we've jolly well damaged him!"

Wharton stared blankly at his chums. "What the thump have you ragged Coker for?" he gasped.

"Eh? Ain't you glad we've ragged him?" asked Bob, in astonishment.

"No fear! What the dickens—"

"The ragfulness was the proper caper, my esteemed Wharton, and the ragfulness was truly terrific."

"You—you silly asses—"

"What?"

"You said you'd heard about it," exclaimed Wharton. "If you've heard about it, what the merry deuce did you rag Coker for? Goodness knows where I should be now but for Coker!"

"Blessed if I make you out," said Bob, staring at the captain of the Remove. "You never turned up at Cliff House—"

"I couldn't after what happened."

"Well, then, Coker asked for it," said

Bob warmly. "You don't look damaged, but I suppose Coker must have whopped you pretty hard to keep you away."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "Coker never whopped me, you ass! I was bagged in the wood by two scoundrels, who tied me to a tree, and Coker came along and knocked out the man who was watching me, and let me loose."

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"Oh, my esteemed hat!"

"We never knew——"

"If that ass Coker had told us——"

"For goodness' sake tell us what's happened, Harry!" exclaimed Frank Nugent anxiously.

Harry Wharton related the happening of the afternoon, his chums listening in astonishment. Evidently, now they heard the facts, that ragging had not been due to Coker of the Fifth. The chums of the Remove had ragged not wisely, but too well.

"Well, who'd have thought it?" said Bob Cherry. "What the thump can those sweeps have wanted with you?"

"Goodness knows! Looks like kidnapping, though I can't imagine why. Quelch has put the police on to it, and they will be looking for the man we left in the wood. But I've no doubt he's got away long ago. I don't know what their game was, but I'm jolly glad Coker butted in."

"And we ragged him for it. My hat!"

"His own fault!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Why couldn't the silly ass tell us? Fifth Form swank!"

"There has been a preposterous misunderstanding," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is up to us, my esteemed chums, to express our esteemed regret to the absurd and idiotic Coker."

"The fact is, Coker came in jolly useful, and I ought to thank him for what he did," said Harry. "I was waiting for him to come in to speak to him. I think you fellows had better come with me and tell him you're sorry for making that mistake."

"It's up to us," agreed Bob. "We'll go to his study after call-over, and put it to him nicely."

When the Greyfriars men assembled for calling-over, two fellows wedged in at the very last moment. One was Billy Bunter of the Remove, dragging weary, fat limbs, and with an expression on his podgy face like that of an expiring codfish. The other was Coker of the Fifth, who had spent a considerable time on repairs before coming in, but who still looked rather ruffled and dusty. Potter and Greene of the Fifth, after noting the expression on Coker's speaking countenance, decided to give him a miss till prep, and they disappeared after call-over, and Coker went to his study alone.

But he was not long left alone.

There was a tap at Coker's door, and it opened, and five cheery faces—unusually meek in expression—looked in.

Coker gazed at them with a deadly gaze! Coker had put a fives bat on the table, ready for a visit to the Remove passage. The Famous Five seemed to have saved him the trouble of paying that visit by arriving in his study.

"Oh!" said Coker grimly. "You!"

"Little us, old bean!" said Bob affably.

"We've come——" began Wharton.

"Never mind why you've come!" interrupted Coker. "You're here, and that's enough! Come into the study."

The Famous Five came in.

"Shut the door!"

Harry Wharton shut the door.

Coker of the Fifth picked up the fives bat.

"Now," he said, "you can take it in turns, or all at once! I'm going to whop the lot of you!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Coker——" began Nugent.

"My esteemed and preposterous Coker——"

"Nuff said!" interrupted Coker. "You cheeked me this afternoon, Wharton, and got away before I could whop you! You other young scoundrels cheeked me, and got away on your jiggers! Now I've got you where I want you! Better take it quietly, or you'll get it worse!"

"My dear chap——" gasped Wharton.

"That's enough!"

"But we came here——"

HEARD THIS ONE?



Hiker (to farmer seated on tree-trunk): "You look very happy, what!"
Farmer: "Yes; I was going to fell this tree, when the lightning came along and did it for me."
Hiker: "And what are you waiting for now, then?"
Farmer: "An earthquake to dig up my crops!"

Sent in by B. Laws, of 5a, Wellington Road, London, N.16, who has now been presented with one of our

USEFUL POCKET-KNIVES!

"Don't jaw, Wharton! I don't want fags jawing in my study! Bend over that chair!"

Coker pointed to a chair with the fives bat.

"Oh crikey! But, you see——"

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "We came here——"

"I've told you not to jaw! Are you bending over that chair, Wharton?"

"Oh, my hat! Not quite! I came here to say——"

"That will do!"

Coker, fives bat in hand, advanced on the staring five. Coker, on whom any number of lessons were lost, was evidently under the impression that he could "whop" the famous Co. He was glad to see them in his study for that very reason.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come, with their very best manners on, to put it nicely to Coker. But they had no time to put it nicely to Coker. They had no time to put it to Coker at all. Coker, getting busy with the fives bat, banished all their apologetic intentions.

Forgetting that they had come there to put it nicely to Coker, the Famous Five collared him on all sides, and Horace Coker smote the floor of his study with a resounding bump, the fives bat flying from his hand.

"Ooooooop!" roared Coker.

With great self-restraint the chums of the Remove forbore to lam Coker with his own fives bat. Bob Cherry picked it up, and jammed it down the back of Coker's neck.

Then the Famous Five retired from the scene, rather hastily, leaving Coker bellowing. They had to retire, or slay Coker, and in the circumstances they felt that Coker ought not to be slain. So they departed, slamming the door after them, leaving Coker of the Fifth sitting on the floor, gasping, and making frantic efforts to extract the fives bat from the back of his neck.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"NO!"

"But, sir——"

"No!" repeated Mr. Quelch. Wharton stood silent.

It was the following day, after class. At the door of the House a cheery group of juniors waited—four members of the Co. and Tom Redwing and Herbert Vernon-Smith. They were waiting while Harry Wharton interviewed his Form master.

Mr. Quelch's face was severe.

"I am surprised at your making such a request, Wharton, after what occurred yesterday," said the Remove master. "Until that matter is cleared up, you must remain within gates."

"I should be with a lot of my friends, sir——"

"I have to consider your safety, Wharton!"

"And we're going for a sail in the bay, sir——"

"I quite understand your disappointment, Wharton! But I cannot allow you, in the present circumstances, to go out of gates at all."

"Very well, sir!" said Harry, and he left the Form master's study and went out of the House.

"What's the jolly old verdict?" asked Bob Cherry.

The captain of the Remove made a grimace.

"Gated!" he answered.

"Hard cheese, old man!" said Tom Redwing. "It's glorious weather for a sail in the bay. But Quelch's right, old chap."

"The rightfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the hardness of the esteemed cheese is preposterous."

"What rot!" said Vernon-Smith. "Look here, Wharton, cut, and jolly well chance it!"

Harry Wharton shook his head. Captain of the Form and head boy of the Remove, he could not emulate the reckless Bounder. Certainly he was strongly tempted. It was a glorious July day, a light breeze was blowing, and the sea and the sands were tempting. It was not pleasant to remain behind, within gates, while his friends went sailing in Redwing's boat. But there was no help for it.

"Nothing doing!" he said. "You fellows cut off! I'll dig up some cricket. Little Side isn't out of bounds for me, at any rate."

"I'll stay in along with you, old chap!" said Frank Nugent.

"Rot!" said Wharton cheerfully. "I shall be all right! You fellows get off."

The Co. hesitated. It was not much use the whole party staying in gates because one fellow had to. But the chums of the Remove disliked going out and leaving Wharton on his lonely own; all the more because they knew they would thoroughly enjoy that trip on the sunny bay at Pegg. The Bounder settled the matter by starting.

"Come on!" he said. "We've not got lots of time—we've got to be back for call-over."

"Cut, you men!" said Harry. "See you later!"

And he waved his hand and went back into the House; on which Redwing and the Co. followed the Bounder.

Harry Wharton went up to the Remove passage for his bat. Some of the Remove men were at cricket, and he was going to join them. It was a disappointment not to go sailing in Redwing's boat with his friends; but he was not a fellow to grouse.

"I say, old chap—"

Billy Bunter was rolling down the Remove staircase, as the captain of the Remove came up. He grabbed Wharton's arm.

"You've not started yet!" he exclaimed.

"Doesn't look like it, does it?" asked Wharton, with a smile.

"Has Smithy got the grub basket?"

"Yes."

"Good! Now, look here, old fellow," said Bunter argumentatively. "You're not leaving me out."

"It's Redwing's party," said Wharton mildly. "Redwing's boat, you know."

"A fellow can take a friend," said Bunter. "Redwing isn't much class—not my class, you know; but he's a civil chap; he'd let you take a friend if you wanted to. If Smithy doesn't like it, he can lump it; I'm not bothering about Smithy! Look here, I'm sticking to you, old chap."

"You are!" agreed Wharton. "Take that jammy paw off my jacket!"

"You're not going without me!" said Bunter. "I'm rather surprised that you should think of it, after all I've done for you. I saw Smithy packing that basket—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It's not the tuck I'm thinking of, of course," said Bunter. "I'm fond of the sea, you know—you know what a sailor I am! Besides, you may get into danger—tides and currents and things—and then you'll need me. I'm really coming with you for your own sake, old chap! I never even saw Smithy pack a cold chicken in the basket—What are you grinning at?"

Wharton jerked his arm away from the jammy paw. There was jam on Bunter's fingers and jam on his fat face.

Billy Bunter had made up his fat mind to join that sailing party—whether on account of his love of the sea, or on account of the cold chicken the Bounder had packed in the basket. But he had hurried up to his study for tea, all the same; Peter Todd had jam for tea, and Bunter liked jam.

With an uneasy feeling that the beasts might get off without him if he was not on the spot, Billy Bunter had gobbled the lion's share of tea in Study No. 7, at an unusually rapid rate, and—very unusually—had even left some of the jam.

He was hurrying down when he met Wharton on the Remove staircase, and

his fat mind was relieved. As Wharton, evidently, had not started, the fat Owl had no doubt that he was in time.

Wharton went on up the stairs. Bunter blinked after him.

"Ain't you starting now?" he roared.

"I'm going for my bat!"

"You won't want your bat, you fat-head! What's the good of a bat in a sailing-boat?"

Wharton did not answer that question. He went into Study No. 1, picked up his cricket bat, and came out again with the willow under his arm. Billy Bunter was waiting impatiently on the stairs.

"Come on, old fellow!" he said.

"I'm coming!" said Wharton cheerfully.

"I say, old fellow, it's all right, isn't it?" asked Bunter, with a rather anxious blink at the captain of the Remove.

It ought really not to have been necessary to ask that question. A fascinating fellow like Bunter ought to have been welcome anywhere. There should have been no doubt on that point—not a possible, probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever!

But things were not always as they ought to have been. Bunter knew that, and he felt a lingering doubt. Wanted or unwanted, he was going to join that sailing-party; the cold chicken in Smithy's basket settled that! But he would have been glad to hear from Wharton that it was "all right."

"Right as rain!" answered Wharton.

"If you want to trot along with me, Bunter, trot away!"

"Good!" said Bunter, greatly relieved.

"Of course, I know you're glad to have me. We've always been friends and pals, haven't we?"

"Have we?" asked Wharton, in surprise. "First I've heard of it!"

"Beast! I mean, you will have your little joke, old fellow! You haven't forgotten how I stood by you when you first came to Greyfriars, and you were such an ill-tempered beast that nobody would speak to you—"

"You silly owl!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! You remember how you had a fight with Nugent, and—"

"You pernicious porpoise!"

"And we never scrapped, did we, old chap?"

"You'd have burst if we had."

"Look here, you beast—I mean—He, he, he! I can take a joke," said Bunter affably. "I say, did Smithy put the doughnuts in?"

"Never noticed!"

"You wouldn't!" said Bunter, with ineffable scorn. "That's the sort of silly idiot you are! I dare say you'd never have noticed, if he'd left the cold chicken out!"

"Very likely!"

"Well, if a fellow's a silly fool, he can't help it!" said Bunter. "I say, where are the other fellows?" Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles as they came out of the House. "I say, Wharton, where are you going? That's not the way, fathead!"

It seemed to be Wharton's way, for he followed it. Billy Bunter rolled after him.

"I say, Wharton, don't walk so quick!" yelled Bunter. "I haven't got spindle-shanks like you, you beast! Look here, walk slower, or I jolly well won't come with you!"

Wharton walked faster.

The fat Owl broke into a run. His fat little legs twinkled as he kept pace with the stride of the captain of the Remove.

"I'm coming, old chap!" he gasped.

"I'm not the man to let a pal down.

Blessed if I know what you're coming this way for, though. The other fellows ain't on Little Side, are they?"

There were a good many juniors on Little Side, and Bunter blinked at them, but did not discern the sailing-party among them. Why Wharton was going that roundabout way was a mystery to Bunter. He was not yet aware that the captain of the Remove had his Form master's instructions to remain within school bounds. That was a happy discovery that the fat junior had yet to make.

"Are you going to lend that bat to a chap, Wharton?" he asked, as they arrived on the cricket ground.

"I'm going to use it, fathead!"

"What for?" demanded Bunter.

"Cricket."

"You silly ass! You can't play cricket in a sailing-boat!"

Harry Wharton chuckled. Squiff of the Remove, who had a ball in his hand, called out to him:

"Like me to send you down a few?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Wharton.

"Look here, Wharton!" bawled Bunter. "You've no time for playing the ox, if you're going out in the boat."

"But I'm not going out in the boat, old podgy thing!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm gated!" explained Wharton.

"Gig-gig-gated!" stuttered Bunter.

"Why, you beast, you said I could come with you—you said it was all right!"

"So you can come with me, and it's all right!" assured Wharton. "No harm in your coming down to Little Side with me, that I know of. And it's all right—right as rain! Like to watch me batting?"

"You—you—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, have the other fellows started, then?"

"Eh? Oh, yes—long ago! Coming, Squiff!"

Harry Wharton walked towards the pitch.

Billy Bunter glared after him, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. He understood now why Wharton had so cheerfully accepted his fascinating company.

Wharton had no objection to the fat Owl coming down to Little Side, if he liked. If ferocious blinks could have slain, the captain of the Remove would have been really endangered at that moment. But ferocious blinks couldn't, and Harry Wharton proceeded to deal with the Australian junior's bowling regardless of Bunter's fat existence—and indeed forgetful of it.

And Billy Bunter, with feelings too deep for words, rolled away and left him to it!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Chase at Sea!

"A LIFE on the ocean wave!" chanted Bob Cherry.

"It's jolly!" said Nugent.

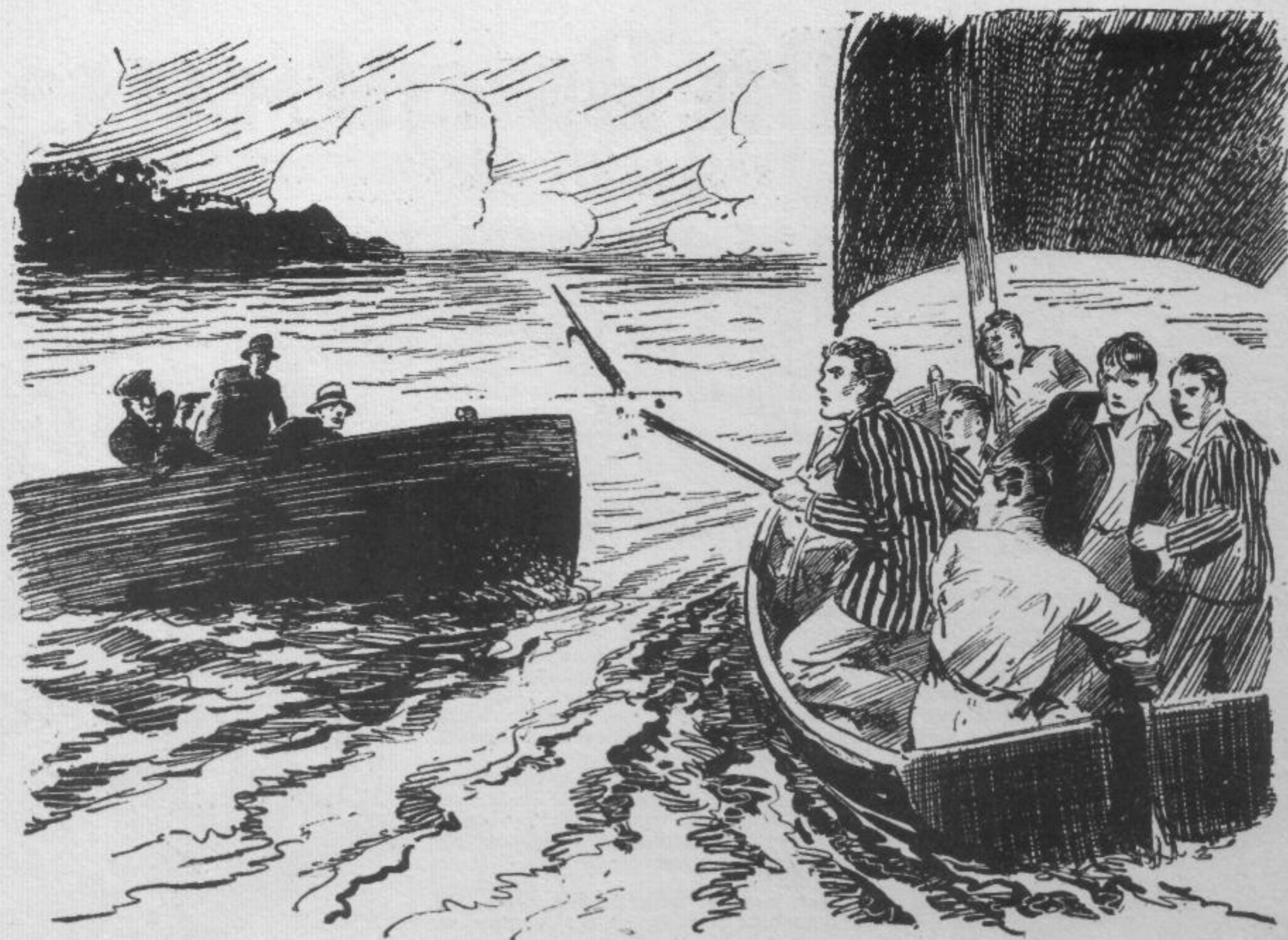
"The jolliffulness is—"

"Preposterous!" chuckled Bob.

It was a merry party in Redwing's boat. Redwing, the son of a sailorman, was born to the sea, and he handled a boat as well as any fisherman at Pegg. The juniors had left their bicycles in the village, and run the boat down to the water, and Redwing stepped the mast, and the sail was set—and the boat glided out over the blue, sunny bay.

Vernon-Smith sat at the tiller, Redwing handled the sheets, and four members of the famous Co. sat about the boat, with cheery faces.

All the fellows had the British boy's natural liking for the sea, and for sails



As Bob Cherry grasped the long wooden handle of the boathook in readiness, Dandy Sanders' automatic spoke. Bang!
"Oh crumbs!" spluttered Bob, as the boathook broke in his hand and the shock numbed his arm.

and boats—and it was a glorious day for a sail on the calm blue waters. Even the Bounder, though his tastes were not quite so wholesome as those of the other fellows, felt that this was rather better than cigarettes in the study, or a surreptitious game of billiards at the Three Fishers.

Wide and blue the bay stretched in the sunlight; wider, bluer, the deep sea beyond the rocks of the Shoulder. There were a good many craft out, pleasure-boats, and fishing-boats, and out at sea brown sails could be seen, and a trail of smoke from a steamer going down to Dover. The wind was from the south, so it came on the starboard as Tom trimmed the brown-patched sail and ran out to sea.

Chug-chug-chug-chug!

The throbbing of a motor-boat followed the juniors.

They had noticed a motor-boat tied up at the landing-stage opposite the Anchor, and it seemed to have got under way as soon as they started. It was following them out to sea, and they saw a man, with steely eyes and a bearded face, driving it, and two other men, both of whom wore slouched hats pulled down over their faces.

They gave no particular heed to the motor-craft, however. It was the only one on the bay; but such craft were not unusual there, and it did not occur to the juniors that its crew took any interest in the Greyfriars boat.

Redwing knew how to get the best speed out of any craft, and the boat rushed swiftly through the blue waters. Swift as it was, the motor-boat could have passed it at any moment; but the steely eyed man seemed content to keep behind. Fifty yards behind the juniors

he kept pace, following every motion of the sailing-boat.

The shore and the buildings grew a blur to their eyes, sinking almost out of sight. Most of the boats on the bay were left behind now, and the Greyfriars party had the sea to themselves, save for the distant ships that passed out on the waters.

They were outside the bay now, beyond the stretch of black rocks that jutted out from the base of the towering Shoulder.

The wind was stronger outside the bay, and the boat danced along almost like a cork, with a thumping of canvas and a creaking of mast and boom. Like an accompaniment, came the chug-chug-chug across the waters from the motor-boat.

The Bounder glanced back impatiently several times. The man in the motor-boat seemed bent on keeping in the wake of the Greyfriars party. Tom Redwing had shifted his course several times to shake off the chug-chug-chugging; but every time the steely eyed man had swerved, also, keeping at the same distance behind.

"What the thump is that sportsman sticking to our tail for?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "I've a good mind to hail him and tell him to sheer off."

"The stickfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his dusky eyes thoughtfully on the pursuing craft. "That esteemed johnny seems to like our ridiculous company. If the absurd Wharton were with us—"

He paused.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Nugent, as he guessed the nabob's thought, "Quelch was right to keep Wharton in gates."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Bob, staring back at the pursuer.

What reason the men in the motor-boat could have for sticking to their traces in this persistent way was a mystery to the juniors. Had Harry Wharton been on board it would have been a natural suspicion that his mysterious enemies were looking for another chance at him.

"Can't be that!" grunted the Bounder. "Wharton's not here, and they know him by sight. Look here, let's tell them to sheer off. I'm fed-up with the buzz of their dashed engine!"

"We'll drop them," answered Redwing, and he shifted the sail, to send the boat skimming over the waves to the north.

Immediately the motor-boat swerved in chase.

Vernon-Smith stood up, staring back at it. Surprising as it was, it could no longer be doubted that the motor-boat was in pursuit of the Greyfriars party. It was near enough for the expressions on the faces of its crew to be read, and Smithy could see that the two men in slouched hats were grinning, while the steely eyed man was watching intently.

"They're after us," said the Bounder abruptly. "Goodness knows what their game is, unless they're the jolly old kid-nappers, and they think we've got Wharton on board."

"They can see we haven't, if they're the chaps who collared Wharton yesterday," said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I can make it out! But they're after us; there's no doubt about that."

"They could run us down any minute if they liked," said Bob.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,273.

I.
DR. ALFRED BIRCHEMALL, the venerable headmaster of St. Sam's, strolled down to the cricket nets on Little Side, dressed in white trowsis and a tall top hat.

"Jolly!" he bawled, in his refined voice.

Jack Jolly, the cheery kaptin of the Fourth, stopped playing and looked up. He almost fainted when he saw the Head.

"Grate pip, sir!" he eggsciaimed.

"Are you going to a fancy-dress ball?"

"Certainly not, Jolly. What ever puts such a queer idea into your napper?"

"Well, you look so comical!" larfed Jack Jolly. "Those trowsis and that hat look as if they haven't been worn for about sixty years!"

"Nor have they!" was the Head's serprizing reply. "They haven't see the light of day since I played for Oxbridge University against Aston Villa in 'seventy-two!"

"Haven't you made a slite mistake, sir?" arsked Frank Fearless, with a grin. "Aston Villa happen to play footer, not cricket!"

"Do they? Well, they played cricket in my days," said the Head carelessly. "But I didn't come here to dig up ancient history, boys. I oame to give you some splendid news that will please you all no end, and espeshally you, Jolly. I beleve you are playing St. Charley's to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir; a single-innings match," Jack Jolly answered. "We're going to lick them all hands down, too!"

"Hear, hear!" corussed the Fourth. Dr. Birchermall grinned.

"There won't be the slitest doubt about that, my boys! You see, I have decided to play for you!"

"What?"

"That's my plezzant serprize!" eggsplained the Head, beaming on the dismayed juniors. "I have decided to turn out for the Fourth and to relevee you of the kaptincy at the same time, Jolly."

"M-m-my hat!"

"Natcherally you are overwhelmed with grattitude. I suggest you relevee your feelings by giving me three cheers," said the Head modestly. "All together, now! Hip hip, hip—"

Evidently he eggspected a loud cheer to wring out. If he did, he was greevously disappointed, for it was a groan and not a cheer that came from the lips of the Fourth.

Dr. Birchermall's beaming smile vanished, and he began to glare instead. "Being funny?" he arsked, somewhat unplezzantly. "Becaws if you are—"

"Nunno, sir!" said Jack Jolly hurriedly. "But you can't eggspect us to be altogether delited. You see, you can't play cricket for toffy!"

"What?"

"I don't suppose you'd know a cricket bat from a maiden over!" said Jack, with a feint grin. "If you play for the Fourth to-morrow, it's ten-to-one in doennuts that we shall lose. So you can't eggspect us to be enthewsiastic, can you?"

The Head cullered to the very roots of his beard.

"When it comes to slogging a cricket ball, I defy anybody to equal me!" said the Head challengingly. "Just to prove that I mean what I say, I'll go over to that wicket and let you bowl to me, Jolly."

"Delighted, Im sure, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly.

The Head trotted down to the wicket inside one of the nets. The Fourth

Dr. BIRCHEMALL—



nearly bust their sides with larfter when they saw him take his stand.

Holding his bat back to front, he planted his feet wide apart, and kept the handle of his bat sloping backwards, so that it was simply impossibul for him to hit the ball properly.

"Play up, Jolly!" he cride. "And prepare to see the mitiest smite in the history of kricket!"

The eggspectant crowd prepared to see a display of fireworks. They soon got it, for Jack Jolly turned himself into a catherine-wheel, and the ball left his hand like a rocket.

Crash!

Ball met bat with teriffick force. If the bat had been the right side round it mite have sent the ball sailing hi over the pavilion. But it wasn't! The result was that instead of flying to the farthest corner of the field, the ball shot upwards at a tanjent, and smote Dr. Birchermall well and truly on the nose!

"Yaroo!" shrieked the Head, dropping his bat and performing the weerd kind of capers you mite eggspect from a dancing Dervish.

"How's that, umpire?" inquired Jack Jolly humerously.

"Out!" chortled Frank Fearless. "He was obviously n.b.w.—nose before wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently Dr. Birchermall had had enuff. At any rate, he staggered off the field, clasping his hand to his dam-midged nasal organ, and howling with pane.

Nothing more was herd about the Head playing cricket for the Fourth that day.

II.

DR. BIRCHEMALL, however, wasn't easily put off, once he had made up his mind to do a thing. So Jack Jolly & Co. were not serprized when he strolled up to the notiss-board next morning,

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Hurree Janset Ram Singh's full titles are : Nabob of Bhanipur, Jagidar of Marukh, Mir of Segal, Rani of Bahapal, and Deshmukh of Gurdistan.



Billy Bunter's actual weight is 14 st. 12½ lb. His nearest rivals in the Remove are Johnny Bull and Bolsover major, each 9 st. 4 lb.



It is claimed that Harry Wharton is descended from Taillefer, the Norman knight who led the charge against the Saxons in the Battle of Hastings.

calmly deleted Loyle's name from the Fourth team, and substituted his own, with the word "KAPTIN" written in bold type beside it.

"Cheek!" said Jack Jolly, when the Head had walked away, chuckling into his beard as he did so.

"He certainly has got a neck!" agreed Frank Fearless. "But heads usually have got a neck, haven't they?"

"We'll have to get rid of him somehow!" said Jack Jolly, nitting his brows. "What about offering him some doennuts with a sleeping draft in them?"

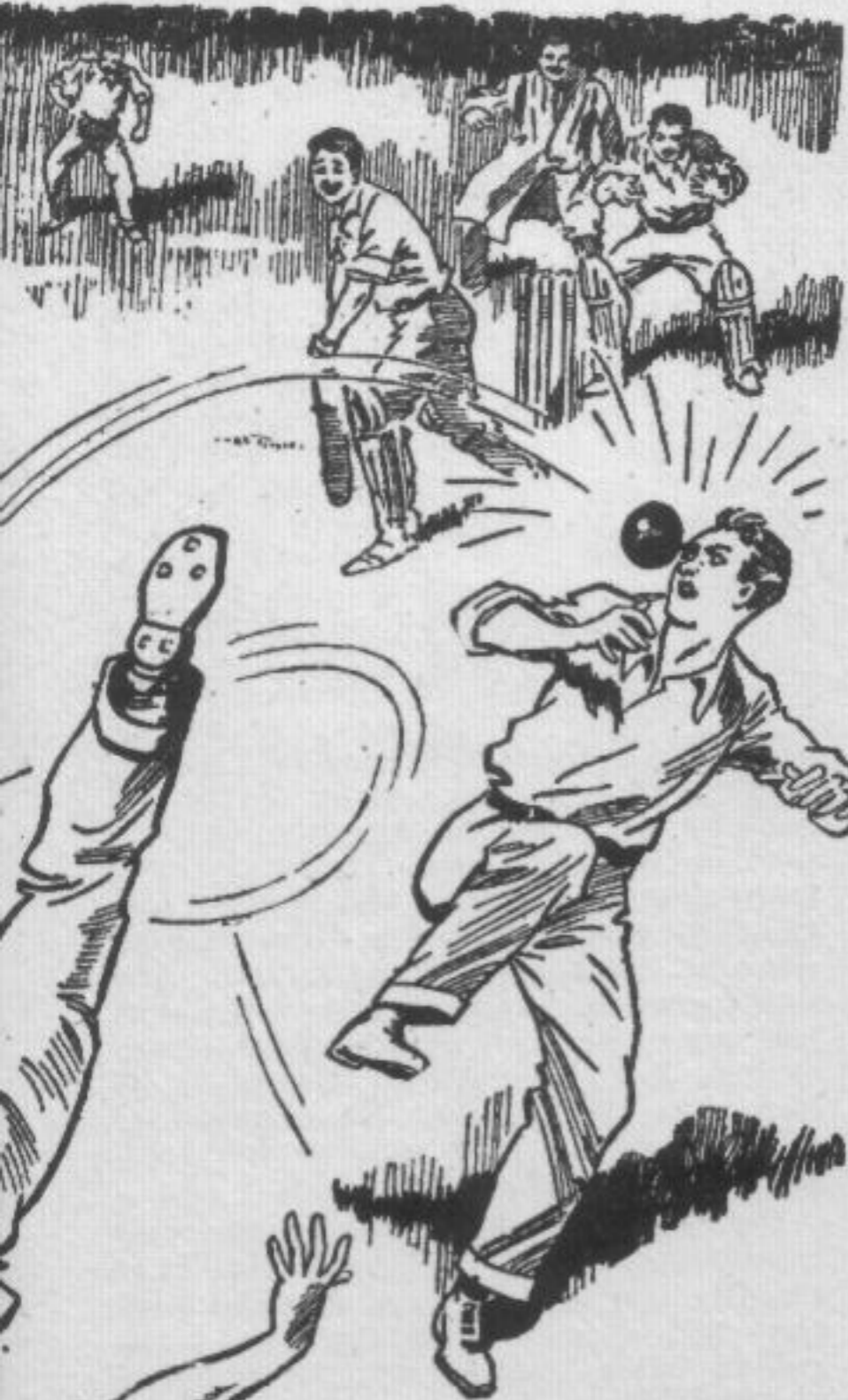
"Good wheeze!"

"Failing that, we could rig up a booby-trap that would send him to sleep for a phew hours!" grinned Frank Fearless. "Or we mite lock him in his study and lose the key!"

Jack Jolly's eyes gleamed more hoapfully.

"Good ideas, those, Fearless, and no mistake! If kneads be, we can use them. But first we'll try the doennut dodge. I'll sneak into the sanny and pinch some sleeping-drafts at morning

CRICKET KRACK



duzzent rain, hail, or snow this afternoon, and provided also no thunderstorms, hurricanes, cyclones, or monsoons come along, the weather should be quite fine, I fancy!"

"Ye-es, sir!" said Jack Jolly, eyeing the Head just a little suspishusly. "Eggsactly! But we didn't come to discuss the weather; what we wanted to do was to hand you over this bag of doennutts as a mark of our affeckshun and esteem."

The juniors eggspected Dr. Birchmall to make a grab for the gift.

But, grately to their serprize, he did nothing of the kind. Instead, he sat back in his chair and larfed till the tears of merriment rolled down his rinkled old cheeks.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" he roared. "This is funny, and no mistake! I suppose you're sure there are no sleeping-drafts inside the doennutts, Jolly?"

"What?" eggscclaimed Jack Jolly & Co., in dismay.

"And if this stunt fails, I suppose you're not thinking, by arfy charnse, of fixing up a booby-trap for me?" arsked Dr. Birchmall sarkastically. "Or, failing that, of locking me in my study and losing the key? Becawse if you are, I should advise you not to try it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!" "You see, as it happens, my boys, Toadey minor came here a phew minnits ago and reveled the entire plot to me!"

"Oh crums!" "If it were not that I want you to be fit for the match, I'd birch you all black and blew, bust me if I wouldn't! As it is, I'll let you off lightly. Take a million lines each—and bring them to me by next Monday!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Jack Jolly & Co., considerably releved to know that it was nothing worse.

"It would appear from this incident," added the Head, "that you don't want me to play for the Fourth to-day. That revellation makes me only the more determined to do it. I shall kaptin the team this afternoon, whether you like it or not. Now, hop it—or, as the vulgar would say—go!"

And the juniors, grinning sheepishly, went like lambs.

III.

THE Head duly turned up on the Junior Cricket Field that afternoon, and his white trowsis and top hat attracted a good deal of attention from the St. Sam's crowd, and loud guffaws of larfter from the visitors.

break, and we'll make a present of them to the Head in doennutts!"

"Good old Jack!"

And the juniors went into class feeling much more hoapful that they would suxceed in getting rid of the old buffer after all."

At morning break Jack Jolly broke into the sanny. He reappeared five minnits later, grinning all over his dial, and carrying severall small paper packets marked "Sleeping Draft. Xtra Strong."

Frank Fearless was waiting in the quad with a supply of doennutts, and the juniors quickly set to werk to insert in each doennutt enuff sleeping-draft to make the Head slumber for the rest of the day.

Having dun the job properly, they trotted along to Dr Birchmall's study.

The Head, for reasons of his own, seemed highly amewsed when they entered.

"Well, my boys, it's a nice day for the grate match!" he grinned. "If it

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



Mr. "Larry" Lascelles, Maths and Games Master, still carries a piece of shrapnel in his arm as a souvenir of the Great War, 1914-18.



William Wibley is a "gifted actor and knows Shakespeare's "Hamlet" all through by heart!



He ignored all the cawstic remarks that were being hurled about, and, winning the toss with a dubble-headed penny, put St. Charley's in first.

"I'll start the bowling!" he said, as he led his team on the field. "Then we shall be sure of getting them out quickly!"

The St. Charley's batsmen came out grinning. But they didn't grin for long. With his very first ball, Dr. Birchmall hit the visiting player who was batting against him right on the ear.

"Wooooop!" howled the visitor.

"How's that, umpire?" yelled the Head.

Meek major of the St. Sam's Fifth, and Mild minor of the St. Charley's Fourth, who were acting as umpires, were both frightened to go against such a mitey personage as Dr. Birchmall. So they both promptly replied:

"Out!"

"Hurrah!" howled the Head. "Didn't I tell you I was a champion kricketer? St. Sam's will reckernize my true worth now, if she never did before! Hark at the crowd roaring with cheers!"

But he had made a slite mistake there. As a matter of fact, the crowd was roaring with larfter!

Dr. Birchmall evidently made up his mind to send down a really swift ball for the next man in, for he walked to the end of the field to start his preliminary run. Like a champion on the sinder-track he streaked towards the wicket. Reaching it, he leaped up in the air and whirled round, with the intention of sending down a real "yorker."

Unforchunitly, however, he whirled round too much. The result was that, instead of bowling a yorker, he turned a complete summersalt, and landed on his tall top hat, promptly berrying his entire head in it!

It was the most commical site imajinable to see the dignified figger of Dr. Birchmall standing on his head and waving his legs about in the air, and the spectators simply shrieked with larfter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That little insident put the Head out of action for some time, and the players of both sides were very glad of the respite.

St. Charley's played well, and soon nocked up a fare score, and by the time they were all out they had made a total of 99 runs.

The Head had fully recovered by that time, and he was grinning all over his dial as he strapped on his pads.

"I shall go in first, of corse," he said. "What I want is to score a century myself, and thus beat them off my own bat."

The St. Sam's innings commenced, with Dr. Birchmall facing the bowling. "Play!"

The St. Charley's bowler sent down a simple lob, and the Head stepped out to it and farely slogged at it. He missed it, however, and the ball just tipped the wicket and nocked off the bails.

"How's that, umpire?" chortled the St. Charley's bowler.

"Not out!" said the Head promptly. "That was a trial ball. Now we start in earnest!"

(Continued on page 28.)



(Continued from page 13.)

The Bounder gave a grunt.

"If they're up to mischief they don't want to start till we get right out to sea. They'd rather be out of sight of land if they're going through our pockets."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"Dash it all, it can't be that!" said Johnny Bull, shaking his head. "But I'm blessed if I can make it out!"

"They wouldn't handle this party easily," said Bob. "There's six of us, and we're rather tough customers. We could knock out that lot."

"They're up to something!" said Nugent.

It was fairly clear that the men in the motor-boat were up to "something," though it was very difficult to guess what that something was. Twice again Tom Redwing changed the course. Each time the motor-boat hung on the new track like a bloodhound. Redwing knitted his brows.

"Look here, you fellows," he said, "if they mean mischief of some kind, the sooner we know, the better, before we're out of sight of land. I'll put about as if we were running for Pegg. That will make them come out into the open, whatever they're up to."

"Good!" said Bob, and he picked up a boathook.

As the sailing-boat went about, the pursuers woke to sudden activity. Hitherto they had contented themselves with following and keeping their distance. Now the motor-boat shot forward, and interposed between the juniors and the land. The man with the steely eyes gave up his place to one of the others, and stood up, waving his hand to the juniors.

"Heave that boat to!" he shouted across the water.

"Why?" called back Redwing.

"Because I tell you to! Sharp's the word!"

"Go and eat coke!" roared Bob Cherry.

The steely eyed man glanced round him swiftly. There was no other boat within half a mile, and the shore was a blur. His hand went to his hip-pocket, and came out with something in it that glimmered bluish in the sunlight. The schoolboys stared at him, almost stupefied. It was an automatic pistol that glimmered in his hand.

"Stop that boat, or I'll shoot!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob.

"Gammon!" snarled the Bounder.

"He dare not! Keep on, Reddy!"

"You bet!" answered Redwing, between his teeth.

The steely eyes glittered over the lifted automatic, and the juniors felt the blood thrill to their hearts. But the Bounder's hand was hard on the tiller; Redwing's hands firm on the sheets. The brown-sailed boat glided on, with the motor-boat now at a little distance alongside, keeping pace. But no shot rang out. Dandy Sanders, crook and cracksman, was a desperate man, but he was hardly desperate enough to fire

on a party of schoolboys. It was an empty threat.

"Will you stop?" he shouted.

"No!" answered Redwing.

"Cut her off from the shore, Hookey!" breathed the steely eyed man, and the man who was driving the motor-boat nodded.

The motor-boat drew ahead and crossed the bows of the Greyfriars craft, and Tom Redwing had to alter his course to avoid a collision. The Greyfriars boat ran north again towards the great mass of the Shoulder. The motor-boat clung to her, edging her off from the land.

"It's that kidnapping gang!" breathed Frank Nugent. "But what can they want? They know that Wharton isn't here."

The steely eyed man raised his automatic again.

"Listen to me, you young fools!" His sharp voice came clearly. "No harm is intended; but I want one of you; his name is Nugent."

"You want me?" ejaculated Nugent. "You! You will not be harmed. I tell you that no harm is intended. You will be set free in a few hours. Stop that boat!"

"Rats!"

"I shall fire!"

"Get on with it!" jeered the Bounder.

Bang!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, as a shot rang out and echoed across the sunny waters, and the bullet crashed into the boat.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Fight Afloat!

BANG!

The report rolled back from the cliffs in a thousand echoes.

The juniors' faces were pale and tense. They knew that the bullet had not been intended to hit; but it had crashed into the boat only a foot from one of the juniors.

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"They're trying to scare us!" he snapped. "Keep on, Reddy!"

"I'm keeping on!"

"Will you heave to?" shouted the man with the automatic.

"No, you rotter!"

The motor-boat edged closer. The steely eyed man was preparing to leap on board. Bob Cherry gripped the boathook, and watched him grimly. Against the automatic, if the crook chose to use it in earnest, the juniors had no defence; but they could not believe that the rascal would go to such a length. And if it came to a struggle, they were prepared to give a good account of themselves.

The man's object was known now. Not only Harry Wharton, but his study-mate, Frank Nugent, was wanted by the unknown gang. With the other fellows it was clear he was not concerned. For some mysterious and inexplicable reason, the two chums of Study No. 1 in the Remove had been marked down as the victims of the kidnapping gang. Harry Wharton had escaped them, and so long as he kept within school bounds he was safe; and so their attention had turned to Nugent. They had been on the watch, and that sailing expedition had given them an opportunity. Probably Dandy Sanders had expected that the mere sight of the automatic would scare the schoolboys into submission. But the Greyfriars juniors were made of sterner stuff than he supposed.

Bang!

"Oh crumbs!" spluttered Bob.

The boathook broke in his hand. The

man with the steely eyes was evidently a first-class shot. The bullet had cut through the long wooden handle of the boathook as Bob grasped it in readiness, and the shock numbed the junior's arm.

A moment more and the boat rocked as the man with the steely eyes jumped and landed on board.

"Now!" he panted.

The automatic glistened in the sun. His left hand grasped Frank Nugent's shoulder. With the swiftness of lightning the Bounder unshipped the tiller and hurled it.

Crash!

The heavy wooden tiller struck the steely eyed man with a crash and he reeled, and the next second he was plunging over the side of the rocking boat, almost dragging Nugent with him.

Bob Cherry grasped Frank by the collar and dragged him back.

Splash!

The man with the automatic went under the water, the automatic slipping from his grasp and sinking to the bottom.

"Good man, Smithy!" panted Redwing.

There was a yell of rage from the two men in the motor-boat. The steely eyed man came up, gasping and panting and spluttering. He looked a different man when he reappeared on the surface. The slight growth that had covered his chin was gone, and his face showed clean-shaven, hard in outline. Evidently he had been in disguise. He clutched at the motor-boat, and one of his companions dragged him in.

He squatted there, gasping and spluttering. Redwing kept the boat steadily on; but the man Hookey kept the motor-boat alongside, and the ruffian Mick grabbed at the gunwale and held fast. The Bounder picked up the tiller again, swung it in the air, and brought it down with a smashing blow on the ruffian's hands, and Mick yelled with anguish and let go. He sucked his fingers frantically.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" panted Bob Cherry.

The man Hookey, sitting at the engine, thrust a hand into his pocket. But he had no time to draw a weapon. Herbert Vernon-Smith, with a bound, landed in the motor-boat, the tiller in his hands. Before Hookey could make a movement to elude him he brought it down on the crook's head, and Hookey, with a groan, fell over backwards.

"Smithy!" gasped Redwing.

"Pile in!" roared Bob Cherry.

He was after the Bounder in a twinkling, the remnant of the broken boathook in his hand.

Mick, with his fingers crushed and crippled, was hors de combat. But the steely eyed man leaped on the Bounder like a tiger. Sturdy as he was, Vernon-Smith crumpled up in his grasp, the tiller falling from his hands.

"Rescue!" he yelled, as he rolled over in the grasp of the crook.

"Back up!" roared Bob.

"The back-upfulness is terrific!" panted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Tom Redwing hurriedly belayed the sheet and grasped the motor-boat to keep the two craft together. The other fellows swarmed after Bob Cherry. Hookey lay almost senseless, Mick was still sucking his crushed fingers and yelling, and the steely eyed man had his hands more than full with the juniors. Had his automatic been still in his hand perhaps Dandy Sanders would have used it then in his desperation. But his

automatic, fortunately, was at the bottom of the sea.

He was dragged away from the Bounder and flattened out in the bottom of the boat under a rain of fierce blows.

Dazed and half-stunned, he sprawled helpless under the juniors, panting out imprecations. The Greyfriars party had carried the war into the enemy's camp with a vengeance. The two boats bumped together, both of them rocking violently and shipping water. Leaving the crook gasping, spluttering, and utterly spent, sprawling on his back, the juniors clambered back into their own boat and Vernon-Smith shipped the tiller again. The motor-boat, unguided, shot away, and Tom Redwing trimmed his sail for the shore. With the wind on the port quarter, the sailing-boat raced away towards Pegg.

The juniors stared back at the enemy.

The motor-boat was shooting on towards the rocks of the Shoulder. Hookey still lay half-senseless; Mick was fully occupied with his crushed fingers; and the steely eyed man, gurgling for breath, was sitting up dazedly. He gained his knees and dragged himself to the engine to take control.

"I fancy they've had enough!" gasped Bob Cherry.

It looked as if the kidnappers had had enough, for the motor-boat did not swing round in pursuit again.

Instead of that, the steely eyed man was driving her out to sea. He had failed, and he was thinking now only of getting clear.

"My hat!" said the Bounder. "What a lark! We didn't look for this when we came out on this little run."

"I've had a jolly narrow escape," said Nugent soberly. "They seem to be after me as well as Wharton. But what the thump's their game?"

"Whatever it is, we've put paid to it," said the Bounder. "You'll be gated, too, when Quelch hears of this, old bean."

"I shan't mind that," said Frank. "Blessed if I want to run into that gang again."

"But what on earth do those brutes want with Wharton and Nugent?" said Tom Redwing.

"Goodness knows! But they seem to want 'em bad!" chuckled the Bounder. "Anyhow, we've given them something to remember us by."

"The rememberfulness will be terrific!"

The motor-boat became a mere speck on the blue waters and vanished. Dandy Sanders was playing for safety. But Tom Redwing ran the sailing-boat back to Pegg; all the party agreed that the sooner they were on shore the better. And they were not sorry when they moored once more at the old landing-stage opposite the Anchor.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Study!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Prep!" said Harry Wharton.

"That beast Carne—"

"Prep!" said Frank Nugent.

"Blow prep!" roared Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 1, with a wrathful blink. He was wriggling. Something evidently had happened to Billy Bunter, and he looked as if it was a prefect's ashplant that had happened.

It was time for evening prep, and most of the Remove were in their studies at work. Bunter had no taste

for work. Besides, he had some algebra to prepare for Mr. Lascelles, and if there was anything Bunter loathed more than Latin it was algebra. Bunter, as usual, was following the happy maxim, "If pleasure interferes with business, give up business."

A good many Remove fellows that evening were thinking of other matters than prep. The amazing adventure of the sailing-party on Pegg Bay was a topic in all the studies and throughout the school. Inspector Grimes had come down from Courtfield to see the juniors, and had departed a very puzzled inspector. But that absorbing topic did not absorb Bunter. Billy Bunter's thoughts seldom travelled outside the limits of his own wide circumference.

During prep it was a Sixth Form prefect's duty to see that Lower boys did not wander out of their studies, lark in the passages, and give prep the go-by. That week the duty fell to Arthur Carne, and as Carne was well known to be a slacker the juniors did not expect a very keen eye to be kept on the Remove. So Billy Bunter had seen no reason why he should not stroll in the Remove passage as a much-needed change from prep. The result, however, seemed to be painful, from his spasmodic wriggling.

"You call yourself captain of the Remove," hooted Bunter, with an accusing blink at Wharton, "and you let a Sixth Form beast bully a chap! I say, you fellows, that brute came up behind me, and, without saying a word, gave me a fearful swipe on my bags. Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" hooted Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to tell the Head about Carne! He jolly well wouldn't swipe a fellow if he knew what a fellow knew about a fellow."

"Fathead! You're interrupting prep!"

"Bless prep! Blow prep! I've got a pain!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you've noticed that that brute, Carne, has been in a frightful temper lately."

"I fancy everybody's noticed that," said Frank Nugent, laughing. "I've seen him looking like a bundle of nerves. Backed the wrong horse, perhaps."

"Lot he cares whether we're out of our studies in prep!" said Bunter. "He just swiped me because he likes swiping a chap when he's waxy. And I jolly well know the reason, too, and I've a jolly good mind to tell the Head! I could jolly well get him sacked."

Wharton and Nugent stared at the indignant Owl. It was rather surprising to hear a Lower boy state that he could "jolly well" get a Sixth Form prefect "sacked."

"What do you mean, you fat duffer, if you mean anything?" asked Wharton.

"I know what I know," said Bunter mysteriously. "I may have seen a Greyfriars prefect meet Joey Banks in Friardale Wood, and I may not. I may have heard Banks threaten to show him up at Greyfriars if he didn't pay what he owed him, and I may not. I may have heard Carne promise to post him a banknote for fifty pounds, and I may not."

"Fifty pounds!" yelled Nugent.

"You fat chump!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, really, you fellows! I suppose I can believe my own ears?" said Bunter warmly. "Of course, Carne was only pulling that sharper's leg. He's jolly well not getting fifty pounds from his

people, whether it's his birthday or not. But that's what he said to Banks."

Wharton's face became very grave.

"If you've been spying on Carne, Bunter—"

"Beast! I happened to hear—"

"You happen to hear too much! Carne would scrag you if he knew you were talking about him like that. Shut up, and get back to prep."

"Carne won't be here much longer, I fancy," said Bunter. "He was only stuffing that man Banks. Where can Carne get a fifty-pound banknote from, I'd like to know? Everybody knows his people ain't rich. I might get a fifty-pound note on my birthday from Bunter Court."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Carne's people ain't well off," said Bunter. "I'll eat all the fifty-pound notes he gets from home! He, he, he! I jolly well hope that man Banks will come along and show him up. I'd like to see him turfed out of Greyfriars. Wow! I say, you fellows, do you think the Head would believe me if I told him that Carne owed Joey Banks money for backing a horse, and—"

"I fancy not," grinned Wharton. "I fancy you'd get the licking of your life from the Head for spinning him such a yarn, and you'd get the ragging of your life from the Remove afterwards for sneaking."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"If you've been spying out anything about a Sixth Form man, the sooner you forget it the better," said Harry. "Now cut!"

"The beast swiped me—"

"Prep, fathead!"

"Blow prep! I'm not going to let Carne swipe me on my trousers, considering what I know—"

"Chuck over that cricket stump, Frank."

"Here you are."

"I—I say, old fellow, wha-a-at do you want that cricket stump for?" asked Bunter, backing to the door.

"Wait a tick, and you'll see."

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter did not wait a tick. He backed out of Study No. 1, slammed the door, and departed, to tell his tale of woe in some more sympathetic study.

Wharton and Nugent looked at one another.

"What has that fat idiot got hold of now?" asked Frank. "Everybody's noticed that Carne's been like a bear with a sore head for weeks. Lots of fellows know that he backs horses, like Loder. But he must have been pulling the long bow pretty hard if he told Banks that he was getting a fifty-pound note on his birthday. His people aren't rich."

"If they were, I fancy they wouldn't hand out fifty pounds at a time to a chap at school," said Wharton dryly. "I suppose Carne would tell the man anything to keep him quiet. But if Carne of the Sixth is really getting hold of a fifty-pound note, it looks—"

He broke off.

Nugent started.

"You—you don't think—" he ejaculated.

"No," said Harry. "Carne of the Sixth is a pretty hard case, I believe, but he couldn't be a thief. But if he had a fifty-pound note, I should jolly well guess easily enough where he got it."

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Nugent.

The same thought was in the minds of both the juniors—the thought of the "lost loot" of the Courtfield & County Bank.

"It's impossible, of course," said Harry. "He must have been stuffing Banks if he really told him what Bunter says he heard. But— Oh, bother it, let's get on with prep."

And they got on with prep in silence. There was silence in Study No. 1, broken only by the rustling of leaves and the scratching of pens. But another sound was heard presently, and the two juniors looked up from the table and stared in surprise at the old screen in the corner of the study.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Wharton.

There was a sound of a movement behind the screen. The juniors stared at it in amazement. They had been more than half an hour in the study, and it had certainly never occurred to them that there was anyone in the room but themselves. If some fellow had hidden in the corner behind the screen for a "lark," it was difficult to see where the "lark" came in. But the movement told plainly that someone was there.

"Who the dickens—" breathed Nugent.

The screen was pushed aside.

"Great pip!" gasped Wharton.

He leaped to his feet.

From the corner, where till that moment he had been concealed by the screen, a man dressed in black came with a sudden spring. Almost in the twinkling of an eye he crossed the study to the door and turned the key in the lock. The he turned on the staring, almost stupefied juniors. His steely eyes glinted at them. A loaded stick appeared in his hand.

"Silence!" he said in a quiet, calm voice. "Silence!"

Nugent's startled gaze fixed on the glinting, steely eyes.

"The—the man in the motor-boat!" he stammered.

"Silence! I am not here to harm you, but one call, one cry, and you will repent it!"

And the chums of Study No. 1, dumb-founded, stared at him in silence.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Disappointment for Dandy Sanders!

HARRY WHARTON breathed hard and deep. The loaded stick was half raised, and the steely, glinting eyes told clearly enough that the man in the study was ready to use the weapon. The two juniors were utterly at his mercy, amazing as it was in a crowded school with half a hundred fellows within sound of a call. There was a locked oak door between the juniors and help—and the man with the loaded stick.

There was a long moment of silence.

The man with the steely eyes broke it.

"I repeat, I am not here to harm you," he said in a low, calm, clear tone, low enough not to be heard by anyone passing the study, "but if you call out I will crack your heads. You had better not take the risk. I shall stun the pair of you before you have time for more than one cry. Be warned!"

"It's the man in the motor-boat," repeated Nugent in a low voice. "He's got up differently, but he's the man."

"The kidnapper!" muttered Wharton.

The man's face was almost hidden by a thick beard and moustache—evidently a disguise. But Nugent knew the steely, glinting eyes. Dandy Sanders nodded coolly.

"Exactly!" he said. "The man in the motor-boat, who failed to get hold of

you this afternoon, Master Nugent; who has failed twice to get hold of you, Master Wharton. That is why I am here."

"And what do you want?" Wharton had recovered from the shock of surprise now, and his tone was cool and contemptuous. "Do you fancy that you can get us away from the school?"

"Scarcely! That is not my object."

"Then what do you want?"

"A few words—that is all. That is all that I wanted when I had you seized by my men. I have failed to get you into my hands, and I did not expect to succeed in another attempt, now that you have been placed on your guard. So I am here."

"Just for the pleasure of a little conversation?" asked Wharton coolly.

"Precisely."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I have taken risks in coming here," said the man in black quietly. "As you may guess, the school has been well watched, and, fortunately, I had had the opportunity of learning my way about the interior. But I had to take risks."

"I suppose you sneaked in by some back window while the school was at call-over," said Wharton. "That would be your only chance. And you've been hidden in this study ever since—till we came up here for prep."

"Exactly."

"And now you're here, what do you want? You may not get away so easily as you came," said the captain of the Remove.

"Keep in mind that this cosh is ready to crack your skulls if you call out!" said the man with the steely eyes. "You know as well as I do that your lives are in no danger. I could have secured one of you this afternoon had I chosen to use my automatic. But if you have ever been stunned by a crack on the head you will know that it is a painful experience. I warn you to keep silent."

"We've had that," said Wharton. "What do you want with us?"

The two juniors were cool enough now. And they were curious. They had cudgelled their brains in vain to surmise what the kidnapper could possibly have wanted to lay hands on them for. Now, apparently, they were to know—and they were very keen to know. What this strange man could possibly have to say to them, which had led him to take such desperate risks, was a mystery to the chums of Study No. 1.

"I will tell you, if you have not guessed!" said the man in black, his steely eyes searching the juniors' faces.

"I haven't the foggiest!" said Wharton.

"Same here," said Nugent.

"I will tell you in three words what I want! Seven thousand pounds!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"In other words, the loot of the Courtfield and County Bank."

"Are you mad?" gasped Wharton.

"I have said that I am not here to harm you," said the man in black, in a low, menacing tone, "and that is true. But if you do not hand over the lost loot, or at least, tell me where to lay hands on it, you will repent it."

"If you're not mad, what do you mean?" exclaimed Wharton. "What should we know about it?"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Nugent, in wonder.

Wharton burst into a laugh.

"My hat! Do you mean to say that you've been after us because you fancy we know something about the money that was taken from the Courtfield Bank? My hat!"

Dandy Sanders gritted his teeth.

"Listen to me," he said. "A few weeks ago Jerry the Rat held up the bank at Courtfield. He got away with seven thousand pounds in banknotes. He concealed the bag containing them in this school."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Harry. "The loot's never been found, and the whole countryside has been combed for it. The man dodged into Greyfriars with a crowd after him, and Inspector Grimes thought he might have dropped the bag somewhere here. The police came to search for it."

The steely eyes searched Wharton's face while he was speaking. It was easy enough for Dandy Sanders to read that face.

In the underworld, Dandy Sanders was a crook and a cracksman, bandit and hold-up man. But in the upperworld, Mr. Sanders was a respectable, legal gentleman, not with the best of reputations, but quite unsuspected of leading a double life. Both as a crook, and as a lawyer, Sanders was as keen as Sheffield steel. And what he could not fail to read in Harry Wharton's face, gave a severe jolt to the belief that had been hitherto fixed in his mind. He set his lips.

"Are you telling me that you did not know that the loot was hidden in this school?" he asked.

"How should we know more about it than anybody else at Greyfriars?" answered Wharton, staring at him.

"Because this study belongs to you."

"This study?" repeated Wharton blankly.

"Jerry the Rat is in prison now," said Dandy Sanders. "But there are ways and means of getting news to his friends. A green leather satchel, containing seven thousand pounds in banknotes was hidden in this study. Jerry the Rat dodged through this room when he was hunted through the House. He locked the door, to gain time while he climbed from the window. But he knew then that he had not a dog's chance of getting clear—and he hid the loot in the chimney of this study."

"Great Scott!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors did not doubt the statement. It was clear that this man was a confederate of Jerry the Rat, and the fact that he was in search of the lost loot explained what had hitherto mystified them. But they were taken utterly by surprise by that startling statement.

"You did not know?" snarled the man in black. His steely eyes seemed almost to bore into the astonished faces of the juniors.

"How could we know?" gasped Wharton. "Do you suppose that we ever put our heads up the chimney?"

"Oh, crikey!" murmured Nugent. "That's why that sneak-thief came down the chimney the other day—that's why the study window was broken, and a spoof glazier came to mend it—that's why—"

"I was the glazier," said Dandy Sanders quietly, "and I searched the study chimney for the loot. I found the place where the satchel had been hidden, and it was gone. Someone had removed it from the place where Jerry the Rat had hidden it. Who uses this study beside yourselves?"

"Nobody!" answered Wharton.

"I tell you the loot has been taken! Who else can have taken it?" snarled the crook.



Having tied Wharton's and Nugent's hands together, Dandy Sanders gagged the two Removites with their own handkerchiefs and then swiftly secured each of them to a leg of the study table. After a final glance at his victims, the crook stepped out of the study.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"You unspeakable rotter!" he said. "Do you fancy that if we had found stolen money, we should have kept it? You rotten outsider, do you think that we are thieves like yourself?"

"Seven thousand pounds might tempt even an honest man!" said Dandy Sanders. "And I tell you that I searched the chimney, inch by inch, and it has been taken."

"No Greyfriars man would—" began Nugent.

"Can it have been found by anyone not belonging to Greyfriars?" snarled the man with the steely eyes.

"I—I suppose not. But—"

"It was there—and it is no longer there! I had no doubt—" The crook broke off. He had had no doubt—not a shadow of doubt—that the schoolboys in Study No. 1 had chanced on the loot, had found it, and, since it had not been handed over to the police, had kept it. But he doubted now. He had to doubt.

It was forced into his mind that he had been on a wrong scent, that the time and trouble he had devoted to these two schoolboys, had been time and trouble wasted.

The lost loot had vanished from its hiding-place, but these juniors did not know how it had vanished, and had not even known that it was there. Dandy Sanders, with savage disappointment, could see that now.

He eyed them almost wolfishly.

If they had not found it, who had? Someone had—someone who had kept it. Someone belonging to Greyfriars—more than two hundred fellows to choose from. The crook ground his teeth.

In making that perilous visit to Study No. 1, after the failure of the attempts at kidnapping, he had been, he hoped, at the end of his quest. Now he realised that he was only at the beginning.

Wharton watched his face, cool and contemptuous. Nugent was grinning faintly. The man was at a loss—disappointed, enraged, puzzled.

"Are you done?" asked Wharton scornfully. "Do you still think we are thieves in this study, you cur! So that's what you wanted us for—to ask us what we had done with a bag of stolen money? You scoundrel!"

The steely eyes glittered at him.

"If it was not you—who—"

"If I could guess, I should not tell you," answered Wharton coolly. "Do you think I'd help a thief get his hands on stolen money? But if anyone has shifted a bag of banknotes from that old chimney, I can't imagine who it was, unless one of your own friends has managed it, somehow. There isn't a thief at Greyfriars, anyhow!"

"There is a thief, and I shall find him," said Dandy Sanders savagely. "I have taken this risk for nothing, but, the money is still in the school, it must be, and—and—" He broke off suddenly, a sudden flash in his eyes.

The two juniors watched him.

Some sudden, illuminating thought, they could see, had struck the crook, though they could not guess what it was.

Dandy Sanders caught his breath. Back into his mind came what he had heard while he was hidden behind the screen—the tattle of the fat schoolboy in spectacles. Someone named Carne—

who was in debt—and a fifty-pound note!

A fifty-pound note! There were twenty fifty-pound notes in the bag of loot, the rest in one hundred-pound notes. Was that a clue to the green-leather satchel? A Greyfriars fellow—and a fifty-pound note! What did it look like?

Wharton and Nugent stood silent, wondering at the sudden blaze of excitement in the steely eyes.

But Dandy Sanders was cool again at once. He had failed. He knew now that he had followed a false scent; that these junior schoolboys knew nothing of the loot! But he had found a clue! He was sure of that.

"Are you done," asked Wharton again, "or would you like to go through our pockets?"

Dandy Sanders smiled faintly. He was done with the juniors; his next move was to be in quite another direction.

"I am finished here," he said. "I believe what you say—you know nothing of the loot! I am going—before your schoolfellows come out of the other studies after preparation. You will not give the alarm when I go?"

Wharton's face set doggedly.

The man, on his own words, was a confederate of the bank-robber; he was in search of the money the bank-robber had hidden. He was not going to escape if the juniors could help it.

Dandy Sanders came a little closer, his steely eyes glinting.

"I have done with you," he said. "You will never see me again. You have nothing more to fear from me,

now that I am satisfied that you know nothing. I should never have troubled you if I had known what I know now. I am going; but before I go I shall gag you. I need only a few minutes—then you can give the alarm as soon as you please."

Wharton clenched his hands. "I will leave you gagged—or stunned!" said Dandy Sanders. "You may take your choice. I have no desire to harm you, but safety comes first."

The loaded stick was lifted. Wharton's hands were clenched, his teeth set. But he knew that he had no chance. What the man said was true—the loaded stick would have stretched the juniors senseless on the floor if he chose to strike, and they could not have stopped him. They had no chance in a struggle with a man with such a weapon in his hand.

"Put your hands together," said Sanders.

It was a bitter pill to swallow, but there was no help. It was that or a stunning blow. The two juniors put their hands together, and with his left hand the crook tied them with a cord he jerked from his pocket. Then he slipped the loaded stick into his coat and gagged the two Removites with their own handkerchiefs. Another length of cord swiftly secured each of them to a leg of the study table.

With hardly a glance at them when he had finished, Dandy Sanders crossed to the door. He unlocked it, opened it a few inches, and peered into the passage. The Removites were all in their studies, and even Billy Bunter had settled down to prep at last.

The crook stepped out of the study, and drew the door shut behind him. He did not turn towards the stairs. He hurried up the passage to the box-room at the end, and a few moments later dropped from the box-room window to the leads, dropped to the earth, and scuttled away across the kitchen gardens. The man with the steely eyes was gone, and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, gagged and tied to the table, were left prisoners in their own study.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Who?

THUMP!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry hurled open the door of Study No. 1, and tramped in, followed by Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh. They had finished prep, and were calling for Wharton and Nugent on their way down to the Rag.

Bob jumped almost clear of the floor at the sight of the two juniors, dragging and wrenching at the cords that fastened them to the table, and struggling with the gags in their mouths. His astonished eyes bulged.

"Wha-a-at—" he gurgled. "What the holy smoke!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"My absurd chums—" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Groooooogh!" came faintly from Harry Wharton.

"Mmmmmmm!" mumbled Nugent.

They could not speak, but their looks were eloquent. It was a quarter of an hour since the man with the steely eyes had gone, and every moment of the time the prisoners had been struggling fiercely to release themselves, but in vain. Never had they been so glad and relieved to see their friends come into the study.

Astounded as the Co. were by the unexpected sight, they lost no time in words. After the first moment of amazement, they ran to the rescue. Pocket-knives were opened, and the cords cut through, and the gags jerked away. The two hapless Removites panted for breath.

"Now, what on earth does this mean?" asked Bob. "Some silly ass been larking here?"

"The man in the motor-boat—" gasped Nugent.

"What?" roared Bob.

"That kidnapping scoundrel—" panted Wharton.

"Pulling our leg?" asked Johnny Bull blankly.

"No, you ass! He got into the

House somehow, and he was hidden here, behind that screen in the corner, when we came up to prep!"

"Great pip!" gasped Bob.

"The great-pipfulness is terrific!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed rascal must have a terrific nerve. But—"

"I'm going down to Quelch," said Harry. "The man's clear by this time, I suppose, but the sooner the police get after him, the better."

Wharton ran out of the study, and went down the Remove staircase three at a time. He burst into his Form master's study in Masters' Passage almost like a whirlwind, drawing a portentous frown from Henry Samuel Quelch. But Mr. Quelch's face changed very much when he heard what the captain of the Remove had to tell him.

Meanwhile, Nugent was surrounded by an excited crowd in the Remove passage. He told what had happened breathlessly, and the Removites listened in blank astonishment.

"Some nerve!" said the Bounder, with a whistle. "So that's what the sportsman was after! The jolly old loot!"

"And he thought you fellows had it!" grinned Skinner. "That's what I call a jolly old unsolicited testimonial to your character."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he didn't know us, you see," said Nugent. "Not knowing us, he might have fancied we were fellows like you, Skinner."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"I say, you fellows, he must have been in the study when I went there to speak to Wharton!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in great excitement. "Fancy that, you know! If I'd spotted him I—"

"Mean to say that that loot was parked in your study chimney?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"So that scoundrel said," answered Nugent. "But he got into the place and searched for it, and it was gone. And the silly owl fancied we must have found it, because it's our study. That's why they've been after us."

"But who the thump could have lifted it?" asked Squiff.

"Ask me another!"

"Bunter, if anybody!" said Skinner. "Have you bagged the loot, Bunter?"

"Why, you beast—"

"I don't believe anybody's bagged it," said Frank. "If it was ever there, it's there now, I think. He must have missed it. Old Grimes will be along looking for it when he hears of this."

Nugent was right on that point. Mr. Quelch had hardly time to telephone the startling news to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, when that official hurled himself into a car and started for the school.

By the time he arrived, there was a buzzing crowd in the Remove passage—not only Lower Fourth fellows, but fellows of all Forms—even great men of the Sixth. The amazing incident had startled all Greyfriars, and for the time, at least, the interest of the whole school was centred on Study No. 1 in the Remove.

That study swarmed with fellows, and many of them peered up the wide, old, ancient chimney, and a dozen electric torches flashed into its dusky recesses. Among the seniors who came up was Arthur Carne of the Sixth; but Carne did not join in the general excited discussion.

He remained in the passage, listening to the buzz of talk with set lips, and when a fellow shouted up the stairs that

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"Grimey" was coming, Carne of the Sixth walked quickly away.

Inspector Grimes, plump and portly, pushed through the crowd, accompanied by Mr. Quelch. At a word from the Remove master, the fellows in Study No. 1 crowded out, but they packed the doorway to watch. Only Wharton and Nugent were allowed to remain in the room, and Mr. Grimes questioned them closely, and then turned his attention to the ancient chimney.

He stood in the wide, old grate and flashed an electric lamp into the darkness above him, and finally his head and shoulders disappeared into the chimney. A breathless crowd watched his official trousers, which was all that could now be seen of Mr. Grimes.

It was some time before the Court-field inspector emerged, with streaks of soot ornamenting his florid, plump countenance.

In reply to Mr. Quelch's inquiring look, he shook his head.

"I have no doubt, sir, that the man's statement was correct," said Mr. Grimes. "Everything that has occurred bears it out. And in one of the cavities in the chimney there are signs that the soot has been disturbed by something being thrust into it."

"But it is gone?"

"It is gone, sir—it has been removed," said Mr. Grimes slowly. "My former impression, sir, was that the man who entered the school by trickery last week had found the hidden loot and taken it away. It is clear now that that was not the case—for it was evidently the same man who came this evening. The loot has been removed, but it has not been removed by any confederate of Jerry the Rat."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"I fail to see who else can have removed it, Mr. Grimes!" he said tartly.

Mr. Grimes coughed—perhaps on account of the soot he had collected in the chimney.

The Remove master looked grim.

"You do not imagine, Mr. Grimes, that any person belonging to Greyfriars can have any guilty knowledge of this matter?" asked Mr. Quelch coldly.

The inspector coughed again.

Obviously, that was exactly what he did imagine; and it was rather difficult, in the circumstances, for him to imagine anything else. But it was not a suggestion that Mr. Quelch could admit for a moment.

"It is fairly certain, sir, that the money was here—and it is quite certain that it has been taken away—and not by a confederate of the bank-robber," said Mr. Grimes. "The matter remains for investigation—we shall see—we shall see!"

The Greyfriars fellows looked at one another when the Form master and Mr. Grimes left the study and went down the stairs.

"Plain enough what Grimey thinks!" remarked the Bounder. "He's got it into his napper that some Greyfriars man has nobbled the loot."

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it," said Harry Wharton. "But, of course, no Greyfriars man would do such a thing. It's rot!"

"If banknotes were eatable," remarked Skinner, "I should suggest to Grimey to put the X-rays on Bunter—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"My hat!" said Vernon-Smith. "This is goin' to be pleasant—a jolly old police-inspector watchin' and suspectin' Greyfriars men."

"Grimes wouldn't be such an ass!" said Bob Cherry.

The Bounder laughed.

"My dear man, it's as plain as your face—which is sayin' a lot—that some fellow found the loot parked in Wharton's chimney, and pinched it. The only question is—who?"

The Bounder's opinion—which, it could hardly be doubted, was also Inspector Grimes' opinion—was very widely shared; indeed, in the peculiar circumstances, it seemed rather a certainty than a theory. And, as Smithy put it, the question was—who?

Only one fellow at Greyfriars could have answered that question—a prefect of the Sixth Form, who, long after the rest of the school had gone to bed, paced his study with restless steps. The whole school surmised and conjectured; but Arthur Carne, of the Sixth Form, knew; and in the silent hours he paced and paced, with a face like chalk—and terror in his heart.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Up to Coker!

"I CALL this the limit!" Coker of the Fifth made that statement, the next day, in his most emphatic tones. He fairly hurled it across the study table

GREYFRIARS LIMERICKS WANTED!

If yours is a good 'un, you're "on"
A LEATHER POCKET
WALLET!

One of this week's prizewinners is Fred. J. Stockley, of 32, Ridley Road, Winton, Bournemouth, who submitted the following effort:

Enter Coker, the freak of cricket!
How proudly he struts to the wicket.
The bowler draws nigh,
The balls are sent high.
Poor Horace takes a "return ticket!"

Get busy on a Greyfriars limerick to-day, chum!

at Potter and Greene, who nodded, and went on with their tea.

They did not inquire what it was that Horace Coker called the limit. They were not interested in Coker's conversation, but deeply interested in the food-stuffs. Besides, they knew that Coker was going to tell them. They had a feeling that Coker was not going to leave off talking. He seldom did.

"The giddy limit!" added Coker. "The outside edge! What?"

"Um! Yes!" said Potter. "Oh, quite!"

"Of course, I shouldn't expect a policeman to have brains like mine!" went on Horace Coker.

"Bit awkward for him if he had!" remarked Potter thoughtlessly.

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"If you're going to be a funny ass, George Potter—"

"Not at all," answered Potter blandly. "One funny ass is enough for one study. But what's the limit, old bean? Has Wingate refused to put you in the First Eleven, for the umpteenth time?"

"That idiot Grimes—that pie-faced, piffing policeman Grimes—that howling ass Grimes!" said Coker. "Making out that some Greyfriars man has pinched the loot the hold-up man parked in a study chimney! He hasn't said

so, but it's plain enough that he thinks so. It's all over Greyfriars! I call it the limit!"

"Well, it rather looks—" remarked Greene.

"Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"Um!" said William Greene.

"From what I hear," went on Coker, "that confederate of the hold-up man fancied that those kids in Study No. 1 had pinched the stuff. He was after them—they got Wharton on Wednesday, and I rescued him, as I told you. Well, they're cheeky little beasts, and I still owe Wharton a whopping for his impudence; but they're not thieves. That crook was a silly idiot! Old Grimes is another!"

"It wasn't those kids, of course," said Potter. "That's clear enough. But it looks as if somebody spotted the loot and pinched it."

"If anybody did, it was a fellow in the study—and it wasn't!" said Coker. "How could a fellow go rooting about another fellow's study—up the chimney, too—without being seen? Rubbish! Nothing of the kind happened, of course."

"But it seems pretty certain that the loot was put there," said Greene.

"That's all right! It was put there!" said Coker. "All the evidence is that it was put there. That rotter who's in chokey now got in touch somehow with his pals, and they've been trying to get at that study ever since. We know that. The loot was there all right!"

"Well, if it was there, and it isn't there now, somebody must have taken it away," said Potter. "That's as clear as Euclid, old bean."

"If!" said Coker, with the smile of superior knowledge. "But, you see, it hasn't been taken away. The crooks haven't got it—we know that, or they wouldn't be still after it."

"Did you work that out in your head?" asked Potter.

"I did!" Coker was completely impervious to sarcasm. "I've got the brains for this sort of problem."

"Oh crumbs!"

"The crooks never got it—that's the first thing. No Greyfriars man would touch it—that's the second! It follows that if it ever was there, and we know it was, it's there still!"

"But Grimey explored the jolly old chimney—"

"I've said he's a fool!"

"Oh, my hat! You think Grimey overlooked it, and left it there, staring him in the face?" ejaculated Potter.

"I don't think—I know," answered Coker calmly. "Facts speak for themselves. There's no Greyfriars man capable of pinching it. That's utter rot! It follows that it's still there. Grimes is a fat old chump! He rooted about in that chimney without finding it. It's there now."

Potter and Greene received that positive statement in silence. They did not agree with Coker's opinion. It seemed to them as fatheaded as Coker's opinion on all other subjects. But it was useless to argue with Coker. Besides, Coker was welcome to his own opinion. It was, so to speak, a poor thing, but his own!

"I've thought of ringing up Grimes and telling him," pursued Coker. "But it's no use pointing out to a silly fool that he's a silly fool, what?"

"Hear, hear!" said Potter heartily.

He was just thinking the same himself, though not in connection with Mr. Grimes.

"Most likely he would simply get his

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rag out, if I told him he was a fat-headed, frabjous, foozling fathead!" said Coker.

"Ho—he might!" gasped Potter. "I—I—I think possibly it might annoy him."

"Well, I'm leaving that silly idiot out of it," said Coker. "He doesn't come in till I walk into his police station and hand over the bag of loot. That will surprise him a bit, I fancy."

"Sure to!" gasped Potter.

"Well, that's what I'm going to do," said Coker. "I'm not having that fat-headed, foozling policeman making out that some Greyfriars man has pinched a bundle of banknotes! I'm taking the matter up myself. I want you fellows to help."

"We—we were going down to the cricket after tea—"

"Never mind the cricket! Your cricket doesn't amount to much, anyway. I shall want your help," explained Coker. "The loot's in that study chimney. It's got to be hooked out. I don't want to go butting into a chimney myself—mucking up a fellow's clothes, and all that. You're going up the chimney, Potter—"

"Am I?" gurgled Potter.

"Yes, and Greene had better come, too. If you miss it, you see, Greene can go up next."

"C-c-c-an I?" murmured Greene.

"That's the idea," said Coker. "When it comes to thinking a thing out, it's up to me—I've got the brains for it. Carrying out directions is where you fellows come in. You can do that. Any fool can do as he's told."

Coker, evidently, had settled the matter to his satisfaction. He had done the brain work; Potter and Greene were to put in the rest. The obvious lack of enthusiasm, on the part of Potter and Greene, did not worry Coker, even if he observed it. Potter and Greene had no desire whatever to perform chimney-sweep stunts. But that, of course, mattered little or nothing. It was their duty, and should have been their pleasure, to follow the directions of their great leader.

"It may be a bit sooty in the chimney," Coker conceded. "But you needn't mind that. It's worth while getting blacked a bit, to bag a bundle of seven thousand pounds in banknotes—what?"

"But it isn't there!" howled Potter.

"Don't be a silly idiot, Potter!"

"Grimes would have found it!" hooted Greene.

"Don't be a silly fathead, Greene!"

Coker rose from the tea-table. He was ready for business, if Potter and Greene weren't.

"Well, come on!" he said briskly.

"Those fags will be out after tea, and we shall have the study to ourselves. If they're there, we can kick them out. That will be all right. Come on!"

"Look here, we'll watch you going up the chimney, if you like."

"I'm not going to smother myself with soot to please you, Potter."

"Think I like soot?" roared Potter.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on arguing. Blessed if I ever saw such fellows for jaw!" said Coker crossly. "Are you fellows coming?"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance.

"Not coming," said Potter—"going!"

And they went.

Coker stared after them. Potter and Greene, like the guests in Macbeth, stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once. They vanished

almost like ghosts at cockcrow, and Horace Coker was left staring.

"My hat!" said Coker.

He stepped out of the study and bawled along the passage.

"Potter, you ass! Greene, you dummy!"

Only a sound of rapidly receding footsteps on the stairs answered Coker. He breathed hard and deep.

For some minutes Coker stood where he was. His friends had let him down, after he had done all the thinking, and left them only the easy task of carrying out his instructions. It was irritating and annoying; for Coker quite disliked the idea of rooting about in a sooty old chimney. But it was clear that if any Fifth-Form man was going to root into that chimney, it was going to be Coker.

But Coker made up his mind to it.

It was unpleasant, but, after all, as he had said himself, it was worth while to recover seven thousand pounds for the bank at Courtfield. There would be a lot of kudos for the fellow who found the lost loot, and lifted the disagreeable shadow of suspicion that now lay on the whole school. Every man at Greyfriars would be relieved. Probably the Head would thank Coker personally. And it would be rather agreeable, too, to show up that ass, Grimes, as the silly ass he was. Coker made up his mind, and, staying only to put on his oldest coat for the job, he started for the Remove passage.

Tea was over in the Remove, and that passage was deserted.

Harry Wharton & Co. had gone down to games practice, and most of the other fellows were out of doors. Skinner was smoking in his study, and Fisher T. Fish was counting his money in his own quarters. But the passage was empty, and there was no eye to fall on Coker when he arrived.

Had Wharton and Nugent been in they might have raised objections to Coker exploring their chimney, with the inevitable result of disturbing ancient soot, and sending clouds of it down into the study. Coker was quite prepared to overcome their objections by kicking them out of the room. But that would probably have led to a scrap with a mob of juniors, which was not what Coker wanted at the moment. He was not there for a scrap, but to root out the seven thousand pounds which Jerry the Rat had hidden in the chimney, and which Coker had no doubt had been overlooked by a fat-headed policeman.

So he was rather relieved to find the coast clear, and Study No. 1 vacant. He tramped in and shut the door, and proceeded to business at once.

Standing in the wide old grate, his head and shoulders were in the chimney, and he had brought an electric torch to illumine the dusky old recesses. He flashed the light on and examined the old brickwork on all sides.

There were several cavities in the old bricks, most of them choked with soot. There was plenty of soot. As Coker poked and groped in the openings in the bricks he disturbed a good deal, and the atmosphere grew rather thick. He sneezed.

But though Coker found as much soot as he wanted, and more, he did not find a bundle of banknotes.

If the bag of loot was hidden there, it was evidently hidden higher up. It was there, so if it was not within reach, it was out of reach. Sherlock Holmes had nothing on Coker, when it

came to making masterly deductions. Coker mounted into the chimney.

It was unpleasant, but it was easy enough. He found some difficulty in breathing, but none in climbing. The old irons in the walls of the chimney, used in ancient days by chimney-sweeps, were still there. They were rusty and frightfully sooty, but they were as strong as they had been centuries ago, and bore Coker's weight easily. Up went Coker, with regular stops to flash his light round him, and pick up the hiding-place of the bundle of banknotes. The higher he went the more soot he disturbed, and the more frequent grew his sneezes.

"Atchooooooh—chooooooh—choooooop!" echoed down the chimney. "Whooop! Ooooo-er! Atchoooooh!"

Soot clothed Coker like a garment. Potter and Greene would hardly have known him if they had seen him now. His face was black as the ace of spades; his clothes were like the professional garments of a sweep. And he sneezed and coughed and snuffled and gurgled and gasped in a thick atmosphere of floating soot.

Any fellow less determined than Coker might have given it up. Not Coker. Coker was a sticker, and he stuck. Blinking with sooty eyes, sneezing with a sooty nose, gurgling with a mouth full of soot, Coker pursued his search, and lived and moved and had his being in sooty blackness.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A False Alarm!

BILLY BUNTER jumped.

He was both surprised and alarmed.

The fat Owl opened the door of Study No. 1 and blinked in. Coker of the Fifth was not the only fellow who was pleased to find the coast clear in the Remove passage after tea. Billy Bunter, for other reasons, was equally pleased. Billy Bunter was aware that there was a cake in the study cupboard in Study No. 1. So, having seen Harry Wharton & Co. safely started at cricket, the fat junior rolled into the House, and arrived at Study No. 1 to look for the cake.

Cakes filled an important role in Billy Bunter's fat existence. But as he blinked into the study, Bunter forgot even the cake.

He jumped, and his little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

There was soot in the grate, soot in the hearth, soot in the fender, soot on the hearthrug, soot flying and floating all over the study. There was soot coming down the chimney in clouds. Study No. 1 was of the soot, sooty.

And from the interior of the spacious old chimney came sounds of scuffling and grunting and snorting and gasping. Evidently there was someone in the chimney.

Bunter for the moment stood transfixed.

Only a week or so ago a surreptitious person had climbed on the roof and descended that chimney. It had been quite a mystery at the time, but it was now, of course, known what the mysterious chimney-climber had been after. He was a confederate of Jerry the Rat, and he had been after the hidden loot. Now it seemed history was repeating itself, for there was not the slightest doubt that somebody was climbing in the sooty interior of the chimney. He



“Stand clear, boys!” roared Mr. Prout, lifting the cricket bat with both podgy hands. “I will stun the scoundrel!”
 “Yaroooh! Keep that bat away!” shrieked the sooty victim. “I’m Coker! Groooooogh! Leggo! Keep that bat away!”
 “Coker!” gasped the Removites, while Prout stared like a man in a dream, holding the bat aloft.

was sending down clouds of disturbed soot, and Bunter could hear him, snorting and sneezing.

Only for a moment Bunter stood transfixed. Then he made a backward jump into the passage. If another crook was penetrating into Greyfriars by way of the chimney in Study No. 1, William George Bunter had no desire whatever to make a closer acquaintance with him.

Bunter did the passage to the stairs at about sixty miles an hour. He did the staircase even faster, losing his footing and rolling down. He picked himself up and raced out of the House. Crimson with exertion, and spluttering for breath, he burst on the cricketers.

“I say, you fellows!” yelled Bunter.
 “You fat chump, get out of the way!” roared Bob Cherry.

“I say, you fellows! Help! There’s a—groogh!—there’s a man—oooh!—coming down the chimney again!”

“What?”
 “I say, Wharton—I say, there’s a man coming down your chimney!” yelled Bunter. “I saw him—I mean, I heard him! I say, your study’s smothered with soot! And he’s coming down!”

Harry Wharton & Co. stared blankly at the fat Owl. Billy Bunter’s wild excitement was a proof that he was in earnest, and that it was not a case of leg-pulling; but the news was amazing.

“A—a—a man coming down my study chimney!” gasped Wharton.

“Ow! Yes. I—I went to your study to—to—to borrow a Latin die, you know, and—and I heard him in the chimney, just the same as happened last week. Oh dear! I—I—”

Bunter gurgled for breath,

“What the thump—” exclaimed the Bounder. “If it’s another sportsman after the loot, he’s too late.”

“Must be that, if it’s anybody,” said Nugent. “But—”

“May be some jolly old member of the gang who doesn’t know that the loot is gone,” grinned Peter Todd. “Whoever he is, we’ll jolly well bag him.”

“Yes, rather!”

“The ratherfulness is terrific!”

Cricket was dropped at once, but the juniors grabbed bats or stumps as they ran for the House. If there was some desperate crook in Study No. 1, hunting for the lost loot, bats and stumps might come in useful in dealing with him. And it was hard to imagine who could possibly be coming down the study chimney if it was not some confederate of Jerry the Rat in search of the proceeds of the bank robbery.

Harry Wharton & Co. rushed into the House in an excited mob, Bunter panting after them. A sharp voice hooted at them as they raced for the stairs.

“Wharton! Boys! Stop! What does this mean?” Mr. Quelch rustled up, with a frowning brow. “How dare you rush about the House in this disorderly manner?”

“Oh, sir!” gasped Wharton. “We—we’re going up to the study. Bunter says there’s another man coming down the chimney. You remember what happened last week, sir—”

“Bless my soul! Is it possible? Bunter, are you sure of what you say?” exclaimed the Remove master.

“Oh, yes, rather, sir!” panted the fat Owl. “I went into the study, sir, for a Latin cake—”

“A—a what?”
 “I—I mean a Latin dictionary,”

gasped Bunter, “and he was coming down the chimney, sir—”

“Follow me!” said Mr. Quelch. Unwillingly the Removites slackened speed and allowed their Form master to lead the way.

There were plenty of them to deal with the mysterious intruder, especially with the help of bats and stumps; and they really did not want Quelch. But that was not for them to decide. Henry Samuel Quelch led the way, and the juniors swarmed after him. On the next landing Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, met the excited army, and stared at them.

“Upon my word!” ejaculated Prout.

“What—?”
 “It appears, Prout, that some person is surreptitiously entering a Remove study, as happened last week,” said Mr. Quelch.

“Good gad!” said Prout. “I will accompany you, my dear fellow! These boys had better keep back. Wharton, give me that bat!”

Without waiting for Wharton to give him the bat Prout jerked it from his hand and strode after Quelch to the Remove staircase.

Quelch whisked up that staircase. Prout rolled and grunted after him, having twice as much weight to lift. After Prout came the crowd of Remove fellows and a good many fellows of other Forms, who had caught on to what was going on.

Mr. Quelch, perhaps, had some doubts, though he was bound to investigate. But his doubts vanished as he arrived at Study No. 1.

Soot clothed the study and hung in the air in clouds. The window was open,

and the summer breeze, blowing in at the window, landed a cloud of soot on the two masters in the doorway.

"Ooooooh!" spluttered Quelch.

"Groooogh!" gurgled Prout.

"My hat! I can hear him!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The hearfulness is preposterous!"

Every ear could hear the surreptitious person in the study chimney. Gargantuan sneezes announced that that surreptitious person, whatever else he might have been looking for, had found plenty of soot.

"Atchooooooh! Ooooooh! Choooop!"

More soot came down, in a volume. There was a sound of scuffling, as if the person in the chimney had nearly lost his hold. Grunting and snorting and sneezing followed.

"He is there!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"There is no doubt now. We must seize him as he descends—"

"I will stun him if he resists," said Mr. Prout. "Give me room to use this cricket bat and I will stun him—"

There was a sudden backing away of the juniors behind. Prout, in his warlike excitement, was brandishing the bat.

"Mind your nappers, you men!" yelled the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch jumped away from his colleague as hurriedly the juniors backed.

"My dear Prout! Pray be careful! I really must say—groooogh! Oocch! Atchoop!" A gust of soot floated into Mr. Quelch's mouth, and he gurgled and sneezed.

Prout strode across to the fireplace. Soot floated out over him. It sprinkled his portly form and his plump face. He heeded it not. He shouted up the chimney.

"Descend! Descend at once, you scoundrel! We are here to seize you. Resistance is impossible! I order you to descend and surrender! Do you hear me, you rascal?"

"Groooogh!" came from the chimney.

"Descend!" roared Prout.

"Atchooooooh!"

"I repeat—groooogh! I say—ooooch! Chew-woooooop!" gurgled Prout, as a mass of soot flew into his plump face. "Bless my soul! Woooooch! This is—is—is—gurrgrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the crowd packed in the doorway.

Prout had taken the matter out of the hands of the Removites. They did not regret it when they looked at Prout. Prout gurgled and gasped in a cloud of soot. On the whole, it was rather pleasanter in the passage than in the study.

"Bless my—ooooch!—soul!" gurgled Prout. "You—you iniquitous rascal, descend at once!"

"He's coming!" yelled Bob Cherry.

There was a slithering sound in the chimney. Some of the fellows rather expected the unknown intruder to clamber up, instead of down, and attempt to escape over the roofs. But he was coming down.

"There he is—"

A pair of long legs swung down from the chimney. They were fairly caked with soot. Clouds of soot accompanied them, and Prout jumped back. But he stood ready to seize the iniquitous rascal when he emerged. The rest of the intruder gradually followed the legs as he lowered himself. Volumes of disturbed soot rolled with him, and twilight reigned in the study. Prout caught a mouthful and a noseful, and gurgled spasmodically.

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"Here he comes!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

A fearsome figure dropped from the chimney and emerged. Who he was, what he was, his nearest and dearest friend could not have told, or even guessed. He looked like a moving monument of soot. His features were clothed in soot, hidden in soot, only a pair of sooty eyes blinking from the mask of soot with a wild blink. His hair was thick with soot, his ears and nose and mouth packed with soot, and he coughed and spluttered and sneezed soot.

"Seize him!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Prout, having taken the lead, Quelch was willing to leave it to him. The desperado had to be seized; but he did not look nice to touch.

"Groooogh!" gurgled Prout.

"Scoundrel! Who are you? Speak!"

"Gurrgrgh!"

With a mouth full of soot the scoundrel found difficulty in speaking. He tried to speak, but only a horrid gurgle came.

"Collar him, Prout!" yelled a voice from the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Surrender!" boomed Prout, brandishing the bat. "Lift a finger and I will stun you! Surrender!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"Bag him, you men!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Never mind the soot!"

"Collar him!"

Heedless of soot, Bob led a rush, and Wharton and Nugent followed him. There was a gurgling splutter from the sooty intruder as they collared him. He came down with a bump, clouds of soot rising from him as he bumped.

"Got him!" yelled Bob.

The sooty figure struggled frantically in the grasp of the three juniors. He coughed and spluttered and hooted and struggled, and hit out wildly.

"Secure him!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"We've got him, sir!"

"Groooogh! Ooooooh! Wooooooh!" spluttered the sooty one. "Yurrgrgh! Mooooch! Atchooooooh-choooh-chooop! Gug-gug-gug!"

"Hold him, you men!"

"Surrender, scoundrel!" roared Prout, lifting the cricket bat with both podgy hands. "Resist, and I will stun you with a blow! Boys, keep clear while I stun the scoundrel!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Look out!"

"I will stun him—"

"Ooooooh!" came in a frantic splutter from the struggling victim.

"Keep that bat away! Groooogh!"

Nothing about the sooty object was familiar to the eye. But his voice—now that he had found it—seemed to have a familiar ring.

"What the thump!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I will stun the scoundrel with a blow—"

"Yaroooh! Keep that bat away!"

shrieked the sooty one. "Stop him! I'm Coker! Groooogh! I'm Coker!"

Leggo! Keep that bat away!"

"Coker!" shrieked a dozen voices.

"C-Coker!" stuttered Mr. Prout.

Coker had found his voice only in time. Mr. Prout had run a very serious risk of braining that bright member of his Form.

The cricket bat, in Prout's podgy hands, remained aloft—suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between the heavens and the earth. Prout stared down at the sprawling, sooty object in stupefaction.

"Coker!" he repeated, like a man in a dream.

"Coker!" yelled the Bounder. "Coker of the Fifth! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the crowded passage.

"Coker!" articulated Mr. Quelch. "How—how—how can it be Coker? What is this boy of your Form, Prout, doing in a study chimney? Is this boy insane?"

Coker sat up.

The juniors had released him now. He was still quite unrecognisable; but they knew he was Coker. Prout threw aside the bat. Perhaps he was glad that he had not, after all, stunned the scoundrel. But he glared at the hapless Coker like a basilisk.

"Coker!" he gasped. "Is—is—is it possible! Is it you, Coker, you—you incredibly stupid boy—you—you—you idiot? What were you doing in that chimney? Answer me! What have you to say?"

"Atchooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar.

"Speak!" thundered Prout.

"Gug-gug-gug! I—I—I— Ooooooh!"

Coker staggered to his feet, scattering soot. "I—I went up the chimney to—groooogh!—I went up to—wooch!—I went up to look for the—gug-gug!—loot! I was going to find the bub-bub-bub-banknotes! They—they don't seem to be there, after all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "This is—this is too much! Look at the state of the study! Prout, this boy of your Form—"

"Coker!" roared Prout. "Coker! Go—go and clean yourself at once! When you are clean, come to my study! I—I—I— Go!"

Coker went. A shrieking crowd in the Remove passage opened to let him pass. They gave Coker plenty of sea-room as he navigated his way to the stairs, leaving a black trail behind him. Nobody wanted to touch Coker. Still gasping and spluttering, coughing and sneezing, Coker went, leaving a hilarious crowd yelling behind him.

Coker of the Fifth, in his study that evening, wore a deep frown. He wore other things, of course, but his frown was the most conspicuous. All Greyfriars was yelling over Coker's exploits in the chimney; though Coker himself could see nothing whatever to laugh at. Had he found the lost loot, of course, it would have been all right. But he hadn't found it; and even Coker had to admit that it wasn't there—as any fellow could have told him before he started up the chimney.

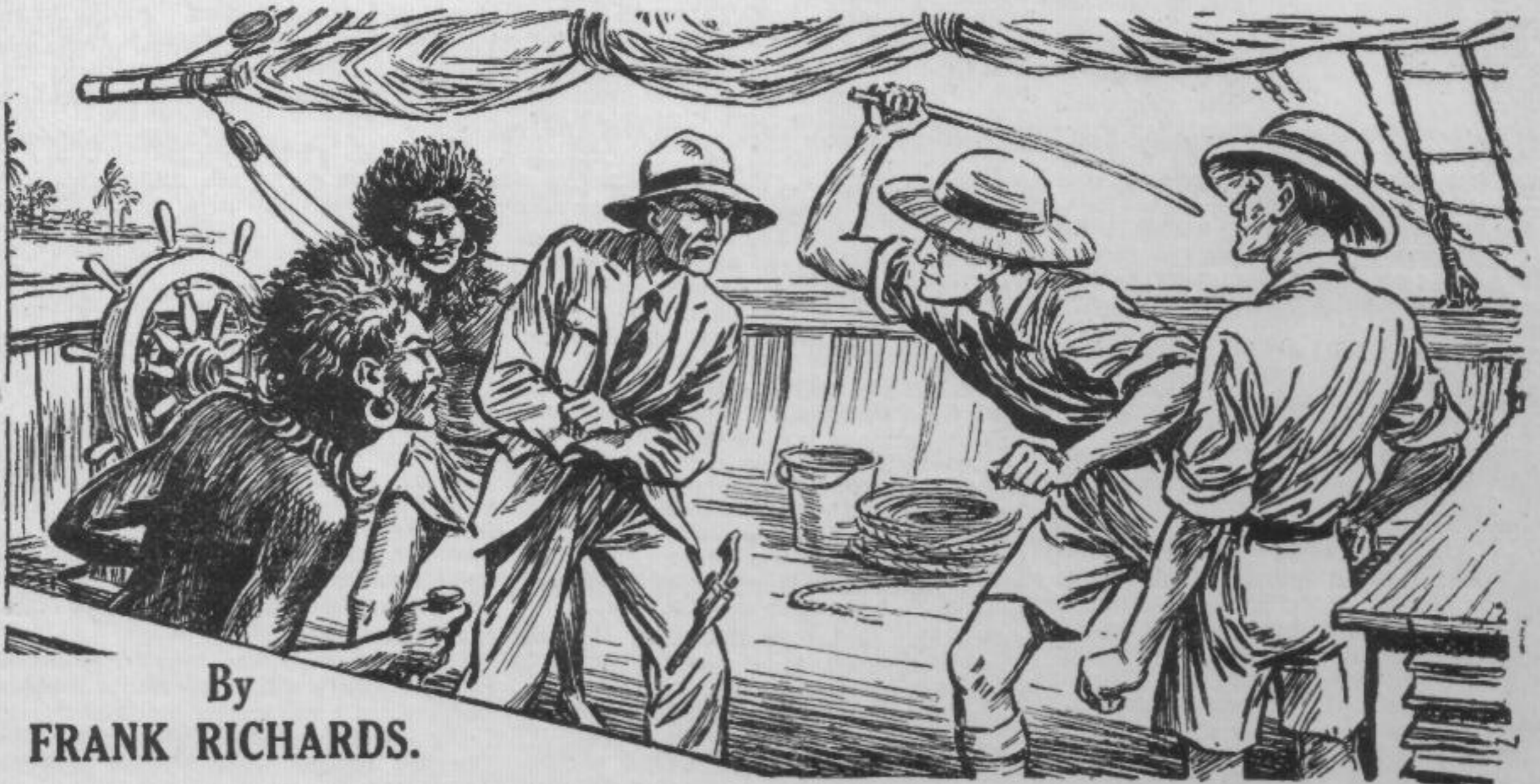
The whole affair was intensely exasperating to Coker. Prout had talked to him at great length, and given him an imposition of a thousand lines; but even that was not so bad as the loud laughter that greeted him whenever he appeared in public. Potter and Greene, when they came into the study for prep, tried to suppress their smiles, but without much success.

Coker had not solved the mystery of the missing loot. It remained a mystery—for the present, at least. And the Greyfriars fellows could only wonder whether it would ever be solved.

THE END.

(Now watch for the next yarn in this spanking fine series. It's entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S BANKNOTE," and will, without doubt, rank as one of Frank Richards' greatest stories. Get your copy EARLY.)

THE ISLAND TRADERS!



By
FRANK RICHARDS.

READ THIS FIRST.

BOB HARRIS AND BILLY McCANN, TWO YOUNG BRITISHERS TRADING UNDER THE NAME OF "BOB, BILLY & CO"—THE "CO." BEING AN ANCIENT AND BATTERED FORD CAR—ARE OWNERS OF A STORE ON KALUA ISLAND. THINKING THAT A VAST TREASURE LIES HIDDEN ON THE SITE, DAVID BONE, A RASCALLY AMERICAN TRADER, TRIES TO GAIN POSSESSION OF THE STORE. LATER, WHILE ABOARD THE "CO." BOUND FOR THE INTERIOR OF KALUA WITH A CARGO OF GOODS, BILLY IS PUZZLED TO FIND THAT THE NATIVES—WHO HAD ALWAYS LOOKED FORWARD TO A "LIFT"—SUDDENLY BAR THE OLD FORD. CONVINCED THAT DANGER LIES AHEAD, BILLY DECIDES TO FORCE ONE OF THE NATIVES TO ACCOMPANY HIM, IN THE HOPE THAT HE WILL BE TERRIFIED INTO DIVULGING WHAT HE KNOWS.

Danger in the Air!

WHEELING the Ford round Billy returned the way he had come, keeping a sharp look-out for a likely native. But they had doubtless taken some short cut through the bush, for they had disappeared. He jolted on, and sighted Kolulo-ululo, a pig-hunter, swinging up the track with his spear in his hand, singing a Kanaka song. He smiled grimly as he saw the native start at sight of the returning car.

"Here, you feller Ko!" called out Billy.

Ko stared hard.

"Yes, sar! You no go along place belong Tu'uka?" he asked.

"Me go along that place plenty too much," answered Billy. "Me comey back takee you along this feller car."

Ko backed away with a look of alarm.

"No wantee, sar! This feller walk along leg belong him."

Billy jumped down. The sunlight gleamed on the revolver he jerked from his hip-pocket.

Kolulo-ululo backed farther away.

Billy pointed to the car.

"You feller boy step along that car plenty quick!" he ordered.

"Oh, sar!" gasped Kolulo-ululo. "This poor Kanaka no wantee, sar! This feller Ko plenty too much wantee walkee leg belong him, sar."

"What name you wantee walkee, leg belong you?" demanded Billy.

"Me wantee walkee, sar."

"You no say what name you wantee walkee?" asked Billy sarcastically. "Then get into that car!"

Kolulo-ululo tightened his grasp on his

pig-slaying spear. So deep was his objection to getting aboard the Ford that he seemed to be meditating resistance, even against the little fire-stick in the hand of the white man.

Billy's jaw jutted.

"You pie-faced swab!" he said, between his teeth. "You drop that feller spear quick, or I'll fix you up for kai-kai. Sharp!"

The spear clattered on the earth.

"Now jump in!"

"Oh, sar," wailed Kolulo-ululo, "this poor boy Ko he no wantee, sar! This poor Kanaka plenty too much fright."

"What are you afraid of? What name you plenty 'fraid go along this car belong me?" demanded Billy.

Kolulo-ululo did not answer the question. His knees knocked together, and his eyes pleaded, his brown face a picture of fright.

"What name?" roared Billy.

His temper was rising now, and he jammed the revolver almost into the Kanaka's face.

"Me no savvy, sar!" gasped Kolulo-ululo. "This feller no savvy nothing, sar! Me wantee walk, leg belong me, sar."

"Get into the car!" said Billy savagely. "Get in, or I'll chuck you in!"

"Oh, sar! No wantee!" wailed Kolulo-ululo.

"What's awaiting ahead of me?"

"Me no savvy, sar! This poor Kanaka no savvy."

"I reckon you savvy well enough!" growled Billy McCann. "I reckon every black swab on Kalua savvy plenty!" He shoved his revolver back into his

hip-pocket and grasped the Kalua boy. "Now, then—"

Kolulo-ululo struggled.

He was a powerful native, and in his fear of the car—fear of the unknown to Billy—he resisted the white man with all his strength. But Billy McCann, shorter by a foot than the Kanaka, had the strength of three Kanakas in his stocky frame. Kolulo-ululo went with a crash to the earth, howling.

"Now, then—" panted Billy.

He swung the Kanaka into the car beside the driving-seat. Kolulo-ululo, with all the breath knocked out of his brown body, collapsed there, panting.

Billy sat down at the wheel, one eye on the Kanaka by his side, and the car moved on.

"Stick there, you son-of-a-gun, or I'll twist your fuzzy head! I mean it!" The Ford shot onward.

"Aie, aie!" howled Kolulo-ululo. "This feller go die! This feller Kanaka he no stop any more altogether! Aie, aie!"

He half-rose, as if to jump from the car in motion. Billy's left hand crashed on him and crumpled him down.

"Stick there! Whatever's ahead we're going into it together! Stick there, or open your mouth, you pie-faced swab! What's ahead?"

"No savvy!"

"I reckon we'll savvy when we come to it!" said Billy grimly.

Grim and silent Billy McCann drove steadily onward, and in the seat beside him Kolulo-ululo crouched, panting, terrified, his brown face grey with fear.

What it was that lay ahead of the car the Kanaka alone knew!

A Plain Warning!

TRADE was brisk in the store, and Bob Harris was tending to a dozen brown-skinned "boys," fingering calicos and trade axes and cigarettes and gilt beads, when Mackay, the old Scottish planter, tramped in.

Mackay, the gruffest white man on Kalua, gazed round at them.

"You feller boy, you no stop!" he growled. "You goey long, place belong you. Plenty quick!"

There was a grumbling cackle from the customers in the store; but no brown man on Kalua ever argued with old Mackay. They herded towards the door.

"Here, easy does it, old bean!" protested Bob, staring at the planter. "Why the merry thump are you chasing out my customers?"

Mackay was the oldest white inhabitant. He had been on Kalua years before any other white man set foot there, trading with the natives in old Mokatoo's time, when no white man's head was safe on his shoulders in the island. Gruff and dour, but as straight as a die, and kindly enough, in his gruff way, to the two boy traders who had bought the store and set up business there a year ago. It was because he knew that old Mackay meant him well, dour as he was, that Bob allowed him to clear out the store as he had just done. Still, Bob was a little restive.

"How's trade?" asked Mackay.

"Top-hole—till you butted in and stopped it," answered Bob. "What the merry thunder—"

"Where's your partner, Billy McCann?"

"Gone inland to Tu'uka's village, other side of the bush," answered Bob. "But what—"

"Gone in the Ford?"

"Yes; Billy never goes without the Co.," said Bob, with a grin. "Besides, he has a consignment for Tu'uka. We had a big order—a bit unusual."

Mackay grunted.

"Expect to see him again?"

"Well, rather! He'll be back this afternoon, if the Ford doesn't conk out and delay him. It does sometimes."

Mackay grunted and pointed through the open doorway of the store. Right opposite the doorway a cutter was anchored in the lagoon—the Osprey, belonging to David Bone, the American trader.

"Bone's still here," said Mackay.

"What about it?"

"You refused to sell him this store," said Mackay. "I hear he got riled, and you booted him out. Bone ain't the man to take no for an answer. He wants this store."

"He can want!" said Bob dryly.

"He's been in the bush several times since he dropped the hook here. He's talked with Tu'uka."

"Well?" asked Bob.

"Which way's Billy gone?"

"The only way to Tu'uka's place, unless you go right round the island—round the Big Bush and across the bridge."

"When'll he get back?"

"You never know, with the venerable Ford!" said Bob, with a grin. "But if all goes well, he ought to be back for tiffin."

"I know more of the island lingo than the niggers think," said Mackay, after another silence. "I've caught words here and there. There's something on. I'd be glad to see Billy McCann safe back."

Bob opened his eyes.

"Why, what can happen to Billy? No nigger on Kalua would ever dare lift a hand to him, even if they wanted to, which they don't. There isn't a nigger on the island that doesn't like old Billy."

"Keep an eye on Bone!" answered Mackay; and, with a nod, he walked out of the store.

Bob stared after him, with a rather worried face.

Mackay knew the island, and he knew the natives. He understood the Polynesian dialect talked on Kalua. And he meant well by the boy traders. He did not want to get mixed up in the trouble. That was why he had cleared the natives out of the store before he spoke. But he had given a warning—a plain warning.

Bob stared out of the doorway into the bright sunshine. In the clear atmosphere he could see the cutter lying at anchor in the lagoon, men moving on her deck, every detail of the handsome little craft. There was no sign yet of David Bone putting to sea. Yet he was a busy man, with widespread interests, and he had no business on Kalua—now that he had failed to buy the store.

Was the American trader up to mischief? He had threatened to "break" the boy traders of Kalua.

As Bob stared, a lean figure came into sight, sauntering past the store. It was David Bone, the American trader. At his heels walked a black, fuzzy-haired boy from Santa Cruz, very different in his looks from the brown-skinned Polynesians of Kalua. Bob noted that the trader cast a keen glance at the store as he passed, a sour smile crossing his lean, leathery face. The black boy stared in the same direction, and his dark face was wrinkled in a grin. Then they passed out of Bob's line of vision.

Half a dozen natives came into the store, and Bob Harris had to get busy again serving them.

But old Mackay's words lingered in his mind; and before his mind's eye, too, lingered that sour smile of the American trader, and the derisive grin of the Santa Cruz boy. The cheerful look had departed from Bob's face, and he was thoughtful and troubled.

He would have been glad to hear the honking of the Ford, coming back from the interior of Kalua. His thoughts were with Billy McCann and the Co. But what, after all, could possibly happen to Billy?

Tu'uka, the chief of Kalua, was on good terms with the Island traders. He was a treacherous savage enough. It was his spear that had slain old Mokatoo, King of Kalua, in the old days, whose palm-pole palace had once stood on the very spot where the island store now stood. Old Mokatoo, so the story went, had hoarded up the golden sovereigns he received from the traders who came to the island for copra, and it was for the sake of his treasure that Tu'uka had slain him; but that treasure, if it existed, had been well hidden, for Tu'uka had never found it.

A treacherous savage, easy enough for David Bone to bribe, if that was the American's game; but he would never dare lift his spear against a white man. For he knew well enough that the killing of a white man would be followed by the burning of his village and the hanging of himself on the branch of a tree.

Yet Bob remained worried.

He called to Jacky, the house-boy, at last, and left him to serve in the store, and stepped outside to watch for Billy's return.

A Narrow Escape!

BILLY McCANN drove on, his teeth shut hard.

Billy had set out that morning from the island store in the cheeriest spirits, with a load for Tu'uka's village, and the Co. was in one of its rare sweet moods. But Billy was not looking cheery now. His face was grim.

His eyes, when they turned on the native crouching in the seat at his side, glinted like cold steel.

Kolulo-ululo, the pig-hunter of Kalua, crouched and shook. Strong as he was, the pig-hunter had no chance in a struggle with the stocky, muscular McCann. Thrice he had sought to leap from the running car, and each time Billy's fist had crashed on him, fairly crumpling him into his seat again.

Honk! Honk!

Two or three natives stared round at the car. They stood out of the way, and Billy slowed down to speak. They were staring at Kolulo-ululo, in the seat beside him, and he read surprise and excitement in their faces.

"You feller boy likee comey along car?" he asked.

He knew what the answer would be, for every lift he had offered that morning had been refused—a new and strange thing on Kalua. He was putting it to the test again. The answer came as expected.

"Plenty tankee, sar. No wantee! This feller walk, leg belong him."

Billy drove on.

What the game was he could not fathom. The natives, generally keen on a joy-ride, were avoiding the car as if it were taboo.

They all knew what was on, but they were not telling the "feller white master." But Billy reckoned that whatever danger lay ahead of the car he was fairly safe so long as he carried his forced passenger. Kolulo-ululo knew—and when the danger was near he would squeal.

It was not a native attack he had to look for—he knew that! Tu'uka would have speared any white man with pleasure, but he dreaded too much the white men's vengeance.

The car flew on.

Ahead of it now gleamed the winding river that flowed down from the interior hills, past the village of Tu'uka, down by winding ways to the lagoon.

In one spot, where the stream narrowed between high stony banks, a bridge spanned it.

It was a bridge of palm poles laid across the gulf, with a flooring of other poles, thick and strong. There was no parapet on either side, and the bridge was not ten feet wide. Thirty feet below the stream flowed over a stony bed.

Tu'uka's village was on the other side of the stream, out of sight, behind bush and forest.

Billy McCann drove at the bridge.

A nerve of iron was needed to drive a car across it; but Billy's nerve was of tempered steel. A hundred times he had driven the old Ford across the bridge and back again.

Bumping and jolting over the rough track, the Ford rushed on towards the bridge.

"Oh, sar!" gasped Kolulo-ululo. "This Kanaka no wantee stop along fat white feller, master, sar! He wantee walkee, leg belong him, sar."

He made a movement to rise, but sank back again under the lifted knuckles of

Billy, who eyed him grimly and drove on.

"What's ahead?" demanded Billy.

"Me no savvy, sar!" groaned the pig-hunter.

"I reckon you savvy plenty, you son of a slush-tub!" growled Billy McCann. "Whatever it is, we go into it together." Then his voice softened. "Look here, Ko! Me savvy you plenty good feller boy! What name you no tell white feller this thing?"

"Me plenty too much fright!" groaned the Kalua boy.

"What name you too much fright?"

"Me plenty fright along Tu'uka."

Billy's teeth snapped.

"So Tu'uka's got a hand in it—the treacherous hound! What's the dirty dog got fixed up for me?"

Kolulo-ululo whimpered.

"Me no savvy, sar."

Billy shrugged his shoulders. For fear of Tu'uka the pig-hunter dared not speak. But he would speak when the danger, whatever it was, was close—Billy did not doubt that.

He drove on, knowing that he was playing with death. Deadly peril—peril unknown and unseen—lurked ahead—that was a certainty now.

There was a shriek from Kolulo-ululo, and his brown hand grasped convulsively at the white man's arm. His face was grey with fear.

"S'pose you stop, me speakee, mouth belong me!" he panted.

Billy braked, and the Co. came to a halt, the bonnet not six yards from the bridge over the gorge.

"Now, what is it?" grated Billy.

Kolulo-ululo almost whispered:..

"S'posee you goey along bridge, sar, feller bridge he no stop!"

Billy McCann started violently. He stared at the pig-hunter for a second and then turned his eyes on the bridge.

"Suffering cats!" he muttered between his teeth.

His eyes burned with rage. So that was it—was it? Tu'uka, rotten with treachery, planning the white man's death, had not dared think of arrow or spear. But the woodwork of the bridge had been cut through underneath, and if the Ford had dashed on another dozen yards nothing could have saved the car and its occupants.

Billy ground his teeth.

He stepped down, and strode towards the bridge. And as his back turned Kolulo-ululo leaped out and ran for his life, vanishing into the bush.

Billy McCann did not heed him. He had no further use for the pig-hunter now.

Testing the palm-pole bridge with his foot he discovered that every length-wise pole had been cut in the middle, and that mud had been daubed over the cuts to conceal them.

Billy quivered with rage. But for Kolulo-ululo the Ford would have rushed on the bridge, and the bridge would have cracked and collapsed under her, sending car and driver to sudden destruction in the gorge below.

"Suffering cats!" hissed Billy.

Slowly he moved off the bridge and walked back to the car. This had been done by Tu'uka's order—no native on Kalua would have dared meddle with the safety of the bridge without that. Why had Tu'uka done it? He was a treacherous savage, but he had no grudge against the island traders. They had always given him fair dealing—he was not likely to benefit by others coming in their place. And then, with a mental jump, Billy knew.

"David Bone!"

He stood by the halted car, red with

rage. The American had threatened to break the island traders, and this was his first blow.

"The dirty swab!" snarled Billy.

"The unclean hound! Suffering cats!"
Spear or arrow Tu'uka dared not use, but the collapse of the bridge under the car would have been an accident. No one would have suspected the truth—probably not even Bob Harris.

Billy McCann climbed into the car at last, backed, and turned. There was no getting to Tu'uka's village now with the Ford. He drove back the way he had come, letting the Ford out. And as he drew near the settlement again he noted, with a grim eye, the surprised stare of the natives he passed. They had all known—and not a brown man on Kalua had expected Billy McCann to drive back alive in the Ford. But Billy McCann was very much alive—a fact that he intended in the shortest possible time to bring to the notice of David Bone, the trader from 'Frisco!

Billy McCann on the Warpath!

HONK! Honk! Honk!
Bob Harris fairly gasped with relief as the Ford came whizzing up to the store, scattering sand and coral chips from the flashing wheels.

"Billy, old man! Thank goodness you're back!" exclaimed Bob. He stared into the Ford. "You've not delivered the goods, then?"

Billy McCann did not answer.

"Where's David Bone?" he rapped.

"What the thump—"

"Where is he?"

"In his cutter," said Bob, staring.

"Why—"

Billy jumped from the car.

"Jacky!" he roared.

The startled house-boy put his head out of the store.

"Yessar!"

"Takee knife, quick," cried Billy, "and cut one big feller lawyer-cane!"

"Yessar!" gasped Jacky, obeying the order promptly.

"Billy! What the merry thump—" gasped Bob. "What's the game? What do you want a lawyer-cane for?"

"For David Bone."

"But—but what—"

"Don't talk to me!" panted Billy.

"Get your gun; you may want it on board the Osprey!"

"You're going on the cutter?"

"If Bone's there—where else? I'm going to cut the skin off that villain's back! I'm going to mark him with more stars and stripes than he can count."

"But—what—"

"Get your gun!" roared Billy.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob; and, giving his partner his head, as it were, he went back into the store for his revolver.

Jacky came panting back with a fresh-cut lawyer-cane. Billy took it from him and made it whistle in the air.

Bob hurried out and joined his comrade. His pocket sagged with the weight of the revolver in it.

"Now, Billy—"

"Come on; don't jaw!"

Billy McCann strode down to the beach. Bob Harris followed him, wondering. Billy was evidently in no mood for talk. What could have stirred him to such fury was a mystery to his partner.

A crowd of natives stared at Billy's white face and burning eyes, and a stream of excited cackle followed the traders down to the beach.

A group of native fishermen lounged by a canoe drawn up on the shelving sand. Billy McCann shouted to them as he grasped the canoe.

"Here, you feller boy! You run this canoe along lagoon, plenty too quick altogether!"

Swiftly the canoe was run down into the water. Half a dozen natives took the paddles, and Bob and Billy jumped in.

Billy McCann pointed a stubby forefinger at the cutter, anchored far out in the lagoon.

"You feller boy, washee-washee along that cutter, plenty too quick altogether!"

The paddles dashed into the water.

"My hat!" murmured Bob.

The canoe fairly flew. Under Billy McCann's fierce eyes the natives bent to the paddles and paddled as if for their lives.

A chorus of cackling followed from the beach. Every native for a good distance round had gathered there now in an excited mob, watching the canoe shoot across to the anchored cutter.

A lean, brown face looked over the cutter's low rail. It belonged to David Bone, who was watching the approaching canoe. His deep-set, flinty eyes gleamed, or rather glared, at the sight of Billy McCann.

"Gee!" he muttered.

"That white feller stop, sar!" murmured Loo, the Santa Cruz boy, at his side.

"I guess Tu'uka's slipped up on it somehow!" snarled Bone. "You shut up mouth belong you, Loo!"

The crew of the Osprey stared over the rail. There were only two Kanakas on board; the rest were ashore. David Bone sailed with a native crew. Only the mate was a white man, and he was ashore now.

"I guess them guys are looking for trouble!" drawled David Bone, and his hand slid to his hip-pocket to make sure that his "gun" was there and ready.

The canoe bumped on the side of the cutter, and with a single bound Billy McCann was aboard.

The lawyer-cane was gripped in his hand.

Bob Harris was on board the next second. The paddlers in the canoe, staring up, jabbered with excitement. A shindy among white men was rare on Kalua, and it was a red-letter day for the natives.

"Say, I don't remember askin' you guys on board this packet!" drawled David Bone.

His hand was at his hip.

"You low-down swab!" roared Billy McCann. "You scum of the gutters of 'Frisco! You dirty double-crosser!"

"Say, you're sure spilling a mouthful," drawled Bone. "What's biting you, boy?"

"I'll tell you and all Kalua!" roared McCann. "You fixed it up with Tu'uka to send my car to the bottom of the Kalua gorge. You reckoned that I was lying in the gorge with a smashed car till you saw me in that canoe. Are you denying it, you swab?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob, understanding at last.

"Sure!" drawled Bone, his thin lips drawn back from his yellow teeth in a snarl. "You got me guessing!"

"Liar!" roared Billy.

The lawyer-cane whistled in the air as he leaped at the American trader. Like a flash Bone's hand came from his hip and his revolver glinted in the sunlight. Just as swiftly, however, the thick cane crashed on his arm and the

THE ISLAND TRADERS!

(Continued from previous page.)

six-shooter went spinning to the deck, to clatter away to the scuppers.

The next instant Billy McCann's grasp was on the trader, twisting him over, and the lawyer-cane rose and fell. The lash of the cane rang like a pistol-shot on the lean back of David Bone, and a yell of pain and fury rang over the lagoon.

Lash, lash, lash!

Loo, the Santa Cruz boy, leaped like a tiger, knife in hand. But Bob Harris' fist crashed into his black face, and the black rolled heels over head and brought up against the rail half-stunned.

Bob's revolver was in his hand the next instant. The two Kanaka seamen backed away from it.

"You feller boy keep clear!" said Bob grimly.

And the Kanakas kept clear enough.

Loo, dazed and dizzy, stared on from where he lay without rising. The savage Santa Cruz islander was quelled, for the moment at least.

Crash, crash! came the thick lawyer-cane on the back of the American trader. David Bone was no weakling; he was lean and strong and wiry. But he crumpled in the furious grasp of Billy McCann, and his savage struggles availed him nothing. Billy's iron grip twisted him half over the rail, and with his right the Little Fat White Master wielded the lawyer-cane.

Crash; crash, crash! it came down.

"My hat!" murmured Bob.

With his revolver in hand, finger on trigger, he was keeping the field clear for his partner. It was man to man, and the better man had the upper hand. Far across the lagoon, far into the bush of Kalua, rang the frantic yells of the American trader as the lawyer-cane crashed and crashed.

Billy McCann was indeed going strong!

The beach of Kalua was crowded. Natives by the score swarmed there, staring towards the cutter, jabbering with excitement. A score of white men had come out of bungalows and warehouses. Among them was old Mackay, with a dry grin on his wrinkled face. The frantic yelling of David Bone was heard all along the beach.

David Bone, reputed the richest trader in the Pacific, owner of ships and plantations and a chain of island stores, writhing and yelling in the grasp of

Billy McCann! It was a sensation for Kalua. All through the islands the grasping American was disliked, but feared as much as he was disliked. His power was great, and he used it ruthlessly. Rich as he was, he grasped for more, careless of the methods he used, so long as he kept to windward of the law—what law there was in the scattered islands. Many a man in Kalua, in all the islands, would have been glad to lay a stout lawyer-cane round the lean carcass of David Bone, but never yet had man ventured to do it. Billy McCann was doing it now—hard.

Lash, lash! Crash!

With white face, burning eyes, teeth set, Billy gripped the writhing trader in a grip of iron, and lashed with the lawyer-cane. It was not so much the peril of his own life that had enraged Billy McCann; it was the narrow escape of the Co. But for luck the Ford would have been lying smashed to fragments at the bottom of the gorge—the old car that Billy had tinkered and tinkered with till he loved it like a brother. David Bone had to learn to keep his hands off the Co.

"Steady, the Buffs!" Bob Harris stepped forward and laid a hand on Billy's shoulder. "Steady on, old bean!"

"Let me alone!"

"Steady! Don't kill the rotter!"

"No loss if I did!" snarled Billy.

"None at all. Still, don't! He's had enough."

David Bone looked as if he had had enough. His struggles were feeble now. He sagged in the grasp of Billy McCann.

Billy panted.

"Perhaps you're right. Suffering cats! The blighter will think twice before he lays a trap for the Ford again!"

He flung the American trader from him, and Bone went sprawling on the cutter's deck, panting, gasping, howling. For the time at least he was helpless to retaliate.

"Let's get out of this!" grunted Billy.

Bob glanced grimly at the two Kanakas and Loo, the black Santa Cruz boy, and made a gesture with the revolver. Then he followed Billy McCann into the waiting canoe.

(Thanks to Billy McCann, the chums have won the first round of their contest against David Bone. But the American trader hasn't got going yet! When he does—well, you'll read more about it in next week's chapters of this thrilling adventure yarn. Don't miss them, whatever you do!)

DR. BIRCHEMALL—

KRICKET KRACK!

(Continued from page 15.)

"M-m-my hat!"

Slogger, the kaptin of St. Charley's, was loud in his protests, until Dr. Birchmall threatened to report him to his headmaster, Dr. Smiter, an old friend.

During the next half-hour Dr. Birchmall succeeded in making some remarkable alterations in the rules of cricket. Every time he was bowled out, he called it a trial ball. Every time he was caught out, it was a fowl, and didn't count. And every time he manridged to nock the ball at all, it had to count as a "sixer."

Jack Jolly was the Head's partner; but the Head didn't give him a charnse; whenever it was Jack's turn to face the bowling, the Head insisted on changing places with him. Altogether, it was a most unusual game of cricket.

Evenchually, the Head called a halt and consulted the scorers.

"How many sixes have I nocked?" he asked.

"Eight, sir!" was the reply.

"Very well. And how many extras have been scored?"

"Ten, sir!"

"Eggsellent!" said the Head, his face beaming. "Eight sixes are ninety-one. I believe, and ten added to that makes one hundred and three. I declare the innings and the game closed. St. Sam's wins by six runs and ten wickets, and there can be no disputing that I have scored my century! Carry me sholder-high, boys, and cheer me to the echo!"

Before the juniors could carry out that suggestion, the eggsasperated St. Charley's players had fallen on Dr. Birchmall and seceded him. They ragged him, and scragged him, and bumped him, and jumped on him, and finally hurled him into the fountain!

By that time the Head felt very sorry indeed that he had had anything to do with the cricket match.

THE END.

(Next week's MAGNET will contain another screamingly funny story of Jack Jolly & Co. entitled: "THE MASKED MARVEL OF MUGGLETON!" Chums, you'll laugh till the tears run down your face when you read it!)

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