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SAVED FROM THE SEA!

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Run Down at Sea!

IT'S a light!" Billy Bunter uttered that ejaculation.

The fat junior of Greyfriars was leaning on the rail of the yacht *Sea Nymph*. The April night was fine; the sky spangled with stars. The *Sea Nymph* steamed at a moderate pace northwards from the Straits of Dover.

Captain Cook was on the bridge, with an eye open for the Goodwin Sands. Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove sat in a cheery and contented row in their deckchairs, after supper, enjoying the balmy breeze, the starry sky, and the shimmering sea. Coker & Co. of the Greyfriars Fifth were on the other side of the deck—Coker being wishful to make it clear that he, Horace Coker, had nothing in common with mere fags of the Lower Fourth Form. Billy Bunter, leaning on the rail, was thinking—naturally—of the supper he had recently packed away, and doubting a little whether the last helping of pudding had been, perhaps, a mistake. Fortunately, the sea was quite calm—and, so far, that last helping of pudding was calm! A glimmer of light twinkling from the shadowy sea caught Bunter's eye, and he blinked at it through his big spectacles and announced the fact.

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"I say, you fellows! It's a light!" said Bunter.

"What's aight?" asked Bob Cherry. "Don't say the ship's on fire, fatty! I'm too jolly comfortable to move."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I didn't say it was aight! I said it was a light!"

"Lucid, at all events!" agreed Bob. "Reminds me of a jolly old conundrum. When is a light not a light—"

Harry Wharton detached himself from his chair and leaned over the rail to look. Starry as the sky was, the sea was deeply dusky, and the visibility was not good. The lights of the *Sea Nymph* streamed out ahead, but no other light was to be seen on the dusky waters.

"Where is it?" asked Harry. "It's gone now! But I saw it," said Bunter. "A boat, or something. Can't be a ship, or we should see it."

"Not likely to be a boat out here at night, going round the Goodwins!" said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I saw it, and it was a light—"

"The boat was aight?" yawned Frank Nugent.

"No, you ass!"

"Reminds me," said Bob Cherry. "There was a man once who saw a passenger aight from a motor-bus—and after that he saw a haystack aight from a bed-room window—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I saw a boat—"
"You shouldn't," said Bob Cherry solemnly. "If you saw a boat, you'll make it unseaworthy."

"Wharrer you mean, you silly ass?" demanded Bunter.

"What I say. But it depends, of course, whether you saw it with your eye, or whether you saw it with a saw—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry was evidently in a humorous mood.

"I say, you fellows, there it is again!" exclaimed Bunter.

This time all the Famous Five rose to look. Billy Bunter pointed with a fat finger. But the light, if there was a light on the shadowy sea, had vanished again.

"Well, where is it?" asked Johnny Ball.

"The wherefulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Well, I saw it!" said Bunter. "Looked like somebody waving a light. Can't you fellows see it now?"

"Lend me your specs, old fat bean," said Bob. "It's the specs that do it!"

Snort—from Bunter.

All the Famous Five of the Remove were blessed with good eyesight, but they could see no light on the sea. It was really odd if the short-sighted Owl of Greyfriars had spotted it when they missed it.

"Well, I jolly well saw it!" said

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—HIS LATEST STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. AFLOAT!

Bunter. "It's gone again! It was right ahead of us—there!"

"Well, if there's anybody ahead of us, he's an ass not to show a light!" said Bob Cherry. "Might get run down at night."

"He was showing a light," said Bunter. "I suppose it's put out now, as I can't see it."

"He will feel rather put out himself if we wallop on him in the dark," remarked Bob. "But I fancy I know what it was."

"What was it, then?"

"A mermaid combing her hair," answered Bob. "What you saw was the reflection of her mirror."

"You silly ass!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As a matter of fact, the chums of the Remove did not believe that Billy Bunter had seen anything at all, except perhaps a glimmer on the sea, or a reflection of starlight on his own big spectacles. At all events, they could see nothing themselves.

"I say, George!" called out Bunter. Captain Cook's round, red face looked down from the bridge. George Cook had the honour of being Billy Bunter's cousin, though it was an honour that he did not appear to prize very highly. Still, he owed it to Bunter that he had nine Greyfriars fellows on a twenty-one guinea Easter cruise.

"Hallo!" called back George.

"Did you see a light?"

"Where?"

"Ahead, a bit to the right."

"Starboard bow, skipper!" said Bob Cherry.

George had been looking to the port bow, where the Goodwin Sands lay. He was giving the Goodwins a wide and safe berth. Starboard the open sea stretched to dusky infinity.

"Eh? No! There's no light!" said George, staring in the direction indicated. "Who saw a light?"

"I did!" answered Bunter.

"Anybody else?"

"No; these fellows are as blind as owls!"

"Hefty haddocks!" said George. "You're some look-out man, you are, Billy! You generally see three yards, don't you, in broad daylight?"

"Oh, really, George—"

"Bosh!" said George.

Having scanned the sea, with great keenness and picked up nothing, George dismissed the matter from his mind. So did the Famous Five, and they sat down again. Coker of the Fifth, however, had heard the talk, and he came across to look. Potter and Greene of the Fifth followed him.

"Now, where's that light?" asked Coker.

"I say, you fellows, there it is again!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Gammon!" yawned Johnny Bull.

"Where?" demanded Coker.

"There—it's gone again—"

Coker stared into the deep shadows. If there had been a light, it had certainly gone again. Coker snorted.

"You young ass! Pulling my leg, what? Do you think that's funny?"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Can't see anything," yawned Potter.

"There isn't anything to see!" grunted Coker. "That young ass is pulling our leg! Where's that light, Bunter?"

"I suppose it's been extinguished now—"

"Well, now you're going to be extinguished!" said Coker. "That will teach you not to be funny!"

Swipe!

"Whooooo!" roared Billy Bunter, as Coker's heavy hand smote on the top of his straw hat. "Ow! Wow! Beast! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors, as Coker snorted and stalked away.

Bunter sat down suddenly. He grabbed wildly at the straw hat, which was squashed down round his fat ears. He pushed and puffed and struggled. He got it off at last, gasping. Coker had a heavy hand. The summit of that straw hat was seriously damaged.

"Ow! Beast!" gasped Bunter. "Look at that hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "That hat's rather a wreck, Bunter."

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! That hat's ruined!" hooted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"Lucky I wasn't wearing my own hat, though," added Bunter.

"Ha, ha! Whose was it?"

"Yours!"

"Wha-a-t?"

Bob Cherry ceased to laugh quite suddenly. But the other fellows took it up, and there was a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you fat villain!" howled Bob. "You've borrowed my straw—"

"Yes, Lucky, wasn't it?"

"Lucky? Why, I—I—I—I'll—"

Bob Cherry jumped up in great excitement.

Harry Wharton & Co. hardly bargained for thrills when they decided on a holiday cruise aboard the yacht Sea Nymph, but they meet up with thrills galore during their first few days at sea—and danger, too!

ment. "Why, you fat, frumptions, footling foolzer—"

Bob Cherry was interrupted. From the sea ahead there came a sudden grinding crash, and a yell, followed by the wild clanging of the engine-room bell and a frantic roar from Captain Cook. The Greyfriars fellows leaped to their feet as if electrified. Under the surging bows of the Sea Nymph rolled the shattered timbers of a boat that had been run down in the dark, and from the shadows of the sea came wild cries for help.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nearly a Tragedy!

HELP! Save me! Help!" Faint, but clear, it came from the dusky waters—a cry that thrilled to the hearts of the fellows on the deck of the Sea Nymph. Captain Cook had instantly signalled to the engine-room, and the yacht slowed. But the shattered boat had been driven under; the yacht's prow had struck the gunwale fair and square. Evidently the smaller craft had drifted right into the Sea Nymph's course in the dark, though why the boatman had not been burning a light was a mystery. But the man, whoever he was, had not gone down with the boat; he was afloat, and screaming for help.

The juniors leaped to the side, staring down into the sea. Mr. Pycroft, the mate, flashed a lamp over the side,

two or three of the crew lighted flares. Cousin George was shouting orders. Hitherto, Cousin George had seemed rather a comic figure to the Greyfriars fellows, with his tubby form and his round, red face, and his yachting outfit, that did not make him look like anything in the world but a portly hotel-keeper. Now, however, they realised that George was equal to his business as skipper of the Sea Nymph. Indeed, he had to be, or he could not have carried a skipper's ticket. But this was the first time that the Greyfriars fellows had seen him put to the test.

"There he is!" roared Coker, pointing to a floating object in the gleam of light from a flare.

"Where?" panted Wharton.

"There—look—"

"Don't be a fool!"

"That's a bit of wreckage—"

"Help!" came a fainter cry from the surge. "Oh, help!"

George was rapping orders staccato. The seamen were handling the yacht's boat. The vessel was at a standstill now. Every eye searched the shadowed sea for the swimmer. Coker had no doubt that he had seen him. Coker kicked off his shoes, threw his cap on the deck, tore off his jacket, and leaped on the rail, his hands together.

"Coker!" yelled Potter and Greene at once.

Unheeding, Coker dived.

"Oh, my hat! Coker's gone!" panted Potter.

"The ass!" gasped Greene.

Harry Wharton, staring into the sea where the lights of the flares danced weirdly in the midst of dancing shadows, had a glimpse of a white face, surging under the wash of the Sea Nymph. The face went under, even as he glimpsed it, and the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, without stopping to think, dived over the rail. If Coker, the worst swimmer at Greyfriars, could dive into the sea for a shipwrecked man, the best swimmer in the Remove was not likely to hesitate. Wharton, however, was on the right mark; it was the drowning man he had seen. And what Coker had seen was the broken tiller of the wrecked boat bobbing in the water.

Wharton went down deep with the dive, and as he came up, almost like an arrow, his hand struck something in the sea, and he instinctively grasped at it. His head came out of the water, and unseen hands grasped at him with frantic clutches. It was the drowning man he had hold of—and the man had hold of him, wildly and frantically.

From the deck of the Sea Nymph the ocean had looked calm enough, but once in it, it was a different matter. There were choppy waves, and swimming was not easy—less easy still with frantic hands clutching and dragging. The Greyfriars junior went under, but he struggled up again. He got a grasp on the man's collar with his left hand, and had the man been cool, he could have kept him afloat with ease till the yacht's boat arrived. But the man was not cool. He was half-drowned, and out of his senses with panic. He got both arms round the schoolboy's neck and dragged, and again Wharton went under; and this time his mouth filled with water.

Something like a thrill of horror ran through Wharton as he was dragged down, almost as helpless as if in the clutches of an octopus. He fought madly to rise, and his lungs were almost bursting when his head came up

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into clear, fresh air, and he gulped in a deep breath.

"Let go!" he shrieked. "I've got you! Let go, you're drowning both of us!"

The man neither heard nor heeded. His white face was close to Wharton's, the eyes open and conscious, but glazed with panic. There was only one way to loosen the maddened grip that was dragging the junior down to death. And Wharton had no time to think about it; he had barely time to act. He clenched his right hand and struck with all the force he could put into the blow. His fist crashed, hammer-like, into the face so close to him, and there was a gurgle, and the tenacious clutch round his neck relaxed.

Even at that wild moment Wharton felt a pang of remorse for the methods he had to use. But there had been no help for it—it was the only way to save two lives. The man seemed quite dazed now, and Wharton held him securely, and turned on his back to swim. Now that the man was quiet, he held him easily enough, keeping his face above water, though in the choppy sea he would not have lasted long, had no help come.

But help was coming—had almost come. Oars were dashing in the water, lights gleamed over the sea. Mr. Pycroft was standing in the yacht's boat, with a boathook in his hand. George was below from the bridge of the Sea Nymph with a megaphone.

"There he is—starboard! You're right on him—there!"

Wharton felt himself grasped and dragged into the boat. The man he was holding rolled over the gunwale with him and collapsed, mumbling faintly. The mate of the Sea Nymph pushed Wharton into a seat.

"All safe, my boy!" said Mr. Pycroft, cheerily.

"Right!" gasped Wharton.

The boat pulled back to the yacht. Mr. Pycroft held on, while the side-ladder was run down. The faces of the Greyfriars fellows, tense with anxiety, lined the rail. The mate would have helped Wharton up, but the captain of the Greyfriars Remove did not need help. He clambered lightly up the ladder and dropped, drenched and dripping, on deck. Frank Nugent, whose face was white as chalk, pressed his arm.

"Harry, old chap—" he breathed.

"Right as rain, old bean!" answered Wharton breathlessly.

"You got him?"

"Yes, thank goodness. He was nearly gone."

"Good man!" said Johnny Bull.

"Here he comes!"

The shipwrecked man was passed up. Cousin George supported him in his plump arm, and he sagged against the skipper of the Sea Nymph. The juniors eyed him very curiously. He looked a man of about forty, in landsman's clothes; obviously, nothing of a seafaring nature about him. His nose was red and swollen, and a thin stream of crimson ran from it, mingling with the sea-water that ran down his face.

"All safe now!" said George, in his fat, comfortable voice. "You seem to have had a knock. But all safe now. What?"

"I'm afraid I did that," said Harry ruefully. "I had to give him a tap; he was dragging me under—"

"Best thing," said George cheerfully. "No harm done. Soon mend that. What? Here, can you speak? Were you alone on your boat, or is there anybody else to pick up? What—what?"

"I was alone!" gasped the rescued man faintly.

"Right!" Steward, take this man below. Look after him. Put him in No. 6, and give him a stiff drink," said George, "and—"

"Help!" came a roar from the sea.

George jumped.

"Hefty haddocks! Who's that? What's that? If the fellow was alone in the boat—"

"Coker!" gasped Potter and Greene together.

"He dived in—" gasped Potter.

"Help!" came Coker's hefty roar. "You silly idiots, can't you pick a fellow up? Are you going to leave me here all night, you potty fatheads?"

"Hefty haddocks!" gasped George. "That doesn't sound as if Mr. Coker is drowning, at any rate."

"He's got hold of something," said Greene. "It's a bit of the boat, I suppose—"

"Pick him up, Mr. Pycroft!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The yacht's boat pulled for Coker. That youth was visible to most eyes, clinging to what looked like a floating spar of some sort. The rescued man was taken below by the steward, and all attention was turned on Coker. Horace Coker, having hold of the broken tiller, was in no danger; but he was very wet, and he seemed rather excited. He roared to the boat to buck up.

From the rail of the Sea Nymph the juniors watched and grinned. There had very nearly been a tragedy—but it was a comedy that was following. The boat surged past Coker, and Mr. Pycroft grabbed at him, missed his collar, and got a grip on his hair. The yell that Coker uttered might have been heard across the Goodwin Sands and far away inland on the downs of Kent.

"Yarooooooh!"

"Got you!" said the mate of the Sea Nymph cheerily.

"Leggo my hair!" shrieked Coker.

"Here you are!" said Mr. Pycroft; and Coker was landed, sprawling, in the boat, feeling as if his bristly shock of hair had been pulled out by the roots.

"Ow! Wow! You silly ass!" gurgled Coker. "Ow!" He sat up, in a pool of water, and rubbed his head.

"Ow! Wow! Oooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker shook a fist at the grinning faces lining the rail. The boat bumped on the Sea Nymph, and he clambered up the ladder. He shook water from him on all sides like a Newfoundland dog.

"Have you picked him up?" he gasped.

To Coker's credit, his first thought was of the man in the wrecked boat.

"Yes; we've got him," said George, staring at Coker. "Did you fall overboard, or what?"

"I went in for him!" roared Coker.

"Hefty haddocks! He was nowhere near you!"

"I thought I saw him, and—and I got hold of what I dived for; but—but it was a spar, or a tiller, or something. I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"You cheeky young swiggers!" hooted Coker. "What are you sniggering at? If it had been the man, I should have saved him! As it happens, it was only the tiller—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared George.

"Did you rescue the rest of the boat as well as the tiller, Coker?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it was jolly plucky to jump in, anyhow!" said George, chuckling. "Pluck's a good thing—what? Ha, ha!"

"Yes, rather, especially as Coker can't swim!" said Bob. "Jolly lucky you rescued that tiller, Coker—it rescued you!"

"Can't swim?" exclaimed George. "Well, if you can't swim, sir, it was plucky! But, for goodness' sake, don't do it again while you're on this ship! I don't want to have to tell your people that—"

"You silly ass!" shrieked Coker. "I'm the best swimmer at Greyfriars! I'll give that cheeky young sweep the whopping of his life! I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come down and change, old man," said Potter; and he took Coker's arm and led him away, Greene taking the other arm.

And Coker, snorting with wrath, realised that he needed a change and went. Potter and Greene grinned as they led him down. They were quite proud of Coker's pluck—there was no doubt that Coker was plucky. But they hardly liked to think of what might have happened to him if he hadn't got hold of that floating bit of wood. Harry Wharton had rescued the drowning man—but there was no doubt that the boat's broken tiller had rescued Horace Coker!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr. Griggs from Rye!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Perhaps you'll listen to me another time!" said Billy Bunter severely.

The juniors were down in the saloon. Harry Wharton had towelled himself and changed his clothes, and was feeling very little the worse for his plunge in the sea. He was taking a rest in an armchair, and his comrades were discussing the exciting episode and telling Wibley all about it—William Wibley having been below, sorting over his theatrical outfit, during those thrilling minutes.

The rescued man was in the bunk in No. 6, where Pawlings, the steward, was looking after him. Billy Bunter rolled in, and gave the Famous Five a severe blink through his big spectacles.

"Another time," said Bunter, "perhaps you'll take notice of a chap—what? Mightn't have run the boat down if you had?"

"What do you mean, you fat duffer?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I was the only fellow that saw the boat's light!" said Bunter. "None of you blind owls saw it!"

"The boat wasn't burning a light, ass!" said Bob. "If it had had a light it wouldn't have been run down!"

"Well, I jolly well saw the light, and told you," said Bunter, "and a few minutes afterwards the boat was run down—so there!"

The juniors exchanged glances. Really, it looked as if the Owl of the Remove had been right, after all. But it was certain that the wrecked boat had been burning no light, as a boat at sea after dark certainly should have done. The shipwrecked man had had only himself to thank for the disaster. Any vessel going to or from the Straits of Dover might have run him down in the dark.

The juniors had been wondering a good deal about the rescued man. He was obviously a landsman, and what he

had been doing so far out at sea in an open boat at night was rather a mystery. Possibly he was an Easter holiday-maker from Folkestone or Dover or Deal; but he could scarcely have been blown out to sea on a calm day. What sort of a craft he had been in they had not seen; but if he had been cruising in some small yacht-rigged cutter or yawl, it was strange enough that he burned no lights. They were rather interested in him, and eager to hear what he had to say for himself. So far, however, he was remaining in state-room No. 6.

"I fancy he was striking matches, you know, when I come to think of it," said Bunter. "That's why the light kept on going out."

Coker very nearly rescued his tiller for him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pawlings came out of No. 6, and the juniors all turned to him at once. They were quite concerned about the man in No. 6.

"How's the jolly old invalid, Pawlings?" asked Bob.

"I think he's quite all right, sir," answered the steward. "He doesn't seem much the worse for his ducking, but his nose is rather painful. He—h'm—seems a little cross about that."

Harry Wharton coloured as his comrades grinned.

"Well, I really couldn't help that," he said. "Surely the chap understands

said Harry. "Has he given his name, steward, and told you what he was doing at sea?"

"Yes, sir. His name's Griggs," said Pawlings. "He was staying at Rye on a holiday, and he went out for a sail this morning, and couldn't get back owing to the wind changing, and after dark he just drifted."

"Rye!" repeated Wharton. "He must have drifted a thumping long way if he came out of Rye this morning."

"I told you fellows how it was," said Bunter complacently. "Just what I was telling you chaps! I was right, as usual!"

"Wonders will never cease!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"That's how he had no lights on the



"Last time of asking!" roared Bob Cherry. "Sure you don't want me to miss you?" Coker snorted. "Then I won't!" said Bob cheerily. He took aim with the orange, and it squashed on Horace Coker's nose. "Yaroooh!" There was a startled yell from Coker as he went over backwards. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.

"That's such a usual way of lighting a boat at sea!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he hadn't any lights on the boat, of course," said Bunter. "Some tripper from Folkestone, I fancy, out for a sail, and lost his way at sea, and couldn't get back after dark."

"It's possible, I suppose," said Harry Wharton slowly. "I suppose a man might run a sail-boat out, intending to get back before dark, and find that he couldn't get back. Must be rather an ass in that case."

"Well, he couldn't have been cruising without lanterns on board," said Nugent. "Bunter may be right! Stranger things have happened!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"
"Well, there's no harm done, except that his craft's gone west, and he's bagged a prize nose!" said Bob. "And

that I had to stop him from getting both of us drowned."

"Pity I didn't go in for him!" remarked Billy Bunter thoughtfully. "I could have managed it without hitting him on the nose. What did you hit him on the nose for, Wharton?"

"You silly ass!" roared Wharton. "I didn't pick out his nose to hit! I just slogged to stop him from dragging me under."

"Rather fatheaded, if you ask me!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "I fancy I could have managed without that! But you were always a bit of an ass, old chap, if you don't mind my mentioning it!"

"You burbling bandersnatch—"
"Shut up, Bunter!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"
"Well, I'm glad he's all right again,"

boat," said Pawlings. "He expected to run back into Rye early in the afternoon. When he saw our lights he began striking matches; but he had only a few with him. If he'd had as much as a pocket torch, we mightn't have run him down."

"What did I tell you fellows?" demanded Bunter triumphantly.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob. Bunter had been right again.

The steward went his way. Harry Wharton rose from the armchair.

"I think I'll speak to the chap," he said. "He ought to understand that I couldn't help thumping him, in the circumstances. And, anyhow, he must know he would have been a goner, if I hadn't got hold of him. Still, I can tell him I'm sorry I had to do it."

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove
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went along to No. 6, tapped at the door, and opened it.

The man, sitting up in the bunk, made a hurried movement.

"Get out, you fool! Leave me alone!" he snapped.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Man with the Wallet!

HARRY WHARTON stared. He was taken quite by surprise.

The man in the bunk did not look much the worse for his adventure, except that his nose was red and raw, and that there was a bit of a bruise between his eyes. Wharton had hit hard—harder, perhaps, than he had realised. But there had been no help for that.

The man was not, now that Wharton saw him clearly in the electric light in the state-room, a pleasant-looking fellow. He had a thin, hard face, with narrow eyes that had a shifty and rather foxy look in them. But what surprised Wharton most was his occupation, and his sudden flash of anger. Sitting up in the bunk, he had a leather wallet open on his knees, which he closed hastily, and shoved under the blankets as Wharton looked in. Wharton did not see, or want to see, what was in it. And it was clear that Mr. Griggs did not want him to. The Greyfriars junior was not in the least interested in that rather bulky-looking wallet. He stood in the doorway, his cheeks crimson, as the man snapped at him. The narrow face was flushed, and the shifty eyes glinted with sudden, passionate anger.

But the next moment, before the junior could speak, the man's expression changed. The anger died out of his

face, as if wiped away with a sponge, and he made an effort to smile.

"Excuse me," he said. "I thought it was the steward coming back, and I had told him I wanted to sleep."

It occurred to Wharton that if the man wanted to sleep, it was odd that he should have been sitting up with the light full on, examining the contents of his wallet. Still, that was no business of his. And he could make allowances for a man's jumpy nerves after he had had a narrow escape from drowning.

"I didn't mean to disturb you—" began Harry awkwardly.

"Well, what do you want?"

"You don't know me again?" asked Harry, with a smile.

Apparently the man was not aware that it was Wharton who had pulled him out of the sea. That, of course, was natural enough. He could hardly have noticed much at the time, and he had been taken below as soon as he was brought on the Sea Nymph.

But what was not natural, and what was quite surprising, was the sudden suspicion that flashed into the narrow face. The man leaned forward in the bunk, staring at Wharton with glinting, searching eyes.

"What do you mean?" he snapped.

"I don't know you! I've never seen you before. Do you mean that you have met me before, or what?"

"Of course not," said Harry, in utter wonder. "You're a stranger to me, Mr. Griggs, so far as I know."

He could see that the man was relieved.

"Well, what do you mean, then?" rasped the man in the bunk. "How should I know you again, as you put it, if I've never seen you before?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It was I who jumped in for you," he explained.

"Oh, you!" exclaimed the man in the bunk. "Oh, is that what you meant?"

"Yes. I'm sorry I had to punch you," said Harry. "That's what I came here to say, Mr. Griggs. I wouldn't have done it if I could possibly have helped it, but you were dragging me under, and we should both have been drowned. But I'm awfully sorry, all the same."

The man passed his hand over his damaged countenance.

"If you couldn't help it, it can't be helped!" he grunted. "It seems to me a queer way of helping a drowning man—hitting him in the face. I suppose you lost your head."

"I didn't lose my head," said Wharton curtly. "If I had, you wouldn't be sitting in that bunk this minute, Mr. Griggs. It was you that lost your head, and I had to get your hands loose from my neck, or you'd have drowned us both. I'm sorry I had to do it."

Grunt from the man in the bunk.

"That's all I came to say," added Wharton dryly. "I won't disturb you any further, Mr. Griggs."

"Stay a moment!"

Wharton turned back. The man was evidently trying to speak agreeably, though it was equally plain that he was feeling anything but agreeable.

"I—I thank you for what you did. It is very probable that you may have saved my life."

It was not merely probable; it was a certainty. But Harry Wharton did not say so. If the man wanted to minimise the service he had received from the Greyfriars junior, he was welcome so to do, so far as Wharton was concerned. The captain of the Remove had no desire whatever to lay claim to his gratitude.

"I wish you had found some other method. My nose is very painful," said Mr. Griggs, with a sort of twisted grin. "Very painful indeed. I am a very poor swimmer. I thought I was gone when this yacht ran me down. I tried to show my position by burning matches, but the wind blew them out almost as fast as I struck them, and I had only a few. Then all of a sudden the ship seemed on top of me."

He shuddered with the recollection, and Wharton looked, as he felt, sympathetic. He could imagine the man's feelings at that fearful moment, and he quite forgave him for his jumpy nerves and his unpolished manners. But Mr. Griggs went on again at once:

"Has anything been picked up from the boat?"

"Nothing, I think," answered Harry. "I hope you had nothing of value on board, Mr. Griggs?"

"Oh, no, not at all; only a few clothes and some food!" The shifty eyes watched Wharton's face. "I fancied that your captain might have picked up the boat, or what was left of it."

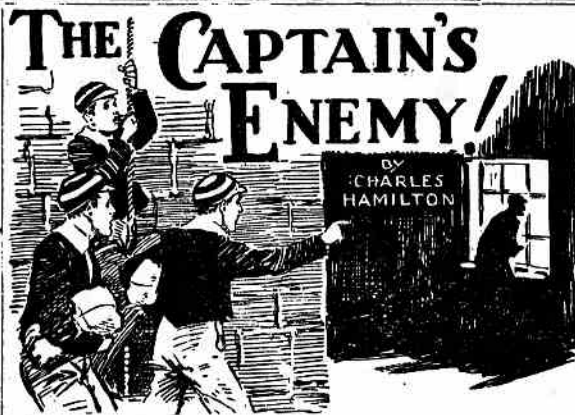
"It was smashed to bits," said Harry. "It must have gone down like a stone, except for a few broken fragments. I'm sure that Captain Cook would have saved it for you if it had been possible."

"It matters nothing—nothing whatever—but you are sure of what you say?"

"Quite sure!"

It was odd enough, but Wharton had an impression that the man in the bunk was glad that the boat had not been saved. Certainly he could hardly have expected it to be preserved, after crunching under the prow of the Sea Nymph. It was clear, at least, that he wanted to be sure about it.

"Anything that was in the boat has been lost," said Harry. "You were rather lucky to save your wallet, Mr. Griggs, in the circumstances."



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"My wallet!" The shifty eyes glinted at him with sharp suspicion. The leather wallet was still out of sight under the bedclothes. "Oh, yes! Luckily, it was in my pocket, and it contains some business papers I should have been sorry to lose."

Wharton smiled faintly. He had had only a glimpse of the leather wallet before it disappeared under the blankets; but he had seen that it was too bulky to go into a pocket. And the man struggling in the sea had had nothing in his hands. Obviously that wallet must have been fastened to him, either on a belt, or hung round his neck. Why Mr. Griggs should tell lies about so trivial a matter Wharton did not understand in the least—any more than he could understand why a holiday-maker, running out to sea for a pleasure cruise, should take business papers with him. Wharton was no fool, and he could not help being aware that there was something rather secretive and furtive about this Mr. Griggs. He had been, naturally, prepared to like the man whose life he had saved, but he was conscious instead of a feeling very like repugnance.

"Good-night!" barked Mr. Griggs suddenly.

"Good-night, sir!" answered Wharton politely.

He stepped out and shut the door, not sorry to go.

"How's the jolly old bean?" asked Bob, when the captain of the Remove rejoined his chums.

"Looks all right," answered Harry. "Can't say I like him. He seems rather sore about that dot I had to give him."

"Punching a nose is liable to make it sore," said Bob, with a grin.

"Fathead—I mean sore in his temper! Can't be helped. It won't keep me awake to-night," added Wharton, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Well, you were rather a clumsy ass, you know," remarked Billy Bunter. "In your place, old chap, I should have—"

"Gone down like a stone?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No!" roared Bunter. "I should have managed without punching his nose. Pity I didn't take the matter in hand. If anything of the kind happens again, Wharton, don't you butt in."

"What?"

"Don't butt in! Leave it to me—see?"

"You howling ass—"

"All very well to call a fellow names," sniffed Bunter. "But if you can't manage without punching a fellow's nose—"

"Well, I've told Mr. Griggs I'm sorry for punching his nose," said Harry.

"But I'm not sorry for punching yours, Bunter."

"Eh? You haven't punched my nose—"

"No—but I'm just going to—"

"Eh? Here, I say— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as the captain of the Remove suited the action to the word.

"Why, you beast! Whooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Wow!" roared Bunter.

And nothing more was heard from Billy Bunter on the subject of punching noses.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Not Missed!

BRIGHT April sunshine streamed down on the sea, on the gliding Sea Nymph, and on the white cliffs that lined the horizon to the west.

Harry Wharton & Co found interest in a distant glimpse of Ramsgate in the sunny morning, and the yaws and

ketches with brown sails that dotted the sea. Coker & Co. of the Fifth were at a little distance—Coker still being very particular to make it clear to all the ship's company that between the Fifth Form and the Remove there was a great gulf fixed.

Coker of the Fifth was, so to speak, with these juniors, but not of them. And he did not want anybody to make a mistake about that—being apparently unconscious of the fact that nobody was interested in the matter. In a deck-chair sat Mr. Griggs, from Rye—his red and raw "boko" looking redder and rawer in the bright sunshine of spring. Mr. Griggs had breakfasted in No. 6, but he had come up on deck at last, and all the Greyfriars party had made it a point to speak to him, and ask him politely how he was, and to express courteous sympathy.

But Mr. Griggs seemed to have no great use for courteous sympathy.

His answers were brief, and he made it fairly clear that he preferred his own company to anybody else's. So the Greyfriars fellows were not long in leav-

Griggs did not choose to leave his "business papers" in his state-room while he was on deck. The wallet appeared to be carried on a strap over Mr. Griggs' shoulder, under his coat, but it was too bulky to be quite hidden from sight.

Cousin George had an eye on the gentleman from Rye. Cousin George, in his fat, hearty way, had made the stranger welcome on board the Sea Nymph. He was quite hospitable to the man who had been picked out of the sea; but at the same time George had an eye to business. He was not running the Sea Nymph for his health. Through Billy Bunter's kind offices, he had nine passengers on that trip; but there was room for more.

As Mr. Griggs' holiday at Rye had been so disastrously interrupted, George was considering whether Mr. Griggs might not be prepared to continue that holiday as a passenger on the Easter cruise. He did not look a very agreeable man; but all was grist that came to George's mill. George was a business man first, and a yachtsman second.

"Find yourself comfortable, sir, what, what?" asked George, in his deep, fat, throaty voice.

"Quite, thanks!" said Mr. Griggs. "Much obliged! I've been going to speak to you, Captain Cook. I gather from the steward that this is a pleasure cruise—a holiday party for Easter. You are touching at foreign ports later?"

"That's so, sir!" said George. "After a visit to Margate—merry Margate, sir—brightest and jolliest place on the East Coast—we spread our wings like the swallows, sir—metaphorically, of course, the Sea Nymph being a steamer—for the sunny south—"

"Oh, quite!" barked Mr. Griggs, who seemed to have no use for George's poetical flights. "Quite! What are the terms?"

George beamed. The newcomer on the Sea Nymph was taking the words out of his mouth.

"Twenty-one guineas, sir, for the Easter cruise," he answered. "Probably you will regard that as reasonable. Other firms—"

"Quite!" said Mr. Griggs. "If agreeable to you, sir, I should be very glad to finish my holiday on board this excellent yacht."

"Delighted, sir!" said George. "The fact is, I was about to suggest it! I think, honestly, that you couldn't do better. The food—"

"Oh, quite!"

"The food, sir, is ample. I may say generous," said George. "I keep a good table—a very good table! Feed 'em, and they come again, sir—that's my motto. I think, sir, you'll enjoy the cruise. But if you'd rather go back to Rye—" added George considerably.

"Not at all!"

"I would land you at Margate, where you could get a train, with pleasure, sir, and," added George with dignity, "I need hardly say that, in that case, there would be no charge—no charge whatever—for the period you have spent on board the Sea Nymph."

"I shall stay on the yacht," said Mr. Griggs, who seemed to be a man of few words. "If I may make a suggestion, I—"

"Suggestions from passengers, sir, are welcomed—more than welcomed," said George.

"If agreeable to others, it would be more agreeable to me to cut out Margate, and lose no time getting south," said Mr. Griggs. "Fine as the weather is, there is a touch of east in the wind. Margate, after all, is a place that can be visited any time."

"Perfectly true, sir," said George.

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ing him to himself. They did not enjoy the society of a man with a sore nose and a sore temper.

Billy Bunter informed the other fellows that the man was a "beast," and for once the other fellows were inclined to agree with Bunter. It was clear, at least, that Mr. Griggs was unsociable, and had a snappish temper, and wanted to be left alone. His clothes had been carefully dried by the steward, and Cousin George had lent him a hat—his own having been lost in the sea.

Pawlings, the steward, was rather attentive to him—from which it might have been guessed that Mr. Griggs had tipped Pawlings liberally. When the juniors happened to glance at him, they could see that, restless as he looked in the deckchair, his keen, deep-set, shifty eyes were never at rest—and he gave them the impression of a man who was as watchful as a cat.

Harry Wharton smiled a little when he noticed a bulge under Mr. Griggs' loose lounge jacket—evidently made by that bulky wallet. Apparently Mr.

"Margate was included in the schedule chiefly because my passengers are schoolboys. Schoolboys, sir, enjoy themselves thoroughly at Merry Margate. But we stay there only one day—"

"If you could meet my wishes, Captain Cook, I should have no objection to paying an extra fee—"

George waved a plump hand.

"No, sir! Not at all! The charge is inclusive—no extras on any account whatever. That is my invariable rule. Let 'em know what they've got to pay, and they come again. That's my motto. But we aim, sir, to meet the wishes of every party concerned, and I will put it to the other passengers. If they agree, we cut out Margate."

As this conversation was carried on in the hearing of the Famous Five, they could not, of course, help hearing it. So when George turned to them they knew what was coming. They exchanged a glance, and Johnny Bull gave a grunt. They wanted a run ashore on the sands at Margate, and they could not help thinking it a cheek on the part of Mr. Griggs to try to alter the arrangements like this. Still, they were ready to yield the point. Wharton collected the glances, as it were, of his comrades, and gave George a nod.

"All serene," he said. "Don't mind us."

"There's an Easter show at the Winter Gardens I wanted to see," mumbled Wibley. "But, never mind—all right!"

"That's all very well," said Billy Bunter. "But I know a place in Margate where you can get a jolly good feed—"

"Chuck it, Billy!" said George. "You don't count!"

"Oh, really, George—"

Unheeding the indignant Owl, George crossed over to Coker & Co. The three Fifth-Formers across the deck had heard also—and Potter and Greene were prepared to give a polite assent. Not so Coker! Wrath was gathering in the rugged brow of Coker. Coker of the Fifth was not in the best of tempers—partly on account of the merriment that had been caused by his heroic rescue of the tiller the night before. And Coker had made his plans for the shore, and Coker, like the juniors, thought it a cheek of Mr. Griggs to butt in—only more so.

"If you young gentlemen are agreeable—" began George.

"I'm not!" rapped Coker.

"Is Coker ever agreeable, you fellows?" murmured Bob Cherry, and there was a chuckle among the juniors.

Coker of the Fifth gave them a glare, and then glared at George.

"Look here, Mr. Cook! I've just been fixing it up with my friends to go off the yacht at Broadstairs, if you'll send us in the boat. We're going to walk along to Margate. A man wants to stretch his legs a bit. But, Broadstairs or no Broadstairs, we're going to Margate."

"Look here, Coker—" murmured Potter, who possibly was not looking forward with enjoyment to a long walk with Coker.

"Don't be an ass, Potter."

"But, I say—" murmured Greene.

"Don't be a fathead, Greene."

Thus adjured, Potter and Greene gave it up. Coker was the only fellow to hold out against the proposed alteration in the schedule. But Coker was a host in himself at holding out. Coker was firm—as firm as a rock, according to his view—as obstinate as a mule, according to his friends. But whether it was the firmness of a rock, or the obstinacy of a mule, Coker meant business.

"I call it cheek," went on Coker. "I don't want to be uncivil to a man I

don't know—and don't want to know—but I call it cheek! If you ask me, that's what I call it—cheek!"

"Sir!" said George, with dignity. "Leave it at that! No alteration will be made in the schedule without the consent of all concerned. You do not consent—"

"I jolly well don't!" said Coker, with emphasis.

"That settles the matter," said George—and he went back to Mr. Griggs.

That gentleman flashed a glance of his shifty eyes at Coker—and the juniors, who were looking at him, were rather startled by the bitter, savage anger in that swift glance. There was no doubt that Mr. Griggs was intensely irritated by Coker's obstinacy. But there was nothing more for Mr. Griggs to say—Coker was standing up for his rights as a paying passenger for the cruise, and that was that! Coker caught Mr. Griggs' bitter look, and responded to it with a defiant snort.

"So jolly old Coker's going to land at Broadstairs," remarked Bob Cherry, as the Sea Nymph drew in towards the bright and attractive seaside resort. "We shall miss him when he goes."

"The missfulness will be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Probably we shan't see him again till next term at Greyfriars. If he starts to walk to Margate ten to one he will end up at Canterbury or Tunbridge Wells."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Cherry!" rapped out Coker. "That will do! Not so much of your Lower Fourth cheek, if you don't want your ear pulled."

"If you're cross, Coker, I shan't miss you when you go!" said Bob. "And you'd like me to miss you, wouldn't you?"

"Eh! I don't care a rap whether you miss me or not, you young idiot!"

"You don't want me to miss you?" asked Bob, his hand groping for an orange in his pocket.

"No, you young ass!"

"Right!" said Bob. "Then I won't! You fellows are all witnesses to what Coker says—he doesn't want me to miss him!"

The juniors, aware of the orange in Bob's hand in his pocket, chuckled. Coker, unaware of it, snorted contemptuously. The Sea Nymph stopped well off shore, and the boat was lowered for Coker & Co. Crowds of people were visible on the shining beach—it was a glorious spring day. Mr. Griggs had left his deckchair and gone below, but nobody specially noticed the fact. Certainly it never occurred to any fellow on board that Mr. Griggs could have any reason for desiring to avoid observation from the beach.

Coker and Potter and Greene went down into the boat. The juniors lined the rail as the seamen fended off with the oars.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Coker!" roared Bob, his hand coming out of his pocket with the orange in it.

Coker gave him a glare.

"Sure you don't want me to miss you?" roared Bob.

"Shut up, you young ass!" hooted Coker.

"Last time of asking—sure you don't want me to miss you?"

Snort from Coker!

"Then I won't!" said Bob cheerily—and he took aim with the orange and didn't miss Coker.

The orange squashed on Horace Coker's nose, and there was a startled

yell from Coker as he went over backwards, and his long legs flew skyward.

"Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter.

Coker scrambled up. His rugged face was crimson with wrath.

"Hold on!" he roared. "Stop the boat! I—I'll—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the grinning seamen had pushed off, and there was a widening space of water between the Sea Nymph and Coker. Coker stood up and brandished his fist at the grinning faces along the rail. Bob Cherry kissed his hand in reply, which appeared to have no soothing effect on Coker whatever. He was still brandishing his fist when the boat pulled into the Broadstairs beach.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

At Merry Margate!

"JOLLY!" declared Bob Cherry.

"The jolliffulness is terrific!"

"Good old Margate!" said

Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter! Roll on, thou fat and flabby Bunter, roll!"

"I say, you fellows, I know where you can get a jolly good feed—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Beast!"

Bob Cherry was in exuberant spirits, and all the Greyfriars fellows looked merry and bright as they walked down Margate pier. There were plenty of people in Margate. The Easter crowd in that happy and popular resort was as thick as the summer crowd anywhere else. On the beach they looked like flies, and the promenade was swarming, and every kind of refreshment and entertainment place seemed to be doing good business. It was difficult for anybody not to feel jolly in the bracing air of Margate. But the Greyfriars holiday-makers hardly needed that stimulus—they were jolly anyhow.

Billy Bunter looked as merry and bright as the rest. Bunter liked Margate. And there was one thing he specially liked about Margate—the air made a fellow hungry! Anywhere else, Billy Bunter could eat enough for four or five fellows; at Margate he could eat enough for six or seven! Bunter had often wished that Greyfriars School was situated at Margate, as some more fortunate schools were.

Bunter had had holidays at Margate before, and he knew every place between Westgate and Broadstairs where a fellow could get a decent spread. And there were, as he gleefully told the other fellows, lots and lots of them. Indeed, had Bunter had his way, that day in Margate would have been spent wholly in a "grub crawl"—from one place of refreshment to another. Had Bunter been given his head he would probably have had to be carried back to the Sea Nymph in an ambulance.

Bunter's idea of a really happy day was to begin it with a feed, continue it with a feed, and end it with a feed. If that was not happiness the Owl of the Remove would have liked to know what happiness was. Unluckily, the other fellows did not see eye to eye with Bunter in this important matter.

"I say, you fellows, give me change for a shilling!" said Bunter, stopping at an automatic machine. Bunter would have preferred a couple of lunches, and a dinner or two—but anything in the edible line was welcome. "I say, I've got no coppers."



Down the shelving, glistening sands came the donkey at a wild rush, and there was a fearful yell from Bunter as the water splashed round him. Splash! Splash! "Yaroo! Help! Whoop!" roared Bunter, as he lost his hold, and landed on his back in the water.

Bob Cherry sorted out coppers and handed the fat Owl twelve. He held out his hand for the shilling.

"Where's the bob?" he inquired.

"Eh?"

"I've given you the change—where's the bob?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! If you're going to be mean—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Remind me when we go back to the yacht," said Bunter, with dignity. "I've left all my money on board, as it happens."

"Let's hope it won't sink the yacht," said Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, wait for me!" squeaked Bunter, as the juniors walked on. "I shan't keep you ten minutes—"

"You won't," agreed Nugent. "You won't even keep us one!"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled in pursuit, with his mouth and his hands full of chocolates. He did not want to lose the other fellows. Bunter had mapped out a rather expensive day, and there had to be somebody to meet the expenses. Bunter, of course, could not meet them, as he had left all his money on board the *Sea Nymph*. Though really it would not have helped very much if he hadn't, as all Bunter's money consisted of one half-crown, which was still in his possession because it was a bad one.

"I say, you fellows, got any more coppers?"

A shilling's worth of chocolates did not last Bunter long.

"There's one at the end of the pier," said Bob, pointing "Go and pick it up."

Billy Bunter blinked round.

"I can't see it."

"Well, it's big enough to be seen," said Bob. "I don't know whether you could pick it up, though—"

"I'll pick it up fast enough if I see it," said Bunter irritably. "But I can't see it! Where is it?"

"Look here, Bob, don't play the goat!" grunted Johnny Bull. "If a fellow picks up money he ought to take it to the police station."

"You shut up, Bull!" yapped Bunter. "I—I dare say I dropped it when I was in Margate last time—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If Bunter picks up that copper," said Bob, "he needn't take it to the police station! I fancy the copper would take him to the police station, so that would be all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors as they looked at the "copper"—a six-foot "copper" that Bunter could certainly not have picked up, and who undoubtedly would have been much surprised had Bunter attempted so to do.

"You—you silly idiot!" gasped Bunter. "Do you mean that bobby?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled on, without trying to pick up that "copper." Bunter was frowning; but he left off frowning and smirked, as two or three girls, coming along the pier, glanced at him and smiled.

Fat complacency dwelt in the podgy countenance of William George Bunter. He was aware that he was dressed very nicely—Nugent's collars fitted him, Johnny Bull's necktie was quite new, Wharton's straw hat was very handsome, Hurree Singh's tan shoes very neat. Bob's waistcoat did not reveal that it was split up the back to get it on Bunter; and Wharton's flannel bags,

though rather tight on Bunter, were undoubtedly very nice bags.

Bunter was, in fact, dressed to kill, with contributions from the wardrobes of nearly every other fellow in the party; and it was fully to be expected that girls would glance at him and smile. He did not even suspect that it was his circumference that did it!

"I say, you fellows, did you notice that?" smirked Bunter.

"Eh? Which?" asked Bob.

"Lots of girls smiling at me," said Bunter complacently.

"Wondering how you got out of the Zoo, perhaps?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good-looking fellows get a lot of this sort of jealousy," remarked Bunter. "A fellow gets used to it! I can't see that it's my fault that I'm good-looking!"

"Oh crumbs! Bunter, old bean, you've got lots of faults, but that isn't one of them—it really isn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" Bunter blinked rather severely at the Co. "Look here, you fellows, you might have dressed a bit more carefully before coming ashore with me. Your bags are awfully crumpled, Wharton."

"I was going to change, but I couldn't find—"

"Oh!" Bunter changed the subject hastily. "I say, you fellows, what about going on the donkeys? I'll show you how to ride. Nothing like learning things when you've got a chance, what? I'll pay for the donkeys."

"Out of the money you've left on board?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I mean, I'll owe it to you—same thing."

"The samefulness is not terrific!"

chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But let the esteemed and ridiculous Bunter show us how to ride, my absurd chums. It will be worth the watchfulness."

And the chums of the Remove cheerfully bore down on the donkey merchants—for Bunter to show them how to ride!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Bathe for Bunter!

DONKEY, sir? Donkey, gents?" A stout gentleman, with a red face and a cheery grin, hailed the chums of Greyfriars. There were a number of donkeys on the trot, and small people were enjoying rides.

"Right-ho!" said Bunter. "Watch me, you fellows!"

"Oh, my eye!" said the red-faced man, apparently a little dismayed by Bunter's width. "You'll be a bit 'cavy for him, sir! But orlright—chance it! 'Ere, Neddy, you stand steady for the gentleman."

"Neddy, Neddy, steady, steady! Don't you start till Bunter's ready!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Neddy did not seem inclined to start at all. He looked round at Bunter, with a very intelligent eye, and seemed shy. Neddy was a fair-sized donkey; but he might have thought that what Bunter really needed was an elephant. But his master encouraged him, and held him for Bunter to mount.

Harry Wharton & Co. lined up to watch Bunter mount—and so did quite a good many other people. The fact was that Bunter's well-filled waistcoat was in the way; and it was not obvious how he was going to overcome that difficulty. Twice, thrice, Bunter heaved himself at the donkey's back, but each time the centripetal attraction of the globe pulled him back.

Neddy planted his hoofs firmly and stood like a rock; but the fat Owl failed to scale the rock. He blinked round at the smiling juniors.

"You might give a fellow a bunk!" he snapped breathlessly.

"The bunkfulness is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and he stepped forward to give Bunter a bunk.

Bob Cherry lent his aid—it was no one-man job!

They grasped Bunter and heaved—and Bunter heaved—and up he went. Unluckily, the heave took him right over, and to his surprise and annoyance he came down on the other side. There was a bump on the sand that almost shook the Isle of Thanet—and a roar from Bunter:

"Yarooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell.

"Whoop! Beast! Whoop! Wow!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"Do that again!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent picked up the fat Owl. He leaned on them gasping. More and more people gathered round. Several other shows along the front began to lose their patrons. Bunter was getting the public!

"Go it!" came encouraging voices. "Try again! Mind he don't break when you sit on him!"

"I say, you fellow: lend me a hand!" gasped Bunter. "This isn't like mounting a horse, you know—when I'm getting on one of the hunters at Bunter Court I go up like a feather—"

"Oh crikey! Some feather!" gasped Bob.

"Just help me up, and I'll show you! Don't take hold of my ears, you silly ass! Leggo my hair, you fathead!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Four of the juniors helped Bunter up this time. The combined effort did it. Bunter was seated fair and square in the donkey's saddle. Neddy did not break under his weight—he was quite a powerful donkey. But he seemed disinclined to start.

"Now, come up, Neddy!" said the red-faced man, pulling at him. "Sooner you start, the sooner it's over! Now then! Kim up!"

"Why doesn't he go?" yapped Bunter.

"P'r'aps he can't move, sir!" came a suggestion from the interested crowd. "Mind he don't break!"

"Start him, you fellows!"

"Kim up, Neddy! Kim up!" hooted the red-faced man. "Git a move on!" He pulled vigorously at the donkey.

"Will you kim up?"

"Shall we push?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Neddy either couldn't or wouldn't move. But as his master yanked at him he suddenly threw up his hind heels and seemed to be trying to nose-dive into the sand.

Bunter flopped over on his neck at once. Bunter, according to his own account, was wont to "witch the world with noble horsemanship" on the hunters at Bunter Court. But donkey-manship seemed quite a different proposition. Plunged on Neddy's rough and hairy neck, Bunter clutched at that neck with both arms, and miraculously did not slide over Neddy's long ears to the earth. He hung on wildly.

"Stick to him, Bunter!" yelled Bob.

"The stickfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped the red-faced man.

Neddy, perhaps startled and worried by Bunter's jockey-like feat on his neck, suddenly started. He fairly bolted.

There was a roar of merriment. If Billy Bunter had come down to Margate to do a stunt on the sands as a public performer, he could not have gathered a keener audience or raised more laughs.

Neddy raced away with Bunter bumping up and down, swinging from side to side, and clinging to his hairy neck like a limpet to a rock, and yelling wildly for help.

"I say, you fellows! Yaroooh! Stoppin! Oh lor! Stoppin, I say! Oh crikey! Somebody hold this donkey! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ride him, cowboy!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Attaboy!"

"Go it, Bunter! Stick to him!"

"Bravo!"

"Attaboy, Bunter! Attaboy!" roared Bob.

"Yaroooh! Stoppin! I say, you fellows—I say—Whoooop! Help! Fire! Murder! Help!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The red-faced man rushed in pursuit. Harry Wharton & Co. rushed in pursuit. A multitude of trippers crowded in pursuit. Merry Margate was enjoying Bunter! Bunter was making Margate merrier!

Neddy, exasperated by the heavy object clinging to his neck, was putting on unaccustomed speed. Neddy seemed to be in as frantic a state as Bunter. Both, certainly, were highly excited.

Leaving the beaten track, Neddy fled down the sands, as if he hoped, like Mazeppa's wild steed, to shake off his

burden by sheer speed. The yelling mob behind him accelerated Neddy.

"Here, look out—"

"Where are you coming?"

"Mind your eye!"

Wild yells greeted the wild rider on the sands. Children with spades and buckets scrambled out of the way. Parents and uncles and aunts scrambled up from resting-places in Margate's wonderful sand. Innumerable sand-castles were demolished by the donkey's hoofs. Howls of protest mingled with cheers as Bunter careered onward.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Bunter's going to get a bath."

"Oh crumbs! Get hold of that moke!" gurgled Johnny Bull. "After him."

But it was not so easy to get hold of Neddy! Neddy, in a perfectly frantic state, was heading for the water—perhaps with some idea in his intelligent mind that thus he would get rid of his terrifying burden. Sunbathers on the water's edge squirmed out of Neddy's way with loud and startled ejaculations—bathers in the lapping water stared at him blankly. Down the shelving, glistening sands came Neddy at a wild rush, and there was a fearful yell from Bunter as the water splashed round him.

Splash! Splash!

"Yaroooh! Help! Whooop!" roared Bunter, as he let go and rolled. The water was shallow, the tide was coming in, but it was still low; and Bunter landed in only a foot or so of it. But he landed on his back and disappeared—except for the widest part of his circumference, which showed above the water.

Neddy, shaking himself and scattering water, trotted to the beach apparently satisfied. The red-faced man, redder than ever with chortling, recaptured Neddy and led him away. Harry Wharton & Co. raced down to the water. Half a dozen good-natured bathers—everybody is good-natured at Merry Margate—plunged at Bunter and dragged him up, and hoisted him ashore. It was a drenched and dripping Owl that was handed, gurgling, over to his friends. They were gurgling, too, with irrepressible merriment. And from bathers and beach-lizards alike came a yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Wet!

HA, HA, HA!"

"Good old Bunter—"

"Do it again, old chap!"

You've brought down the

house, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—Grooooh!"

Blessed if I can see anything to cackle

at—Wow! I'm wet!"

"That's through bathing with your

clothes on!" explained Bob Cherry.

"The sea's always wet at Margate!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! This isn't funny!" roared

Bunter.

"Isn't it?" chuckled Nugent. "Most of Margate seems to think that it is, old fat man! You're the goods to-day—the big attraction! If the Entertainment Committee was here they'd try to book you for the summer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" hooted Bunter. "Cackle!

Your bags are ruined, anyhow, Whar-

ton."

"Eh? I haven't been in the water,"

said Harry, staring.

"I jolly well have!"

"Why, you fat scoundrel, that's why I couldn't find my best bags——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the sea-water won't improve your waistcoat, Bob Cherry——"

"My waistcoat!" ejaculated Bob.

"And Bull's necktie is soaked——"

"Mum-mum-my necktie!"

"And so are Inky's shoes——"

"My esteemed shoes!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"And your straw-hat's floated away, Wharton——"

"My hat!" yelled Wharton.

"And Wibley's jacket will shrink now——"

"My-my-my jig-jig-jacket!" stut-tered William Wibley.

"And serve you all jolly well right!" howled Bunter. "I'm glad! Yah!"

"Chuck him back into the water!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, we shall have to get back to the yacht now," hooted Bunter. "I can't go about like this! Come on, you rotters!"

Billy Bunter squealed away up the beach—his borrowed plumes dripping water as he went. Harry Wharton & Co. were not quite as mirthful now—since they had learned that Bunter's drenched garments belonged to them-selves. The fat Owl, apparently, had nothing of his own on, except his fat skin. This, from Bunter's point of view, was fortunate—as fortunate as the circumstances that he had been wearing Bob Cherry's straw when Coker knocked it in. Soaking in sea-water certainly did not improve garments; so Bunter realised that matters might have been worse.

Leaving a wet trail behind him, the fat junior tramped up to the promenade. He turned in the direction of the jetty, off which the Sea Nymph was moored.

"Buck up, you fellows!" he snapped. "I've got to get changed."

"Oh, you'll soon dry up!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Not Bunter!" chuckled Nugent. "Does he ever dry up?"

"Do you think I'm going about with my clothes all wet?" roared Bunter.

"But you won't be," said Bob. "You'll be going about with our clothes all wet! I suppose we can have our clothes wet if we like? We never asked you to get inside them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I'm going back to change at once! I'm not going to catch pneumonia to please you! I can feel it coming on in my legs now!"

"Oh crikey!"

"And I've got a touch of plumbago already——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackle!" hooted Bunter. "Oh, cackle! You'd like to see me perishing with pneumonia in both legs, I know!"

The idea of Bunter getting pneumonia in his legs made the juniors shriek. The fat junior blinked at them through his spectacles with a devastating blink. As a matter of fact, Bunter might have dried in the sun—it was a glorious April day, almost as warm as summer; and the brilliant sun of Margate, famous for its sunshine, streamed down on promenade and pier and glowing sands. Still, there was no doubt that Bunter felt rather uncomfortable; and when Bunter was uncomfortable, that, of course, was the only thing that mat-tered within the extensive limits of the universe.

"Are you coming?" he hooted. "Get a move on, you lazy slackers! Never

(Continued on next page.)

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such a gang of moochers! Look here, I'm going back to the yacht to change, see?"

"The changefulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "and the go-fulsness is also a good idea! Get on with it, my esteemed and absurd fat Bunter."

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you're coming back with me?" hooted Bunter. "No need," answered Wharton. "I suppose you don't want us to change you—even if you are going to change into some more of our clobber."

"You can wait on the jetty while I change, if you like! I shan't keep you more than an hour or so!"

"Anybody want to stand on the jetty for an hour, when we've only got one day in Margate?" inquired Bob Cherry. "Don't all speak at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, if you wander away by yourselves, I shall miss you," exclaimed Bunter. "I don't want to do that! I'm only thinking of you fellows, of course—not because I want you to stand the exes, or anything of that sort."

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

"When you've changed, you can bring ashore all that money you've left on board."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled on—but the chums of the Remove did not follow. Really, as the stay in Margate was so short, they did not want to spend the time walking to and fro, and waiting for Bunter to change. That bright and entertaining spot, Dreamland, was open for Easter, and the juniors wended their way thitherward—leaving the Owl of the Remove to his own devices. And it is much to be feared that, in the delights of scenic railways and roundabouts and other enjoyable things, they forgot the fat existence of William George Bunter.

When they came out of Dreamland, however, they looked round for him. He was, as Bob Cherry remarked, wide enough to be seen. But he was not on the horizon; and they walked through the town and came out on the cliffs in the direction of the Foreland. A visit to the North Foreland, and a climb up the lighthouse, was the next item on the programme; and that, certainly, would not have appealed to Bunter. Bunter would have wanted a taxi to the Foreland, and a lift up the lighthouse. But a walk along the coast was exactly what the juniors wanted, and they started on it cheerfully.

"What about going along the sands?" asked Johnny Bull. "You can get all the way to Broadstairs on the beach."

"I don't think!" answered Bob Cherry.

"I've looked it out," said Johnny warmly. "I tell you if we go along the beach we can get to Broadstairs, or come up at Kingsgate to go to the lighthouse."

"But you we couldn't!" answered Bob, shaking his head.

"I tell you we could!" hooted Johnny.

"And I tell you we couldn't, old bean," answered Bob. "If we go along the beach now, we shan't get either to Kingsgate or Broadstairs, but to kingdom-come. You see, the tide's coming in!"

"Oh," said Johnny, "I forgot the tide!"

"Lucky you've got your Uncle Robert with you to remember it, old bean! The tide washes right up to the cliffs most of the way, and I noticed it was coming in when Bunter took his bath. Still," added Bob thoughtfully, "we might swim it! It's only a few miles. But we should get wet."

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"Fathead! Let's go along the cliffs!" said Johnny.

And a cheery bunch of juniors walked along the cliffs, leaving Merry Margate behind, and soon finding themselves in open country, with green fields stretching away on their right towards Kingsgate and St. Peter's. There were plenty of other walkers on the broad asphalt promenade that stretched all the way from Margate to Kingsgate; and the juniors, remembering that Coker & Co. were walking from Broadstairs, kept an eye open for the burly form and rugged features of the great Horace.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Coker!

"BLESSED if I half like it!" muttered Potter.

Grunt, from Coker.

"Same here!" confessed Greene, glancing along the beach.

Another grunt from Coker, more emphatic.

"Well, let's hurry a bit, anyhow!" said Potter, with an uneasy glance at the glimmering waters rolling in towards the cliffs.

Coker, who was proceeding at an extremely leisurely pace, slowed down a little. Coker was not the man to take advice.

Coker was one of those fellows who know! Advice to a fellow who knows is superfluous. Horace Coker had no use for it.

"Lots of time," said Coker calmly. "I believe it's well under two miles from Kingsgate to Margate by the beach. We've done about half a mile."

"But the tide—"

"Don't be an ass, Potter. That is, if you can help it! Am I the sort of fellow to be caught in the tide?" snapped Coker contemptuously.

Potter looked at him. Coker was, in Potter's opinion, just that sort of fellow! He was, in Potter's opinion, the fellow to do anything of a really idiotic nature. But it was useless to tell Coker so! He would never have believed it!

"Let's buck up a bit," said Greene nervously. "The tide's jolly well coming in, anyhow!"

"Don't be funky, old man," said Coker kindly. "Funk's no good!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"Take it easy," said Coker. "Lots of time! If you get your poor little feet wet it won't kill you—what?"

And Coker lounged on regardless. Coker knew all about it! Potter and Greene were not so sure. Coker had been on this coast before. He had walked all the way along the beach. What a fellow had done once, a fellow could do again.

Nervousness about the tide only made Coker sniff. Coker had no patience with such stuff.

The Fifth-Formers had had quite a good time, so far. Coker had stood his friends a magnificent feed at quite a nice place in Broadstairs.

Potter and Greene had realised that Coker, with all his drawbacks, had his uses. They started to walk to Margate with Coker in quite a cheery mood. But they would have preferred to take the upper way, along the top of the cliffs. Unluckily they said so—which was quite enough to make Coker decide on the beach.

So the beach it was, and they tramped through soft sand and seaweed, with the high line of chalk cliffs on their left, and the sea rolling on their right.

It was quite pleasant, though the soft sand made walking a little laborious. Still, it was quite a nice walk—only Potter and Greene had rather a worried eye on the sea.

The tide was coming in, and it seemed to them to be coming in faster and faster; and every time they passed one of the rugged gullies that led up through the cliffs to the promenade above, Potter and Greene slowed down, and regarded it with a longing eye.

Coker, however, marched on determinedly; and, in order to make it clear that he had no sympathy with funk, he went at a very moderate pace, and Potter and Greene, with growing uneasiness, went on with him.

Every now and then they exchanged a glance behind Coker's broad back, indicative of their desire to take Coker by the scruff of the neck and dip his head in the sea. But that, however satisfactory otherwise, would not have hastened their arrival at Margate, so they resisted the temptation.

"Nobody on the beach here," said Potter, breaking a troubled silence.

"Did you want a Margate mob?" asked Coker.

"I mean, there must have been lots of people on the beach, on a fine day like this—must have gone because the tide's coming in."

"Might have seen you coming!" suggested Coker. "And your features did it, old man!" Horace Coker could be humorous. This was a sample of his badinage.

"Look here, Coker, come on!" yapped Potter. He did not want light and airy badinage. He wanted to get out of the way of the incoming tide. "You're jolly well not going to get us all drowned—see?"

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"For goodness' sake, hurry up, and don't play the goat, Coker!" urged Greene.

"Don't be a dummy, Greene!"

Potter and Greene breathed very hard.

"Rather heavy going in this sand," said Coker calmly. "Take it easy! Look here, sit down a bit on this rock. You fellows can do with a rest. You're tired, and it's making you nery."

The fact was that it was very heavy "going" in the soft and clinging sand, and Coker was a little tired. He was not going to admit that, of course, even to himself. He was going to halt for the sake of Potter and Greene.

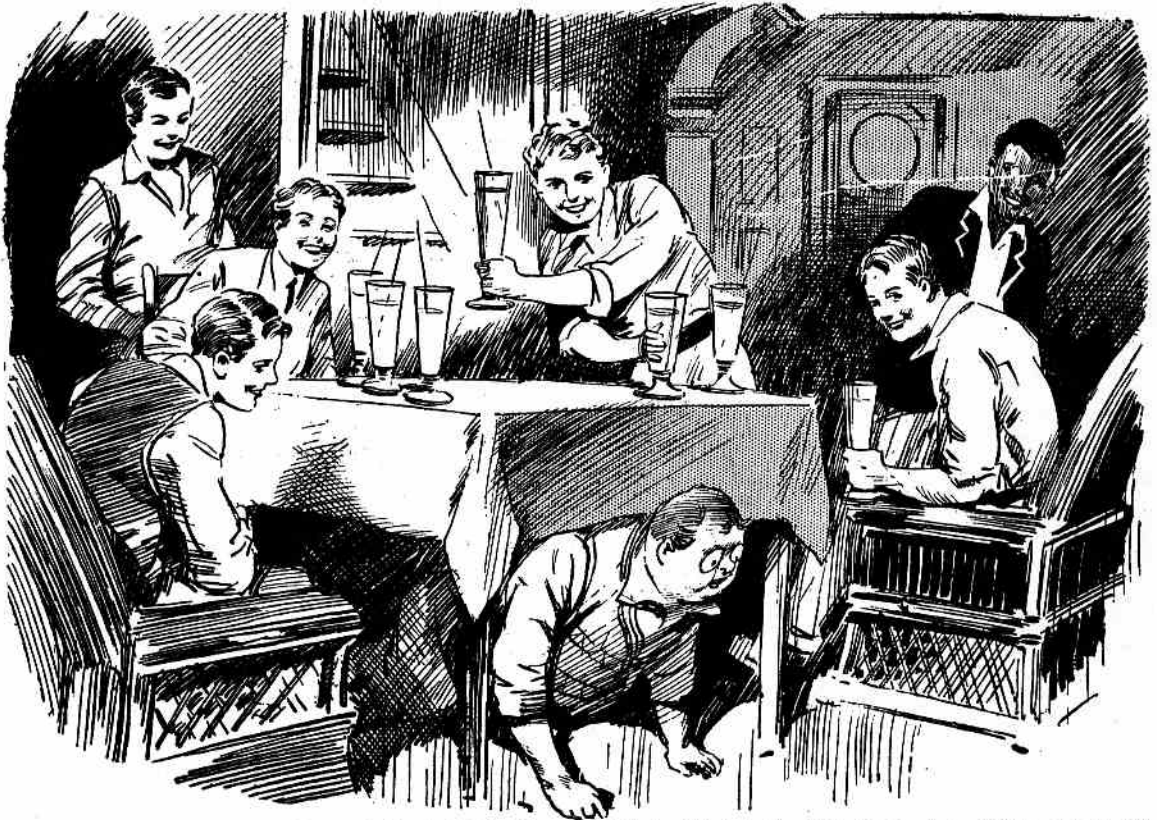
Those two anxious youths almost exploded, as Coker coolly sat down on the edge of a big chalk rock that jutted up from the beach. Coker had a newspaper under his arm, which he had bought at Broadstairs.

Calmly he opened it, and glanced over the news. Potter and Greene eyed him almost wolfishly. Their legs were rather aching with dragging through soft sand into which the feet sank, but they wanted to get on. Very much indeed they wanted to get on. Coker may have fancied that he was inspiring them with courage by his attitude of cool and detached indifference. In point of fact, he was inspiring them with deadly fury. Coker, regardless, communicated the news.

"They're going it a bit in the East!" said Coker. "But I'll tell you what—my uncle knows China like a book, and he says that the Japs have bitten off a lot more than they can chew. In the long run, he says, the Chinese will give them frightful beans!"

"Blow your uncle!"

"Blow China!"



"Did you drop a pound note, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry. "Eh! What! Yes!" said Bunter. "Where is it, old chap?" "Look under the table!" As the fat junior crawled under the table, Bob Cherry took his glass, and exchanged it for one of the others.

Potter and Greene, with the North Sea lapping at their feet, lacked interest in the Far Eastern situation and the opinion of Coker's uncle thereon.

"Hallo, here's something rather local," went on Coker. "Bank held up at Folkestone yesterday morning—"

"Blow Folkestone!" said Potter and Greene together.

"Man with a gun," said Coker. "I say, this is quite interesting. We might have been in Folkestone yesterday, you know, if—if we hadn't been somewhere else. Man held up a bank—"

"Look here—"
"Got away with a stack of bank-notes—"

"Look here, Coker—"
"I'll read it out to you, if you like," said Coker, with the masterly calmness of one of those strong, silent characters. "They haven't got the man—"

"Bother the man!"
"He seems to have bothered them!" grinned Coker. "Got clean away, loot and all. Chased up and down, and never caught! Pity I wasn't there! Listen to this—"

"Look here—" roared Greene.
"I said listen! 'It seems certain now that the bank raider, after eluding pursuit, escaped in a sailing-boat from the harbour,'" Coker read out calmly.
"You silly idiot!" shrieked Greene.
"Look at the tide!"

"I can't look at the tide when I'm looking at a newspaper, Greene! Don't be an ass! Listen to this! 'A small cutter is missing from its moorings, and its owner says— Whooooooop!'"

Coker unintentionally wound up like that, as Potter and Greene, exasperated

beyond endurance, grabbed him simultaneously, and dragged him headlong off his seat on the rock.

Coker rolled in the sand, roaring.
"Now come on!" roared Potter.
"You silly ass! You frabjous idiot! You burbling dummy! Get a move on—see? Come on, Greene!"

Potter and Greene restarted after the interval. They went at a run—partly to escape from the tide, partly to escape from Horace Coker. Coker was scrambling up with red-hot rage in his rugged face.

"By gum!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I'll—"

Coker's newspaper fluttered along the beach as Coker started in pursuit of his comrades. Potter and Greene ran hard, kicking up sand and stumbling over draggled seaweed and slippery ridges of chalk.

Coker tramped heavily in their wake. They had got him on the run at all events, though there was likely to be more delay if he overtook them—Coker's fixed intention being to bang their heads together for their cheek.

"Stop!" roared Coker.
"Fathead!" called back Greene over his shoulder.

Coker put on a fierce spurt. He skidded on a smooth surface of chalk, skated a few yards, and landed on the back of his neck. Coker's roar as he landed startled the seagulls over the cliffs.

Potter and Greene did not even look back at him. They were not only uneasy now, but seriously alarmed. Ahead of them a chalky spur of cliff jutted out into the sea, and round the rugged, broken base of it the waves were washing. Obviously they could

not get by without getting wet, and they had a horrid feeling that they would not be able to get by at all. And if they could not advance, certainly they could not retreat; behind them the tide was coming in as fast as before them. The bare idea of being pinned against high, inaccessible cliffs by the incoming tide was appalling. They fairly raced.

But it bootied not. Long before they reached that jutting spur the water was washing up to it and over it, great billows breaking in masses of foam. Splashed from head to foot, they jumped back and retreated. They looked at one another with ghastly faces.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Potter. "We're for it!"

"Cut off!" mumbled Greene.
"Let's get back—"
"We can't get back! We've passed cliffs that jut out farther than this!" groaned Greene.

"That idiot Coker—"
"That dummy Coker—"
"The ass!"

"The dangerous maniac!"
There was a heavy tramp on the sand, and Coker came up panting.
"Now, you cheeky rotters—" roared Coker.

But the wrath and excitement died out of Coker's face as he read the horror in the faces of his comrades. He glanced at the roaring tide that blocked the way ahead and understood. Even Horace Coker could understand anything that was absolutely obvious.

Coker whistled.
"My hat! Looks as if we're cut off!" he remarked.

"You silly idiot!" groaned Greene.
"You dangerous lunatic! We can't go



(Continued from page 13.)

on and we can't get back! Those cliffs—” He stared up at the line of cliffs that rose almost like a wall sixty or seventy feet. He groaned.

“Looks as if we shall have to climb,” said Coker. Coker, at least, had plenty of pluck. Nature, perhaps, had given him this as a compensation for leaving out the brains.

“Climb!” said Potter ferociously. “We're not monkeys!”

“No; you're funkies!” said Coker brilliantly.

Potter and Greene gazed at him. In imminent danger of death Coker could still be funny. It was true that Coker did not yet grasp the whole of the danger. His brain worked—but slowly and laboriously.

“Well, we've got to get out of this,” said Coker briskly. “Lucky you've got me with you, what? Come on!”

They retreated closer to the cliffs. The tide was lapping over their feet as they went. Before and behind them jutting cliffs were washed deep by the sea, and they were imprisoned in a deep embayment of the long line of towering chalk. Here and there rugged gullies split the chalk, but none of them, so far as they could see, reached to the top. Coker, however, with cheerful coolness, clambered into the nearest one, and the dispirited Potter and Greene followed him. Behind them the sea washed up to the chalk, and a leaping wave followed them up the gully and drenched them.

“Lucky we're out of that!” said Coker.

“Are we out of it?” hissed Greene. “Oh, come on! Don't jaw!” said Coker. “Save your breath for climbing, old man! You'll need it!”

Coker clambered on valourously. There were a good many practicable gullies between Kingsgate and Margate by which a fellow could have climbed up from the beach. But this was not one of them. This one was narrow and steep and extremely difficult to ascend; but for the roaring tide behind, even Coker would not have tried it on. But that was not the worst. Long before they could reach the top the gully ended in a ledge, above which rose a sheer wall—fifteen feet at least—to the grassy edge of the cliff above.

“My hat!” said Coker. Coker, apparently, had not expected this. Potter and Greene had. They crouched on the narrow ledge and groaned. With a deep, sullen boom the tide roared up the gully below them. Splashes of water reached them on the ledge, drenching them once more to the skin, but the tide did not come so high; they were well above high-water mark. That, at least, was something to be thankful for.

Coker stared up at the chalky wall above and shook his head. Only a fly could have climbed higher. He looked

down at the flooded gully below. Foam and spray dashed up at him.

“It's all right!” said Coker.

“All right?” gasped Greene.

“Yes; we're safe here! Only got to wait till the tide turns,” Coker reflected. “Let's see, is it twelve hours—or what?”

Potter and Greene could not handle Coker just then without hurling him—and themselves—from the slippery, chalky ledge into the roaring waters below. So they did not handle him. They could only make mental resolves to smash him into small pieces if they ever got out of this alive.

“It'll be a bit parky,” said Coker. “The sun's hot, but the water seems a bit cold. Well, we've got to wait. Brace up!”

“W-w-w-wait for the tide to turn?” gurgled Greene. “You blithering idiot, do you think we can hang on here till the tide turns?”

“Looks as if we've got to,” said Coker, still calm. “I wish I'd brought along that newspaper now. Might have read it while we're waiting.” There was no doubt that Coker had pluck, whatever might be said of his intellect.

“You burbling ass!” said Potter. “There must be people on the promenade up there on a fine day like this. Somebody will hear us if we shout for help.”

“Oh, rot!” said Coker. “I don't like the idea of shouting for help, and getting laughed at by a lot of trippers. Stick it out, what?”

Potter considered whether he could hit Coker in the eye without knocking him off the ledge to drown. He felt that he had better not risk it; he did not want to drown even Coker. So he restrained his feelings and lifted up his voice to shout. Greene joined in lustily.

“Help! Help!”

“Look here, chuck it!” said Coker. “We shall get a lot of trippers here—”

“Don't I wish we should!” groaned Greene.

“Help!” roared Potter.

“Help!” yelled Greene.

Coker snorted.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Removites to the Rescue!

“HALLO, hallo, hallo!”

“Somebody in trouble!”

“Sounds like it!”

“The soundfulness like it is terrific,” said Hurree Singh.

Six Greyfriars juniors were sauntering cheerily along the sunny promenade. The houses of Kingsgate were in sight, and beyond them the lighthouse, which was the objective of the Famous Five and Wibley, when the shouting came from below the edge of the cliffs. Harry Wharton & Co. stopped at once. They were well aware that the tide was in, washing along the base of the cliffs, and that anyone caught on the beach was in serious danger.

“Come on!” exclaimed Bob Cherry.

“Help! Help!” came echoing over the cliffs.

On the edge of the cliffs was a raised grassy ridge a few yards wide. Bob Cherry dropped on his hands and knees and crawled to the verge and looked over. Even that much required a certain amount of nerve, for the vast space below was dizzy to look into.

“Oh, my hat!” ejaculated Bob, as he stared down.

For fifteen feet or so the cliff dropped like a wall; below that was a narrow, rugged gully splitting the chalk where it bulged out. On a ledge in the gully

were three drenched figures—and two of them were yelling for help, the other snorting contemptuously.

“Coker & Co.!” exclaimed Harry Wharton, as he lay beside Bob and looked over.

“Caught in the tide, the silly asses!” said Johnny Bull. “Lucky they were able to climb up out of it!”

“The luckfulness was preposterous.” “Hallo, hallo, hallo, down there!” bawled Bob Cherry.

“Oh, thank goodness!” gasped Potter. The sight of faces hanging over the dizzy verge above was a glad one to the eyes of Potter and Greene. They were well aware, if Coker was not, that they could not have clung on that chalky ledge till the tide turned. Their only hope was in help from above.

Coker stared up. “It's those dashed fags!” he ejaculated. “Look here, you cheeky young sweeps, you jolly well clear off! See?”

“Wha-a-at?” ejaculated Frank Nugent.

“Clear off! You're not wanted here!” snapped Coker. “I don't want any of your rotten Lower Form cheek! Just hook it!”

“Well, my hat!”

“Don't mind him, you fellows!” gasped Greene. “Coker can't help being mad!”

“What?” roared Coker.

“Shut up, you dummy!” hissed Potter ferociously. “Shut up, you idiot! Cheese it, you blithering cuckoo! Wharton—get help for us somehow—”

“Help, for goodness' sake!” gasped Greene.

“Right-ho! Hang on!” called back Harry Wharton.

“Mind your own business!” hooted Coker. “I'm all right here. I don't want any help from fags!”

“Oh, you wait till we're out of this!” groaned Potter. “Won't I jolly well punch you!”

“Look here, Potter—”

“Shut up, idiot! I say, Wharton—”

Harry Wharton scanned the cliff below. It was impossible to go to the help of the Fifth-Formers; there was no hold for a cat between the cliff-top and the ledge at the head of the gully.

“We shall have to get a rope,” said Harry.

“Buck up, for goodness' sake!”

“Right-ho! We passed a coast-guard station a few minutes ago; we can get help there! Hold on!”

“Nothing else to do,” agreed Bob. “They'll have a rope there. Coker isn't the first silly idiot to be caught in the tide about here, I dare say. Put it on, old bean.”

Harry Wharton retreated from the edge of the cliff and started at a rapid run towards a building in the distance, over which a flag was flying. He covered the ground at a terrific rate.

Meanwhile, the other fellows remained lying in the grass on the cliff-edge, looking over. Their presence was some comfort to the hapless Fifth-Formers below. They had to wait till a rope could be brought. The chalk ledge was narrow, wet, and slippery, and it dawned on even Coker's powerful brain that he would be well out of this scrape. At the same time, it was extremely irritating to Coker to be pulled out of it by the Remove fellows. Even while he was sticking like a fly on the face of the cliff, with the hungry tide roaring below, Horace did not forget that he was Coker of the Fifth.

Before long more faces were looking down. There were plenty of walkers on the cliff promenade that sunny afternoon. As the news spread that

somebody had been caught in the tide they gathered to look. The more venturesome crawled to the cliff-edge and stared down at the three. Others gathered in groups to watch the rescue. Nursemaids with prams, holiday-makers and trippers of all sorts and sizes, boys and girls of all ages, collected in growing numbers. Twenty faces at least looked down on the three Greyfriars seniors squatting and crouching on the ledge, and twenty or more voices gave them encouragement. It was gall and wormwood to Horace Coker. He felt that this made a fellow look a fool. He was not aware that he was precisely what he looked!

But help was coming. A brown, weather-beaten face looked over, and a long, strong rope with a loop at the end came slithering down.

"Put it under your arms!"

Potter put the rope round Greene, and Greene was pulled up, shutting his eyes and shuddering as he left the footing of the ledge and hung in awful space. But many hands pulled on the rope, and Greene was drawn over and landed safely on the grass. He sat there, gasping, white as a sheet. Then the rope slithered down again, and Potter put it round himself and was drawn up in his turn.

It came down a third time, and Coker slowly grasped it. The whole thing annoyed Coker. He had a feeling that Potter and Greene would make out that he had been to blame for this; that it was he who had endangered them all. He resolved that he would jolly soon put a stop to that, anyhow. But annoyed as he was, Coker did not want

to remain there on his lonely own, and he fastened the rope round his burly person and was drawn up. He came scrambling over the verge, and many friendly hands grasped him and helped him to safety. Perhaps it was by accident that Bob Cherry's grasp fastened on his ear.

"Ow!" gasped Coker, as he sat in the grass.

He disentangled himself from the rope and rose. Potter and Greene were still sitting and gasping.

"Safe now, old bean," said Harry Wharton.

Coker stared at him. "Don't be cheeky, Wharton!" he snapped.

"Dear old Coker!" grinned Bob.

"Shut up, Cherry!"
(Continued on next page.)

"IDENTIFICATION PLATES" FOR PLAYERS!

EASTER-TIME demands from the professional footballer his last, and perhaps greatest extra effort of the season. Three matches on the programme in four days, and, so far as some clubs are concerned, every point of vital importance. Writing before Easter I am prepared to prophesy that the future status of some clubs will be decided by the results returned during the holidays.

This rush of games late in the season is specially trying for the footballer, because by that time he has had so many calls made on his reserves that he has little reserve strength left.

The lateness of Easter this year means that the footballer has been hard at it for practically eight months. In these circumstances it is not surprising that men begin to feel a bit tired; that they lose some of their zest for the game.

The loss of keenness for playing is the same as saying that fellows have gone stale. However, this big Easter effort has to be forthcoming, and we can rely on the men keeping at it "till they drop," as the popular phrase has it.

One of my readers asks my opinion on the proposal which is to be placed before the annual meeting of the football clubs to the effect that the players of the big teams shall be numbered. I give it as my view that this is a change which would be for the good in certain directions, and which, so far as I can see, could not possibly do any harm. I appreciate the fact that football is a team game, and that one of the cardinal points is that it doesn't matter which player of a side does good work so long as good work is done. One of the secrets of success on the football field is for every player to be all out for the team, and thinking nothing about himself.

It does not seem to me that the mere carrying of numbers on their backs will affect the outlook of the player at all. The selfish footballer will be a selfish footballer whether he has a number on his back or not. The unselfish player, the one with the true team spirit, won't change his habits because he is carrying what might be called an "identification plate."

WHO'S WHO?

I FEEL confident that the numbering of players will help the watchers to follow particular players with greater certainty, and in doing this the spectator will get extra enjoyment. In the ordinary way I can follow a team of footballers pretty well—identify each man, that is, by the position in which he plays. But there comes a time when I get all confused.

OUR FOOTER FANS' FEATURE!

"LINESMAN CALLING!"



If you've a Soccer query, write to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4., and then watch out for his answer on this page.

A player is injured, and has to leave the field. The rest of the team is shuffled about; the players get out of their particular positions, and if you don't know them personally it is very difficult to keep track of "who is who."

The experiment of numbering the players proved very helpful in the trial match played at Portsmouth last month, because, of course, to the spectators at that game many of the players were comparative strangers. And, in addition, they looked stranger still in shirts of different colour to those usually worn. For the same reason I hope that the players in the coming Cup Final will be numbered. It is a cosmopolitan crowd which attends a Cup Final. Both Everton and Manchester City will have to play in strange colours, and many of the spectators are so far away from the play that they find difficulty in identifying even the players whom they know.

A NEW PENALTY KICK PROPOSAL!

IN addition to the proposal to number the players of the leading football teams next season, there is also a rule amendment "on the carpet" which will affect all football. It refers to the penalty kick. The rules relating to penalty kicks, which have been so frequently changed, are still not considered satisfactory by many thinking people. The argument is put forward that it is unfair that every offence by a defender in the penalty area should be punished in exactly the same way, because these offences differ in character.

There is the case of a full-back, making a tackle, who is guilty of a technical offence just inside the area when his goal is not in real danger. The other extreme is the case of the full-back who fists the ball out from under the bar when his goalkeeper is beaten. The punishment for these two offences is exactly the same—a kick from the twelve yards' spot,

The new rule proposal is that the twelve yards spot should be done away with, and that all penalty kicks shall be taken from the spot where the offence is committed. I am not sure whether this new penalty kick proposal will go through, but there is much to be said for the alteration.

During this football season I have had many letters from readers asking me for the right tactics for full-backs and half-backs.

Should the wing half-back consider the inside wing forward his special care, leaving the outside wing man to the full-back, or should the wing half tackle the outside wing man?

As a result of observation of first-class football teams during the present season, I am forced to the conclusion that the ideas of the "top-notchers" on this question are changing. A few years back there were few first-class football clubs which sent their wing half to tackle the opposing outside wing man. During the present season, however, many of the leading clubs have altered their policy. They now give the wing half-back instructions to watch, specially, the opposing outside wing man.

This change of defensive ideas, is due to a change of forward tactics. Inside wing forwards, playing well back, have been swinging the ball out to the wings, and if these wing men have not been tackled immediately, they have made much progress towards goal.

I believe that one of the reasons why Arsenal have not been so successful in the later stages of the season is because opposing wing half-backs have watched, very closely, the wing men, Bastin and Hulme, and, in consequence, Alex James has not been able to get these wingers away, to the same extent, with his passes.

Coker walked over to Potter and Greene and stared at them sarcastically. "How long are you going to sit there?" he inquired. "Like setting up as a sort of peep-show for a mob of trippers, what?"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. They had not forgotten what they had mentally promised Coker once they were in safety. Now they were in safety, and ready to hand over to Coker what they had mentally promised him. They were tired, but not too tired to deal with Coker.

They rose to their feet. They did not speak; there was no need for words. As if moved by the same spring they jumped at Coker.

"Here, I say!" yelled Coker, as he went down with a bump on the asphalt of the promenade. "Wharrer you up to— My hat! Yaroooh!"

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

"Go it!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thump, thump, thump! Bang!

Potter and Greene were going it. They did not need encouragement. They were going it hard and fast, and hot and strong. Coker struggled wildly. He yelled frantically. He roared and he raved. Potter and Greene thumped and thumped and thumped and thumped. A hundred astonished faces stared at them, but they heeded not. They were deaf and blind to everything, but Coker. They thumped and thumped and thumped.

"Come on, you fellows," said Bob. "We haven't done the lighthouse yet!"

The chums of the Remove pursued their way, chuckling. For quite a distance they were followed by a sound like the beating of carpet, and the voice of Horace Coker on its top note. Potter and Greene were still going strong.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Brutal for Bunter!

"PAWLINGS!"

"Yessir!"

"Hold on a minute!"

The steward of the Sea Nymph held on.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

Billy Bunter had the deck of the yacht almost to himself. Cousin George was ashore, on business matters connected with the commissariat. Many of the crew had gone into Margate. The engineer was smoking on the jetty. Mr. Griggs, the latest addition to the ship's company, was in his cabin, where he had been ever since the yacht had pulled into Margate Harbour. Cousin George, in his hearty way, had asked Mr. Griggs to go ashore with him; but it seemed that the shipwrecked gentleman had a headache and preferred to lie down in his bunk. George told him that the air of Margate would soon banish headaches; but in vain, and Mr. Griggs was in strict seclusion.

Harry Wharton & Co. were far away; in fact, just then they were viewing sea and land from the summit of the North Foreland Lighthouse. Coker & Co. had not returned; not that Bunter wasted a thought on Coker & Co. Bunter was thinking of the joys of Margate, especially of the eatables and the drinkables; but though Margate was not an expensive place for a holiday resort, it was evidently useless to go ashore to "do" Margate with only a bad half-crown for financial resources.

Looking for Harry Wharton & Co. in the Margate crowds seemed rather a

hopeless proposition. So Bunter was at a loose end. That was why he now bestowed his most amiable grin on the steward of the Sea Nymph. Bunter was quite prepared to do Margate on his own if he could raise the necessary cash. The question was, how to raise the cash!

"I'm in a bit of a difficulty, Pawlings," said Bunter.

"Indeed, sir!" said Pawlings, without enthusiasm.

"My cousin won't be coming back yet," explained Bunter; "and, like an ass, I gave Wharton my purse to mind when we went ashore. I'm actually without money at the present moment."

"Indeed, sir!" repeated Pawlings.

"Yes! I shall need a few pounds ashore," said Bunter. "I'll ask George for it when he comes back, and—square. I'm not the fellow to borrow money of servants, of course—"

"Indeed, sir!"

"Hardly," said Bunter. "It's liable to make them cheeky, and all that. But you're a man who knows his place, Pawlings—"

"Indeed, sir!" said Pawlings. His vocabulary seemed to be limited. But his manner was very dry.

"You're not a man to put on airs, or anything of that kind, because a gentleman has borrowed a five-pound note of you, Pawlings," said Bunter affably. "I'm sure of that. I shall let you lend me five pounds, Pawlings."

"That's very kind of you, sir!" said Pawlings, with a deep, deep sarcasm that was a sheer waste on William George Bunter.

"I mean to be kind," said Bunter. "I'm always kind to the lower classes, when they know their place and keep it. I insist upon that, of course. By the way, I'm going to give you a very decent tip at the end of the trip, Pawlings."

"Thank you, sir!" said Pawlings, still sarcastic.

Pawlings was going to believe in that decent tip when he saw that decent tip; not before.

"You deserve it," said Bunter airily. "You're a good servant, Pawlings, and you know your place. And you're obliging me with this little loan—"

"You honour me, sir," said Pawlings. "I find it difficult, sir, to express my feelings. You put it so politely, sir, and so tactfully that I really hardly know what to say. I only regret, sir, that it is quite impossible for me to oblige you with the little loan you mention."

"Eh? Well, never mind the fever," said Bunter hastily. "Make it a couple of pounds, Pawlings. You've got a couple of pounds in your pockets."

"Certainly, sir! They're staying there," said Pawlings.

"S-s-staying there?"

"Exactly, sir!" said Pawlings.

Bunter blinked at him. Pawlings was still quite respectful and polite, though there was a glimmer in his eye. Bunter breathed rather hard.

"If you mean that you don't want to lend me a couple of pounds, Pawlings, say—"

"You've got it precisely, sir."

"Look here, Pawlings—," hooted Bunter.

"That would be a pleasure, sir; but I am afraid that I must go back to my duties, sir," said Pawlings.

And he went back to them, leaving Bunter blinking.

"Cheeky rotter!" breathed Bunter. "My hat! What are the lower classes coming to nowadays? That fellow was cheeky—distinctly cheeky! I'll jolly well ask George to sack him."

Pawlings had been cheeky; there was

hardly a doubt about that. Worse still, he had refused to lend Bunter any money. He had been, as Bunter realised now, sarcastic. Things were coming to a pretty pass when a steward on a dashed floating boarding-house was sarcastic to a gentleman and a Public school man! Still, Bunter could have stood the sarcasm had it been accompanied by cash. Unaccompanied by cash, it was extremely irritating.

Even Bunter did not think of trying to raise a loan from the steward's boy. He thought of the cook; but it was probable that the cook would be as cheeky as Pawlings. Then he thought of Mr. Griggs.

As his acquaintance with Mr. Griggs was of the very slightest, even Bunter felt that he had to think a bit before attempting to "touch" him for a loan. Still, Griggs' life had been saved on the yacht. Bunter had not saved it. Still, it had been saved, and the man was bound to be feeling a little grateful. And he must have money, as he was spending twenty-one guineas on an Easter cruise, and had offered to pay more if Captain Cook would cut out the call at Margate.

It did not look very hopeful; but Bunter reflected that if he drew Griggs blank, he would be no worse off than he was before. "Soft sawder" might work the oracle, and Bunter was prepared to butter anybody to any extent, though it was true that he had his own inimitable way of doing it. Anyhow, it was worth trying on, he considered, and he rolled away to No. 6 state-room to try it on.

He heard a sound of tramping feet within that state-room. Mr. Griggs was not, it seemed, lying down with his headache. The room was roomy—for a state-room on a yacht—but there was not much space for walking about. Billy Bunter could not help wondering why Mr. Griggs, if he wanted to walk about, did not step out on deck. It was really extraordinary for a man to spend that glorious, sunny, spring day shut up in a room, if he was able to leave his bunk. And evidently Mr. Griggs was.

The tread in the little room was unceasing—that of a restless man ill at ease—a man counting the slow minutes as they passed. Had Bunter thought of it he might have wondered whether Mr. Griggs had something on his mind—some secret cause of anxiety. But Bunter's fat thoughts, as usual, were concentrated on his fat self.

He tapped at the door. After tapping he would have opened it, but he found that it was locked inside. In surprise, he tapped again. The uneasy tread had ceased at the first tap.

"Who is it? What do you want?" came a rasping voice from within.

"It's me," explained Bunter, regardless of grammar.

"Who?"

"Bunter! Captain Cook's cousin!"

"What do you want?"

"I—I thought I'd just come and ask how you were, sir," said Bunter. "Is your headache any better?"

Bunter remembered that he had heard Mr. Griggs inform George that he had a headache.

"No—yes—no! I do not want to be disturbed! Please go away!"

"Hem! I—I thought you might like a little company, sir."

"Rubbish!"

"I—I should be very pleased to—sit with you, if you liked—"

"Nonsense!"

"Perhaps you'd like a game of—of Ludo, sir?"

"You young fool!"

"Or—or draughts—"

"Go away!"

This was not encouraging. It was, in



Once away from the jetty and the pleasure boats, there came a deep, full-throated roar, and the boat shot like an arrow through the cleaving waters. Potter and Greene yelled as they were drenched with water, while Coker, losing his footing as the boat leaped, sat down, and roared almost as loudly as the engine!

fact, distinctly discouraging. The man seemed an unsociable, ill-tempered beast. The voice of the charmer had no effect on him whatever—through a locked door, at least. Why the thump the man kept his door locked was a mystery to Bunter.

"Wouldn't you like to come into the saloon, sir?" resumed Bunter. "I'll play the piano to you, if you like. It may soothe your headache."

"Will you go away?"

"Hem! Perhaps you'd like to see the newspaper, sir? We've got the papers from Margate. There's something rather interesting in this morning's paper—a bank hold-up at Folkestone yesterday."

"What?"

There was a note of interest in Mr. Griggs' voice at last. Bunter began to hope that the door would be unlocked, at least. Bunter was the most skilful borrower of cash in the wide world; but even Bunter could not borrow money through a locked door.

"Quite an interesting case, Mr. Griggs," said Bunter hopefully. "I'll get you the paper, shall I? Man held up a bank at Folkestone yesterday, and got away, and stole a sailing-boat and pot to sea. It's frightfully exciting! They were watching the railway stations, and stopping cars on all the roads, and all that, and it turned out that the villain got away to sea in a sail-boat. He, he, he! Like to see the paper, sir?"

The door of No. 6 flew suddenly open. Mr. Griggs appeared in the doorway, and Bunter grinned with satisfaction. He had drawn the badger at last.

"Where is the paper?" snapped Mr. Griggs.

"Shall I get it?" asked Bunter. "The

fact is, there's another little matter I wanted to speak to you about, sir."

"Get me the paper."

"All right, sir; but my friends have gone ashore, and—"

"Will you give me the newspaper?"

"Oh, yes!" gasped Bunter, quite startled by the savage anger in Mr. Griggs' voice and look. "Half a jiffy!" Bunter rolled away, and came back with the morning paper. "Here you are, sir!"

Mr. Griggs snatched it from his hand, and stepped back into his room with it. Bunter rolled in after him. Now that the door was open, Bunter was keen to get on with business.

He did not get on with it, however. Mr. Griggs turned on him, caught him by the collar, and spun him back through the doorway.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Smack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter sat down, clasping a fat hand to a fat ear, that was red and burning from a terrific smack. The state-room door slammed, and was locked again. There was a rustle of paper within as the newspaper was opened with feverish haste. Bunter staggered to his feet.

"Oh lor'!" he gasped. "The—the awful beast! Oh crikey! Ow! My ear! Wow!"

The Owl of the Remove shook a fat fist at Mr. Griggs' closed door. He was done with Mr. Griggs. It was evident that there was nothing doing. He had come there to raise the wind; and he seemed to have raised a whirlwind. Still rubbing his fat and burning ear, William George Bunter rolled back disconsolately to the deck.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Hot!

"IS that those beasts, Pawlings?" "It's Master Wharton and his friends, sir!"

Grunt from Bunter

He fixed his little round eyes and his big round spectacles on six boyish figures that strolled along the jetty. The Famous Five and William Wibley were coming back, without, Bunter was sure, caring a rap how he had spent the afternoon—after all he had done for them. Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

"So they're coming!" he grunted. "Well, when they come on, Pawlings, tell them I'm waiting for them in the saloon."

"Yes, sir," said Pawlings.

"You needn't mention anything about my borrowing that tin of pepper from the cook, you know."

"The—the pepper, sir."

"They might fancy I was going to play a trick on them, or something. They're an awfully suspicious lot," said Bunter. "Of course, I'm not thinking of anything of the kind, Pawlings."

"Oh!" gasped Pawlings. "Of—of course not, sir!"

"I'm going to get some lemonade ready for them," said Bunter airily. "They'll be thirsty, after walking in this warm weather. They've treated me rottenly, but I'm not going to pay them out, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Pawlings again. "I—I see!"

He gazed quite curiously after Billy Bunter as that fat and fatuous youth rolled below. Then he smiled; and he was smiling when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on board. The chums of the Remove were a little tired after an

energetic day in merry Margate, but they were very merry and bright.

"Master Bunter has given me a message for you, gentlemen!" said Pawlings.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter gone ashore?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No, sir. He said he would be waiting for you in the saloon, sir, and I was to tell you so, and I was not to mention that he had borrowed a tin of pepper from the cook, as you might fancy that he was going to play a trick on you!" said Pawlings, with a perfectly grave face.

"Oh, my hat!"

"In spite of Master Bunter's instructions, I thought I had better mention it, as he may change his mind about playing a trick, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Forewarned is forearmed!" chuckled Bob. "Anything else, Pawlings?"

"Only Master Bunter is preparing lemonade for you, sir, as you may be thirsty after walking in this warm weather. Very kind and thoughtful of Master Bunter, indeed, sir!"

"Oh, very!" chuckled Bob.

"Thanks, Pawlings!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Come on, you fellows! Don't keep Bunter waiting, when he's so kind and thoughtful."

The juniors went down into the saloon. On the table stood seven glasses, filled with lemonade. In the atmosphere was a strong scent of pepper, which would certainly have excited suspicion, even if the chums of the Remove had not been "tipped" by Pawlings. However, they affected not to notice it.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, you've got back! Had a good time?"

"Oh, not so bad," said Bob Cherry. "You been enjoying life, old fat bean?"

"Well, yes; I've had rather a pleasant conversation with Mr. Griggs," said Bunter. "He seems rather to like my society. But, I say, you fellows, aren't you thirsty, after walking in this hot sun?"

"The thirstfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Well, I thought you would be, and I've got some lemonade ready for you," said Bunter brightly. "It's lovely lemonade, you know—home made, and delightfully cool. He, he, he! Very cool indeed! He, he!"

"What's the joke, old fat man?" asked Nugent.

Bob Cherry winked at his comrades and stretched out a hand towards the glass that stood before Bunter. Bunter grabbed at it at once.

"That's mine!" he exclaimed.

"What's the difference?" asked Bob. "Oh, nothing. But—but I'd rather have mine," explained Bunter. "I haven't done anything to the others, you know."

"Oh crikey!"

"So they're all the same, are they?" asked Wibley.

"Quite, old chap! I simply happen to prefer this one," said Bunter. "The others are exactly the same. He, he, he! I hope you don't imagine that I've been playing tricks, or anything, with them?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob.

Billy Bunter as a wicked deceiver was really rather excruciating.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. "Look here, drink your lemonade, old fellows, now. I've taken the trouble to get it ready for you. You'll find it beautifully cool. He, he, he!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Did you drop that pound note, Bunter?"

"Eh, what? Yes," said Bunter. He set his glass on the table again and blinked at the floor. "Where is it, old chap?"

"Look under the table."

Bunter put his bullet head under the table. Bob Cherry took his glass and exchanged it for one of the others. The Co. suppressed their mirth as he made the exchange. From under the table came Bunter's impatient squeak.

"I say, I can't see the pound note! Look here, you beast, were you pulling my leg?"

"Just that," said Bob cheerfully. "I like to see you bend, old fat bean! I

keep on wondering how long your waistcoat will stand it."

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

He rose to his feet, puffing for breath. Bunter did not like being. He would have liked it still less had he known what had taken place above, while his head was under the table.

"He hasn't burst!" said Bob. "How the dickens does Bunter bend without bursting, you fellows? How do you do it, Bunter?"

"Yah! Look here, you haven't touched your lemonade." Billy Bunter repressed his annoyance and grinned amiably at the chums of the Remove. He was very anxious to see them drink that lemonade—very. "Ain't you thirsty?"

"Yes, rather," said Bob. "But you jolly well drink yours first, Bunter, or we shall think you've been up to some game."

"I don't mind," said Bunter, and he lifted his glass again, happily unconscious that it was not the same glass.

The juniors watched him, fascinated. That Billy Bunter had doctored the lemonade with pepper was, of course, perfectly clear. A thirsty fellow taking a deep drink of lemonade that had plenty of pepper mixed in it was booked for a rather unpleasant surprise. As Bunter now had one of the doctored glasses, Bunter was booked for the surprise, and they watched him with deep interest, to see how he got on with it.

Nothing doubting, Billy Bunter raised the glass of lemonade to his capacious mouth, opened the latter, and took a deep swig.

The next moment there was something like an explosion. Crash! went the glass to the floor, smashing into a score of fragments. A fearful howl burst from Billy Bunter, and he jumped clear into the air.

"Ooogh! Oh crikey! Wow! I say—yarooop! Grooogh! Urrrrgggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Whoooch! I'm burned—atchoooch! Whoooch—hoop! What's the matter with that—grooogh!—lemonade! Oh! Yooooooch! Urrrrgggh!"

"Delightfully cool—what?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! Ooogh! I couldn't have put pi-pip-pepper into my own—grooogh—glass! Ow! Wow! I was jolly careful of that. Oooooch! Oh crikey! Gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weren't they all the same?" asked Bob innocently. "You said they were all the same, Bunter, so I changed mine for yours—"

"Ow! Beast! Grooogh! Ooogh! Woooogh! Urrrrgggh! Groooooch! Woooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't think we'll drink this lemonade," said Bob. "It can't really be good if it has that effect on Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooogh! Beasts! Woooogh!"

Billy Bunter shook a fat list at the yolling juniors and rushed away in search of cool water to wash out the interior of his capacious mouth and his podgy neck, leaving the chums of the Remove yelling like hyenas.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for George!

"STEWARD!"

"Sir!"

"Has Captain Cook returned?"

"Jest coming along the jetty, sir!"
"Ask him to step down; I want to speak to him."



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"Certainly, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were on deck, watching the bright sun setting over Margate and Cliftonville, when Cousin George, red-faced and cheery as usual, rolled on board. The juniors had had their tea, and were debating which of the joys of Margate they should patronise that evening. As the yacht was not to pull out till the morning they had an evening before them, and there were plenty of attractions in merry Margate to choose from. George gave them a hearty greeting as he came aboard. George was always bursting with plump heartiness. Then, receiving Mr. Griggs' message from Pawlings, he went down to see the passenger in No. 6.

That passenger, on his looks, had not enjoyed his day in the confines of his state-room. On his bunk lay the newspaper Bunter had given him some time ago, a certain section of which Mr. Griggs had read with great avidity. There was undoubtedly something in the newspaper that interested Mr. Griggs very much indeed. Most of the day Mr. Griggs had kept his door locked, but it was not locked when Captain Cook came along, with his plump and hearty tread. Mr. Griggs opened it, and George gave him a hearty grip and an affable nod. George's fat face, beaming with plump good humour, was quite a striking contrast to the thin, narrow, hard face of his passenger, with its knitted brows, tight lips, and shifty, watchful, anxious eyes.

"Please step in!" said Mr. Griggs, holding the door open.

"Won't you step out, sir?" said George. George liked space for his ample proportions. "Headache better, sir? A walk on the pier, sir, in the glorious air of Margate, would do you good. A little trot along to Westgate, sir—"

"Will you come in?" snapped Mr. Griggs. "I have something very particular to say, Captain Cook."

"Oh, very well, sir!" said George, and he came in, and Mr. Griggs shut the door. "I trust, sir, that my steward has attended to all your wants in a satisfactory manner while I have been ashore. We aim to give every satisfaction—"

"Yes, yes—"
"Satisfy 'em, sir, and they come again!" said George. "That's our motto, sir. Anything you have a fancy for, sir, within reason, of course—"

"Please let me speak! When are you putting to sea again?"

"In the morning, sir—in the bright and rosy dawn," said George. "If you feel disposed for festivity, sir, you have the evening—a fine evening—before you. There is an excellent show at the Winter Gardens—"

Mr. Griggs' eyes glinted at George. He did not look as if he was disposed for festivity.

"Dreamland will be open," resumed George. "Roundabouts, perhaps, do not appeal to you—or perhaps the toy motor-cars—though they are really great fun. But there are other attractions at—"

George, like all the Bunter tribe, was talkative. But his passenger cut him short.

"Will you put to sea to-day—before dark?"

"I regret very much, sir, that I am unable to meet your wishes in that respect, sir. A day at Margate was in the schedule, and Mr. Coker insisted—"

"The day is now at an end—"

"Hardly, sir. The boys are, in fact, discussing an evening in Margate—and Mr. Coker and his friends are not even on board yet—they may be late—"

"Your crew are on board?"

"Yes, that is so," said George, staring.

"But—"
"You could get steam up at once, then?"

"I could!" said George, still staring.

"But—"

"Well, I request you very particularly to do so," said Mr. Griggs. "The fact is, the air of Margate is not good for me—and I am very anxious to go."

"My dear sir," said George, "the air of Margate is the finest air—"

"I do not expect you to oblige me for nothing," said Mr. Griggs. "I will pay double fees if you will start this evening."

"My charges, sir," said George, with dignity, "are fixed and inclusive. There are no extras! No extras is my invariable rule!"

Mr. Griggs eyed him, with his shifty eyes.

"You are probably not a rich man, Mr. Cook," he said at length, after a pause. "A hundred pounds would be welcome to you."

"Quite!" said George, thinking of the mortgage on the yacht, and the doubt

"I will make it two hundred pounds, Mr. Cook!"

George almost bristled.

"Enough, sir!" he said, with a wave of a plump hand. "So far from putting to sea as you request, I shall require a very clear explanation, or I shall request you to step ashore before we sail. In that case, your fee for the cruise will be returned to you, after deduction for one day on board—"

"You refuse?"

"Yes, sir, I refuse!" said George, with dignity. "You have forced me to doubt your bona fides, Mr. Griggs. You have—Great hefty haddocks!"

George broke off with a yell of surprise and consternation. Mr. Griggs had slipped his hand into the wallet under his coat. As George was making a movement towards the door his hand came out and shot up to a level—and the bluish barrel of an automatic pistol looked George full in the face. The plump skipper of the Sea Nymph staggered back, and brought up against the bunk, fairly goggling at the levelled weapon, and the gleaming eyes behind it.

"Don't call out!" said Mr. Griggs, in a low tone of savage menace. "One call, and I will scatter your sheep's brains over that bunk! Take warning—you've got to deal with a desperate man!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Man with the Gun!

"HEFTY haddocks!" murmured George faintly.

He leaned back limply on the bunk. His fat knees were knocking together, and seemed hardly able to support him. His red face had turned quite pale. Even a brave man might have been appalled by a levelled automatic within three or four feet, with a dark and desperate face glaring behind it. And George was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. His plump legs sagged under him.

"Keep quiet!" Mr. Griggs' voice was little more than a whisper, but it was very distinct. "I'm sorry to use these measures—not for your sake, you fool, but for my own! But there's no choice now. By morning I shall have handcuffs on my wrists, if we stay here. Get me?"

"Oh!" gasped George.
"A sound above a whisper, and I will blow your silly brains out!" said Griggs, in the same low, savage tone. "You were idiot enough to run me down at sea, when I was escaping—but I am not going to be taken! Ten years' penal servitude wait for me on shore—do you understand? I'm telling you this so that you will have sense enough to take it quietly. I will shoot you, and every man on the yacht, rather than be taken!"

"Hefty haddocks!" gurgled George. "Tut-tut—turn that—that thing away! It—it might g-g-g-o off!"

"It will go off if you don't obey every order I give you, like a lamb!" said Griggs grimly. "If you'd accepted my offer— But never mind that! Listen to me! You've seen the papers to-day?"

George nodded, dumb.
"You've seen that there was a hold-up at Folkestone yesterday—a man shot and wounded in a bank—"

George gasped.
"The gunman got away. I've learned—from the newspaper—that they have discovered that he pinched a sailing-boat in the harbour and got away to sea."

George grasped it now. He had read that news in the paper without in the least realising how closely it concerned

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whether the profits of the tripping would pay it off. "But—"

"I will pay you a hundred pounds, sir, to put to sea at once."

George Cook gazed at him. George was a capable hotel-keeper, and he was a capable skipper. Otherwise, George was not very bright. But George was bright enough to see that there was something extraordinary in this—very extraordinary indeed. For the first time George began to entertain a vague suspicion of his passenger. A man who stayed—or, rather, hid—in his cabin, all the time the yacht was in sight of land, and who offered him a hundred pounds to put to sea twelve hours ahead of time, could scarcely be an ordinary holiday-maker. There was, George realised, something of a "fishy" nature about this man Griggs from Rye.

"I am sorry, sir, that I cannot oblige you," said George stiffly, "and, in fact, since you have made me such a queer offer, sir, I am afraid that I shall have to ask you for an explanation."

"Will you accept my offer?"

"No, sir," said George. "As some of my passengers are still on shore, and I could not possibly leave them behind, I could not do so, sir. Neither should I dream of it, Mr. Griggs, unless you explained very satisfactorily—"

him. He did not connect the holiday-maker from Rye with the fugitive from Folkestone. But he understood now.

"They're searching for that boat up and down the coast!" grated Griggs. "They won't find it—you've taken care of that! Every coastguard and fisherman from Dover to Herne Bay will be watching for that boat—and for me! Do you understand now?"

George nodded—or, rather, his head sagged! The man before him, holding the gun to his head, was the desperate gunman who had shot and wounded a man in a Folkestone bank only the day before—and that knowledge made cold chills creep down George's spine. And George knew what was in the wallet from which Griggs had taken the automatic. The loot from the bank—a thousand pounds in banknotes—was on board the Sea Nymph!

Griggs smiled grimly. He had got George where he wanted him, so to speak. There was no resistance in George.

"They've been smart!" snarled Griggs. "I never thought they'd spot the boat I got away in! But—it's in the paper. They won't find the boat—though they hunt for it till doomsday. But they may pick up some of the wreckage. I was afraid you might do that, and learn that the boat came out of Folkestone—the name was on it—" He broke off. "They may think me drowned—or picked up at sea—and they won't take chances! Every vessel in these waters will be questioned. This among the others."

His shifty eyes glittered at George over the automatic.

"That's not going to happen! I took a desperate chance in getting away to sea in the boat. I hoped to be able to run across to Holland or France—and get to land before dark. But I failed! There were no lights on the boat—and you ran me down in the dark. All the better, perhaps—as it's turned out! I'm a landsman—and it was a desperate chance. I should never have taken it had not the hunt been so close at my heels—I risked drowning rather than the stone jug! Do you understand now that I am a desperate man, not to be trifled with?"

George understood it only too well! "I've been waiting here, ever since I read the newspaper that fat fool gave me, for you to come back—and expecting every minute to hear the footsteps of the police! Sooner or later they'll visit every vessel putting in at Deal, or Ramsgate, or Broadstairs, or Margate—at every place along this coast—for news of the boat missing from Folkestone. Any minute they may be here! Do you understand? I can't afford to wait till morning! Minutes may make all the difference!"

The gunman breathed hard. There were clots of perspiration on his brow. His nerves were tense and taut.

"We're going to sea—at once! As soon as you can get steam up! Got that?"

"We—we can't!" babbled George. "Some of my passengers—"

"Fool!"

"And—and my mate's ashore—"

"You will sail without your mate."

"The food—"

"What?"

"Supplies, sir, ordered in Margate—not yet delivered—"

"Fool! Do you know what I would do if I could handle a steamer," snarled Griggs. "I would spatter your brains over that bunk and take command!"

"Hefty haddock!"

"And if you jib, that's what I shall do, and take my chance of getting the

yacht to sea on my own! Got that?" hissed Griggs.

"Oh lor!" groaned George.

"You will call the steward now," said Griggs quietly. "Make some excuse for staying in this room with me—anything you like—and give him a message to the engineer to get steam up immediately. You've got the choice between life and death, Mr. Cook! Make it!"

George's choice was already made. He detached himself, with an effort, from the bunk, and limped to the door. He opened the door about three inches, and Mr. Griggs, standing behind him, kept the muzzle of the automatic pressed to his plump ribs.

"Steward!" gasped George.

"Sir!"

Pawlings came along.

"Tell the engineer to get steam up at once—at once—and get ready for sea! Lose no time! I—I am staying here with Mr. Griggs. Come and tap on the door when—when all is ready."

"Yes, sir." Pawlings looked at George through the narrow aperture.

"Are you ill, sir?"

"Eh? Yes! No! Hurry up!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Pawlings hurried away.

The door snapped shut again.

George sat down on the edge of the bunk and wiped his perspiring brow. It was no wonder that Pawlings had thought that he looked ill. His face was almost ghastly. His eyes were like those of an expiring codfish. His plump cheeks quivered like jellies. He gazed at Griggs as he might have gazed at some threatening demon.

They waited.

George's order, unexpected as it was, was being carried out. They had only to wait. Coker & Co.—and Mr. Pycroft, the mate—were still ashore—they had to remain there. Provender—ordered for delivery at the jetty—would have to remain on the jetty when it arrived. If Harry Wharton & Co. landed they would be left behind. There was no argument possible, with a desperate and determined man, and a deadly weapon, which he had used once and was ready to use again.

Tap! came at the door. Griggs' eyes glittered. Steam was not up yet.

"Who is there?" he called out.

"Wharton, sir! Captain Cook is with you, I think!"

"Yes. What do you want?"

Wharton pushed the door open. Mr. Griggs' hand disappeared behind him; but though the automatic was now out of sight, George was only too unhappily conscious that it was still there—and ready! The glitter in the shifty eyes told him what to expect if he failed to play up. He gave the Greyfriars junior a ghastly grin.

"Wha—a-a-it is, Master Wharton?"

"They're getting steam up, Captain Cook," said Harry, in wonder. "We were thinking of a run into Margate for the evening, but if you're going out to sea—"

"Pip-pip-please yourself," stammered George. "I—I've had to—to alter my plans a little. Perhaps you had better go ashore for the evening." Griggs made a negative sign with his head. He did not want the juniors talking ashore of that sudden and unexpected change in Captain Cook's plans. George caught the sign and faltered: "I—I mean, we—we're going for a little trip—I'm sure you'd enjoy it—"

"Oh, all right!" said Harry. He looked curiously at George. "I hope you're not ill, sir!"

"Oh, no! N-n-never better in my life!" gasped George. "Shut the door after you."

Wharton shut the door after him. George blinked at Griggs. The automatic came into view again.

"You're safe, so long as you play up, Mr. Cook!" said Griggs quietly. "Keep that up. No harm will come to the boys—so long as they don't interfere. Let them think it's a trip for the evening. You'll land me in Franco by morning and have done with me. But—mind you play up! I'm taking desperate chances—and a man's life is no more to me than a fly's!"

"Oh lor!" groaned George.

It seemed an age to George—and probably longer still to the gunman—before Pawlings tapped on the door again.

George hooked himself off the bunk. Griggs gave him a look, and George shuddered.

"I shall have to go on the bridge!" gasped George. "I can't take the yacht out to sea without! For goodness' sake, man—"

Griggs nodded.

"I shall come up with you! I shall have to risk that!" He gritted his teeth as he read a flash of hope in George's eyes. "Take care! I shall have this automatic in my pocket—with my hand on it! At the first sign of trickery, you are a dead man—and I'll take my chance of getting the yacht out to sea. Take warning!"

"I—I never thought—"

"That will do! Get going!"

George tottered from the cabin. Griggs went with him on deck. Bright sunset shone on Margate harbour, on the crowded pier, and the sands that were alive with trippers with innumerable small people with spades and pails. It was a happy and familiar sight—but George had no eyes for it now.

Billy Bunter rolled up to him.

"I say, George—"

"Go away!" snapped George. "Don't bother now."

"That's all very well," said Bunter. "But what's this idea of a trip to sea? I was going to the show at the Winter Gardens, and I don't want—I say, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you."

"Be quiet!" snapped George.

He reached for Bunter's ear, and the fat Owl dodged just in time. Cousin George did not seem so good-tempered as usual.

Bunter grunted and rejoined the juniors.

"I say, you fellows, what's up with George?" he asked. "He looks jolly sick about something, and he's as bad-tempered as you are at your very worst, Wharton."

"You silly ass!"

Harry Wharton & Co., as a matter of fact, were rather wondering what was "up" with George. They could see that something was the matter. They were surprised, too, to see Mr. Griggs go on the bridge with him, with one hand in his pocket, and his eyes on George as watchful as a cat's. But they were very far from guessing what it was that was "up."

"Coker will miss this trip!" remarked Bob Cherry, as the Sea Nymph glided away from the jetty. "It's rather sudden, isn't it?"

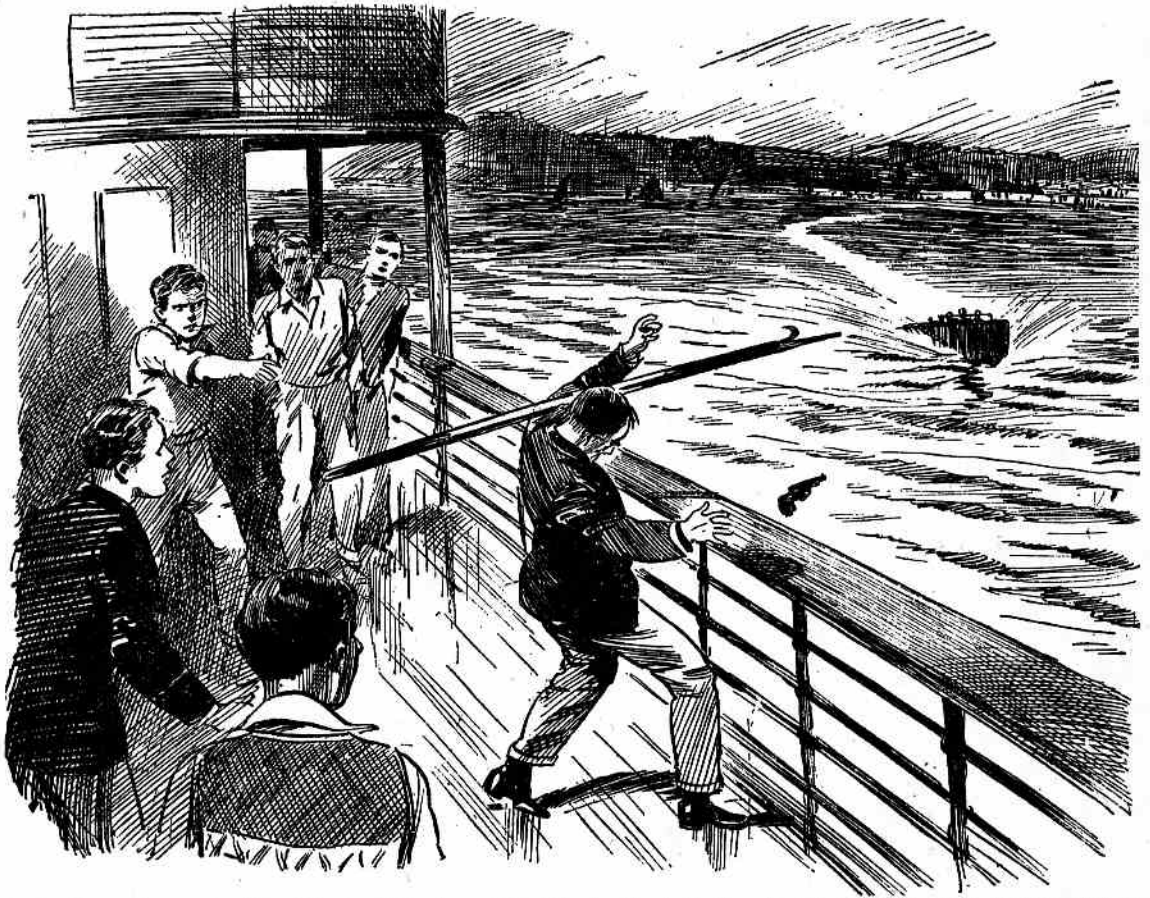
"The suddenfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, with his dusky eyes very curiously on George and Mr. Griggs.

"Anybody know where we're going?" asked Nugent.

"Out to sea, that's all," said Johnny Bull. "What's that man Griggs doing on the bridge with the skipper?"

"Can't make it out," said Harry.

The juniors had a vague feeling that something was wrong somewhere. Yet



As the desperate man dwelt on his aim, Wharton whirled the boathook in the air, and hurled it—with deadly accuracy. It crashed on the man with the gun, and Griggs uttered a sharp yell, staggered and fell. "At him!" shrieked Bob Cherry as the pistol dropped from the man's hand.

what it was—if anything—they could not conjecture. The *Sea Nymph* put on speed, and, looking back, they watched the crowded beach growing a dim blur in the bright sunset.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker in Chase!

HORACE COKER stared. "Well!" he ejaculated. "I like that!"

Coker's expression belied his words. It was obvious, from his expression, that he did not like it—not at all. Standing on the jetty, Coker of the Fifth stared at the *Sea Nymph* steaming away to sea—already at a considerable distance off-shore. And Coker snorted.

Coker was alone. But his faithful chums were not far away. After that exciting scene on the promenade near Kingsgate, Coker had thrown Potter and Greene over—lock, stock, and barrel! He was done with them—fed-up to the back teeth! Potter and Greene, tired of thumping Coker, left him to his own devices—quite as fed-up with Coker as he could possibly have been with them. It was, in fact, quite a treat to get away from Coker—and they had a pleasant, quiet tea at a little bungalow place along the front, feeling that if only they didn't see Coker again their cup of happiness would be full. Coker, meanwhile, when he had recovered his wind, started to walk back to Margate.

After tea, reflection came to Potter and Greene. It was delightful to have done with Coker—on the other hand, they were booked for the Easter cruise on the *Sea Nymph*, as Coker's guests—which made it awkward. Either they had to chuck up the cruise, or make it up with Coker somehow. The real question was, whether Coker would consent to make it up, after his friends' rough-and-ready methods of dealing with him. Fortunately, it was easy to pull Coker's leg. Soft sawder seldom failed with the great Horace.

So Potter and Greene walked back to Margate, expecting to find Coker on the yacht, and prepared to turn out the necessary amount of soft sawder. To their surprise, they found the *Sea Nymph* steaming out to sea—and Mr. Pycroft, the mate, staring after her with amazed eyes from the jetty.

They wondered whether Coker had gone in her; and what the dickens it meant, anyhow. But Coker was not gone in the yacht. Coker had started back a couple of hours before Potter and Greene; but he had taken short cuts instead of following the promenade. Coker's short cuts led him over a considerable portion of Kent; he negotiated roads, lanes, and footpaths; and when, to his joy, he struck a town at last, he found that it was not Margate, but Broadstairs.

This surprised Coker—for either Margate and Broadstairs had changed places during his walk, or else Coker was the biggest idiot over—neither of which seemed possible to Coker.

However, a taxicab carried him back,

landed him in Margate safe and sound, though in a rather bad temper, and he strode on to the jetty—to see Potter and Greene staring seaward there, Mr. Pycroft rubbing his weatherbeaten nose in amazement—and the *Sea Nymph* far out at sea. Whereupon Coker remarked that he "liked that!"—not really liking it a little bit.

"Cheek!" continued Coker. "What does the man mean? Cheek! Leaving a chap behind! Where's that blessed yacht off to? Cheek!"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance and drew nearer to Coker. It was time for the soft sawder to be turned on.

"Queer, Cook clearing off like that without telling us, Coker!" Potter remarked blandly, just as if nothing had happened.

Horace Coker gave him a cold, fixed, icy look.

"Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"Yes, old fellow! I said—"

"Well, don't!" said Coker, turning his back.

"Coker, old man—" murmured Greene.

"Will you oblige me by keeping your remarks to yourself, William Greene?" inquired Coker over his shoulder.

"But look here, old fellow—"

Coker walked across the jetty. Potter and Greene exchanged a private wink, and followed him. Coker tapped the mate on the arm.

"Where's the yacht gone, Mr. Pycroft?" he asked.

"Ask me another, sir," said the mate.

"Looks as if she's gone to sea—but I can't make it out! Captain Cook was coming back to sea to some stuff he's ordered—instead of that, he pulls out. Beats me!"

"I suppose he's coming back for us?" hooted Coker.

"No good asking me, sir! Can't make it out!"

"That cheeky sweep Griggs was trying to make him out over Margate this morning! But he couldn't—" Coker paused, staring after the black drift of smoke behind the yacht. "Cook wouldn't— But if he has— This isn't what I'm paying twenty-one guineas for, I know that! What the thump—"

"We're stranded!" said Potter.

"Don't talk to me, Potter! I'm fed-up with you!"

"That's all very well, Coker—but we look to you for guidance!" said Potter. "It's really your own fault—you've taught us to rely on you in times of difficulty."

"If Coker doesn't take control, what are we going to do?" asked Greene. "It's like—like sheep without a shepherd!"

Horace Coker thawed considerably. He was offended—severely offended. Still, if fellows looked to him for guidance, if without his leadership they were like sheep without a shepherd, it was up to him. He thawed.

"If you fellows put it like that—" he said.

"How else are we to put it?" asked Potter. "You're leader! Is it any use either of us taking the lead? I ask you!"

"Leaders," said Greene, "are born, not made. We've had a row. We were hasty." As Coker had had the thumping, Greene did not mind admitting that it was a hasty thumping. "Let's admit we were hasty! All the same, I don't see how Coker can get out of his responsibility for fellows who rely on his brains for guidance."

This was putting it on rather thick. But it could not be put on too thick for Coker! He liked it, in fact, laid on with a trowel. A smile dawned on Coker's rugged features. Quite a genial smile.

"You've acted rottenly," he said. "I was going to turn you down, right down! Still, I admit there's something in what you say. A pair of helpless, silly, incapable duffers—"

"Oh! Exactly!" gasped Potter. "How—how well you put it, Coker!"

"The yacht's gone—" said Coker. "Never mind the yacht," said Greene. "So long as you stick by us, Coker, we don't mind anything else. It will come back, anyhow. We can put in the evening at the Winter Gardens—"

"And get a decent dinner along the front somewhere—" said Potter.

"And if the yacht isn't back, there's a lot of hotels—"

"In fact, a few days in Margate—"

"Not at all a bad idea—"

"Don't jaw so much!" said Coker calmly. "We're not going to the Winter Gardens—and you can whistle for your dinner! I'm not being left behind and stranded by a dashed hotel-keeper that I've paid for a cruise! I'm going after that yacht, and going to ask Cook to explain himself—and if he doesn't satisfy me, I shall demand my money back, and punch his head into the bargain."

"Swimming it?" asked Potter, with a touch of flippancy that was quite out of place, in Coker's opinion.

"Don't be a fool, Potter! Mr. Pycroft, I suppose you know where to hire a motor-boat?"

"Ay, ay!" said Mr. Pycroft.

"Get it for me—I'll give you a passage to the yacht in it, if you want to go aboard! Get the best motor-boat in Margate—never mind the expense. I'm standing the racket. Cook isn't playing this rotten trick on me; and if it's that skinny blighter Griggs at the bottom of it, I'll jolly well punch his nose as well as Cook's. We can beat that yacht in a good motor-boat."

"Easy!" said Mr. Pycroft. "I know a good boat—man named Hatch—he'll drive it for you—beat the yacht hollow—he's raced in it. And to tell you the truth, Mr. Coker, I fancy there must be something wrong on board the Sea Nymph. I can't make it out! Cook says to me—"

"Buck up with that motor-boat!" rapped Coker.

"Leave it to me," said Mr. Pycroft, and he ambled away.

Potter looked at Greene. Greene looked at Potter. Visions of a joyous evening in Margate faded from their eyes. But they knew that it was useless to argue with Coker. Argument only made Coker more obstinate. Coker stared grimly after the yacht, while he waited for the motor-boat to be brought round. Cook had left him stranded—contrary to all arrangements—and Coker was going to have it out with Cook. Coker was not the man to be treated like this without something happening. Coker was fully prepared to hit George in the eye, on his own bridge, if he did not explain himself satisfactorily.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Coker.

The motor-boat bobbed under the jetty. It was a rather large craft, evidently a good boat, and a man in a peaked cap and a jumper sat at the wheel. This, apparently, was Hatch, who had raced the boat; an acquaintance of Mr. Pycroft's. He touched his cap very civilly to Coker—Mr. Pycroft having, perhaps, let him know that Horace was an open-handed youth with more money than brains.

Coker jumped down, slipped, and bumped. He recovered himself and glared up at Potter and Greene—who stopped grinning just in time.

"Now then, if you're coming—" snapped Coker.

"Oh, all right!"

Potter and Greene jumped down. Coker tapped Mr. Hatch on the shoulder.

"Overhaul that yacht," he said. "Go all out—make her rip! See?"

"Rip's the word, sir!" said Mr. Hatch. "You watch!"

And Mr. Hatch did make her rip. Once away from the jetty and the pleasure-boats, there came a deep, full-throated roar, and the boat shot like an arrow through the cleaving waters. Potter and Greene yelped as they were drenched with spray—the mate turned up his collar—Coker, losing his footing as the boat leaped, sat down, and roared almost as loudly as the engine.

Mr. Hatch sat tight and drove her—with the fixed, unregarding glare of the racing man. He had been told to make her rip, and he made her rip—he had been told to catch the yacht, and he was going to catch the yacht. They passed other vessels as if the latter were standing still. Cheers and shouts came from the pier and from the decks of pleasure steamers—the general impression being that this was a race! And a race it was—and Potter and Greene could only hope, as the blinding spray drenched them, that after the race they would live to tell the tale! They hardly expected to.

Coker, after getting on his feet several times and failing to continue perpendicular, sat it out.

"What's she doing?" he yelled.

Mr. Hatch barked:

"Only twenty-five! She ain't all out yet."

"We'll catch that yacht—"

"Catch her!" jeered Mr. Hatch. "We could walk all round her! You'll get a splash or two."

Coker got more than a splash or two. So did Potter and Greene. But they were catching the Sea Nymph. The Sea Nymph hadn't an earthly!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Only Coker!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Give us a rest!"

"I say, look at that man Griggs!"

"Bother that man Griggs!"

"But, I say, you fellows, look at him!" breathed Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. were not specially interested in the man Griggs. But they looked at him. And really, now that they looked at him, they found him worth looking at!

Griggs was standing close beside George. He seemed to want to keep quite near to George, for some reason of his own. He stood with one hand in a pocket that bulged. But now he was not giving George his attention. He was staring back towards Margate, and the expression on his face was extraordinary. His narrow eyes glittered, his teeth showed as his lips were drawn back in a snarl, his face had whitened. If over a human being had looked like an infuriated, hunted wild beast, the man Griggs did at that moment.

Every man on deck was staring at him. The juniors stared at him in their turn, almost fascinated by the terrible look on his face, and lost in wonder.

"What the dickens—" muttered Nugent.

The juniors looked back. So far as they could see, there was nothing on the horizon to account for the rage and terror in Griggs' face. Margate had dropped to the sea; only a few high buildings could be seen against the sunset. Here and there a cutter, or yawl, or ketch leaned to the wind. A pleasure-steamer was coming down from the Thames, puffing smoke. A motor-boat, driven at a racing speed, was cutting the water like a knife, leaving a streaming wake of white foam behind. Nothing in that, it seemed, to account for Griggs' look, till the juniors observed that his starting eyes were fixed on the racing boat, and that the boat was coming for the yacht like an arrow. But even after they realised that it was the motor-boat racing after them that absorbed Griggs' attention they could not understand.

"That boat's putting it on!" remarked Bob Cherry. "I say, that's a jolly good boat! They're making her move! Is it a speed test, or what?"

"They seem to be after us!" said Johnny Bull. "Can't see who's running her, but I seem to know those fellows in—"

"Coker!" exclaimed Wharton.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Dear old Coker! He wasn't going to be left behind. Well, he'll catch up easily enough. But what on earth's the matter with Griggs? What does he care whether Coker comes on board or not?"

"He seems to care!"

Griggs was standing motionless, absorbed, watching the motor-boat astern. He seemed unconscious of his

surroundings for the moment. But he pulled himself together and turned to George.

"Faster!" he snarled. George rang full-speed to the engine-room. The yacht leaped into speed. But if Griggs was thinking of shaking off the motor-boat he had to think again. The petrol-driven craft could have made rings round the Sea Nymph.

"Faster!" hissed Griggs, a few minutes later, after a black and bitter stare at the pursuer. The juniors exchanged glances of utter wonder as the man snarled orders to George on his own bridge. What it could all mean was a deep mystery to them.

"She's going all out, sir," mumbled George huskily. "She can't do more, sir, if she bursts her boilers."

"That motor-boat's after us!" hissed Griggs. "You've got to beat her. Got that?"

"Beat her!" said George. "She's a good ten knots better than we are. How are we going to beat her?"

"She's after us!" hissed Griggs. "Word's got out in Margate—she's after us!"

"It's young Mr. Coker and his friends, sir!" said George. "I suppose they found themselves left behind, and came after us—"

"Who else? Who's driving her? And who's skulking out of sight till they catch us up?" hissed Griggs.

George did not answer that. He could make out Potter and Greene and Mr. Pycroft, holding on in the motor-boat, and he discerned Coker sitting down. He could not make out who was driving her, and neither could he tell whether others were hidden out of sight. It was likely enough, if the police had wind of the man on the Sea Nymph. Griggs, at all events, had no doubt of it. That desperate chase of the yacht did not mean, to Mr. Griggs, that Coker of the Fifth wasn't going to stand any nonsense from George Cook! It meant that the bloodhounds were on his trail.

"Something's jolly wrong here, you men!" whispered Harry Wharton. "I can't make it out—but— Oh, look!"

Griggs' hand came out of his pocket. There was a glimmer of the sunshine on a bluish barrel. He stepped to the rail.

Bang, bang! Petrified by the sight, the juniors stood rooted to the deck. Twice the desperate man fired at the pursuing motor-boat, missing by yards.

"Mr. Griggs—sir—" gasped George. "Hold your tongue!"

Bang! Griggs fired again, and whipped a streak of paint off the motor-boat.

There was a squeak of terror from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows! I say— Yaroooh!"

Bunter made a frantic bound for the companion, and there was a sound of rolling and bumping. The fat Owl went below in a heap.

But Harry Wharton & Co. did not think of quitting. Their faces hardened. The truth rushed in on their minds now. They understood why George had decided on that sudden cruise; he was under fear of the desperate man with the automatic. And that man, in fear of pursuit, was firing fiercely on the motor-boat with the Greyfriars Fifth-Formers in it. Evidently he believed that the police were after him and overhauling him fast, and all disguise was thrown to the winds now. He was trying to "get" the man who was driving the motor-boat—his

only chance of escape! Of the school-boys on deck he took not the slightest notice; probably he had wholly forgotten their existence. His third shot had gone close, and now he was taking deliberate aim for a fourth, his eyes glinting like cold steel over the automatic.

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth. "That's got to stop!" he breathed. "Why, it's murder—"

There was a boathook close at hand, and Wharton reached out and grasped it. Had the crook's eyes fallen on him, had the villain read his intention, the deadly automatic would have been turned on him—there could be no doubt of that. He took the risk.

As the desperate man dwelt on his aim, Wharton whirled the boathook in the air, and hurled it with deadly

him! Grip him! He's the Folkstone bank-robber! Get him!"

"We've got him!" chuckled Bob Cherry breathlessly.

"The gotfulness is terrific!" "Better tie him up, I think, sir," said Pawlings. "I have a rope here, sir. If you will allow me, sir!"

With many hands grasping him and holding him helpless, the gunman was tied up, and Pawlings made a scientific job of it. Griggs spat like a cat, his rage and fury terrible to witness; but they had no terrors for the Removites. His teeth were drawn now. Strong cords were knotted on his arms and legs, and he lay like a helpless bundle, still panting and cursing.

"Hefty haddock!" gasped George, wiping his perspiring brow. "We've got him! The coppers in that motor-boat will be glad to get hold of him—what, what?"

George rang to the engine-room, and the Sea Nymph slowed to a stop and waited for the motor-boat to come up. In a very few minutes it was shut off and bobbing in the water under the rail.

Coker was the first to clamber on board. Coker's face was red with wrath. He glared at George.

"What's this game?" roared Coker. "What? You leave me behind at Margate, and I hire a motor-boat to come after you, and then you let some silly ass start potting seagulls and mopping bullets all round my motor-boat, and—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, gurgling. "It wasn't seagulls that were being potted, Coker—it was you!"

"What?" hooted Coker. "Me?"

"You and your jolly old motor-boat! And if Wharton hadn't knocked that man Griggs over—"

"Griggs! What—" Coker broke off as he spotted Griggs, wriggling in his bonds and still spitting with rage. "Why—what— My hat! What have you got that man tied up like a turkey for? Is this one of your fag japes?"

"Hefty haddock!" gasped George. "Thank goodness he never hit your motor-boat! So you thought it was gull-shooting, did you? Hefty haddock! Aren't there police on your boat?"

"Police!" repeated Coker blankly. "No! What should I want coppers for? I wasn't going to have you run in for leaving me behind, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Stop that cackling!" snapped Coker. "I want to know what this means—I want to know—"

He was interrupted by a cry, or rather, a yell, from Griggs.

"No police on the boat? Is that true?"

Coker stared at him.

"Eh! Of course not—wharrer you mean? What the thump do you suppose I should bring peelers along for? Mad?"

Griggs did not answer. He only ground his teeth with helpless fury. It had seemed to him certain that the motor-boat chase meant that the police were after him. He had not doubted it for a moment. The guilty flee when no man pursueth!

He had given himself away—for nothing! There had been no danger from the motor-boat! No police with handcuffs ready for his wrists—only the egregious Coker, wanting to know why he had been left behind at Margate! The infuriated rascal fairly foamed with rage.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,314.

A LAUGH A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY!

Here's to-day's daily dose:



"You farmers should learn about modern agriculture, you know," said the exasperating man, in a patronising tone. "Now look at the way you're pruning that tree. Why, I don't believe you'll get a single apple from it."

"Neither do I," said the old farmer, grimly, "it's a pear-tree!"

V. M. Ellis, of Weymouth House, Beechers Cliff, Bath, who sent in the above winning joke, has been awarded one of this week's USEFUL PENKNIVES!

accuracy. It crashed on the man with the gun, and Griggs uttered a sharp yell, staggered, and fell. The pistol dropped from his hand.

"At him!" almost shrieked Bob Cherry.

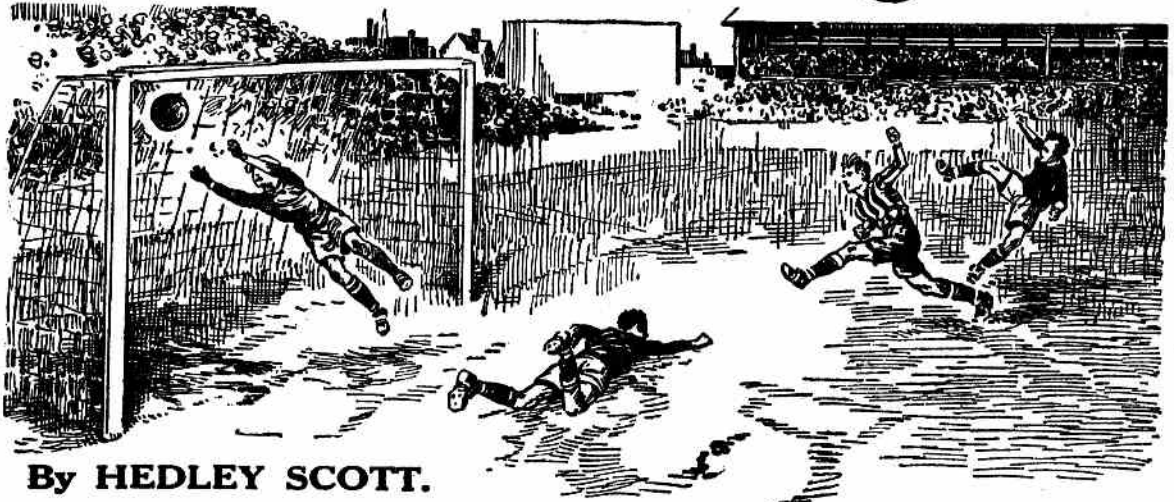
For a second Griggs sprawled, then he was on his knees, grasping at his fallen weapon. But George was prompt. George's foot landed on the pistol, kicking it half the length of the Sea Nymph. As it clattered down again Pawlings pounced on it, and tossed it into the sea. "Now!" roared George.

Griggs leaped to his feet like a tiger. But his gun was gone, and George was no longer terrorized. George, his fear changed to fury, came at Mr. Griggs with both hands, hitting out right and left. A moment later Harry Wharton & Co. were on the spot, backing him up. Griggs went down, struggling and yelling like a wildcat, grasped on all sides, and overpowered.

Hold him! gurgled George. "Grab

OUR THRILL-PACKED SOCCER AND 'TEC STORY!

NOBBY, the 'Shooting Star'!



By HEDLEY SCOTT.

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

A fugitive from Don Carlos' circus, Nobby, a sixteen-year-old waif, meets Ferrers Locke, the detective, who introduces him to Lord Douglas Weatherstone, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C. Nobby very soon becomes professional, but falls foul of Lord Douglas' rascally nephew, Daniel Willoughby Thundersley. Later, Nobby is legally adopted by Lord Douglas. Thundersley then plots with the Don, who kidnaps Nobby and imprisons him in a large packing-case, which is afterwards dispatched to Weatherstone Court. Shortly after this, Jack Drake, Locke's boy assistant, discovers in a wrecked car a charm he had given Nobby months before. The driver of the car bolts, leaving behind a receipt confirming the cartage of a packing-case from Little Willerden to London. Seeing a clue, Locke and Drake make all speed for Little Willerden.

(Now read on.)

A Startling Discovery!

THE village was in total darkness when the speedy sports car eventually thundered through its narrow confines. Locke's keen eyes were seeking the Cartage Office from which the receipt had been issued. As expected, the carter lived over his business premises, and was intimidated by a swinging sign, and in a few moments Locke and Drake were beating a tattoo on the old door of the premises. The carter himself answered the summons, wrathful of countenance at being disturbed.

"Closed!" he snapped querulously by way of greeting, and followed it up with: "What d'you want?"

Locke explained who he was, whereat the man's eyes opened wider, and a new respect shone in them, and Locke and Drake were invited inside.

"Take a look at this receipt, if you will," said Locke. "Was it issued from here?"

The carter wagged his head in an affirmative.

"It's my writing," he added helpfully. "Yes, sir, that was issued from 'ere."

"Know anything about the man you gave it to?" was Locke's next question.

The carter shook his head.

"He was a toff, sir—like yourself,

sir. Came in a car—Daimler car—with a chauffeur. Asked me to pick up a packing-case at the garage down the road—"

"What garage?" asked Locke sharply. "Used to be Timothy Ardler's, sir. But he's been dead an' buried this six years. No one has the place now. All tumbling to pieces—"

"A disused garage, what?"

"Yes, sir, suppose you'd call it that."

"Didn't you think it strange that a man should ask you to pick up a case at a disused garage?" was Ferrers Locke's next question.

"Well, sir, to tell you the truth, I did until this fellow Thundersley gave a pound for the job. Then I thought 'twere best not to be nosy. I'm a carter, sir, not a detective like you."

Drake had started violently at mention of the name Thundersley, but Locke's face never flickered. He took up the point casually.

"You mentioned the name of Thundersley—"

The carter wagged his head afresh.

"That was the name he gave me," he explained. "And here's the pound he gave me—"

"Never mind about the pound," interrupted Locke. "Can you describe this man Thundersley?"

"Well, sir," the carter was obviously a little at a loss. "He was a gentleman. Wore a dark overcoat, and a black felt hat well down on his face, you might say. That's about all I can remember of him."

Locke looked at Drake as much as to say "do you recognise the man?" and Drake nodded imperceptibly.

"Do you know what was in the packing-case?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"Couldn't for the life of me say," replied the carter. "I do know it was mighty 'eavy!"

"And to what address did you deliver it?" was the detective's next query.

And even Locke, case hardened as he was to surprises, was startled by the reply.

"Weatherstone Court," said the carter. "Swell place. Belongs to a lord or somethin'."

Drake whistled, and felt his pulse leap with excitement. What fresh mystery lay here? Why had the name of Thundersley been given as the sender of the packing-case, when the sender's passport had been made out in the name of Smithson?

Locke's face was grim.

"Do you happen to remember if the packing-case was addressed to Lord Douglas Weatherstone?"

"It was not," replied the carter. "It was addressed to Mr. Thundersley—same name as the chap who gave me the pound."

"Thank you very much. You've been extremely helpful," smiled Ferrers Locke, and he pressed a crisp treasury note into the carter's horny palm. "Come along, Drake. We're hot on the scent."

Drake's astonishment at the turn events had taken was as great as that of the carter at receiving a pound for "nuthin'," to use his own term. In a daze he followed Ferrers Locke out to the car, which was soon roaring Londonwards just as fast as the detective could drive it.

En route, he explained to his very much bemused assistant what had taken place in Lord Douglas' household whilst he, Drake, had been abroad.

"He's adopted Nobby, has he—adopted him legally? By Jove!" exclaimed Drake. "So Nobby's now a Thundersley, eh?"

"He is," said Locke quietly. "And the packing-case was obviously addressed to him? Why?"

"Blessed if I know, guv'nor! Seems a terrific tangle to me. First there's a chap who isn't a Thundersley calling himself a Thundersley and sending a packing-case to a Thundersley. Then there's this charm I gave young Nobby. Gosh, guv'nor, it fairly makes my head ache! But where's Nobby—we are no nearer finding the answer to that?"

Locke chuckled mirthlessly.

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, we are getting nearer to him every minute. Hang it, I wish I could squeeze another fifty miles an hour out of this bus!"

As the sports car was already tearing

up the miles at a speed of seventy miles an hour, Drake wondered mightily why the demand for extra speed. He was soon to be enlightened. With a squealing of tyres as the brakes were applied, Locke drew the car to a standstill outside the gates of Weatherstone Court. To the lodge-keeper he yelled a command to hurry, and, once the gates were flung wide, the car roared into life again and flashed up the long winding drive.

Locke and Drake were tumbling out of the car even as the iron-studded door swung open and, bathed in the light from the hall, stood Terrence, the butler, and Lord Douglas Weatherstone.

"I saw you arrive," said his lordship, his fine old face lined with anxiety. "Have you any news?"

"I think so," said Locke, striding into the spacious hall. "Tell me, my lord, where is the packing-case that arrived this afternoon?"

"The packing-case," began his lordship, who had completely forgotten the existence of it. "The packing-case—"

It was Terrence, the butler, who came to the rescue.

"It's in the first floor box-room, sir," he said respectfully. "You remember, my lord. I asked your lordship whether I should unpack it in readiness for Mr. Nobby's—ahem—Mr. Thundersley's return."

"Ah!" ejaculated his lordship. "So you did, Terrence! So you did! And I remember telling you not to be inquisitive, what? But— He turned to the detective. "But what's this talk of the packing-case? What's it mean?"

"It means, my lord, that it would have been better if you had allowed Terrence to have opened that case," said Locke seriously, what time he threw off his coat and gloves, "for, unless I'm mistaken, that packing-case contains young Nobby! Terrence—get a hammer and cold-chisel—at once!"

"Yes, sir, at once, sir!" gasped the startled butler, and he disappeared at a run.

Gasping his astonishment, Lord Weatherstone led the way to the first floor box-room.

"That's it, Locke!" He paused for breath, and indicated the room with shaking finger. "That's—that's where the case was taken. Good heavens!"

He reeled against the oaken balustrade almost overcome with the excitement and shock of it all.

With a powerful wrench Locke swung open the door of the room, thumbed on the electric light, and looked for the packing-case.

There it lay, at the far end of the room, surrounded by numerous suit-cases, trunks, and odds and ends. No sound came from within it, and that circumstance caused Locke to dash forward and start wrenching at the lid of the case with his bare hands.

"Where's that fool Terrence with the hammer and chisel—" he spluttered impatiently. "Every second might be precious—"

"Here I am, sir," panted the butler, and, with shaking hands, he thrust the hammer and chisel into the detective's hands. "Here, sir—"

Bang! Crash!
Feverishly Locke battered away at the chisel and levered on it with all his strength as it found a hold between the lid and the sides of the case. Drake's strong young hands helped, too, and within two minutes the lid was lying on the floor of the box-room.

"Look!"
A cry of horror escaped Drake as he beheld the contents of the packing-case—a cry which was echoed by Lord

Weatherstone who peered over his shoulder. For bound and gagged, and dreadfully still lay the familiar form of Nobby!

Locke stooped, and with a heave of his powerful muscles, lifted the inanimate form out of the packing-case. Another quick movement of his hands and the neckerchief which gagged the youngster was torn from Nobby's mouth; a swift slicing of a pocket-knife, and the cords binding Nobby's wrists and ankles fell apart.

"Is he alive?" quavered his lordship. "Terrence, you fool! Get some brandy! Don't stand there gaping like an old woman."

"I took the liberty of bringing some with me when I fetched the hammer, my lord."

"Good, Terrence!" replied Lord Weatherstone gratefully. "If Nobby's alive I'll double your wages."

"I'd sooner see the young master alive if you halved my wages, my lord," was Terrence's dignified and honest reply. "We've grown to like him, my lord, short as is the time he's been here."

But his lordship wasn't listening. He was watching Ferrers Locke's face, and the ghastly, bluish, still countenance of the red-headed youngster alternatively.

"Is he alive? Is he—"

Locke nodded grimly. "Just alive, I think. He's been dying of slow asphyxiation. The case was practically air-tight. Ah—the brandy!"

He forced a drop of the stimulating liquor between Nobby's tightly-clenched teeth, and followed that up by employing artificial respiratory measures.

Slowly, ever so slowly, life came back into Nobby's body.

In the meantime, his lordship had summoned a Harley Street physician, and he arrived with a cylinder of oxygen, and the necessary apparatus for pumping it into Nobby's lungs.

Between them, Locke and Drake carried Nobby to his bed-room, and there they left him to the administrations of the physician.

His lordship joined Locke and Drake in the library below.

"Do you think—" began his lordship, for about the twentieth time.

"Yes, he'll come through all right," smilingly interrupted Locke. "But it was a near thing—a very near thing. Another half an hour and—who knows?"

He drained the glass of refreshment the attentive butler had offered him, and stalked away from Lord Weatherstone and Drake, making once again for the box-room. Once there he closed the door and examined the silk neckerchief which had served as a gag. He seemed in no way surprised at finding the initials D.W.T. skilfully embroidered upon one corner of it, neither was he any more surprised when, delving into the packing-case, he encountered a card-case which also bore similar initials embossed in gold upon its outer surface, and a number of visiting-cards with the name of Daniel Willoughby Thundersley in one of the compartments.

A grim smile flickered over Locke's face as he pocketed the card-case and the neckerchief.

"A very pretty plot," he murmured to himself. "Clumsy maybe—very clumsy, but it would have been deuced awkward indeed for Master Daniel Willoughby Thundersley to give a creditable account of how these things came to be here."

He retraced his steps and rejoined Drake and his lordship.

"Cheer up!" he said breezily. "Things might have been worse—much worse." Then seriously: "I don't want a word of this breathed outside the house, my lord. You understand—not a

word. Can you rely on the servants—the Harley Street doctor?"

"You can take my word for it, Locke," said his lordship. "If you desire it—not a word shall be breathed about this ghastly, this terrible affair."

"Good!" exclaimed Locke cheerfully. "By complete silence I shall snare the villain responsible for this, but I insist that the matter should be kept a strict secret."

His lordship's face lightened. "Then you know who the miscreant is?"

Locke's face set severely. "I do. But there's more in this, my lord, than I wish to divulge at the moment. Please be patient, for this matter affects the whole future life of young Nobby."

His lordship was man enough not to question the detective further, albeit he fairly trembled with curiosity. Fortunately for him, the physician put in an appearance at that moment, and his smiling face told eloquently enough that Nobby was out of danger.

"He's breathing normally now. He'll sleep heavily, so don't disturb him. He'll be as right as a trivet in a couple of days, my lord."

And, with that cheering information, the Harley Street specialist intimated that he would depart, whereupon his lordship drew him on one side and extracted from him a promise of silence.

"Terrence, you had better ring for a nurse. Master Thundersley must be watched night and day until he's really well again."

The butler bowed. "I have taken the liberty of engaging a nurse in your lordship's name already, my lord," he said respectfully.

His lordship beamed.

"Terrence, you're the world's best butler—"

"Thank you, my lord. You are very kind, my lord."

"Even if you are the world's ugliest!" added his lordship, with a playful laugh. "Your wages are doubled. Now get out!"

"Which is what we must be doing, my lord," said Ferrers Locke, with a glance at his watch. "Come along, Drake!"

And, shaking hands with Lord Weatherstone, the pair of them made their departure, Locke reiterating the importance of the whole affair being kept a secret for the nonce.

Once in the car and heading for Baker Street, Drake ventured a question.

"Guv'nor, my brain's not equal to this case," he said wryly. "What are we going to do now?"

"Go home and get some sleep, my lad."

"And after that—" began Drake. "After that, my lad, we are going to visit Daniel Willoughby Thundersley and accuse him of the murder of Nobby."

Drake jumped.

"But he didn't murder Nobby, guv'nor, anyway!"

"I know he didn't," replied Locke, with a smile, "and he doesn't know much about this wretched business, either. That's why I'm going to accuse him of murder, see?"

Quite frankly Jack Drake admitted that he didn't see, and that he gave it up, whereupon Locke treated him to a flashing, affectionate smile, and bade him be patient.

In the circumstances Drake had to be!

(Daniel Willoughby Thundersley's booked for the biggest shock of his life in next week's thrilling chapters, chums. See that you order your MAGNET early, and so make sure of getting the TWO SPLENDID FREE GIFTS!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,314.

SAVED FROM THE SEA!

(Continued from page 25.)

"Potty, I suppose," said Coker. "Police—rats! Look here, George Cook, I want to know why you left me behind—see? And if you don't explain sharp—"

"Coker, old man—" gasped Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

"Coker—" gasped Greene.

"Dry up, Greene! Now, Mr. Cook—"

George grinned. He could grin now—his old hearty, genial grin.

"It's all right, Mr. Coker! That man's the Folkestone bank-raider, and he had a gun, and—and—and so that's how it happened. He thought the police were after him in that motor-boat. Lucky you came after us, sir! We're going back now—"

"Well, my hat!" said Coker.

And that was all Coker could say!

But Coker had lots to say later. Coker's view was that he—Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, was the man who had done the trick—the goods—the actual article! It was true that Wharton had knocked over the desperate man on the yacht, and that he had been secured before Coker arrived. Still, had not Coker pursued in the motor-boat it was fairly probable that the rascal would have got away—certain, according to Coker.

Indeed, Coker soon began to think that he had chased the Sea Nymph, not so much to have it out with George, as because he had a feeling that there was something wrong on board—something that needed looking into—something that required a fellow like Horace Coker to handle it.

Anyhow, Coker took unto himself the whole credit of the capture of the Folkestone bank-raider—and showed considerable annoyance when other fellows failed to agree.

Whether it was due to Coker or not, certain it was that the gunman was caught, and handed over to the Margate police, with his wallet of loot. The affair rather delayed the departure of the Easter cruisers; but nobody minded that—they enjoyed every hour of every day in Merry Margate.

THE END.

(There's heaps more fun and thrilling adventure in "THE SCHOOLBOY TOURISTS" next week's sparkling yarn of the chums of Greyfriars aboard the Sea Nymph. As there will be a great rush for next week's DOUBLE FREE GIFT NUMBER of the MAGNET, order your copy NOW!)

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. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

NOW that I have let you into the big secret concerning our coming FREE GIFTS, I guess you are all keyed up with excitement and waiting anxiously for the time when you can feast your eyes upon them. Never before has so great a treat been planned for MAGNET readers! And that's saying something when one remembers the popular free gifts the old paper has presented in the past!

Well, chums, the first of these

12 BIG PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES showing the World's **MARVELS IN MODERN ENGINEERING** will come into your hands next Saturday. And won't you be delighted! Grand, spiffing, gorgeous, superb—you will say all that, and then some!

In addition to the first of these unique photo-plates—which depicts **THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS AIRSHIP**, the Graf Zeppelin—you will receive a **HANDY LOOSE-LEAF FOLDER WITH A SPECIAL METAL FASTENER**

in which to put your souvenir plates week by week.

Glad you're a reader of the MAGNET? I'll say you are! A big point to remember, though, is this: you can only make sure of getting every one of these remarkable photogravure plates by giving your newsagent a regular order for the MAGNET without delay. Having done this, you will be doing me a great favour if you spread the good news among your chums. They will be as keen as mustard to participate in this splendid treat when you tell them all about it!

This week's grand school yarn of St. Jim's—**"CHUMS ON THE ROAD!"** by **Martin Clifford**,

wants some beating. Tom Merry & Co. actually get "sent to Coventry"! Are they downhearted? No, not a bit of it! And neither would you be, in the same circumstances! Get this week's GEM and read this gem of a school story. You'll find it well worth your while!

Owing to the little space at my disposal I've only just room for a few

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Schools of Acting (K. K., No Address).—The majority of first-class schools of

acting are in London. The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, 62, Gower Street, and the Guildhall School of Music, John Carpenter Street, E.C.4, are the principal ones. Write direct for prospectuses.

Who was "Jingling Geordie"? (Tom Purvis, of Sunderland:—This was the name of a notorious old wrecker, who lived near Tynemouth. He had only one leg, and his iron-shod peg-leg made a jingling sound as he walked over the rocks. A little cove to the north of the entrance to the Tyne is still marked on Admiralty charts as "Jingler's Hole.")

Learning to Play the Organ ("Magnetite," of Bury).—Several organ "Tutors" have been published. Ask your nearest local music shop to get one for you, and tell them exactly what you want. You should have no difficulty whatever in getting a book that will explain all you want to know.

What is the Range of a Shot-gun? ("Manucnian").—An ordinary modern game-gun should have a killing circle of 30 inches at a distance of 30 yards with the first barrel, and 40 yards with the second barrel.

The Climate of Manchester (Same Inquirer).—Manchester's climate is certainly not one of the worst in the world! But Lancashire has one of the most humid atmospheres in Great Britain—a fact which has made it the great cotton manufacturing centre of these islands.

Now we'll see what is in store for you next week! To begin with—

"THE SCHOOLBOY TOURISTS!" By **Frank Richards**,

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