

**X TREAD THE TRAIL WITH THE RIO KID-BOY OUTLAW! X**

# The POPULAR

Week  
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1928.  
New Series  
No. 516.

EVERY  
TUESDAY.

2c



**LOST IN THE DESERT!**

**A WOUNDED SHERIFF and a NOTORIOUS P... OUTLAW.**  
*Companions in a Terrible Adver...*

at it, feller," said  
"Hyer's your sup  
reckon you'd not get  
Smith's joint at Fr  
ng the rag, and cat, hombre  
THE POPULAR.—No. 516.



**THE ADVENTURES OF A HAMPER!**

Ever since it arrived at Rookwood, Gunner's hamper has gained surprising fame. But the climax of the whole affair comes when the lid of that hamper is lifted!

# Uncle Thomas's Surprise!

By  
**OWEN CONQUEST.**

ANOTHER ROLLICKING LONG COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

**Dickie Dalton Takes a Hand!**

**M**Y hat, it's a whopper!" Thus Dickinson minor, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood as he and his study-mate, Peter Cuthbert Gunner, staggered into their quarters, bearing between them a very large hamper.

"On to the table with it!" gasped Gunner. "Heave-ho!"

With a crash the big hamper landed on the study table, and Gunner looked round, with a red and perspiring face, at the crowd of juniors thronging into the study behind him.

"Hallo, what do all you fellows want?" he demanded truculently.

"Just having a look at your hamper, old man," said Valentine Mornington genially. "There's been such a fuss about it, we've all come to see it."

"Let's have a look inside, Gunner," urged Tubby Muffin, the fattest Fourth-Former at Rookwood.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Cuthbert snorted.

That gigantic hamper had only been at Rookwood a few hours, but already it was famous.

Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern House, the deadly rivals of the Classical juniors, had captured it from the porter's lodge, but by a masterly stroke of strategy Jimmy Silver & Co., of the End Study, had retrieved it intact during afternoon school.

Gunner himself had only just come into possession of his own, as it were. Owing to the fuss he had made about it, practically the whole Form were quite naturally interested in Gunner's hamper.

"Blest if I know what all you fellows want to come nosing round for," remarked Gunner, who was nothing if not outspoken. "It's my hamper, after all!"

"It would have been Tommy Dodd's by this time but for Jimmy Silver & Co.," grinned Conroy, the Australian junior, "so we all feel a proprietary interest in it, Gunner."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Open it, Gunner," squeaked Tubby Muffin, whose little round eyes were fixed on the hamper as if fascinated. "I'll help you, if you like."

"Like your cheek!" snorted Gunner.

"Keep your paws off, fatty! I tell you

what I'll do, though," continued Gunner. "This hamper's from my old Uncle Thomas. He's a funny old chap, interested in flints, and things—a bit of a fossil himself, I think. Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner looked round, pleased with his joke, and the group of juniors round the door sniggered dutifully. It was always as well to laugh at the jokes of a fellow with a hamper that size.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gunner. "Good joke, that—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd.

Peter Cuthbert dashed the tears of merriment from his eyes. He did not often pull off such a successful joke, and he appreciated the reception it had had.

"I tell you what, you fellows," he said good-naturedly, "there ought to be a heap of grub in this whacking big hamper. Let's have a feed in the dorm to-night!"

"Hear, hear!" came a chorus of approval.

"I say, Gunner," squeaked Tubby, "let's have it now, you know. It would be safer."

"Cheese it, you fat clam!" snorted Gunner. "We'll have it in the dorm. A dormitory feed round about Christmas-time is just the thing!"

"How are you going to get it there?" asked Dickinson minor dubiously.

Gunner pondered.

"Better run it up there now," he remarked. "Here, lend a hand, three or four of you! We'll take it up right away and shove it under the end bed."

"Hear hear! Good old Gunner!"

Mornington, and Conroy, and Tubby Muffin assisted Gunner to haul the big hamper off the table. They trod carefully upstairs with their heavy burden, for the big hamper was fearfully weighty.

They had just reached the dormitory landing when there was a hiss of "Cave!" up the stairs. The juniors in the Fourth Form passage scattered like chaff, and Gunner & Co. looked startled.

"Quick! In with it!" gasped Gunner. "There's somebody coming!"

The big hamper was rushed into the Fourth Form dormitory and hustled towards the end bed. But, alas, before it could be thrust out of sight, there

was a hurried footstep on the stairs, and a well-known voice hailed them.

"Boys! Gunner! Stop! What's all this?"

It was Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth Form.

The next instant Dickie Dalton, as he was commonly called, appeared at the doorway of the dormitory in person.

The four juniors turned sheepish looks upon their Form master. They all liked Dickie Dalton, but midnight feeds in the dormitory were not unnaturally frowned upon by the authorities of Rookwood, and at the moment they fervently wished Mr. Dalton elsewhere.

"What are you boys doing here?" repeated Mr. Dalton sharply. "And what's that? Ah, I see—a hamper!"

"If you please, sir," ventured Gunner. "I—I—"

"Yes, Gunner?" said Mr. Dalton pleasantly, eyeing Peter Cuthbert with a gimlet-like glance.

"We—we—" began Conroy feebly.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Dalton, almost genially. "You boys seem to find some difficulty in expressing yourselves. Is it possible that that hamper contains comestibles of an indigestible nature, Gunner? And am I right in supposing that the contents were destined to be consumed after lights out in the dormitory this evening?" continued Mr. Dalton inexorably.

"A fair cop!" murmured Mornington.

"What did you say, Mornington?"

"I—er—I was saying that you were quite right, sir," said Mornington.

"Ah," said Mr. Dalton genially, "and may I ask who is the owner of this enormous hamper?"

"Please, sir, I am!" said Gunner dismally.

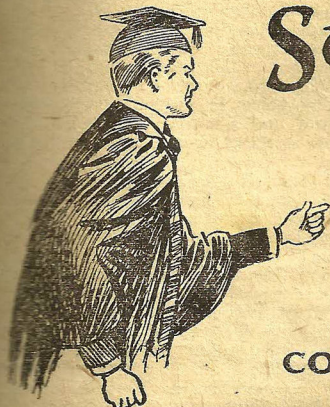
"Well, Gunner," said Mr. Dalton dryly, "you are aware, of course, that irregular meals in the dormitory at night are forbidden. Kindly take up the hamper again, therefore, and follow me."

And Mr. Dalton whisked out of the dormitory.

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Gunner. "Come on, you chaps!"

The four juniors picked up the heavy hamper again and trailed after the Housemaster down the stairs and along to the Master's passage. Mr. Dalton

THE POPULAR.—No. 516.





marched straight to his study and held open the door invitingly.

"Kindly place the hamper in the corner, over there," he remarked pleasantly. "So! That will do nicely. You may go now, boys!"

Tubby Muffin gazed at the Housemaster, anguish in his fat face.

"But, sir—"

"Well, Muffin?"

"Are you going to e-a-confiscate the hamper?"

"Kindly mind your own business, Muffin," said Mr. Dalton. "Go at once!"

Outside the Housemaster's door four juniors looked at each other with sickly expressions.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Gunner forcefully.

"After all the trouble that blessed hamper has caused, too!" said Mornington. "And now Dickie's confiscated it!"

Tubby Muffin gave a deep groan. His feelings were really too deep for words.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER.

#### Tubby Muffin is Foiled!

THE fate of Gunner's hamper was, needless to say, the sole topic of conversation in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth that evening. The general opinion seemed to be that Gunner was an ass, which was rather hard on Peter Cuthbert.

Instead of being fed up with the contents of the hamper, Peter Cuthbert Gunner was fed up with the subject in a different way. His indignation knew no bounds.

One by one, however, the fellows dropped off to sleep, with the exception of Tubby Muffin. The disappointment of that fat youth over the affair of Gunner's hamper was simply heart-rending.

Tubby Muffin took a very special interest in that hamper, and he felt that he simply could not leave it lying

undisturbed in Mr. Dalton's study. Tubby Muffin, in fact, had a plan, to which he could only have been nerved by the desperation of baffled greed.

He heard eleven o'clock strike, and then his fat figure slipped out of bed with hardly a sound. Tubby groped for his dressing-gown, slipped his feet into his bed-room slippers, and rolled to the dormitory door. Down the stairs he crept cautiously, and along the corridor into Masters' Passage.

The coast was clear, and Tubby observed with satisfaction that no light gleamed over the fanlight to the door of Mr. Dalton's study. The Fourth Form master had, therefore, presumably, retired for the night. The passage was lit very dimly, but Tubby knew his way well enough.

He paused with his hand on the handle of Mr. Dalton's study door, and listened fearfully, but all was still. The next moment Muffin was inside the study. He stood and gasped for a moment at his own temerity. There was no doubt that he was frightened, but his mind was fixed on Gunner's hamper, and Tubby meant to go on.

Inside the study it was pitch dark, and in the first two steps that Muffin made in the direction of the corner where the hamper lay he knocked over a small chair. To Tubby the resulting crash resounded through the house like the explosion of a bomb.

"Crums!" muttered the fat junior. "That's done it!"

But nothing stirred.

"I shall have to have the light and chance it!" was Tubby's next muttered remark.

He realised the impossibility of burgling the hamper, which was very stoutly corded, without any sort of light to see by.

With this desperate resolve, he switched on the electric light.

There lay the hamper quite untouched, and Tubby Muffin's eyes glittered.

He was just bending over it, with a pocket-knife in his hand, when the door opened and into the study walked Mr. Horace Greely, master of the Fifth Form.

"Ah, Mr. Dalton!" boomed Mr. Greely, in his rich, fruity voice. "I saw your light, and I just stepped in to ask you— Why, good gracious me, what is this?"

It would be difficult to say which of the two was the more startled, Tubby Muffin or Mr. Horace Greely.

At the first sound of Mr. Greely's booming voice Tubby had dropped the penknife and whisked round, his eyes almost starting from his head with fright.

Mr. Greely's eyes simply bulged.

The boom of his voice took on a deeper and a sterner tone.

"Boy! Muffin, what is the meaning of this?"

Tubby Muffin fervently wished that the floor would open and swallow him up. He realised, however, that this was impossible, and through his fat brain, stimulated by terror, flashed an idea which offered him the only hope of escape from his awful predicament.

Quaking inwardly, Tubby made a desperate effort to pull himself together. He fixed Mr. Greely with a glassy stare, and raised his arm slowly direct at the astonished master.

"Caitiff, stand aside!" was his extraordinary remark.

Mr. Greely fairly gasped.

"Muffin—boy—" he began; and then he broke off as a new idea came to him.

Tubby Muffin, quaking inwardly, rolled resolutely towards the door, staring straight before him.

"Caitiff!" he gasped again. "Stand aside! Touch me not!"

Mr. Greely, with a look of concern, skipped aside to allow Tubby to pass. He felt quite sure now that he was in the presence of a sleepwalker.

"Dear, dear!" he muttered. "The boy's asleep. Dangerous to wake him. Bless my soul!"

Tubby Muffin rolled past the staring Fifth Form master and trod slowly down the corridor towards the stairs and the Fourth Form dormitory. Mr. Greely, with a look of anxiety on his plump countenance, paced after him.

Thus, in a silent procession of two, they proceeded solemnly upstairs and into the dormitory where Muffin, silently divesting himself of his dressing-gown, slipped into bed and rolled over with a grunt.

Mr. Greely quietly withdrew, closing the door gently behind him.

"Extraordinary!" he muttered. "I must tell Dalton of this. Sound asleep—sound asleep!"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Not Tuck!

THE next morning Tubby Muffin said nothing about his nocturnal adventures. He very wisely decided that the best thing for him to do was to lie low.

Mr. Greely duly related the extraordinary circumstances to Mr. Dalton, who listened attentively, and remarked at the conclusion of the narrative, in somewhat dry tones: "Very extraordinary, indeed, Mr. Greely!" Possibly the dryness of his tone may have had something to do with the fact that he had already picked up a penknife near the hamper in his study and recognised it as Tubby's.

Knowing Tubby Muffin, Mr. Dalton was not long in putting two and two together, though Tubby Muffin little



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## TALES FOR ALL TASTES



dreamt of it. However, Mr. Dalton did not propose to confide his suspicions to Mr. Greely.

During the morning Peter Cuthbert Gunner, on thinking over the events of the previous day, had decided that he must make an effort to regain possession of his hamper. To this end, therefore, when morning break arrived, he proceeded to organise a sort of indignation meeting on the subject in the Form-room.

Needless to say, he met with considerable support. The whole Form

even licked rather than his hamper should have been confiscated.

Much encouraged, Gunner resumed:

"Bagging a fellow's hamper is too steep, that's what I say!" he shouted. "I'm jolly well going to ask Dickie Dalton to let me have it back, and I want you chaps to support me."

"What-ho!"

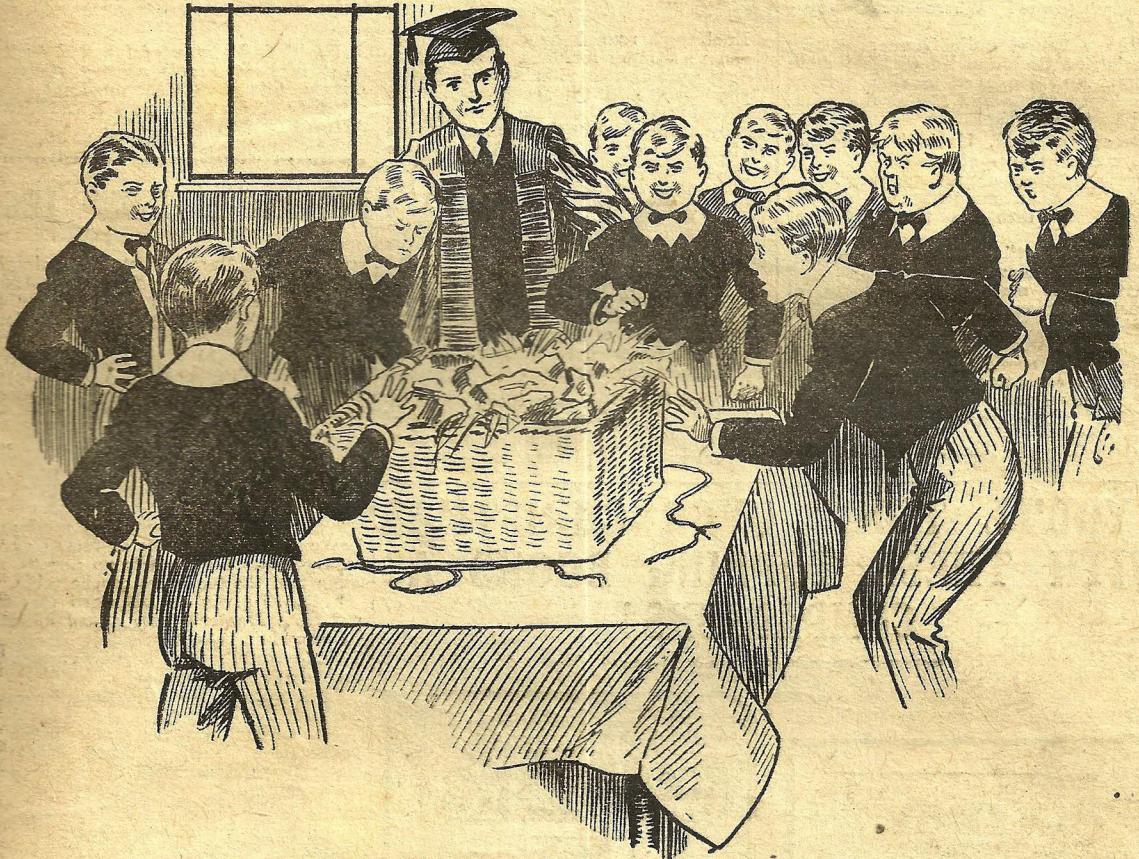
"We'll support you—you'll want it!" remarked Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well put it to him straight," bawled Gunner. "I shall say—'Look

was a general grin round the Form-room.

"As a matter of fact, Gunner," said Mr. Dalton quietly, "I heard a number of your remarks, and except that they might have been couched in—ah—slightly more respectful language, I cannot say that I disagree with them. I was merely, Gunner," continued the Form master, "proposing to give you a little lesson. Dormitory feasts are forbidden, and you know it. I therefore confiscated your hamper—for the time being."



**OH, WHAT A SHOCK!** With a heave the big hamper was thrown on to the table and Gunner sawed at the ropes that secured it with his penknife. Muffin's face fairly beamed. "Good old Gunner," he chuckled. "This is prime! Why—What—?" With a smile Muffin hurled back the lid of his famous hamper, and displayed to view, not tuck, but—fossils! (See Chapter 3.)

agreed that the hamper was no use to them in Mr. Dalton's study.

Peter Cuthbert, on the other hand, although he was every sort of an ass, was a generously disposed fellow, and in his hands an extra large hamper was likely to be whacked out lavishly all round.

That was how the Fourth looked at it. So there was a buzz of excitement and encouragement when Gunner mounted on a chair to air his grievances.

"What I say is," bawled Gunner, "Dickie Dalton has no right to bone a fellow's hamper!"

"Hear, hear!"

"On the bawl, Gunny!"

"Of course, we all know dormitory feeds are not allowed, and we were fairly copped. But a couple of hundred lines, or even a mild licking, would have met the case."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Gunner!"

There was no doubt of the applause that greeted this statement. There was not a fellow there who would not have preferred to see Gunner lined or

here, Dickie, what about it? 'Tisn't done to bag a fellow's grub, and you ought to know it."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the stuff to give him, Gunner!"

"Wait till I see him, that's all!" bawled Gunner. "Dickie's going to get it straight from me."

"Indeed, Gunner!" remarked a quiet voice, and Mr. Richard Dalton strolled into the Form-room.

There was a silence that could be felt, and Peter Cuthbert's jaw dropped.

"You were saying, Gunner?" remarked Mr. Dalton pleasantly. "Don't let me interrupt you, please."

Every eye was on Gunner.

Now was his chance to put it to Dickie Dalton straight!

But now that the grand opportunity had arrived Gunner did not seem to fancy it, somehow. He slipped hastily off the chair and dodged behind Dickinson minor.

"I—I—it's nothing, sir," spluttered Gunner. "I—I think I had better be going."

Mr. Dalton smiled grimly, and there

"Oh—ah—yes!" stammered Gunner.

"It was not, however, my intention to—er—bag your grub, as you put it, Gunner," continued Mr. Dalton, with a slight smile. "It is not against the rules of the school for a hamper to be opened and the contents sampled at a time like this, during break. You may therefore go to my study and fetch the hamper as soon as you like, Gunner. That's all."

And Mr. Dalton turned towards the door.

There was a buzz of applause.

"Bravo, Dickie!" sang out Mornington.

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

Peter Cuthbert stared after the departing Form master with a red face.

"Thanks awfully, sir," he murmured. "I—I say, sir—"

"Well?" Mr. Dalton stopped with a half-smile.

"If you will hold on a minute while we get the hamper I shall be awfully glad if you will stay and sample some of it, sir," said Gunner, going redder than ever.



Instantly came a buzz of excitement.

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Dickie!"

"Good for you, Gunner!"

With a smile and a "Thanks very much," Mr. Dalton stepped back into the room, and there was a rush of half a dozen fellows to bring the big hamper along.

With a heave the hamper was thrown on to the table, and Peter Cuthbert sawed at the ropes that secured it with his penknife.

Tubby Muffin's fat face fairly beamed.

"Good old Gunner!" he chuckled.

"This is prime! Where—what—why—oh!"

With a genial smile Gunner at long last hurled back the lid of his famous hamper and displayed to view a large quantity of flints and stones of curious shape and marking!

Instead of tuck, Uncle Thomas had sent him a hamper of fossils!

Peter Cuthbert almost staggered.

There was a moment of dismayed silence, and then one terrific yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors simply shrieked.

After the manifold adventures of Gunner's famous hamper and the difficulties he had experienced in getting possession of it, the situation struck them as being too comic for mere words.

But the exceptions were Gunner himself, who seemed stupefied, and Tubby Muffin, whose disappointment was simply tragic.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fourth.

"Fossils!" howled Mornington. "Hold am sending you a large hamper of choice specimens. Please study them carefully. I suggest that in order to popularise the study of geology among your young friends you should present the collection ultimately to the school museum.—Your affectionate uncle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Dalton tried to vain to keep his countenance, but was compelled to join in.

"Dear me, Gunner—ha, ha, fossils, apparently—ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Just one thing," gasped Mr. Dalton, "before I go. Allow me, Muffin, to return your knife. You dropped it in my study, I think."

And Mr. Dalton, with his shoulders shaking, fairly fled from the Form-room.

Rookwood roared over the joke of Gunner's hamper for days. Some of the fellows were curious to know what Dickie Dalton had said to Muffin when he handed him his knife and questioned Tubby about it. But that youth, fatuous as he was, was not so foolish as to give away any information upon that point.

He was well aware that, did they but know it, Rookwood fellows would view his nocturnal excursion for the purpose of burgling the hamper of fossils, as the cream of the whole joke.

Gunner's famous Uncle Thomas, however, had a further sensation in store for the Fourth Form, for at the bottom of the hamper of fossils was found an envelope addressed to Gunner. It contained the following note:

"Dear Peter,—You evinced some interest in the all-absorbing subject of fossils when you visited me last holiday. I promised you a pleasant surprise, so I

choice specimens. Please study them carefully. I suggest that in order to popularise the study of geology among your young friends you should present the collection ultimately to the school museum.—Your affectionate uncle.

"THOMAS GUNNER.

"P.S.—In order to provide you with the means of celebrating the arrival of the specimens by a little jollification, I am enclosing herewith a five-pound note."

That P.S. saved Uncle Thomas' reputation at Rookwood!

THE END.

(You'll find plenty of fun and excitement in next week's rousing story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, entitled: "LOVELL'S CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE!")

## PULLING LEVISON'S LEG!

(Continued from page 22.)

repayment of Hazel's debt to him simplified matters very much for the St. Jim's junior. He walked along cheerily to Study No. 4, and tapped at the door and looked in.

"Trot in," said Vernon-Smith, with a nod. "You're looking very chippy, Levison. Has Bessie Bunter smiled on you?"

Levison laughed.

"Ass!" he said politely. "I'm feeling rather chippy, Smithy. Hazel's paid me that ten quids."

"Great Scott!"

"Well, it's rather surprised me," said Levison. "As a matter of fact, I never expected it. I can settle up now."

He laid the ten notes on the table.

"Hazel's given me his word that it's not from Marjorie," he added quickly. "I wouldn't have touched it otherwise. I think Hazel's word is good enough on that, don't you?"

"Oh, quite!" said the Bounder carelessly.

He stuffed the ten notes into his pocket-book, Levison little dreaming that they had occupied the same place an hour earlier.

"Let's go down and talk to the distinguished visitor," suggested the Bounder, who had his own reasons for wishing the affair of the ten pounds to sink into oblivion without discussion.

"Right-ho!" said Levison.

And the two juniors went downstairs together, and Marjorie greeted Ernest Levison with a very sweet smile.

There was quite a happy tea-party in Study No. 2, Hazeldene and Levison doing the honours, and Harry Wharton & Co. and Vernon-Smith being specially invited to meet the honoured guest. Billy Bunter rolled in, and Levison picked up a cushion.

"You chuck that cushion—" Bunter began.

"Roll away!"

"And I'll tell Bessie—"

"What?"

"And she won't speak to you again!" said Bunter impressively.

"You—you—" gasped Levison.

"I mean it!" said Bunter.

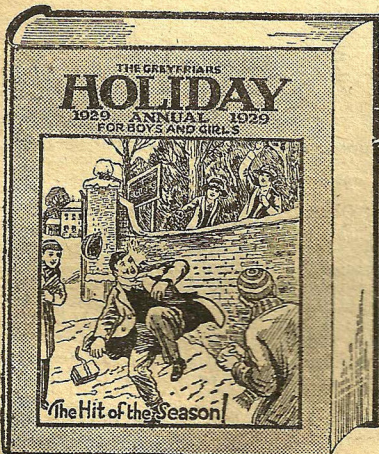
Whiz!

Perhaps Bunter's warning was an added inducement to hurl the cushion. At all events, it was hurled with deadly aim, and Bunter and the cushion rolled into the passage together.

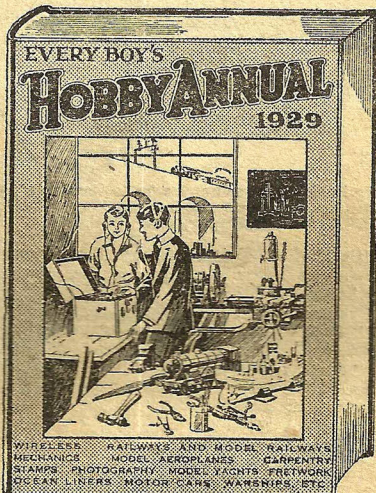
THE END.

("LEVISON'S ENEMY!" is the title of next Tuesday's topping story of Harry Wharton & Co. Don't miss it.)

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