

"THE BOOTLEGGERS' REVENGE!" A Thrilling Story of Schoolboy
Adventure in America.

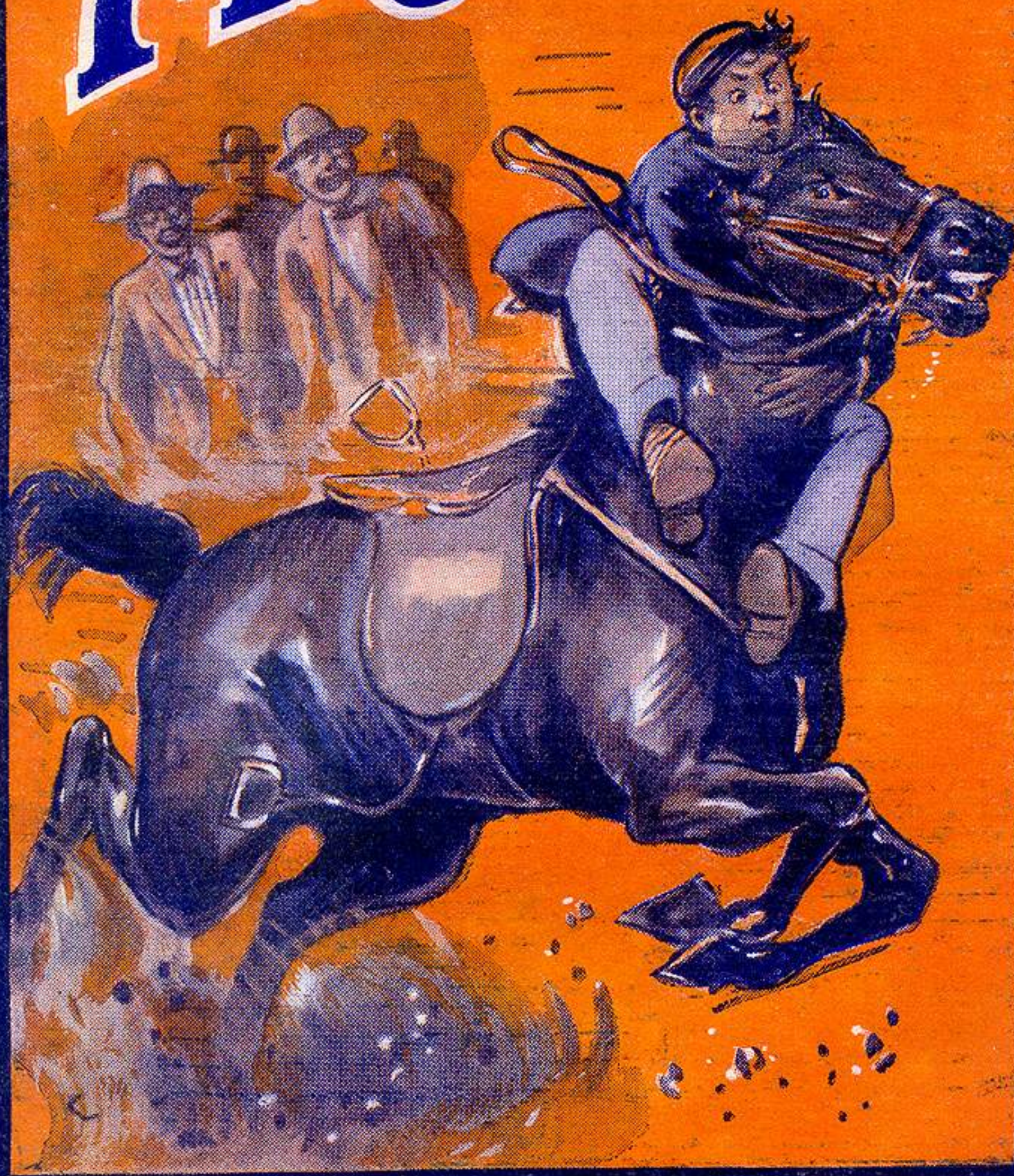
No. 1,101. Vol. XXXV. Week Ending March 23rd, 1929.

The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



COKER—THE HORSEMAN!

(A "moving" incident from the grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars—in this issue.)

The Bootleggers' Revenge

by Frank Richards

Punching a film star's nose seems to Coker an ordinary thing to do, for in his opinion noses of obnoxious people were meant to be punched. But the punching of Myron Polk's handsome nose leads to extraordinary consequences for Horace Coker!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets Left!

BANG!
Snore!
"Bunter!"
Snore!
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

Snore!
Whether Billy Bunter—even Bunter—could have slept, with Bob Cherry's powerful voice going full-steam ahead on the other side of the door, was doubtful.

But if Bunter heard, he did not heed. Really, he must have heard. Everybody in Long Beach Boarding-House, at Hollywood, could hear, as well as passers-by on the Sunset Boulevard.

But only a determined snore came in reply from Bunter.

He was not going to get up. It was only ten o'clock in the morning. At Greyfriars, certainly, Bunter would have had to turn out hours before. But he was six thousand miles from Greyfriars now. At Los Angeles, California, Billy Bunter did not mean to turn out at unearthly hours. Any hour before half-past ten was unearthly to Bunter.

At Long Beach Boarding-House breakfast was at nine, and any guest who did not turn up on time had to miss the meal. This, at first, had caused Bunter to rise early. But there is no problem that cannot be solved by a powerful intellect. Bunter had thought it out, and solved it. For an extra charge, breakfast was served in a fellow's room. The extra charge fell to Mr. Hiram K. Fish, so that did not worry Bunter. He breakfasted in bed, locked the door in case any beast should

disturb him, and settled down to happy slumber.

It did not matter, as a rule. Nobody felt any deep yearning for Billy Bunter's society. He was not wanted at the Perfection Studio, where Harry Wharton & Co. went every morning to work. Bunter was not in the cast for the great "school" film that was growing, under the eye of Mr. Rigg Schootz. So whether the fat junior loafed about the studio, or snored in bed, was of little consequence to anyone but Bunter.

On this particular morning, however, he was called—and called emphatically. The thumping on his door, and the powerful voice of Bob Cherry, grew more and more emphatic.

Bang! Thump!
"Bunter! Fatty! Fathead!"
Snore!

"Don't raise the roof, old chap," said Harry Wharton, coming along the passage. "Try a lower gear."

"The risefulness of the esteemed roof will be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The burstfulness of our ridiculous ear-drums will also be great."

"The fat ass!" exclaimed Bob. "If he doesn't turn out, he'll be left behind. The car's outside."

"We might manage to bear it if he was left behind," observed the Bounder.

"Well, we don't want to leave the fat duffer on his own," said Bob. "I suppose he's forgotten that we're going on location to-day." He banged on the door again. "Bunter! Fatty! Wake up!"

Snore!

"Oh, can it!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "I guess it don't matter a continental red cent if the fat jay don't mosey along with the rest of the caboodle."

"He doesn't want to be left behind," said the good-natured Bob, and he banged again. "Bunter! Bunt! Bunt!"

Snore!
Bang! Bang!

The snoring ceased at last. The fat voice of William George Bunter squeaked angrily at the fellows who were disturbing his balmy slumbers.

"I say, you fellows! Shut up! Clear off! Get out! Stop that thumping row, you silly idiots!"

"He's awake!" grinned Nugent.
"Turn out, Bunter!" shouted Bob.
"Shan't!"
"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull.
"We're going!"

"Jolly good thing, too! Go as soon as you like! The sooner you go the better! Shut up!"

"Don't you want to come?" demanded Bob, through the keyhole.

"No, I don't! I'm sick of hanging about the studio watching you fellows play the giddy ox! It's sickening for a fellow who can really act!"

"Oh, my hat!"



"You haven't provided a separate car for us!" asked Coker.

"Eh—what? Isn't there room in the bus?" demanded Mr. Fish.

"Plenty of room if you hang your feet outside!" called Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not travelling with a mob of cheeky fags, Mr. Fish!" said Coker, with lofty calmness.

"You'd rather walk?" snapped Mr. Fish.

"Certainly!" said Coker, with Olympian calm.

"Kouf it, then!" grunted Mr. Fish.

And he gave the driver the signal to start. The horn honked, and the bus got in motion.

Mr. Fish strode away, to get into a hurry about something else. He had no time to waste on the lofty Coker. Time, as Mr. Fish often said, was dollars, and dollars were to Mr. Fish what the golden calf was to the idolaters of ancient times. Mr. Fish's long legs whisked Mr. Fish away, and he vanished in one direction, while the motor-bus rolled off in another.

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. They seldom argued with Coker—it made life too strenuous. But they were on the verge of rebellion now.

"We'll walk!" said Coker, with calm dignity. "After all, it's a jolly morning for a walk."

"Do you know it's thirty miles?" inquired Potter.

"Oh!" said Coker.

He hadn't known it was thirty miles.

"We may be late for lunch at Jack-Rabbit if we walk it!" suggested Greene, with gentle sarcasm.

"Don't be an ass, Greene! The location's at Santa Monica, and that's only ten or twelve miles from Hollywood."

"Santa Monica Mountains!" said Potter. "The location's at Jack-Rabbit Canyon, about twenty miles past the town!"

"Don't be an ass, Potter! Santa Monica's on the coast, so it can't be past the town—unless it's on an island!" added Coker.

Coker could be sarcastic, too.

"You go along the coast, which bends westward just north of Santa Monica town!" said Potter, with an air of great patience, as if he were addressing a child.

"Oh!" said Coker again.

Potter and Greene glanced after the motor-bus. It was disappearing in the distance.

"Well, what are we going to do?" inquired Potter. "We've lost the bus. We can't walk it."

"I could walk it," said Coker calmly, "but I admit it's rather too much for you fellows. I'll get a car."

"Good!" said Coker's chums, brightening up.

"I haven't driven a car here yet," said Coker.

"Eh?"

"I'll hire one and drive you to the location."

"Oh!"

Potter and Greene seemed rather dismayed at the idea of being driven to the location by Horace Coker.

"What about a taxi?" suggested Greene.

"I'm going to drive a car."

"It's rather a hilly road," said Potter.

"That's all right. I'll get a good car."

Potter and Greene were not so particular about that. It was a good driver they were particular about.

"Come on!" said Coker briskly.

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"There's a garage down the street. I've noticed some good cars there. I can hire one easily enough."

"But—" said Potter and Greene simultaneously.

It was no use "butting." Coker started, and his chums followed him, with dubious looks. They remembered Coker's performances on his motor-bike at home. On his motor-bike at home, Coker was firmly convinced that he looked a master of the craft. To others, he seemed rather to resemble Death on a pale horse.

Potter and Greene were almost tempted to walk it, thirty miles as it was. Life was sweet.

While Coker was in the garage negotiating with the garage-man, they exchanged hurried whispers. By the time Coker emerged, having hired a car, Potter and Greene had disappeared.

Coker stared round for them in vain.

Where they had gone, and why they had gone, he could not understand. But they had gone. Even if they had to

Another "Magnetite" raises a roar of laughter and wins a useful pocket-knife!

WITTY!

When motoring down to Westminster one day a certain M.P. was held up in a narrow thoroughfare by a costermonger with a barrow-load of shrimps. "Move on, there!" cried the M.P. "Move on, yourself!" replied the costermonger. "Think you own the blinkin' street? I'll move when I'm ready." The Honourable Member became angry. "My good man," he said, "you evidently don't know who I am. I have M.P. at the end of my name." "So has every bloomin' shrimp on my barrow!" came the instant retort.

A penknife has been awarded to Eric Greenhough, 29, Red Lane, Farsley, Leeds.

Don't let the grass grow under your feet! Send in that funny yarn you've heard—to-day!

walk to Jack-Rabbit Canyon, in the Santa Monica Mountains, they were determined not to be driven there by Horace Coker. No doubt they felt that they were too young to die.

Coker stared round in perplexity. The truth dawned upon his powerful brain at last. He frowned. They did not trust his skill as a driver! They had seen him drive at home! In spite of that—or perhaps because of that—they did not trust him!

Horace Coker's jaw set grimly. If they did not choose to drive with him, they could go and eat coke! Coker started alone.

The garage-man stood and stared after him as he started. As soon as Coker was in motion, the garage-man began to doubt his wisdom in letting him have the car. But that reflection came too late. Coker was already going strong.

Fortunately, the traffic was not thick in the early morning. And there is said to be such a thing as fool's luck. Coker got out of Hollywood alive, leaving no dead behind him, though he left several other drivers gesticulating and yelling and a policeman foaming at the mouth.

The American habit of hustle was useful to such of the citizens of Los Angeles as happened to be on Coker's route that morning. They jumped for their lives.

Coker may, or may not, have been aware that the rule of the road in the United States differs from that at home. He favoured either side of the road with cheerful indifference. Sometimes the car seemed to develop a kind of obstinacy, and had to be given its head, like an unruly horse. On such occasions, Coker's progress resembled that of a very erratic rocket. People at quite a distance would give him one look, and then adopt hustling tactics. It was not uncommon for Coker to give the accelerator a shove in mistake for the brake. This certainly added to the excitement of the drive.

But Coker, at least, was happy. With a cheery face, he whizzed on his way, leaving rage and terror behind. It remained to be seen whether "fool's luck" would befriend him all the way to Jack-Rabbit Canyon. The chances were that it wouldn't!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Ructions on the Road!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! That's Polk!"

The Greyfriars bus was some miles out of Hollywood, following the road westward, with the hills rising blue to the sky on the right, and the vast Pacific in sight to the left. There was a buzz of cheery voices in the bus. Lord Mauleverer sat silent in a corner, with the "Los Angeles Film Ledger" open before him. His lordship was not reading the latest film news, however. He kept the paper open at one page, on which was displayed a photograph of one of the Perfection movie girls—Miss Leonora la Riviere. Mauly seemed deeply interested in that photograph. There was a far-away look in his eyes. Occasionally he smiled. But he held the paper so that the photograph was not visible to the other fellows in the bus. They had no view of the "Lovely Leonora."

From a lane in the hills, a horseman came out into the road. The juniors recognised Myron Polk, the Perfection star.

Polk, the greatest man in the Perfection company, was not going on location at the same time as the common herd. His brightly-polished, purple auto would bring him along later. Now he was enjoying a morning's ride, on the handsome black horse that figured in scenes in the "Lord of the Desert" film, in which Polk was figured as a dashing sheikh. It was a splendid horse, and Polk rode it well, and he undoubtedly looked a very handsome figure in riding-clothes. The "handsomest man in Hollywood," as the publicity agents called him, was worth a second glance; and, no doubt, the admiring glances he received in abundance accounted for the lurking expression of conceit and arrogance on his extremely good-looking face.

The Greyfriars fellows looked at him, as he appeared in sight ahead, not very admiringly. They knew too much of Myron Polk by this time to admire him.

"What a ripping gee!" said Bob. He admired the horse, if not the rider.

Lord Mauleverer looked up at that. His lordship knew all about horseflesh.

"Begad! That's a tip-top gee-gee!" said Mauly.

"I guess that critter's worth five thousand dollars!" said Fisher T. Fish impressively. Nothing had any significance for Fisher Tarleton Fish until it had been translated into dollars.

Suddenly conscious that several earthquakes were happening all at once, Coker sat up in the bush, and blinked all round him. Something was piled up by the roadside—something that had once been a car at the wheel of which Coker had been sitting! (See Chapter 3.)



Myron Polk glanced at the bus as he came riding down the road. He recognised its occupants, and his lip curled.

Johnny Bull gave a grunt.

"I never see that chap without wanting to punch his head," he remarked.

"The punchfulness of his esteemed napper would be a terrific pleasure," observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Coker punched it the day we came to Hollywood," said Harry Wharton, laughing, "but it's done him no good."

"He's a thorough rotter!" growled Johnny Bull. "We know jolly well that he hired that ruffian Gomez to attack Coker, and, according to Bunter, he hid the brute at his bungalow afterwards, when the police were looking for him. Blessed if I don't believe he's got make-up on his chivvy now!" added Johnny, with a grunt of disgust.

Myron Polk came riding down the hilly road, with a tight rein. The road was not wide at this point, and the motor-bus took up a good deal of room. The horse seemed restless and, as the bus roared up the hill, the animal shied from it. Polk drew the rein with a hard and cruel hand, and gave a sharp lash with his whip.

"Brute!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

It was injudicious, as well as unnecessary, to lash the horse, when the rider was penned in a narrow space between the bus and the wooded hill-side.

The horse reared, struggling with the rein, and Polk, with a black scowl, and a gritting of his teeth, lashed again with the riding-whip.

That Polk had a passionate and vindictive temper, the Greyfriars fellows were well aware. The fact that he had hired Gomez, the "thug" of Spanish Town, to "beat up" Coker of the Fifth was proof of it. Every face in the motor-bus glared at the handsome star as he wreaked his ill-humour on his steed. For a moment or two, it looked as if there might be an accident, for the high-spirited animal reared and plunged under the cut of the whip, and it was dangerously close to the motor-bus. Polk backed it with a wrist like iron, and the juniors, looking back, saw the horseman prancing and curvetting in the middle of the road.

"That chap doesn't know how to use a horse," growled Lord Mauleverer. "A man who loses his temper with a horse ain't safe in a saddle. That fellow wants a thumpin' horse-whippin'!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"I guess the sight of this crowd gets his mad up!" remarked Fisher T. Fish. "He sure don't like you galoots. You ain't been any too civil to him."

"He hasn't been any too civil to us!" said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, guff!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Polk's sure a big noise—and who are you galoots, anyhow? Nobody!"

"Fathead!" said Bob politely.

"That guy draws five thousand dollars a week from Perfection!" said Fisher T. Fish.

Evidently Fishy regarded that as the last word! A man who drew a thousand pounds a week was a man to be treated with awed respect by lesser mortals, in Fishy's opinion. But Fisher Tarleton Fish had that opinion all to himself. To the other fellows, money was not the beginning and end of all things.

The bus roared on towards the Santa Monica Hills, and Polk rode down the road towards Hollywood. He had his steed in hand again, but it was still restive. Polk, in his movie stunts, was a splendid rider; but he was, as Mauly had remarked, not a man who should have handled horses. When his temper was bad, his steed suffered for it, and arbitrary cruelty had the effect of making a high-spirited animal nervy and jumpy. For several minutes after the bus had passed, there was a contest between Polk and his Arab, in which the riding-whip came freely into play.

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Then he went down the road at a gallop.

"Honk, honk, honk!"

A car came rookoting up the road.

Polk stared at it.

It was a small light car, but it seemed to need more of the road than a fleet of lorries.

At the wheel sat Coker of the Fifth.

With an open country road before him, Coker felt that he could let the car out a little.

He let it out a lot.

On the screen, Coker, as a motorist, would have raised roars of laughter. He inspired quite other feelings on the road.

Which side of the road Coker regarded as rightly his, was not to be guessed from observing him. He seemed to have assumed all the road as his province, as well as some of the adjoining countryside. He grazed a meadow fence on the left, rocketed across the road, and nearly butted into the wood on the other side. Then he took middle for a few moments. Then, for some reason known only to Coker or, perhaps, unknown to him, he described a corkscrew course. Had Potter and Greene been able to see him then, they would have felt deeply thankful that they were not in that automobile.

Polk dragged in his horse, and drew close to the roadside to let Coker pass. He disliked very much making concessions to anybody; but Coker, in a car, was a fellow to whom the most stiff-necked person would have made concessions.

To Polk's alarm and rage the car headed straight for him, as if Coker meant to run him down.

Coker didn't mean anything of the kind. Coker's car ran so to speak, taken the bit in its teeth. Coker didn't mean to run into Polk. He didn't mean anything at all. He just whizzed.

With a wrench at the horse's head, Polk tore him away from the danger zone, leaping out into the middle of the road.

But as if the horseman had been a magnet, and irresistibly drew the car after him, the automobile changed its course, still heading for Polk.

Another wild jump saved him.

To pass Coker was impossible. Coker used up all the road and a little over.

With a glare of rage, Polk whirled his horse round, and fled from the car.

He had recognised Coker, and his impression was that Coker was doing this on purpose. Coker wasn't. He would have jammed on his brakes, had he thought of it.

Polk lashed his horse, and dashed up the road at full gallop. After him roared Coker's car.

It was a hot pursuit.

With whip and spur, Polk drove his horse to a frantic speed, the car zig-zagging behind him.

The horse was swift, but Coker, no doubt, would have won that remarkable race but for accidents. Fortunately—not for Coker, perhaps—accidents accrued.

Fool's luck failed Coker all of a sudden.

Exactly what happened, Coker never knew. Afterwards, he attributed it to some defect in the car, and severely blamed himself for having driven an American car. With an American car, Coker declared, you never knew what might happen. Possibly there was some truth in this; but it was an undoubted fact that, with Horace Coker at the wheel, it was impossible to tell what might happen.

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Coker was suddenly conscious that several earthquakes were happening all at once.

When they ceased, Coker sat up in a bush, and blinked round him.

Something was piled by the roadside—something that had once been a car. Coker had been tossed into the bush. He sat and blinked, waiting for earth and sky to resume their normal positions.

Far in the distance a clatter of hoofs died away. The Arab horse, scared out of its wits, with the bit between its teeth, was tearing along at frantic speed, and its rider had completely lost control. Polk, his hat gone, his reins over the horse's ears, clung frantically to the saddle, white as chalk, while the horse thundered on and on.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mauleverer Takes Control!

"POLK!"

"My hat!"

"Great pip!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had not expected to see the Perfection Star again that mornin'.

They saw him quite suddenly.

The motor-bus was rolling over a long, level stretch of road, when the clattering of hoofs behind drew the juniors' attention.

The bus was going at a moderate speed; the horseman behind gained on it at every stride.

The Greyfriars fellows stared back at Polk.

Hatless, white as a sheet, clinging to his saddle, Polk looked very different from the supercilious rider who had passed the bus a short time before.

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "That gee's runnin' away with him!"

"The runawayfulness is terrific!"

"He'll be thrown!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Lord Mauleverer laid down the "Los Angeles Film Ledger," and rose to his feet. Before his comrades guessed his intention, he had dropped from the bus without waiting for it to stop. He dropped lightly, running with the bus for a few moments, and keeping his feet. Then he stopped, and turned back in the road.

"Mauly!" yelled Bob.

His lordship did not heed.

He was standing in the road waiting for the runaway horse to come up—a matter of moments now.

Harry Wharton shouted to the driver to stop, and there was a jamming of brakes. The bus pulled in, fifty yards from the spot where Lord Mauleverer stood.

The juniors swarmed out of the vehicle, with the exception of Fishy. With runaway horses around, Fishy calculated that he liked the inside of a bus better than the outside.

Harry Wharton & Co. ran back along the road. But they knew that they could never reach Lord Mauleverer before the climax came.

Mauleverer stood like a rock.

There were times when the slacker of Greyfriars could be anything but slack. Now he was vigorous and alertness.

The maddened horse thundered down on him. Polk, lost to his surroundings in his terror, hardly saw the waiting figure in the road. Few could have faced without flinching the charge of the maddened horse. Mauleverer did not flinch. It seemed to the juniors, running towards the spot, that their chum would be hurled over and

trampled down under the thundering hoofs, and they halted, spell-bound with horror.

But Mauly knew what he was about. With a cool head, quick judgment, and a ready hand, he caught at the flying reins, and grasped them. The next instant he was torn from his feet.

But it was only for an instant.

With an unrelaxing grip on the reins, the horse swept round in a circle, Mauly the centre of the circle. Twice round Mauleverer the horse circled, in a cloud of dust. Then he was pulled to a halt.

Myron Polk was still clinging to the saddle, hardly conscious of what was happening.

With a rush, Harry Wharton & Co. came up. The Arab horse, trembling and sweating, stood obedient to Mauleverer's hand.

"Oh, Mauly!" panted Wharton.

"All serene," said Mauly coolly, though he winced. His right arm was feeling as if it had been almost dragged from the socket.

The horse was still trampling, but Mauleverer's grasp did not relax, and Wharton speedily lent him aid. In a few minutes the Arab was quiet, only panting in great gasps. Polk was still clinging to the saddle; but now he recovered himself a little, and alid to the ground.

"Not hurt?" asked Bob Cherry.

Polk shook his head. He was panting for breath, and the colour slowly returned to his white face.

"Something scared him?" asked Bob.

"A car—that too Coker!" muttered Polk.

"Oh, my hat! Coker in a car!" ejaculated Bob. "No wonder the poor old gee was scared."

Polk gritted his teeth.

"The mad fool! He tried to run me down in a car—"

"Well, he couldn't have meant to run you down," said Bob, with a stare.

"I tell you he did!" hissed Polk.

"He is following me now—"

"He jolly well isn't," said Bob, looking back along the white road that stretched away long miles to Hollywood. "He's not in sight."

Polk followed his glance. The road could be seen for a mile back, and there was no sign of Coker or his car.

"I—I suppose he stopped!" muttered Polk.

"More likely piled up the car!" said Johnny Bull. "Coker's fool enough for anything!"

"The howling ass!" said Nugent. "Potter and Greene ought to have stopped him. Lucky it's no worse!"

"I believe he meant to cause an accident!" said Polk, between his teeth.

"That's all rot!" said Bob unceremoniously.

Polk turned away from him with a snarl. The fact that he had been saved from what might have been a serious accident, by the Greyfriars fellows, did not mollify his feelings towards them. He was only conscious of the humiliation of having received help at their hands.

"Give me my horse!" he snapped to Mauleverer.

Lord Mauleverer quietly handed him the reins, and Polk grasped at them with a savage jerk that made the horse squeal and toss its head. In his right hand Polk still grasped the whip, and he raised it and lashed savagely at the horse's flank.

"Stop that, you cad!" shouted Mauleverer.

"You rotter!" bawled Bob Cherry, as the juniors jumped back out of the way of wildly trampling hoofs.

Polk's expression was one of sheer evil now.

His humiliation and rage were to be wreaked on the horse. He would have been glad to lay the whip round the juniors. But the horse, at least, he could punish, and he meant to do so without mercy. For the animal, even for its value, Polk cared nothing in the vindictive rage that possessed him.

The startled and frightened horse strove to back from him. Polk, gripping the reins, lashed again and again.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked grim. They were not disposed to stand by and see the noble animal ill-used. But it was Lord Mauleverer who acted, while the other fellows paused.

He strode at Polk, grasped him by the back of the collar, and dragged him backwards, with a strength that few would have suspected to dwell in Mauly's slim and graceful frame.

Polk staggered in his grasp, and the horse, backing and jerking at the same moment, tore its head loose.

In an instant the frightened animal was thundering back down the road, the way it had come.

Polk, heedless, for the moment, of the fugitive horse, turned on Mauleverer like a tiger, the whip uplifted to strike.

That blow never reached Mauleverer, however.

Two or three of the juniors grasped Polk at the same moment, the whip was torn away, and the Perfection star hurled headlong into the dust.

He landed with a crash by the roadside.

Bob Cherry tossed the whip away over the trees. He was strongly tempted to lay it round Polk first.

The Perfection star raised himself on his elbow, glaring in furious rage at the juniors.

"You—you—you—" he panted.

"You miserable cad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Your gee's gone now. You'll have rather a run to catch him again, I think. Begad! I'd kick you, only it would soil my boots!"

Polk staggered to his feet.

"I'll make you squirm for this!" he gasped, in a choking voice. "The whole gang of you."

"Is that the way you express your thanks?" asked Bob Cherry. "Is that the Polk brand of gratitude? You were an ass to lend him a hand at all, Mauly."

"Yaas."

Polk swung furiously away from the juniors. The fact that he owed his safety to Mauleverer was gall and worthwood to him. He almost wished he had been left unaided on the runaway horse—almost, but not quite. He turned his back on the Greyfriars party and started down the road. The horse, galloping with swinging stirrups, was already out of sight in the direction of distant Hollywood.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to the motor-bus and rolled on their way. Polk, dusty, dishevelled, and furious, tramped down the road, with little hope of recapturing the Arab horse before it elated into the boulevards of the film town.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Luck!

"H!" said Coker of the Fifth.

He gasped.

"Ow!"

Coker of the Fifth crawled out of the bush into the road. It had been a providential bush. It had saved Coker from a very unpleasant impact with the hard, unsympathetic earth.

He was shaken. He was bruised: He was dusty and untidy. He was breathless. But he was still all in one piece—which was really more than he had a right to expect.

For some minutes Horace Coker stood pumping in breath and gazing at the wreck of the car.

Coker flattered himself that he could do running repairs. He fancied that there were few emergencies in a motorist's career which he was not equal to. But he confessed to a limit, and he acknowledged that the car was beyond the limit. That car required handling rather on the lines of a jig-saw puzzle, and Coker shook his head over it.

It was piled up amidst a broken fence on the left side of the road. It was out of the way of traffic. Coker was glad of that; he was a considerate fellow. He decided that as soon as he got somewhere where there was a telephone he would let the garage man know where his car could be collected. That was all he could do, in the circumstances. He could not drive that car again—and he could not carry it away under his arm. So he left it where it was, wondering whether the garage man would have the cheek to stick him for damages, instead of admitting that the accident was the

Be like Leslie Kay, of Clements Arms, Small Heath, B'ham, and win a leather pocket wallet Here's his winning Limerick:

The "Owl," in the guise of a Lord,
Was invited to ride in a Ford.

For the "movies" to act
He was bent, and a pact
With "Parker" was made in
accord.

**NOW HAVE A SHOT AT
A LIMERICK YOURSELF,
CHUM!**

fault of the car. It was very probable that the garage man would!

In the meantime, the question arose, what was to be done? Coker was many miles out of Hollywood, and still many more miles from his destination. He was disinclined to turn back, but going forward meant a tremendously long walk, and he was feeling rather too shaken up for it. As there seemed nothing else to be done, however, Coker turned his back on the car and started up the road, hoping to get a lift on the way, sooner or later.

It was just as well for Coker that he lost no time in getting out of the neighbourhood of the wrecked car, and that he did not start for Hollywood. Pursuers were on Coker's track. A police car was chasing the wild driver who had scattered terror and dismay in his wake. Coker was far out of sight, round a bend of winding, hilly road, before the wreck was overtaken, however. He tramped on, unaware of the danger he had escaped.

Coker tramped on and on. Cars passed him, going and coming, but there was no prospect of a lift.

Coker was tired, and dusty, and warm. Presently he sat down on a grassy knoll by the roadside to rest.

Then he observed a straying horse that was grazing near at hand. To his surprise, he recognised the black Arab that had been ridden by Myron Polk.

He wondered what had become of Polk. He had forgotten the Perfection star. Now he remembered him, and

wondered whether the silly-ass who had so clumsily got in the way of his car had had an accident. If he had, Coker was sorry. But he could not help thinking that it served the fellow right. A fellow who couldn't keep out of the way of a car driven by a masterly hand deserved what he got.

The horse, having galloped several miles back down the road, had dropped into a walk at last, and then turned from the road to the grass and grazed. Coker could ride—as well as he could drive a car! There could be no harm in borrowing the horse for the rest of the trip to Jack-Rabbit canyon. In fact, that popinjay, Polk, ought to be obliged to him for bringing in the horse, which was obviously straying, and might get knocked over by some car if it strayed in the road.

Coker rose from his resting-place and approached the horse cautiously. He caught the trailing reins. The horse jibbed a little, but allowed Coker to mount; and it was a great relief to Coker to rest his aching limbs in Polk's handsome and expensive saddle.

"Gee up!" said Coker.

He smacked the horse and jabbed his heels into its ribs. The Arab ge'd up. Coker guided him up the road, greatly relieved at getting this timely lift on the way.

But the treatment the noble Arab had received that morning had shaken up his nervous system, and he was restless and jumpy. He shied and pranced as a fast car came whizzing along the road. Coker dragged at the reins, but the horse knew—better than Coker could have told him—that it was not a master's hand that held him. After the car had passed it left Coker and the horse prancing wildly. Coker had a list to port, and he saved himself by a wild struggle that gave him a list to starboard. Then he pitched forward, and saved himself again by claspings the horse round the neck.

That attitude, though not picturesque, seemed safer, and Coker wisely kept to it. The fact was that Coker was not one of those fellows born to "witch the world with noble horsemanship." His belief that he could ride was only one of Coker's many strange beliefs that had no foundation whatever in fact.

The horse made several efforts to shake Coker off, startled and dismayed by that affectionate embrace round his neck.

But Coker was a stickler.

If he could not ride, he could hang on—and he hung on. The more the horse pranced the tighter Coker clung, like a limpet to a rock. He gasped and spluttered, and yelled. "Whoa!" to heedless ears. The Arab broke into a gallop; and as another car came roaring along the animal turned off the road into a path over the hill, much to Coker's relief. He was not now thinking so much of getting to his destination as of saving himself from a collision with a car, or a nasty fall. It was a great relief to get off the road into the country.

He passed two or three people, who stared and roared at the sight of Coker clinging to the horse's neck.

Coker did not heed them.

He had all his work cut out to keep on. He gave his attention strictly to the business in hand.

Where the horse was going Coker had no idea, except that it was taking him into the hills.

Having lost the reins, and not venturing to unloose his clasp on the neck, Coker had no means of stopping the horse. He only hoped that it would

stop of its own accord sooner or later. He ventured a hasty blink round him at intervals, and found that he was in a country of hills scattered with trees. These, he knew, must be the Santa Monica mountains—somewhere in which was Jack-Rabbit Canyon, where the Perfection Company were on location. All traces of road and path were lost by this time; he was clattering over wild hillsides without a track.

By this time Coker regretted that he had borrowed the horse. He could not help feeling that this lift might cause him to have a longer walk than ever, in the long run. But it was too late to think of that.

The horse stopped at last.

Perhaps he realized that the rider on his back was not some fearsome creature, and that there was no harm in him, after all. Anyhow, he stopped and began to graze.

Coker cautiously unloosed his grasp, slid over the horse's head, and bumped into the grass.

"Ow!"

The horse stared at him and trotted away.

Coker let him go.

Wherever he was, and howsoever far he might be from his destination, Coker was not disposed to ride Polk's horse any more.

He sat where he was, staring about him; and the horse disappeared among the thickets on the hillside.

Coker picked himself up at last. He tramped away, hoping to strike some track, or path, that might guide him out of the apparently pathless hills, or to meet some native who could give him a direction.

It seemed that luck was in his way, for a quarter of an hour later he sighted a man who was emerging from a hollow in the hill. Coker waved his hand and shouted.

"Hi!"

The man, with a startled look, spun round and stared at Coker. The Fifth-Former of Greyfriars noticed that he was a swarthy fellow, but his face was half-hidden by a Mexican sombrero. Coker hurried towards him.

"I say, I'm lost in these hills," said Coker. "I want to get to Jack-Rabbit Canyon. Can you tell me—"

He broke off.

"You!" he stuttered.

"Muy bien!" said Gomez, the "thug" of Spanish Town. "So we meet again, senior!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Location!

"SO this is the jolly old location!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton & Co. were strolling about Jack-Rabbit Canyon, in the Santa Monica Mountains, keenly interested in all they saw.

The canyon was a wide, open space, shut on either side by towering cliffs, wooded here and there.

The lower end was open to the view of the sea, which rolled blue in the sun at less than a mile's distance.

The upper end was closed by wild and irregular rocks and cliffs, seemingly impassable to any foot but that of a mountain goat.

Down the canyon from the upper hills brawled a torrent, flashing and rippling in the sun.

At one spot it was crossed by a wooden bridge. Near the bridge stood an old building of adobe—sun-baked bricks—evidently left over from Mexican days.

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The adobe building, which had once been a rancho, was now the headquarters of the Perfection Company, having been hired by Mr. Schootz for that purpose.

The Perfection Company had the canyon all to themselves. It was one of the most solitary places in the hills. But it had plenty of occupants now, for the Perfection Company was numerous.

Mr. Schootz and the more important members of the company had their quarters in the old rancho. Other members were accommodated in out-buildings and in tents. The Famous Five had rooms in the rancho.

Early as the season was, it was already summer in the glorious climate of Southern California. The days were hot, though—as usual in California—the nights were cold.

The juniors had by this time seen a great deal of the work in a movie studio; but this was their first trip to "location," and they found the change from Hollywood very agreeable.

Many pictures were to be "shot" at the location—some in the canyon and the surrounding hills, some in the fields below, some on the wide stretch of sand that bordered the Pacific. Mr. Schootz had more than one picture in hand—the principal being the "Lord of the Desert" film, in which Myron Polk was chief actor; and the school film, in which Harry Wharton & Co. were taking part.

Whether Myron Polk was to pitch his quarters in the camp the juniors did not know. The leading lady, Janet Joose, remained at her luxurious flat in Hollywood, and was to come out in her car when wanted. But a "frame house" near the old rancho accommodated a number of "extra girls"—extra girls not, as a rule, being the possessors of cars. Among the movie girls on the location was the one in whose photograph Lord Mauleverer had been so deeply interested.

His lordship, strolling round the location with the Famous Five and the Bounder, suddenly stopped and caught his breath, and his gaze became fixed. A female form had appeared from a grove of orange-trees near the stream; and Mauly's amiable face went red, then pale, then red again.

"Jolly place!" said Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's one of the movie girls! I believe I've seen her before."

"Blessed if I can tell one from another!" said Johnny Bull. "Their chivvies aren't nearly as thickly plastered out of doors as in the studios."

"You silly ass!" said Mauleverer.

"Eh?"

"Cheese it, you fathead!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors stared at Mauleverer. It was very uncommon for his lordship to speak sharply. But there was quite a note of acerbity in his voice now.

"What's the row, Mauly?" asked Bob, in wonder.

"Oh, rats!"

"Do you happen to know that young lady?" asked Bob.

Mauleverer gave him a withering look.

"You chump! It's Miss Leonora la Riviere."

"Oh!" said Bob, giving the movie girl under the orange-trees another look. "Is it? Yes, I remember she had red hair now."

"Don't be a coarse idiot, Bob!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"If you can't tell beautiful auburn hair when you see it, dry up!" said Mauleverer.

"Oh, scissors!"

"It's Miss Snookson right enough,"

said the Bounder; "only she's got on rather a different complexion to-day."

"That young lady's name is La Riviere," said Mauleverer stiffly.

"Oh, shut up!"

"What's the matter with Snookson?" demanded Vernon-Smith. "Doesn't Shakespeare say, 'What's in a name?' Snookson mightn't do for the films, but it's all right for home consumption."

The juniors grinned. They remembered that Mauly had displayed signs of tender attachment towards the movie girl whom he had rescued from the fire at Perfection studio. This was, in fact, one of Mauly's little weaknesses. Some of the fellows remembered a young lady at the bunshop near Greyfriars, to whose fascinations, for a time, his lordship's susceptible heart had succumbed.

"You get on my nerves a little, Smithy, if you don't mind my mentioning it," said Lord Mauleverer coldly. "There's such a thing as manners, you know—or perhaps you don't know."

"Look here, you silly ass—" began the Bounder warmly.

"Cheese it!" snapped Mauleverer.

"I can jolly well tell you—"

"Peace, my infants!" said Bob Cherry soothingly. "Peace in the giddy family circle."

"Shurrup!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Miss Snookson's coming this way."

"If you say Snookson again, I'll jolly well punch your head!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer.

Johnny grinned, and was silent.

"Snookson!" said the Bounder at once.

Lord Mauleverer turned on him. Harry Wharton hastily interposed. For once his amiable lordship was really angry.

"Hold on, you duffers! Do you want to let a lady see you scrapping? Behave yourself, Smithy!"

Miss La Riviere, otherwise Snookson, was bearing down on the party. Obviously, she had recognised the gallant schoolboy who had saved her from the fire at Perfection.

The juniors raised their hats politely. Lord Mauleverer turned the colour of a beetroot as he saluted the "Lovely Leonora."

Miss La Riviere extended her hand to Mauly with a charming smile. He took it as if he fancied it a delicate piece of china.

"I guess I've been coming to see you, kid," said Leonora.

"Oh, ah—yaas!" said Lord Mauleverer, in a gasping voice.

How old Leonora was none of the party could guess. Signs of age, if any, were hidden under the decorative effects of the beauty parlour. But they had no doubt that she was a good many years older than the schoolboy earl. She seemed to be a rather nice, good-natured girl, as far as the juniors could see; and they could not help wondering what she would have thought had she guessed that Mauly had "fallen" for her charms. Probably she would have considered him "some gink."

"It sure was the elephant's hind leg, the way you booked me out of that flare-up," said Leonora. "And you a kid, too!"

"Not exactly a kid!" gasped Mauleverer. "I—I—I'm over fifteen, Miss La Riviere."

"I sure was skeered a whole heap," went on Leonora, unheeding. "But now it's over, what luck! What?"

"What?" ejaculated Mauleverer.

"Luck?"

"Just a few!" said Leonora, with a laugh. "It's got me into the papers."

"The—the papers?"

Getting into the papers was about the last thing in the universe that would



With a cool head, quick judgment, and a ready hand, Lord Mauleverer caught at the flying reins, and grasped them. The next instant he was torn from his feet as the horse swept round in a circle! (See Chapter 4.)

have gratified Lord Mauleverer. But the view of a movie girl, with her daily bread to earn, was, naturally, different.

"Yep," said Leonora brightly. "Movie girl nearly burned to death—gallant rescue by an English nobleman—and all that! I've got my picture into the 'Film Ledger'—right in!"

"Oh!" gasped Mauleverer. "I sure gave the reporter the glad eye and fixed it," said Leonora cheerily. "They wasn't keen on the picture when they found I was only an extra. But I sure gave that reporter looks like candy till he fell for it."

Harry Wharton & Co. politely moved away. They were not wanted on in this last scene—least of all by Lord Mauleverer.

"It sure was real luck," went on Miss La Riviera. "It hit me right where I lived, you bet your best hat. You see, p'r'aps you ain't wise yet to Hollywood ways. What? Publicity's the thing! Gets before the public! Make your existence known! Hit the eye! See?"

"I—I—I see!" stuttered Mauleverer. "How many folks in Hollywood knew there was such a girl as me in the place at all, before the fire?" said Leonora. "Not a gink! I've made the rounds of the studios till my shoes were nearly worn off, and I was sure lucky to bag an extra part at Perfection. Now all Hollywood knows I'm around! See? Why, this morning the folks were rub-

ber-necking on the boulevard to get a look at me." Leonora chuckled. "I'll tell the world. I ain't going to be lost in the crowd again—not little me, you bet your silk socks!"

"Oh, begad—yaas!" "It's the making of me," said Leonora brightly. "But if you hadn't hooked me out, kid, I guess I shouldn't have been looking for bookings on the movies any more. You want to know I'm ever so much obliged. A plucky kid, you are, I'll tell the world! You feeling all O.K. again?"

"Oh, yaas—quite!" "You've still got a mark or two on your face," said Leonora. "My! When I think what might have happened!" She squeezed Lord Mauleverer's hand. "Kid, you're the real goods, all wool and a yard wide, I'll tell the world!"

And, with a bright smile to his lordship, Leonora left him and walked away to the frame-house.

Lord Mauleverer stood gazing after her.

He stood rapt. In the mouth of Fisher T. Fish, Mauleverer had never liked the American language. It had rather got on his noble nerves. But circumstances alter cases. From the lips of Leonora it was like unto the music of the spheres.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry from the distance. "Mauly! Grub, old bean!"

Lord Mauleverer started from a dream.

"Eh—what?" "Grub!" shouted Bob. "Grub!" repeated Mauleverer, with ineffable disdain.

His thoughts were on things more romantic than grub.

On second thoughts, however, he realised that he was ready for lunch, and joined the other fellows. But it was in a mood of abstraction. And when the Bounder introduced salt into his pie, Mauly did not even notice it. Mauly evidently was getting into a serious state. His friends could only hope that he would recover before he reached the stage of a proposal. That indeed would have been what Fishy called the elephant's hind leg and the grasshopper's whiskers!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter was glad to see Potter and Greene.

Bunter was on the piazza of Long Beach Boarding-House when the two Fifth-Formers came up the garden.

Potter and Greene were rather at a loss.

They had backed out of sight when Coker started on his wild career as a motorist. That was merely prudent. If Coker scattered himself and the car in small fragments along the road from Hollywood to Santa Monica, naturally, Potter and Greene did not want to be strewn along with him and it. But they were left at a loss. They had to get to Jack-Rabbit Canyon to join the Perfection Company. They could not walk it; and, without Coker to foot the bill, they could not hire a car. Even at home the hire of a car for thirty miles was rather expensive. In the United States it was fantastic. There was no doubt that Coker's friends missed him when he was absent. Coker had many uses.

Having decided at last to take the ordinary bus to Santa Monica town, and there look for a lift to the location, Potter and Greene came back to the boarding-house before starting, for lunch.

At what time they would wander into the location they did not know, but it was likely to be nearer supper than lunch.

Billy Bunter turned his little round eyes and his big, round glasses on them in relief. He was glad to see them. Bunter, coming down at twelve, had found himself deserted. Like Potter and Greene, he had the problem before him of getting to the location. But in his case it was a more severe problem—a problem that made anything in Euclid look easy. For Bunter was unprovided with that necessary article, cash—more necessary in the United States than in any other country. He still had the threepenny piece he had brought from England, and upon which he founded his usual remark that he had "only English money about him." But a threepenny piece was obviously useless as journey-money, especially as it was a bad one.

"I say, you fellows," called out Bunter, "where are the other chaps?"

"Gone!" grunted Potter.

"Cheek, you know!" said Bunter. "I told them distinctly that I should be ready to start later. I told them to ask old Fish to wait! Yet they've gone off and left me—after all I've done for them!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Potter.

"But it's all right," added Bunter brightly. "I suppose you're going? I'll come with you."

Potter and Greene went into the house without replying to that. The prospect of Bunter's companionship on the trip did not seem to elate them.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

There was no doubt that the Fifth-Formers were beasts, for anybody but a beast would have been glad, of course, of Bunter's company. Paying Bunter's expenses en route would have been regarded as a privilege by any right-minded fellow. But beasts as they were, Bunter meant to travel with them. It was Hobson's choice with Bunter; a case of beastly company or none.

So after lunch, when Potter and Greene walked away from the boarding-house to catch their bus, William George Bunter rolled after them.

They caught their bus.

So did Bunter.

They frowned at him, and secluded themselves as far from him as the dimensions of the bus allowed.

Still, they could not object to Bunter travelling in a public vehicle, if he liked. Bunter travelled.

When the question of a fare arose he referred to Potter and Greene. He did not mind which of them paid his fare—or whether they clubbed together for

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it. All he cared about was that it should be paid. Potter, breathing wrath, paid it—to avoid a scene on the bus, promising himself to take it out of Bunter in kicking when they landed at Santa Monica.

It was late in the afternoon that Santa Monica was reached.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter, as Potter and Greene consulted about the next step on the journey.

Potter took him by the collar, slewed him round into a favourable position, and proceeded to indemnify himself for the bus fare.

Thud, thud, thud!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

He jerked himself away, and retreated.

He was done with Potter and Greene. Potter obviously was prepared to expend more boot-leather if Bunter approached. Bunter had had enough. With his usual cool cheek Bunter had intended to hook himself on to the two Fifth-Formers for the journey; whether they liked it or not being quite immaterial to Bunter. But he was unhooked now.

From a distance, with a morose eye, he watched Potter and Greene. They had still fifteen or twenty miles to cover from the town of Santa Monica to get to the location. Finally, for a considerable consideration, they obtained a lift in a country cart that was going within a few miles of Jack-Rabbit Canyon. Those remaining few miles they had to walk. Fortunately, their baggage had gone with the juniors in the motor-bus that morning.

Bunter, with a morose brow, watched them depart. Decent fellows would have been glad to put up an extra five dollars for Bunter. Bunter's fascinating company would surely have been cheap at a pound. Potter and Greene evidently did not realise that. In fact, they seemed to have forgotten Bunter's existence. Anyhow, they departed—and Bunter was left on his lonely own.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bunter.

The last state of the Owl of the Remove was really worse than his first.

He had done about half the journey, certainly; but he was now landed in a strange town with a bad threepenny-piece in his pocket, and already feeling the need of refreshment.

Had he stayed in Hollywood, at least he would have had food and shelter at Long Beach Boarding-House. At Santa Monica he was in the unenviable position of Robinson Crusoe on his island. All his wants had to be provided for by himself, and the prospect was gloomy. Those Fifth-Form beasts had let him down, and what was going to be done was a more pressing problem than ever.

What was going to be done, with Bunter, generally meant, who was going to be done! But at Santa Monica there was nobody to be "done"—Bunter was prepared to "do" anybody, but there was nothing doing!

To hire a car, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. to pay at the other end, was his natural resource in such circumstances. Bunter had done this on more than one occasion; and on the last occasion the juniors had paid up, but they had bestowed a severe ragging on the Owl, and promised that next time it happened they would give him the ragging over again without paying up. Bunter had a feeling that they would keep their word; he was accustomed to selfishness and ingratitude, and nothing those beasts did would surprise him. So that resource was cut off.

It really looked as if Bunter would have to walk—which was impossible—or else camp on the beach at Santa Monica without anything to eat—which was

doubly impossible, and utterly unimaginable.

He wandered down to the beach in a troubled frame of mind.

During his brief engagement at Magio Films, Bunter had had dollars of his own. They had gone the way of all Bunter's cash, unfortunately. A fellow had to have something to eat. As had happened before, many a time and oft, he was down to his last threepenny-bit. Indeed, had Bunter, as he fondly hoped, secured a million-dollar engagement on the pictures, it was probable that his riches would have taken unto themselves wings and flown away—in the form of refreshments, liquid and solid—leaving him at long last only that small coin which had accompanied him from England.

The sun was setting on the broad blue Pacific but the beach was crowded; the blue waters dotted with boats and sails. A boatman sitting on the gunwale of a boat drawn up on the sand, inquired whether Bunter would like a sail. Bunter shook his head—he was not looking for diversions. Then he suddenly remembered that Jack-Rabbit Canyon was not far from the sea, though a good distance along the coast from Santa Monica.

He turned back to the boatman.

"You know Jack-Rabbit Canyon?" he asked. "Place where a film company is on location."

"Sure!" said the boatman.

"Could you land me near it?"

"Sure!" said the boatman. "Just opposite—ten minutes' walk up the shore."

"Good!" said Bunter. "I'll take your boat, then."

"Ten dollars," said the boatman.

"That's all right."

The boat was pushed out, Bunter boarded it, and the sail was hoisted. The boat swept out into Santa Monica Bay.

Bunter settled down comfortably.

The sun was sinking deeper and deeper, level rays crimsoning the blue waters. Most of the craft were now making for the shore. At a little distance from the coast, rising in terraces towards the blue hills to the north, the boat ran on. Dusk was deepening over the sea when the boatman turned his prow towards the shore at last, running for a little cove that opened in the cliffs.

Billy Bunter felt a tremor or two.

His fat conscience was not troubling him. When a fellow had to get somewhere he had to get there, and if he couldn't pay his way, naturally, he had to go with his way unpaid. That satisfied Bunter; but he felt a strong doubt as to whether it would satisfy the Santa Monica boatman. But Bunter, like many fatuous and obtuse people, had a vein of slyness in him. He was aware that it would be dark, or nearly dark, by the time the boat landed on the shore opposite Jack-Rabbit Canyon. Once he got out of that boat, the chances were that he would be able to dodge the boatman. He did not intend to enter into any sordid argument about money if he could help it. To dodge a taxi-driver was impossible; but Bunter hoped that the boatman would prove easier game. The chances, he considered, were in his favour, and if the worst came to the worst, anyhow he would be at his destination.

The boat ran in and bumped on the sand at the foot of the cliffs.

"I guess we're here," remarked the boatman.

Bunter blinked round him.

"Where's Jack-Rabbit Canyon?" he asked.

The boatman waved his hand to the darkness ashore.

"You follow this gully, and you get out of the cliffs, and you see the canyon just ahead," he answered—"about a mile back from the sea."

"Well, step ashore and point it out to me," said Bunter. "I don't want to get lost, you know. My friends are getting rather anxious about me by this time, I think."

"I got to get back to Santa," remarked the boatman, "and time's money."

"I don't mind another dollar," said Bunter.

"You've said it!" agreed the man, with alacrity.

And he jumped ashore and tied the painter.

Bunter followed him.

He had stated the precise truth; he was quite indifferent whether he bilked the boatman out of ten dollars or eleven.

He followed the man up the sandy gully and emerged on the cliffs. It was quite dark now; but far off in the darkness, against the black wall of mountains that faced the coast, a light twinkled.

The boatman pointed to the distant twinkling light.

"I guess that's on the location," he said. "There ain't usually a light in

that old rancho there. You want to hit for that light."

Bunter did not reply.

He had fallen a little behind the boatman, and now he dodged round a high rock out of sight.

"Just keep on up the shore, and you'll sure strike a road," the boatman went on. "Keep that light in your eye, and you'll hit Jack-Rabbit Canyon. You—Thunder! Where are you? Here! Hey! What! Great snakes, where is that galoot? Hallo!"

The "galoot" heard him.

But he heeded not.

William George Bunter was crouched in a hollow of the cliffs in deep darkness, silent as a mouse when the cat is nigh.

He scarcely breathed.

The boatman for some minutes did not seem to grasp the situation. He called to Bunter, apparently under the impression that his passenger had lost himself in the darkness or fallen into some crevice.

But the truth dawned on him at last.

The language that the Santa Monica boatman used, when he finally comprehended, was alarming.

Had Bunter had any intention of revealing himself, the boatman's remarks would have banished that intention on the spot.

The man had seemed quite good-tempered while he was sailing Bunter along the bay. He revealed now that he had an absolutely vile temper—indeed, he appeared to have positively murderous tendencies.

He announced, at the top of his voice, that as soon as he got a "holt" on the fat guy, the swindling gink, the pesky geck, he would scalp him, smash him, break him, beat him to a frazzle, dress him down, and beat him up.

None of these things appealed to Bunter. Like Brer Rabbit, he lay low and said "nuffin."

For half an hour at least the boatman scrambled among sand and stones and rocks, searching for his elusive passenger.

All the time he was speaking in emphatic tones, and his dire threats almost curdled Bunter's blood.

Fortunately—for Bunter—the man did not find him. The search really was hopeless among the rugged rocks in the darkness. Bunter had only to remain still and quiet, and that he did. The hapless boatman gave up the search at last and went back to his boat. His remarks as he went almost turned the atmosphere blue. He was the most eloquent boatman Bunter had ever listened to.

Bunter was glad when he was gone.

(Continued on next page.)

1829=1929

IF, by some magical means, it were possible to set time back one hundred years and to transport ourselves to a stretch of the Thames between Hambledon Lock and Henley Bridge, we should be able to give a cheer to two University Eights struggling for victory there. Certain it is, however, that we should not dream that we were witnessing the beginning of what is to-day the most popular event in the rowing world—the Oxford and Cambridge Boat-Race.

What a contrast that historic struggle of 1829 would provide with its centenary taking place this month! One crew wore blue jerseys and black hats; the other sported shirts of a rather striking shade of pink. Slow, heavy boats, built with high sides and seemingly capable of crossing the Atlantic were what those old-time oarsmen had to drive along with their square oars. No dense, cheering crowds lined the banks of the river all along the course, and no evening papers giving the result of the race sold in hundreds of thousands all over the country.

How has the transformation been brought about?

The Birth of the Blues!

In the first place, although the Boat-Race celebrates its hundredth birthday this year, it will not be the hundredth time the rival Universities have met, for not until 1856 did the race become an annual event. After that, however, it was not long before public interest in the contest was aroused—an interest that has developed into an amazing enthusiasm with the passing of years.

It has already been mentioned that the colours of Oxford and Cambridge in the first race were blue and pink respectively, and so they remained until 1836. On that occasion, just as Cambridge were about to push off from the

The Hundredth Birthday of the Boat Race. An interesting article dealing with one of the biggest sporting events of the year.

boathouse, it was noticed that their craft had no colour in the bow. Something had to be done—and that quickly.

Whilst one colour after another was being suggested, R. N. Philips, a well-known oarsman of his day, made a dash for a near-by haberdasher's shop, and returned with a piece of Eton blue silk. The crew adopted it at once, and since that year Cambridge has worn light blue instead of pink. Thus, with Oxford's darker shade of the same colour, originated the well-known phrase: "The rival Blues."

Another change that came early in Boat-Race history was that of the course itself. Hambledon to Henley, Westminster to Putney—these, and half a dozen other courses were tried before the final choice fell on that twisting 4½ miles of the Thames from Putney to Mortlake. The fame of that stretch of river has since spread all over the globe.

The First Slide!

And then there are the boats. Picture the "racing eight" used by Oxford in 1829, which needed the strength of eighteen men who being carried into its new home at Oxford last year. To present-day oarsmen it would appear little better than an oversized eight-oared "tub," with its heavy metal keel and an almost well-like depth of two feet four inches. Neither sliding seats, stream-line build, outriggers, nor any of those ingenious devices that go to make the modern racing eight the fastest craft of its kind were known a century ago.

Of course, the changes did not happen all at once. Many years of experiment were required, especially in the transition from fixed to sliding seats. As a beginning, the buckskin breeches of the hapless crews were greased in order to give the necessary "slide" though the state of those breeches after a gruelling race has not been recorded.

Then came the first moving seat, stretching right across the boat, with runners of half-round steel, and bearings hollowed out to fit them. Later, in attempts to secure the perfect sliding seat, glass bearing and ball bearings were used; but the effects of water and grit soon showed up their drawbacks, while they often stuck owing to the heat.

Only when someone hit on the idea of moving the seats on wheels was the problem solved. To-day the University boats have sixteen-inch slides with wheels of vulcanite running on a brass track.

The Latest Dodge!

Outriggers—the extended parts of a boat's gunwale that give a greater leverage—were introduced in 1846, and 1857 witnessed another revolutionary idea when the Oxford President had a keelless boat built at his own expense. The scornful reception of this entirely new departure soon died down when Oxford won that year's race easily, and since then both boats have remained keelless.

Although no drastic alteration in the shape and build of the University eights has been made for a long time, it does not mean that the builders and designers have been idle. On the contrary, every few years has brought some small improvement. This year, for instance, the two boats have been rubbed and polished with a special paste that gives the woodwork a glass-like smoothness and reduces the friction practically to nil. A small point, perhaps, but one that may well repay attention in a race where a second can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

What about the future? What will the Boat-Race of 2029 be like? Few people would care to make an attempt at answering the question. But whatever changes are brought about during the next hundred years of its history, one thing will remain the same—the never-say-die spirit of sportsmanship that makes the Boat Race the cleanest and most thrilling contest in the world.

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The little sail danced away on the shadowed waters. But Bunter did not see it go, and he was not sure that the unpleasant man was gone. For a long, long time Bunter remained in his hiding-place, quaking. There are drawbacks to the career of the most successful "bilk." When Bunter emerged at last from his concealment, he emerged in fear and trembling.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Where Is Coker?

"COKER here?" Potter and Greene asked that question simultaneously when they arrived at Jack-Rabbit Canyon.

It was after sunset when they arrived, tired and dusty. They had had some difficulty in finding their way after nightfall, but the glare of electric light from the windows of the old adobe rancho had guided them.

Although Jack-Rabbit Canyon looked, for the most part, as wild and desolate as in the old days when savage Indians had lurked there, and Mexican vaqueros had ridden by the banks of the torrent, it was not out of the reach of civilized gadgets. Mr. Rigg Schootz was still in touch with Hollywood on the telephone, and electric light gleamed in the old rancho and all the other many buildings.

A brilliant sub-tropical starlight shone down on the hills and the wide canyon and gleamed on the rippling stream. Lord Mauleverer was seated on the parapet of the wooden bridge with a dreamy gaze fixed on the orange-trees that half-hid the frame-house where some of the movie girls had their quarters. Possibly he was thinking of the auburn hair of the "lovely Leonora." Harry Wharton & Co. were in the patio of the old Mexican ranch-house when Potter and Greene came in. They stared at the simultaneous question.

"Coker!" repeated Harry.

"Hasn't he got here?" asked Potter.

"No."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Polk said he saw Coker in a car on the road," said Bob Cherry. "Coker frightened his horse, and it ran away. But Coker hasn't got here in the car."

"Well, he wouldn't!" said Potter. "About a million chances to one against his getting anywhere driving a car! What's happened, I wonder?"

"Of course, he's smashed the car!" remarked Greene. "But has he smashed himself, too?"

"We tried to stop him," said Potter, almost tearfully. "But you know Coker! He thinks he can drive!"

"He thinks he can play football," said Greene. "He thinks a lot of funny things. With a brain like his, Coker ought not to think!"

"Something must have happened to him," said Harry. "He ought to have got here early, soon after us. Of course, he may have taken the wrong road."

"If there's a wrong road, Coker would naturally take it," agreed Potter, relieved. "That's it very likely. He couldn't have got off the road to the left; even Coker wouldn't try to drive a car into the Pacific. But if there was a wrong turning to the right, he would take it!"

"Nothing would stop him!" agreed Greene.

"He may be half-way to Santa Barbara or San Francisco by this time!"

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remarked Potter. "Well, I hope he's safe."

"Better speak to Mr. Schootz," said Harry. "If anything's happened to Coker, he must be looked for."

"Where's Schootz?" grunted Potter.

"This way."

Wharton led Potter to the room which Mr. Schootz used as an office in the rancho. All the rooms in the rancho opened on the patio, the central courtyard, and they were almost innumerable. Mr. Schootz had a large room, which was fitted up very like his office at Perfection Studios in Hollywood—with desks and files and telephones. He was seated there with Mr. Van Duck, discussing the morrow's plans for "shooting" with the assistant director, when Potter looked in at the open doorway.

"Mr. Schootz—" began Potter.

Mr. Schootz waved a podgy hand at him.

"You got here late."

"Yes. You see—"

"Never mind. Hook will show you your quarters. Get!"

"Yes. But—"

"I said get!" remarked Mr. Schootz, revolving his swivel chair so as to turn his back on Potter.

Mr. Schootz was a busy man, with hardly a second to waste on such an unimportant member of his company.

"But, you see—" went on Potter, addressing the bald spot on Mr. Schootz's head, which was all he could see of the great producer.

"Beat it!" interjected Mr. Van Duck.

"But Coker's missing!" jerked out Potter. "He started from Hollywood in a car on his own this morning, and he hasn't turned up. He's lost his way or had an accident."

Snort, from Mr. Schootz.

"What the thunder was the all-fired guy doing in a car by himself?" he demanded. But he did not wait for an answer to the question: time was dollars. "I guess I'll get Hollywood Police Station, and see if there's been any accident. Don't spill any more."

Potter stood silent while Mr. Schootz "got" Hollywood Police Station on the telephone.

He said, very little into the transmitter; but he grunted several times emphatically as he listened to the other end.

Finally he put up the receiver and turned round to Potter.

"The dog-goned geek has wrecked the car," he said. "They've got the car in small pieces, and they want Coker. He's going to be prosecuted for dangerous driving."

"Oh crumbs!" said Potter.

"I guess I shall have to get Fish on the phone, and tell him to go round and fix it!" snorted Mr. Schootz. "Fish is in Hollywood, and he can work the rifle. Coker will have to pay!"

"But what's happened to Coker?" demanded Potter.

"This here ain't one of them bureaux for supplying answers to riddles," grunted Mr. Schootz. "I tell you they picked up the car, and saw nothing of Coker. He couldn't have been damaged or they'd have found him with the car, sure."

"But he must be somewhere!" gasped Potter.

Mr. Schootz glared at him.

"Bright!" he hooted. "Did you work that out in your head, kid? Yep! I allow he's somewhere. He sure is!"

"But—" said Potter.

"The gol-darned gink started to walk, and lost his way, I reckon," remarked Mr. Van Duck.

"He sure did," said Mr. Schootz, "and mebbe he'll blow in in the middle of the night, and mebbe in the morning. You still there?" he added, with another glare at Potter of the Fifth.

"Oughtn't he to be searched for?" asked Potter.

"You can search for him all you want," said Mr. Schootz. "You can do anything you like, so long as you don't stand in my doorway chewing the rag."

Potter retired from the office. Mr. Schootz was getting quite bad-tempered.

Mr. Rigg Schootz resumed his discussion with the assistant director, and forgot all about Coker. As a matter of fact, he had already noticed that Horace Coker was, as he expressed it, the world's prize boob. He had no doubt that Coker had lost his way in a strange country, and would blow in sooner or later.

Potter and Greene, and the juniors, came to the same conclusion. As the police had taken charge of the wrecked car, and had not found Coker near it, it was clear that Coker could not have suffered in the accident. So it seemed fairly clear that he had started to walk and lost himself. As for searching for him in the pathless hills after dark, that was impracticable. The searchers would only have lost themselves.

"Well, the nights are fine here," remarked Bob Cherry. "A night out won't hurt Coker much. As likely as not he will get a night's lodging somewhere. Lots of places about."

"So long as he's not been smashed up it's all right!" said Potter. "Anything else serves him jolly well right."

And the two Fifth-Formers went to supper without troubling further about Horace Coker. Neither did Harry Wharton & Co. bother about him as they went to their rooms that opened on the wooden gallery in the patio. They turned in and went to sleep, little dreaming of what was Horace Coker's unenviable situation at that moment. To Bunter, they had not given a thought, supposing him to be still at Long Beach Boarding-House at Hollywood—Potter and Greene not having mentioned him, and having, in fact, forgotten him. To Coker they gave almost as little thought—but certainly they would not have turned in and slept so peacefully, had they known that in those very moments Horace Coker lay in a shack in the recesses of the Santa Monica Mountains, bound hand and foot—a prisoner in the hands of Gomez and his gang.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Limit!

"FORGET it!" urged Mr. Fish. Myron Polk scowled through the haze of smoke from his cigar.

"I mean it, every word!" he grunted. "Oh, guff!" said Hiram K. Fish uneasily.

Polk, stretched elegantly in an easy chair, one well-creased leg crossed over the other, smoked and scowled. The Perfection star was evidently in an angry and bitter mood.

Mr. Fish, standing before him, was worried. For half an hour he had been arguing with Polk; and arguing in vain.

Polk's character seemed to be a mixture of that of a vindictive man, and that of a spoiled boy. Such a character was difficult to deal with.

Mr. Fish looked at everything from the point of view of business. But Polk had been too richly favoured by fortune to care so much about business as

Hiram K. Fish did. With the Perfection star, animosity came even before dollars.

Mr. Fish moved about restlessly. He would have been glad to take the elegant young man by his elegant shoulders, and shake him. That was what he wanted, in Hiram's opinion.

"Look hyer now, Polk—" urged Mr. Fish.

Polk blew out a cloud of smoke. Taking the cigar from his mouth, he picked up a glass that stood on a lacquer table at his elbow. In a land where "Prohibition" was the law, that potent refreshment was severely forbidden; but in Polk's bungalow on the hill above Hollywood, as in many other places in the United States, the laws of prohibition were more honoured in the breach than the observance. The Volstead Act, the Eighteenth Amendment, and the activities of hordes of detectives and spies, did not prevent Myron Polk from having a well-stocked wine-cellar. Only, he had to pay more for his drinks; that was all the difference the prohibition law made to him. Instead of ordering his supplies from a wine merchant, he ordered them from a gang of "boot-leggers"—getting inferior drink at a higher price.

He drank deeply, and a flush came into his handsome face. He resumed the cigar, his expression more bitter and dogged than before.

"I mean every word," he said. "I'm fed-up with that crowd of impudent schoolboys you've brought to Hollywood, Mr. Fish. I've been assaulted by one of them—that ruffian Coker—insulted by another—that gink Mauleverer—spied on by another, the fat fool Bunter—and treated with insolence by the whole party. I'm not standing for it! Either they get out of Perfection or I get out."

"You've said that before and you came back," said Hiram K. Fish.

"I mean it this time. I'm fed-up to the back teeth. They're at the location now?"

"Sure!"

"You needn't expect me there, then! Not so long as one of that crowd is there."

"Do be reasonable!" urged Mr. Fish.

"That goes!" snapped Polk. "If that crowd is worth more to you than I am, keep them! There isn't a studio in Hollywood that wouldn't jump at me with both feet, and you know it."

"There's such a thing as contracts!" snapped Mr. Fish.

Polk shrugged his shoulders.

"You can take action on your contract, if you like. I can afford to pay damages."

"You'd let us down in the middle of the big film! The 'Lord of the Desert' is half through—"

"I've said what I'm going to do. Kick that crew out of Perfection, or I quit."

"Schootz won't stand for it," argued

Mr. Fish. "He's as keen on a British school film as I am. It will go like hot cakes, especially with that titled guy Mauleverer in it. I'll tell the world that stunt is some cinch! We've spent a lot of money getting that crowd here. A lot of time, too; and time's dollars! I tell you, Polk, it can't be done!"

"Cut me out, then!"

"Oh, you make me tired!" exclaimed Mr. Fish. "Why the John James Brown can't you steer clear of the crowd, if you don't like them? You needn't ever be on the spot when they're around."

"I've said my say!" retorted Polk sulkily. "That bunch goes, or I go. Take your choice."

Mr. Fish took two or three turns restlessly up and down the parquet floor.

He was deeply disturbed, and deeply irritated.

Even before the schoolboys had come on the scene, Mr. Fish and his partner, Schootz had found it difficult to bear the airs and graces of the spoiled and flattered star with patience. Polk's head had been turned to flattery, and at the best of times he

Mr. Fish, at the bottom of his heart, did not believe that the star would carry out his threat if put to the test. Perfection paid an immense salary for Polk's services, and he had signed a contract which he could not break without heavy loss. The "Lord of the Desert" film was the biggest picture of his life, and he certainly did not want it to remain unfinished and unseen by the public. But there really was no telling what the passionate, vindictive man might or might not do, and Mr. Fish was deeply worried.

"Better put it to Schootz," he said at last. "What Schootz says goes. I guess I'll phone him up."



"Keep that light in your eye," said the boatman, "and you'll sure strike a road. You—Thunder! Where are you? Here! Hey! Great snakes! Where is that galoot? Hallo!" The "galoot" heard him, but heeded not, for Bunter was crouching in the hollow of the cliffs, in deep darkness, and as silent as a mouse. (See Chapter 7).

was not easy to deal with. The slightest offence, real or fancied, had been enough to make him start and jib like a restive horse. A wound to his vanity was something that he could not possibly forget or forgive.

All the evil and bitterness in his passionate nature had been roused by the Greyfriars fellows. Coker had punched him; Lord Mauleverer knew he had fled like a poltroon from the studio fire, leaving a woman in danger; the others hardly concealed the contempt they felt for a man who had hired a bully to "beat up" a fellow he disliked. For the trouble and loss he might cause the Perfection Picture Syndicate, he cared nothing at all. He was down on the Greyfriars fellows, with an implacable "down."

He watched the worried Mr. Fish with a sardonic sneer.

Polk nodded, and Mr. Fish went to the telephone and called up the rancho at Jack-Rabbit.

"Fish speaking," he called. "Say, Rigg, Polk allows that he ain't going on with the picture unless those John Bull guys are fired for keeps."

A snort came along the wires.

"I guess you better talk to him, some," said Mr. Fish, and he handed the receiver to Myron Polk.

"Now, what's this pesky trouble?" came Mr. Schootz's voice. "Spill it, Polk!"

"Fire that crowd, or you don't see me on the Perfection lot any more!" said Polk coolly. "I mean every word!"

"You can't break your contract."

"I guess you'll see!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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"THE BOOTLEGGERS' REVENGE!"

(Continued from page 13.)

"I sure guess it will cost you something!" growled Mr. Schootz.

"Let it!" sneered Polk.

There was a pause.

"Well, what's the answer?" demanded Polk.

"This hyer is the answer," came Mr. Schootz's deep voice. "I reckon I'm fed-up, and you've sure touched the limit! The guys ain't going to be fired; they're freezing on hyer till the film's through! If you want to kick, kick! You ain't dictating to Perfection Pictures, big noise as you reckon you are! There's a god-goned limit, and you've touched it, Polk! That's that!"

And Mr. Schootz, without waiting for the star to answer, hung up.

Polk threw the receiver back into its place.

His face was like thunder.

Mr. Fish read Schootz's answer in Myron Polk's expression. He picked up his hat and went towards the door.

"I guess I'm going down to the location," he said. "Shall I tell Schootz to expect you to-morrow or not, Polk?"

The matter was put to the test now. If Polk had been bluffing, as Mr. Fish half believed, his bluff was called.

There was a long silence.

It was bitter to the star to admit defeat. But he did not want to break his contract with Perfection, any more than the Perfection directors wanted him to break it. He had bluffed, and now that his bluff was called there was nothing for Myron Polk to do but to climb down.

"I guess I'll be along," he said at last.

"That's hoss sense!" said Mr. Fish cordially. "Dog-gone my cats, Polk, you know how much we want you, and you sure wouldn't let us down!" A little soft sawder cost Mr. Fish nothing, now that his point was gained. He was quite willing to soothe the star's ruffled vanity, so far as words could do it. "And I'll sure speak to them young guys and warn them to behave. I guess I'll talk to them like a Dutch uncle."

And Mr. Fish took his leave; but when he was walking down the hill to Hollywood, out of sight of Polk, he grinned. He found something rather entertaining in the Perfection star's surrender, after his big words.

Polk, left alone, helped himself to another drink, and then another. He paced the room, with a black and bitter brow.

He had made the humiliating discovery that he was not so indispensable as he had supposed. There was a limit to the extent to which Mr. Schootz would tolerate his airs and graces. That limit was reached when he sought to dictate in matters outside his own province.

The Perfection star rang the bell at last, and when his Japanese servant appeared, ordered the car to be brought round.

A few minutes later he was driving down the hill at his usual reckless speed.

He left Hollywood by the Santa Monica road but before reaching that town, turned off into another road that led away into the heart of the shadowed hills.

Deep in the hills, Polk drove on by a grassy track after leaving the road.

He stopped at last; and leaving the car standing, with the head-lights extinguished, strode away into the gloom. He halted under a tree, and putting a

silver whistle to his lips, blew three quick blasts in succession.

Then he waited.

He had not long to wait. There was a sound of footsteps, and a shadowy form loomed up.

"Buenas noches, senor!"

Jose Gomez, the "thug" of Spanish Town, joined the Perfection star under the shadow of the trees.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Precious Pair!

MYRON POLK peered at the swarthy, low-browed ruffian in the dimness under the tree. Dim as it was, he could see that the swarthy face bore the signs of recent conflict. Gomez's squat nose was red and swollen, and there was a cut on his chin and a dark shadow under one eye. Evidently the "thug" had lately been in the wars.

"I have news for you, senor," said Gomez.

Polk made an impatient gesture.

"I'm not here to talk about hooch," he muttered. "You can settle those matters with Mato, as usual."

"As the senor pleases," said Gomez. "But—"

"The Perfection Company are on location now," said Polk. "They are camped in Jack-Rabbit Canyon. You know the place?"

Gomez grinned.

"As well as I know my hand, senor. It is a mile from the cove where we run the liquor."

"I don't want to know anything about your rum-running," muttered Polk. "That does not concern me."

He made a gesture of distaste. It was through Gomez and his gang that Polk obtained his supplies of illegal liquor, like a good many other wealthy people in Los Angeles. On every coast of the United States gangs of liquor smugglers have been called into existence by the prohibition laws—laws good in themselves, but too stringent for men accustomed to self-indulgence. Myron Polk had no intention of giving up drinking because it was prohibited by law, and so he was one of the millions who obtained supplies from bootleggers. But he did not want to be mixed up in, or know anything about, the lawless proceedings of the rum-runners.

"As the senor pleases," repeated Jose, with a nod.

"You've got to keep clear of Los Angeles," went on Polk. "But now the company are on location you've got your chance. It should not be difficult to get that ruffian Coker into your hands."

"That is the news I was about to tell you, senor. Coker is already in my hands."

Polk started.

"Already?" he breathed.

"Si, senor!" Gomez rubbed his bruised nose. "I came on the fool by sheer accident this morning. He had lost his way in the hills, and stopped me to inquire." The "thug" chuckled. "You may be sure, senor, that I did not allow him to escape."

Polk breathed hard and deep.

"He fought like a tiger," said Gomez. "Carambo! He is a strong brute! But Slick Wilson and Diego were at hand."

"What have you done with him?"

"The fool is a prisoner now, bound hand and foot, and lying in a shack yonder," Gomez made a gesture into the darkness behind him. "That gulch is our headquarters, as you know, senor. For the time I feared that the fool had discovered us, and knew something. But he is only a fool, and knows nothing.

To make all safe, I secured him—till I should see you and ascertain your wishes, senor."

Polk's eyes gleamed.

The Grayfriars senior who had punched him and spoiled his prized beauty for a time, was in the hands of the gang of bootleggers of the Santa Monica hills—and at his mercy.

"It is for the senor to order what shall be done with the fool," went on Gomez. "There are crevices in the hills where a body would never be found—"

Polk shivered.

"You geek! Hold your tongue!" he muttered. "Are you mad?"

Gomez shrugged his shoulders.

"That would be my way," he said coolly. "But it is for the senor to order. It is the senor who pays."

"Listen to me," said Polk, in a low voice. "You know all that schoolboy crowd—you have seen them."

"Si, senor."

"It does not suit me for them to remain with the Perfection company," said Polk. "You say you have the brute Coker safe?"

"Quite safe."

"And the others—what has happened to one might happen to the rest," said Polk. "You understand? It should be easy for you and your friends to deal with a crowd of schoolboys. If you have a safe place where prisoners can be kept—"

"So many, senor?"

Polk gritted his teeth.

"Every one of them! They are in my way; they are figuring in a film which I am determined shall never be made. Schootz has refused to fire them. But they've got to go. You're going to get rid of them for me! I don't choose to quarrel with Schootz at the present moment; but that school film shall never be completed! Let them disappear—"

"You do not mean—" began Gomez.

"Don't be a fool! If you shed blood I will be the first to put the police on your track!" said Polk savagely. "Get hold of them, and hide them somewhere in the mountains. You need not use gentle measures, so long as their lives are not threatened. They do not belong to this country. As soon as their people in England learn what has happened, it will be impossible for them to remain here; they will have to leave as soon as they are at liberty again. Money will not be wanting," added Polk, as the Mexican seemed to hesitate.

"But, senor," muttered Gomez, "so many! And this is not the Sierra Nevada or the Rocky Mountains, senor. The police will comb these hills from end to end—"

"Your gang seem to hide safely enough here!" sneered Polk. "Your cargoes of whisky and rum are hidden here."

"That is true, senor; but not with such a search going on," said the Mexican. "Up to now the police are not aware of the fact that liquor smuggling is carried on here. But such kidnapping—" He broke off. "There is a way, senor—easy and safe."

"What is that?" muttered Polk.

Gomez made a gesture in the direction of the distant shore.

"Twice a week, senor, the steamer lies off the coast, with the cargo of liquor. It is landed by a motor-boat in the cove. The boat could take a passenger back to the rum steamer."

"To the steamer?" muttered Polk.

"Si, senor! It is but a short run to Lower California—Mexican territory. There the prisoners would be safe."

"You've said it!" exclaimed Polk. His eyes glittered. "Coker first—as he

is in your hands—and then the others, one by one."

"It is easy," said the Mexican. "The capitano on the steamer will be glad to take passengers—at a price!"

"The price will be paid!" snapped Polk.

"Then it is done, senor!"

Myron Polk's eyes were gleaming as he went back to his car. There was a smile on his face as he drove back to Hollywood.

Before that night was out, Coker, the member of the Greyfriars party whom he hated most, excepting Mauleverer, would be thrown on board the smuggler, and carried away, leaving no clue behind. Mauleverer next, and then the rest.

Prisoners among a lawless gang, on the coast of Mexico, with no hope of help or rescue, they could wait till Polk chose to order them to be released, and he would not be in a hurry to do that. Not, at least, until it was certain that their relatives in England would insist upon their instant return home. For the consternation such news would cause in a distant country, among people he did not know, and who had never harmed him, the Perfection star cared nothing. His vindictive mind was thinking of nothing but vengeance and of ridding himself of the fellows, the mere sight of whom roused all the bitterness and evil in his nature.

The great school film, for which the Greyfriars crowd had been brought out to U.S.A., would never be made, if the plot succeeded. And Polk did not see how it could fail.

But there was many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as the Perfection star was to discover!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker in the Toils!

HORACE COKER wriggled uncomfortably.

It was night; but Coker of the Fifth was not sleeping, or thinking of sleep.

Sleep was not easy in Coker's situation.

He was lying on bare earth, with ropes wound round arms and legs, and tightly knotted.

He lay in darkness, in a miserable

shack built of rough wood. Sometimes voices came to his ears, and he knew that he was not alone in that hidden recess of the hills. But he could see nothing.

Coker's powerful brain was in a rather dazed state. What had happened to him was disconcerting.

He had prepared for trouble as soon as he met Gomez on the rocky hillside. Gomez alone Coker might have handled. But he was not able to handle the two bootleggers who came to the thug's aid. Coker had put up a terrific fight—of which he was still feeling the effects. But the three of them had overpowered him, made him a prisoner, and bound him hand and foot.

With a sack over his head to blind-fold him, Coker had been dragged away and tossed into the hut. He had lain there ever since, without food, without a word from his captors.

What they meant to do with him was a mystery to Coker. He had expected hard usage in the hands of the ruffian whom Polk had employed to "beat him" up at Hollywood. But, apart from binding him, the bootleggers had left him alone. With this outrage Myron Polk had nothing to do—Coker's meeting with Gomez had been entirely by chance.

What the ruffians had been doing in that lonely recess of the hills was a mystery to Coker. That they were "up" to something there he could guess; but he could not begin to guess what it was. It did not occur to him that he had run into a gang of bootleggers, and that they suspected him of spying on them. He did not suspect that there was a store of illicit bottles and kogs hidden in the lonely gulch within a few paces of him.

He wriggled and wriggled. He had wriggled out of the sack, but he could not wriggle out of his bonds. The bootleggers had tied him carefully and scientifically, and Coker was helpless.

His feelings were growing more and more volcanic with every passing hour. He was not scared—Coker was afraid of nothing. But his temper was growing positively dangerous!

There was a step in the open doorway of the shack. Coker rolled over and glared at a dim figure in the faint starlight.

"Look here—" he bawled.

"Silencio!"

The Spanish word, and the voice, told him that it was Gomez.

"Oh, it's you, you rotter!" roared Coker. "Just you let my hands loose, that's all! I'll change the shape of your ugly face for you. You monkey-faced rotter—grooogh!"

Coker's eloquence was suddenly cut short as a gag was thrust into his mouth.

"Grooogh! Grooogh!"

Then he was silent, as the gag was shoved well home, and tied in place by a cord wound round Coker's bullet head.

He was lifted to his feet. Another man stepped into the shack. Between the two of them Coker was swung out.

He blinked round him.

In the dim starlight that fell into the narrow, rocky gulch he could see nothing at all.

He was dragged along, and felt himself lifted on the back of an animal—a horse, or a mule.

He was not seated in the saddle, he was thrown over the animal's back, like a sack of straw. Over him a blanket was flung.

Then the animal stepped into motion and Coker was led away.

Through the muffling folds of the sack over his head Coker could distinguish the tread of the mule, and the footsteps of two men walking with the animal; occasionally a low mutter of voices.

His position was horribly uncomfortable. Coker wriggled spasmodically, at the risk of falling from the mule's back.

Suddenly something sharp touched his ribs, and he realised that it was the keen point of a knife.

Coker ceased to wriggle. The hint was enough.

Where they were taking him, what they were going to do with him, were problems Coker could not solve. His first day in the United States, Coker had been kidnapped and held to ransom. But Coker realised that this was nothing of that kind. He was a prisoner; but why he was a prisoner was a mystery. Polk, perhaps, was at the bottom of it. That popinjay was scoundrel enough for anything, in Coker's opinion. But what were they going to do with him?

(Continued on next page.)



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The journey was slow, and seemed long. Coker's wits were not very keen, but they were on the alert now. In spite of the sack round his head and the blanket thrown over him, he made out that the mule was following a downward path. He was not, apparently, being taken deeper into the mountains, but down towards the shore. He further guessed that that was why the blanket was covering him—to conceal him from the view of anyone who might be abroad at that late hour.

The mule stopped at last. The blanket was pulled aside, and Coker lifted down. He felt himself laid on hard, stony earth, against a rock. Through the sack that muffled his head he could hear the wash of waters on a beach. He was close by the sea now.

Why had they brought him down to the sea? They seemed to have left him; he was alone.

Coker wriggled and wriggled till the sack was wriggled off his head once more. Then he blinked round him.

He was seated against the rocky side of a sort of gully, that led down through high cliffs to the beach below. At the lower end of the gully he had a glimpse of the ocean, rolling in the starlight. Round him were the black shadows of high rocks.

His kidnappers were not to be seen. But vague sounds below told him that they had gone down to the beach.

Faintly, from the silence of the night, Coker heard a throbbing sound from the sea. It sounded to him as if a motor-boat was coming to the shore from the open Pacific.

The two ruffians who had brought him there had gone down to the beach to meet the incoming motor-boat. So much was clear. They had left Coker safe enough, bound and gagged, in the gully. He was to stay there till wanted, apparently. And the truth slowly filtered into Coker's mind. He had been brought there to be taken on board some vessel—there was no other possible explanation.

The throbbing of the motor-boat came nearer and nearer over the shadowed sea.

Coker struggled desperately with his bonds. But he struggled in vain. He was helpless, and he had to wait, in breathless fury, till the "thugs" disposed of him as they chose.

Exhausted by the vain struggle, the hapless Fifth-Former of Greyfriars lay back against the rock. Save for the throbbing sound from the sea, all was silent about him. But from somewhere close at hand he suddenly heard a stealthy footfall.

A dim shadow loomed in the gloom. Coker, silent, still, blinked at it. It came closer, stealing round the great rock against which he lay—and suddenly stumbled over Coker's long legs. And a fat voice, familiar to Coker's ears, but amazing to hear at such a time and place, ejaculated, in terrified accents:

"Ow! Oh, crikey! Wow!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

BILLY BUNTER was having the time of his life that eventful night.

A hundred times he had regretted that he had not stayed at Long Beach Boarding-House, in Hollywood. An equal number of times he had repented him of indulging in that late nap in the morning and letting the Famous Five go without him. Likewise

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had the fat junior repented of his wonderful wheeze of "bilking" the boatman; for even Santa Monica was better than his present quarters. William George Bunter was up against it; and the woes of William George might have touched a heart of stone.

Long after the Santa Monica boatman had gone, Bunter had remained in hiding, fearing that the beast might yet be lurking about, cunningly waiting for him to reveal himself. When he emerged, in fear and trembling, he found that the boatman indeed was gone, and that was a relief. All he had to do now was to find his way to Jack-Rabbit Canyon. He was aware that the canyon opened in the hills about a mile from the sea, and a mile's walk was not too much, even for Bunter. But circumstances alter cases.

From the cliffs that bordered the sea above the beach, the land rose in a series of terraces towards the hills. There was no path, that Bunter could discern. Far off twinkled the light which the boatman had told him burned at the rancho in the canyon. Bunter's idea had been to strike out for that light. He found rocks and acclivities in the way, and deep crevices, and yawning gaps. Even in daylight the short-sighted Owl of the Remove would not have found it easy to pick his way. After dark it was impossible. No doubt there were plenty of paths, known to the natives. But Bunter was a stranger there, and he was lost in a bewildering wilderness.

Afar twinkled the light—visible but unapproachable. Bunter barked his fat shins on rocks, stumbled over stones and sharp ridges, and rolled into hollows. Half an hour of this had been enough for Bunter. Indeed, only the thought of supper at the location had spurred him on so long. Now even the thought of supper could not spur him. With more bumps and bruises than he could count distributed over his fat person, Bunter limped back to the gully. He was stranded for the night—that was the ultimate outcome of his fat astuteness.

Bunter was so hungry by this time that he could have eaten anything—had there been anything to eat. But if he could not eat, at least, he could sleep, and he limped down to the gully to find a resting-place in the soft sand of the beach.

But it seemed that Fate was bent on persecuting Bunter. He had walked across a wide stretch of sand when he landed. Now the tide was in, and the sand was under water. Right up to the rocks of the gully the Pacific washed and murmured. Bunter was ankle-deep in water when he made that interesting discovery.

He let out a terrified squeak and jumped back. The water washed at his feet, and it seemed to Bunter that it was flowing in to devour him. He scrambled up to the gully again in terrified haste.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned the Owl of the Remove. "Oh, dear! Beasts!"

He was thinking of Harry Wharton & Co.—probably fast asleep at the location by that time—caring nothing for him, after all he had done for them!

Tired out, the fat junior sat down with his back against a rock to rest. He was soon asleep.

But for once Bunter's sleep was fitful and broken. As a rule, Bunter was good for twelve hours, if he was left alone. His fat snore in usual circumstances, was an unending melody.

But now he was dreadfully hungry, and he was most uncomfortable. Again and again he woke, with aches and pains. And, hot as the day had been,

the night was chilly. Every time he awoke, Bunter thought of his warm bed at Long Beach Boarding-House, and groaned in bitterness of spirit.

He was cold, hungry, cramped, and in the lowest of spirits. And suddenly, from the silence of the night, came the sound of approaching footsteps, coming down into the gully.

Bunter started, listened, and trembled.

He did not know the time, but he knew it must be past midnight. Who was abroad at such an hour, in such a lonely place?

The sound of footfalls in such a place, at such a time, did not bring hope of help to the Owl of the Remove. They terrified him almost out of his fat wits.

He suppressed his breathing, as the footfalls came nearer and clearer, descending the gully.

They stopped.

Bunter's heart almost ceased to beat. Only the big rock against which he sat intervened between him and the strangers, whoever they were.

There was no sound of voices. There were sounds of movements, though what they implied Bunter did not comprehend.

Footsteps went on at last, descending the gully towards the sea.

Silence again.

Who were the unseen, unknown men, moving so stealthily in the darkness? Burglars hiding their loot? Murderers carrying a body down to the sea to dispose of it? Bunter could hardly suppress a groan of terror at the awful thought.

But they were gone, and there was a chance for the fat Owl to creep away before they came back. He rose to his knees—and then suddenly stilled himself as he heard sound on the other side of the rock. It sounded as if somebody was there, wriggling on the ground—wriggling and wriggling.

Bunter, motionless, listened, his fat heart quaking.

At last there was silence again.

Long minutes passed. From the sea he heard the sound of an approaching motor-boat. If it was coming to take away the men who had passed him, he was safe. But it might mean that more of them were coming—that a gang of smugglers, perhaps, would be ascending the gully from the beach in a short time. If they found him—

Bunter clambored to his feet.

He had to get away. Somehow or other he had to escape before the danger was close.

All was silent now.

With deep caution, Bunter crept round the big rock, blinking to and fro in the gloom like a frightened rabbit.

Suddenly he stumbled.

Something was stretched on the ground in his way, and Bunter stumbled over it before he saw it.

As he sprawled over it, he discerned what it was—a pair of legs! Somebody—a long-legged somebody—was sitting against the rock in the darkness.

Bunter squeaked aloud in utter terror. He expected a fierce hand to grasp him, and he gave himself up for lost.

But there was no motion on the part of the shadowy figure over whose long legs he had stumbled. No word came from it.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Oh!"

The awful thought came into his mind that it was a body over which he had sprawled. But he became aware that a pair of eyes, very lively indeed in their expression, were fixed on him, and he discovered at the same time that the legs he was sprawling over, were roped

together. It was not a body—it was a prisoner—left there by the men who had gone down to the beach.

Bunter gasped with relief.

A bound prisoner could not hurt him. The prisoner was gagged as well as bound—the fat junior discerned that now. That, evidently, was why he had not spoken or moved when Bunter sprawled over his legs.

Bunter picked himself up. There was no sound from the men at the bottom of the gully, on the tide-swept beach. Evidently they were waiting for the motor-boat to come in. It was close in shore now, but had not yet arrived. Bunter, having ascertained beyond doubt that the dim figure at the foot of the rock was bound hand and foot, peered at him—and he almost fell down again as he recognised him.

"Coker!"

He fairly gasped out the name.

Coker could not speak. But his eyes were expressive. At that moment he longed more than ever for his hands to be free. He was yearning to punch

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mr. Fish!

BUNTER blinked.
"You benighted chump!" hissed Coker.

"Eh?"

"You fat, burbling dummy!"

"Oh, really, Coker——"

"You frabjous fathead! Get me loose!" hissed Coker. "There's a knife in my pocket. Get it, and cut me loose before those brutes come back! Quick!"

"But, I say——" gasped Bunter.

"Shut up! Get me loose!"

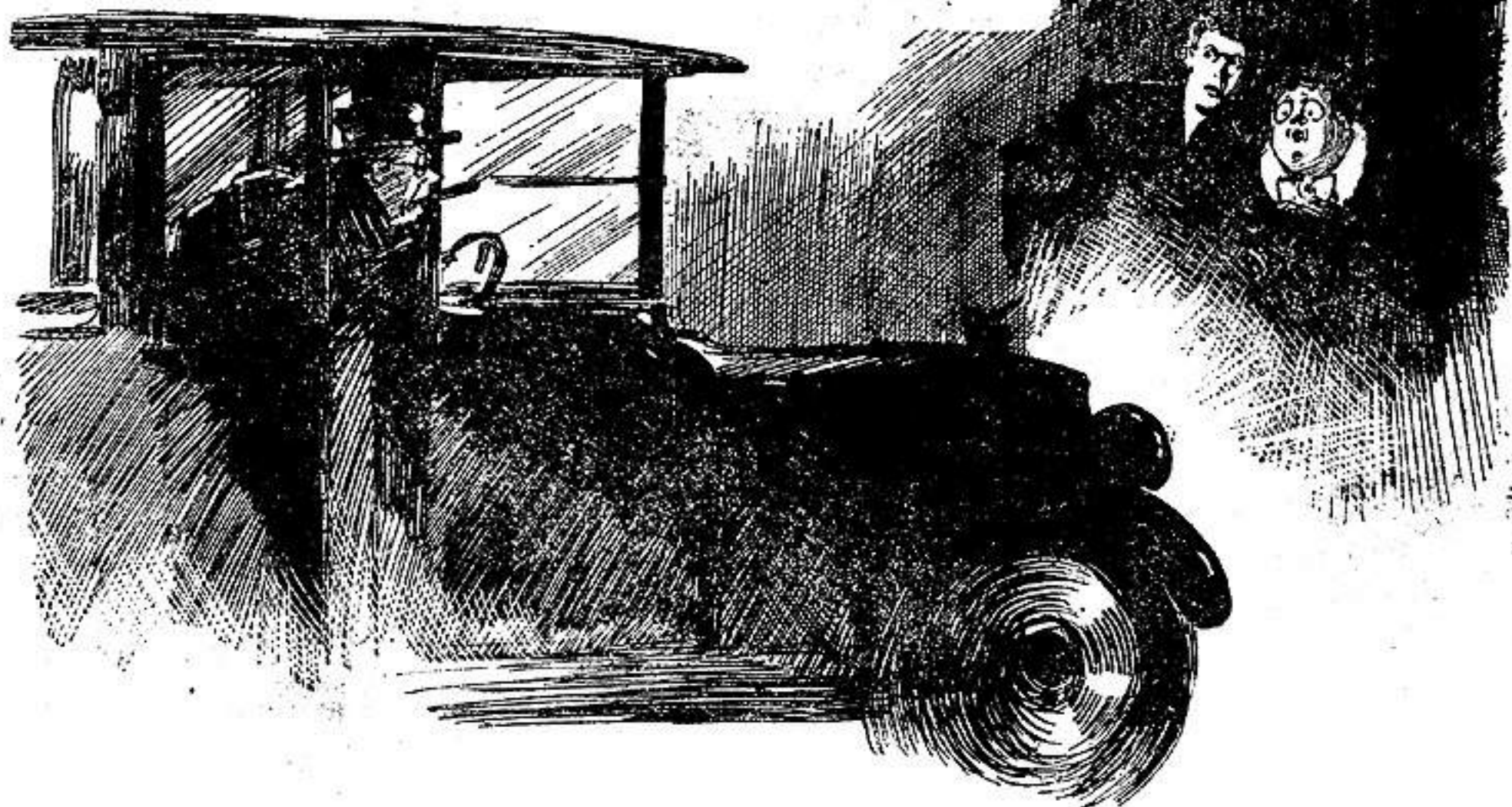
"Look here——"

Coker almost foamed at the mouth. Every second was precious. From the bottom of the gully came sounds which indicated that the motor-boat was closing into the cove. The throbbing of the engine ceased.

"Quick!" hissed Coker. "Oh, I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! I'll wring your fat neck! Get me loose, you born idiot!"

the motor-boat lying close inshore. Men were tramping in shallow water, carrying what appeared to be heavy bundles. Some sort of a cargo was being landed at that lonely spot in the middle of the night. Obviously it was smuggling of some sort, and Coker could discern five or six moving figures in the starlight.

The bundles were being stacked on the back of the waiting mule and secured there. The smugglers were too busy to think of Coker just then, little dreaming of what had happened out of their sight among the shadowy rocks of the gully. But as soon as the mule was loaded they would come up, and then——



The chauffeur was staring at the two figures in his path when the door of the car opened and a bony face stared out. "Say, what's this rumpus?" demanded a nasal voice. "Great John James Brown! It's that gink Coker. But what are you doing here—and that other pesky guy, Bunter? I'll tell a man!" (See Chapter 13.)

Bunter, right and left, for wasting these precious moments.

"Coker!" repeated Bunter blankly.

Coker nodded his head at him frantically. It was the only sign he could make. He was as amazed as Bunter by the unexpected encounter; but it meant freedom to him if the fat Owl had sense enough to act quickly. At every moment he feared to hear the returning footsteps of Gomez and his associate.

But William George Bunter was not quick on the uptake. For several moments he blinked in helpless wonder at Coker of the Fifth.

But Coker's frantic signs stirred him at last. His fat fingers groped over the gag, and jerked loose the cord that fastened it in place. He pulled the gag out of Coker's mouth.

Coker gasped.

For a full minute he could do nothing but gasp. Then he found his voice.

"You fat idiot!" said Coker. "I'll smash you!"

Billy Bunter, thus adjured, felt for the pocket-knife, opened it, and sawed through the ropes that bound the Fifth-Former. Once he had started, it did not take long. In little more than a minute, Horace Coker was free.

He staggered up, yelping with pain. His limbs had been bound so long that they were stiff and cramped.

Precious as the moments were, Coker was incapable of exertion for some minutes. He leaned on the rock, tormented from head to foot with "pins and needles," gasping.

From the bottom of the gully trampling footsteps, splashing in the tide, and a faint sound of voices, could be heard. The danger was close now.

Coker forced himself to action.

"Keep with me, you fat fool!" he whispered.

"Oh, really, Coker——"

"Shut up!"

Coker started up the gully, and Bunter rolled after him. Coker gave one glance back and had a glimpse of the sea at the bottom of the gully, and

Then it behoved Horace Coker to be at a safe distance.

He had not been brought to that lonely spot on the seashore for nothing; the only explanation was that Gomez had intended to put him on the motor-boat after the smuggled cargo had been landed. Where the Mexican intended to take him, and what he thought of doing with him there, Coker had no idea, and he did not waste time thinking it out. Getting away from the spot was the most pressing matter now.

By what path Gomez had brought him down the rugged shore Coker did not know; and he could find no trace of a path once he was out of the gully. But he plugged on, seeking to put a safe distance between him and the gang of bootleggers.

Bunter panted after him.

"I—I say, Coker——" gasped Bunter.

"Keep on!"

"Oh crikey!"

It was all very well for Coker to tell Bunter to keep on! Coker was a hefty

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fellow, and his long legs scrambled tirelessly. Bunter was far from hefty, and his little fat legs were aching with fatigue. The Owl of the Remove had a lot of weight to carry.

"Owl! I say, Coker—" wailed Bunter at last.

"Shut up!"

"But, I say—"

"Silence, you fat dummy! Do you want to bring that gang down on us?" hissed Coker. "Dry up, and come on!"

"I—I c-c-can't!" groaned Bunter.

"Idiot!"

Coker plunged on, sprawling and scrambling, picking himself up again, and scrambling on. Bunter stumbled and sprawled, and did not get up again. He couldn't. He was at his last gasp.

Coker turned and stared back.

"Where are you, you burbling chump?"

"Owl!" groaned Bunter.

"Why don't you come on?" hissed Coker.

"Wow!"

Coker scrambled back. He was more inclined to thump the Owl of the Remove than to help him; but he could not

desert him. He groped for Bunter, and fastened a finger and thumb on a fat ear and pulled it.

"Yaroooh!" howled Bunter.

"Now come on!"

"Beast!"

Coker stared back towards the gully. A light was moving in the darkness there.

"They've missed me; they're looking for me!" breathed Coker. "They'll be after us—"

"Owl!"

It dawned upon Coker's powerful brain that the fat junior was exhausted. He grasped Bunter's shoulders and heaved him to his feet.

"I'll help you!" he growled. "Hang on to me! If those rotters get hold of you they'll make mincemeat of you, you born idiot!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

With the help of Coker's powerful arm Bunter staggered on. All the way the ground had been rising, and the fugitives were now high above the cliffs that looked on the beach high above the shadowy gully. Coker, looking

back, could see two lights moving like glittering specks in the blackness. Evidently he had been missed, and Gomez and his crew were searching for him among the rocks—doubtless greatly puzzled to guess what had become of him.

Coker scrambled onward, half dragging and half carrying the fat junior. Bunter clung to him convulsively, groaning dismally at every step.

Coker found himself at last in what seemed a path, and the way was easier. The dancing lights in the gully had vanished now, but he had no doubt that the bootleggers were still seeking him along the rugged shore. Once or twice the echo of calling voices came to his ears.

From the path Coker emerged into a road, dragging the tottering Owl of the Remove. Beyond the road, black against the sky, rose the hills. Coker knew that beyond Santa Monica the coast ran east and west backed by the mountains. As the sea was behind him, the mountains before him, it was evident that Santa Monica and Hollywood lay to his right; though how many miles away—or how many dozens of miles—he had no notion. But that, at all events, was the direction of safety; and Coker turned to the right and tramped along the road dragging the groaning Owl.

A sudden blaze of headlights flashed through the night ahead of him. A car was approaching.

"Oh, good luck!" gasped Coker.

Whoever was in the car, he could not refuse a lift to fellows escaping from a gang of thugs.

Coker released Billy Bunter, who collapsed on the spot and lay gasping, and waved his hands and shouted as the car came roaring up.

"Stop! Help! Halt! Stop! Help!" roared Coker.

There was a sound of grinding brakes.

The car halted.

The chauffeur stared at the two dishevelled figures in the glare of the headlights. The door opened, and a bony face stared out.

"Say, what's this rumpus?" demanded a nasal voice. "Great John James Brown! Is that that gink Coker?"

Coker jumped.

"Oh! It's you, Mr. Fish!"

"I allow it's me!" snapped Hiram K. Fish. "I guess I'm hitting for the location. But what the John James Brown are you doing here—and that other pesky guy! I'll tell a man!"

"You're going to the location?" gasped Coker.

"Yep!"

"Oh, good! I've just got away from that villain Gomez—"

"Oh, search me!" said Mr. Fish.

"If you ain't the galoot to rope in all the trouble that's lying around! What you want to wake up that bulldozer again for? Say!"

"Do you think I asked him to kidnap me?" roared Coker.

"Oh shucks!" said Mr. Fish crossly.

"You're sure more trouble than a bagful of wild cats—you sure are, and I'm telling you so! Hop into the car, and don't spill any more!"

"Look here—"

"You hopping in?" inquired Mr. Fish. "I ain't sticking on this spot till the auto freezes to it. Time's dollars!"

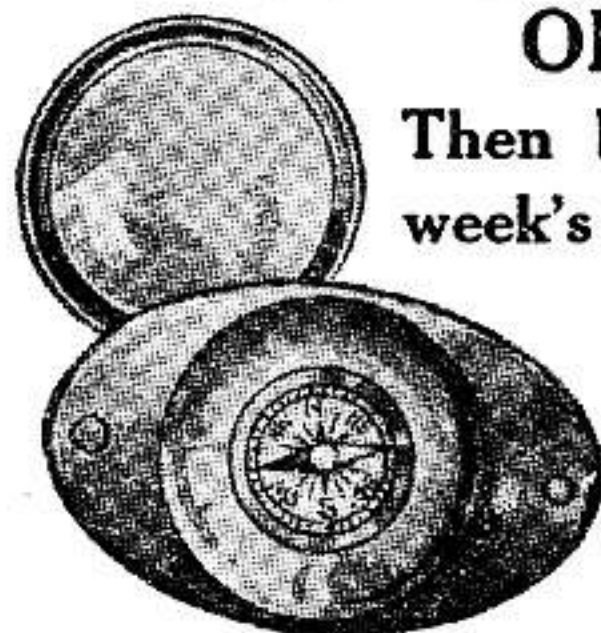
Horace Coker snorted. He dragged Bunter to his feet and propelled him into the car and followed him in.

Mr. Fish, with a grunt, slammed the door, and the car buzzed on again towards Jack-Rabbit Canyon. Mr. Fish had been busily occupied at Hollywood till a very late hour, and he was in a

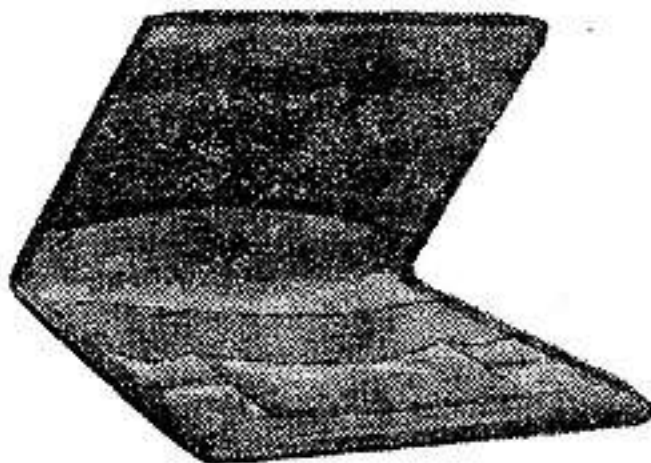
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hurry to get to the location. He was busily occupied now in thinking of business matters—Mr. Fish was thinking of business matters in all his waking hours, and in his sleeping hours he was dreaming of them. So he lent only half an ear to Coker's story of his wild adventures with Gomez and his gang. And, to Coker's surprise and annoyance, he expressed no sympathy whatever.

"You sure are the guy to collect trouble!" was his comment. "You sure can't see any trouble lying around without grabbing at it! Great John James Brown! You sure are more trouble than you're worth, by long chalks!"

"Look here—" hooted Coker. Mr. Fish waved a bony hand at him. "Don't spill any more!" he snapped. And Coker finished the drive in sulky silence. As for Bunter, he was already fast asleep, and his deep snore made a musical accompaniment, resonant and unceasing, to the whirr of the motor-car.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

And a Surprise for Mr. Polk!

HARRY WHARTON jumped. Snorrrrrre! It was morning on the location. Bright sunshine streamed down into the patio of the rancho at Jack-Rabbit—on gorgeous flower-beds and trees bright with the green of spring.

The Famous Five turned out cheerily in the sunny morning, and as the captain of the Remove sauntered along the wooden gallery on which the bed-rooms opened, he was struck by an old familiar sound issuing from one of the rooms.

Snorrrrrre! There were, of course, other snorers in existence besides William George Bunter. But that deep and powerful snore, so familiar in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, could only be William George's.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Wharton. He had supposed Bunter to be still at Long Beach Boarding-House in Hollywood. That hefty snore told a different tale.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Either Bunter or a captured elephant! It can't be an elephant, so it must be Bunter trumpeting!"

"Then he's here," said the Bounder. He pushed open the door. There was Bunter!

The Owl of the Remove was fast asleep, too tired out by his night's adventures even to wake up for breakfast.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. Snore!

"So he got here, after all," said Nugent. "Must have got in late. Let him rip."

Leaving Bunter snoring, the juniors went down the steps into the patio, to breakfast under the trees in the sunshine.

"Any news of Coker?" asked Bob, as Potter and Greene came down from their rooms.

Potter nodded. "I hear that he came in late last night, with Bunter, in Mr. Fish's car," he answered. "Goodness knows where old Fish picked them up. He's still asleep."

"So the bad pennies have both turned up, after all," grinned Bob. "We couldn't lose Coker and Bunter for long. Too good to be true."

After breakfast, Bunter and Coker had not appeared. They were having their sleep out.

Wharton inquired of Mr. Van Duck whether the party would be wanted that

morning, and was told that they wouldn't be. A scene of the "Lord of the Desert" film was to be shot that morning, featuring Myron Polk and his black Arab horse. But Mr. Van Duck told the juniors to hang around and watch the work.

About ten o'clock the purple automobile came whizzing into Jack-Rabbit Canyon and stopped outside the rancho.

Myron Polk came in at the arched entrance into the patio. He gave the Greyfriars party a glance, with an expression on his face that rather puzzled the juniors who noted it. He stopped at the door of Mr. Schootz's office and spoke to the producer. A few moments later Mr. Schootz's voice was heard in loud and excited tones.

"Well, carry me home to die! We've got everything fixed for the scene, and now you allow that the darned cayuse is lost! What in thunder did you lose him for, say?"

Polk shrugged his shoulders. "Not my fault!" he sneered. "The horse would be here but for your mob of meddling schoolboys. They let him loose yesterday on the road, and he hasn't been found yet. I'm having him searched for."

Mr. Schootz came striding out of the office with an angry face. He bore down on the Greyfriars group.

"What's this?" he roared. "You guys been horning in and meddling with Polk's cayuse—what?"

"Nothing of the kind," answered Wharton quietly. "Polk's horse ran away with him yesterday on the Santa Monica road, and Mauleverer saved him from broken bones by stopping it."

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Schootz. "You did, Mauleverer?"

"Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer, with a nod. "Couldn't see the fellow break his giddy neck, you know, though it may not be worth much."

"Polk says you turned the cayuse loose!" snapped Mr. Schootz.

"We wouldn't let him ill-use the horse," said Harry. "But for that it would not have run away a second time. Anyhow, if we hadn't been there, Polk wouldn't have been here this morning; he would have been in hospital."

"The breakfulness of his esteemed and ridiculous bones would have been terrific but for the promptness and despatch of the ludicrous Mauly," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the thankfulness of the excellent Polk does not seem to be preposterous."

"Oh, search me!" growled Mr. Schootz. He turned to Polk, who had followed him from the office with a sneer on his face. "My! You claim to ride, and you let a critter run away with you!"

Polk scowled. "A mad fool charged at my horse in a car," he said. "One of your precious schoolboy outfit—that fool Coker."

"I sure allow that Coker is the world's prize boob," said Mr. Schootz. "He's got a charge for dangerous driving hanging over him, and I've got to fix it. Dog-gone him!"

He gave an angry snort.

"We can't get on with the scene without the cayuse. And Janet Jooce is coming out specially from Hollywood for that scene! It sure gets my goat! Here,

you Van Duck, get Janet on the phone and put her wise that the scene's cut out to-day."

One of the doors on the gallery opened, and Horace Coker emerged from his room.

He came down the steps into the patio. Polk was standing with his back to him, and did not observe the appearance of Coker of the Fifth.

Certainly he did not expect to see Coker at the Jack-Rabbit Rancho, as he firmly believed that his enemy was in the hands of the rum-runners, many a long mile on his way to the Mexican coast.

"It's sure the grasshopper's whiskers!" growled Mr. Schootz, as Van Duck went to the office to telephone. "That prize boob Coker—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Coker, arriving on the scene in time to hear that disrespectful allusion to himself.

At the sound of his voice Myron Polk gave a convulsive start.

He spun round. The colour faded from his face as he stared at Coker, his eyes almost starting from his head in his amazement and dismay.

So utterly was he taken by surprise that he had no time to think of concealment. He stared at Coker as at a ghost.

"You!" he articulated. "You here!"

His jaw dropped. Coker stared.

"Why shouldn't I be here?" he demanded.

All the juniors fixed their eyes on Myron Polk. His emotion at the sight of Horace Coker startled them.

Polk struggled to recover his self-control; he realised that he was betraying himself.

Horace Coker was not quick on the uptake. But he already suspected the Perfection star of having had a hand in the lawless proceedings of Gomez and his gang. That suspicion was confirmed by Polk's looks at this moment.

"Surprised, ain't you?" he jeered. "You thought that gang had got me out of the way—what? Gomez hasn't told you yet that I got clear, you rotter!"

"Here, you!" snorted Mr. Schootz. "What's that stuff? Don't you begin a shindy now, you Coker."

Coker pointed an indignant finger at the Perfection star's pale and dismayed face.

"Ask that rotter who hired Gomez and his gang to collar me last night!" he roared.

"Oh, shucks!" snapped Mr. Schootz. "I guess you was dreaming half of what you told me when Fish brought you in last night. Polk knows nothing about it, anyhow."

"He looks as if he does," sneered Coker. "He's jolly surprised to see me here!"

(Continued on next page.)



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Polk gave a shrug of the shoulders. He had recovered himself.

"Naturally," he answered. "From the way you were handling that car yesterday I figured that you'd smashed yourself up. I guess I'm surprised to see you all in one piece!"

"You jolly well knew——"

"Can it!" roared Mr. Schootz. "I guess if you start anything here, you, Coker, I'll fire you out so quick it will make your head swim!"

"Look here——" bawled Coker.

"Shucks!"

Mr. Schootz walked away with Polk, who went back to his car. Horace Coker snorted angrily, and sat down to breakfast.

"That rotter was at the bottom of it!" he declared.

"Of what?" inquired Potter.

Coker proceeded to relate his wild adventures of the night before. The Greyfriars fellows listened in astonishment.

"My hat!" said Bob. "No wonder they can't find the horse, if Coker rode him away into the hills and lost him there."

"Blow the horse!" said Coker. "It was a rotten horse—didn't know how to behave with a good rider on its back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but you say Bunter let you loose!" exclaimed Nugent. "How did Bunter get on the scene?"

"How should I know?" growled Coker. "He was there—I know that. If he hadn't have been, I should have been shipped on the motor-boat and taken away goodness knows where. I'm convinced that Polk was at the bottom of it. You all saw his face when he saw me."

"He looked jolly startled," said Bob. "Still, lots of people might be startled, seeing your face suddenly, Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want any Remove cheek!" roared Coker. "You can clear off, you cheeky fags!"

Mr. Van Duck's voice was heard calling to the juniors. As the "Lord of the Desert" scene was unavoidably postponed, Harry Wharton & Co. were wanted to work on the school film. It was a busy morning after all for the

chums of the Remove on the Perfection location.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Looking for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter came down to lunch.

Refreshed by his long slumber, the Owl of the Remove was himself again, and terrifically hungry.

"Oh, here you are!" said Harry Wharton, as the juniors came into the patio. "Sure you've had enough sleep?"

"Well, I shall want a nap after lunch," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I had a terrific time last night—fighting a gang of smugglers——"

"Eh?"

"I suppose Coker's told you how I rescued him from a desperate gang of pirates?"

"Not quite!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"He hasn't mentioned the pirates or the rescue. He says he found you crawling like a fat lizard on the shore."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just like Coker!" said Bunter bitterly. "Ungrateful—like you fellows—toot! Leaving me behind at Hollywood, after all I've done for you! Yah!"

For once, the Famous Five were rather curious to hear Billy Bunter relate his adventures. They had heard Coker's story, but they had no doubt that Bunter's version would be more thrilling.

But they had to wait. Bunter was eager to talk—as usual—but he was more eager to attend to the pressing requirements of the inner Bunter. Not till William George had taken on cargo far beyond the Plimsoll line, did he proceed to relate his adventures. The juniors' anticipation that the tale would be thrilling was fully realised.

"It was like this," said Bunter, lolling gracefully on a bench in the patio, and breathing rather stertorously after his exertions at table, "those rotters, Potter and Greene, left me at Santa Monica. Luckily, I got a boat across the bay to the shore below this place. The boatman, a faithful fellow, did it on tick—you fellows know you

left me without any money. You needn't deny it!"

"Guilty, my lord!" grinned Bob. "But how did you diddle the boatman?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! As I said, he was a faithful fellow," said Bunter. "He could see, of course, that he had a gentleman to deal with. 'Never mind the money, sir!' he said to me, in the respectful way the lower classes always treat me. 'That's all right! I know a gentleman when I see one!' Just like that!"

"First lie!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Get on with the washing, old fat bean!" said Bob.

"Well, I dismissed my faithful boatman," said Bunter, "and, feeling rather tired, sat down to rest. I hadn't lost my way or anything. I just sat down to rest. Then I heard that gang of desperadoes coming down into the gully. They stuck Coker down by the rock. My first thought, of course, was to rush on them and knock them right and left. But——"

"But second thoughts are best!" remarked Bob Cherry. "I've no doubt you acted on second thoughts."

"You see, there were eight of them," explained Bunter. "If there had been only four, or say five, I'd have handled them. But I thought that eight might be too many for me."

"The mightfulness was terrific!"

"Well, they went down to the beach," said Bunter. "Then I acted, with that presence of mind and utter disregard of danger that you fellows must have noticed about me lots of times."

"Gee-whiz!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Springing to my feet," continued Bunter, "I rushed to Coker and released him. 'Buck up, Coker!' I said to him with the icy coolness I always show in the hour of danger. 'Courage, old man! I'm with you!' Grasping him by the arm, I led him away."

"Coker says he had to carry you!" grinned Nugent.

"He would!" sneered Bunter. "Well, I can only tell you exactly what happened! I led Coker away, encouraging him with my dauntless pluck. Heedless of the shots——"

"Shots!" ejaculated the Bounder.

"They were firing like anything——"

"Coker must have been deaf!" remarked Nugent. "He didn't hear any shooting."

"Too frightened to notice it, I expect," said Bunter. "He was almost fainting, you know; and but for my encouraging voice he would have given in a lot of times. They fairly rained bullets on us! Luckily I wasn't hit. A bullet grazed my cheek."

"Only grazed it!" said Bob. "I suppose if the bullet had hit it you wouldn't have had the cheek to spin this yarn!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Keeping perfectly cool under a hot fire, I guided Coker's faltering footsteps!" said Bunter. "The pirates pursued us, with fiendish yells. Only one of them got close. I turned, and felled him with a single blow, straight from the shoulder."

"I can see you doing it!" agreed Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Finally, I got Coker to the road, and Mr. Fish's car picked us up," said Bunter. "It was just in time. The smugglers—I mean pirates—were close on us—rushing us down, in fact—and I don't feel sure that I could have handled the whole gang at close quarters. And—and that's all!" concluded Bunter. "Not much to me;

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Bunter wriggled behind Harry Wharton & Co. and crouched low. "I—I say, you fellows!" he gasped. "K-k-kik-keep in front of me! Keep him off!" The man in the jersey, sighting the group of juniors under the trees, came towards them. (See Chapter 15.)

though I fancy you fellows would have been frightened out of your wits."

There was a chortle from Bunter's audience.

"And now tell us what happened," said Johnny Bull.

"Eh! I've told you."

"I mean, what really happened?"

"If you can't take my word——" began Bunter hotly.

The Owl of the Remove broke off suddenly. A startling change came over his fat face, and his little round eyes almost bulged through his big spectacles. The juniors, following his scared glance, saw a man in duck trousers and a blue jersey, who had come in at the arched entrance. They had never seen the man before, but obviously he was one of the boatmen of a shore resort.

Bunter's eyes were fixed on him in terror.

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

"What the thump——"

Billy Bunter squirmed off the bench, wriggled behind it, and crouched low. The juniors stared at him in amazement.

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "K-k-kik-keep in front of me! Sit close together! Keep him off."

"What?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Dud-dud-don't let him see me!" gasped Bunter.

"My only hat!"

The man in the jersey, sighting the group of juniors at the bench under the trees, came towards them.

"Say, you guys," he said. "I guess I've moscyed along hyer from Santa

Monica looking for a fat galoot in specs!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"I sure took that pesky gink across from Santa to the shore hyer in my boat!" explained the man in the jersey. "He allowed that he was hitting the location in Jack-Rabbit Canyon. Dog-gone my cats, if the fat guy didn't absquatulate the minute he got on shore, in the dark, and clear off without paying up! I reckon I've come along to Jack-Rabbit to look for him. If he's here I want to know. I'm going to break him into more pieces than you could count in a month of Sundays!"

"Ow!" came a gasp from behind the juniors.

"Oh, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "This gentleman must be the faithful boatman Bunter was tellin' us about!"

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

"You can cackle, you guys!" hooted the incensed boatman of Santa Monica. "You can sure cackle; but that pesky mugwump won't cackle any when I get a holt on him! You hear me yaup? I guess I'm going to beat up that geck a few! Search me!"

There was a horrified gasp behind the juniors. The man in the jersey made a stride round the end of the bench.

"Yarooogh!"

Bunter leaped to his feet with a yell of terror.

"I say, you fellows, keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess that's the jay!" roared the man from Santa Monica. "That's sure the boob! Now, if I don't mush him up good——"

His grasp closed on Bunter.

"Yooop! Help!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows! Help! Yarooogh! Whooooop!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "Hold on, my dear man!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Yarooogh! Help! Fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors rushed on the indignant boatman and dragged him away from Bunter. A twenty-dollar bill which Lord Mauleverer pushed into the man's hand pacified him. But he gave Bunter a threatening glare as he departed.

"Wow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "Keep him off! I say, you fellows! Help! Yow-ow-ow——"

"He's gone!" gasped Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "He's gone, old fat man! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sat up.

"Ow! Sure he's gone? Oh dear!"

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

"Ow!" Bunter scrambled to his feet. "Wow! What are you cackling at, you beasts? Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at? Ow!"

And Billy Bunter snorted and rolled away, leaving the chums of the Remove still cackling!

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "THE FILM STAR'S FEUD!" It's the best yarn in the series, chums, so make sure of reading it by ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

YOU WANT THRILLS? WELL, HERE THEY ARE!

The BLACK HAWK!

By

Geo. E. ROCHESTER.



New Quarters.

THE sky was greying towards the east, token that the dawn was at hand, when the black Stahl-schuss scout glided low over the roofs of a small and isolated farmstead and landed in a field behind the ramshackle wooden outbuildings.

Leaving his propeller ticking over, Derek clambered stiffly from the cockpit and dropped to the ground.

He stood for a moment scanning the buildings with intent and searching eyes. But there was sign of neither life nor habitation about the place. Silent and deserted it stood, gaunt sentinel to greet the dawn.

It was at this lonely farmstead that Derek had found the fugitive from Cassel. And more than once since that night, when he had taken the English lad back across the lines, Derek had returned here. Always he had found it, as now, shuttered and deserted, for the peasant woman had gone.

It was obvious that, not trusting over-much the German uniform which Derek had worn, she had sought safety in flight.

It was better so, as far as Derek was concerned. In the guise of the Black Hawk he could never have used the farmstead as a base if she had remained, for she would certainly have been shot out of hand were he discovered on her premises. And that was apart from the question as to whether or not he would have been able to wholly trust her.

No, it was better that she had fled and left him in undisputed possession of the place. There was a barn here which

served him as a hangar. Hidden in it, beneath a great pile of hay and straw, were tins of petrol and belts of synchronised gun ammunition which Derek had, from time to time, brought from the hangar of Abergau under cover of night.

Derek had always been acutely alive to the necessity of preparing a base to which he could retreat in the event of his being driven from Abergau. And he had selected this place for the simple reason that he knew of none other which would serve him half as well. And yet the risk of discovery was intensified one hundredfold.

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched" is an old English proverb which the Germans have very conveniently changed to "Don't count your Hawk until it is caught." And, jingo, lad, the Hawk in question wants some catching!

At Abergau he had been able to come and go as he liked, for the villagers had accepted him as a German officer. But if his black machine were seen taking off or landing at this lonely farmstead, then investigations would at once be made. And what investigations could he face?

No, there had been a certain amount of temporary security at Abergau, but there was nothing here save the constant and deadly risk of exposure.

Yet he must face it if he intended to carry on as the Black Hawk. And he was grimly determined to carry on until either he went under or unmasked the men who had plotted his ruin.

Drawing his gun, Derek made a tour of the buildings, but saw nothing to occasion any suspicion that spying eyes might be watching him from some place of concealment.

Satisfied that all was well, he returned to the field where he had landed. Unlocking the padlock of the heavy barn doors, he swung them creakingly open. A quick survey of the interior of the barn showed him that it was as he had left it on his previous visit.

Retracing his steps to the machine, Derek swung himself up to the cockpit and gave the engine a burst of the throttle, which took the black scout surging in towards its makeshift hangar.

Five minutes later the machine was housed with barn doors closed, and locked on the inside. Wearily, with set purpose, Derek divested himself of his German uniform, and pulled on rough peasant garb which he took down from a nail.

Carefully folding the grey uniform, he placed it in an empty ammunition box, together with the badge and papers which had been Oslo's.

That done, he took a broken-hafted spade which lay with other rusted agricultural implements in a corner, and dug a hole in the earthen floor of the barn.

It was a laborious job, for the ground was almost as hard as stone. More than once he groaned aloud with the pain of his wounded shoulder. But at length the box and its contents lay buried beneath a six-inch layer of earth which he beat flat by the spade into some semblance of its former appearance, and covered with a great heap of straw.

On this same heap Derek stretched himself out, to fall at once into deep and untroubled slumber. Thus the day passed for Derek Moncrieff, until mid-afternoon, when he awakened.

The Sunset Hour!

THE slim and elegant Von Zei spent the greater part of that same day lounging in an arm-chair in the officers' ante-room at the German Air Headquarters of Frankfurt.

All morning he had the ante-room practically to himself. And he seemed well content, leaning back in his chair with eyes half-closed, and booted legs stretched out in luxurious ease. Now and again, as though at some pleasant thought, his lips would twitch in a fleeting smile.

For Von Zei was amused. Immensely so. Few had ever been privileged to witness such a delicious comedy as he had. Indeed, it had been funny, that scene in the commandante's office at dawn. Now if only there were appreciative ears to which he could tell of it!

It was after late lunch that the grim-featured Falterbau joined him, seating himself in an adjacent chair. Amongst the great German war aces, Falterbau ranked second only to Von Zei, and on the left breast of his oil-stained grey tunic was the black-and-white ribbon of the Iron Cross.

"You appear to find these quarters

more comfortable than your cockpit. Von Zei," he grunted.

"Indeed, yes!" murmured Von Zei.

"And you?"

"I will be as honest," laughed Falterbau, "and admit I do."

Then the laugh died on his lips, for he was not given overmuch to laughter, this stern-visaged Falterbau.

"I tell you, Von Zei," he went on, changing the subject with a harsh abruptness, "we will have to find a better machine than the Fokker, else we are going to be driven from the skies."

"You think so?"

"Think so?" Falterbau crashed a clenched fist to the arm of his chair. "I know it, I tell you! We have neither the speed nor the climbing angle of the Bristol Fighter, which these cursed Englishers are using. And now they are fitting their D.H.9's with a new engine which makes them far faster than our Fokkers, and gives them a 'ceiling' which we cannot attain. If things go on like this, Von Zei, there will be only one end!"

"And that is?"

"We shall not dare show our noses over the British lines!"

"I know two of us who shall, in spite of all you say," drawled Von Zei.

Then, straightening up in his chair, he laid a white and well-manicured hand on Falterbau's knee.

"Come, cheer up, my friend," he said.

"We know, you and I, that these are dark days; but buffoonery at which we can laugh is not yet dead."

"Buffoonery?" echoed Falterbau. "I do not understand!"

Von Zei sank back in his chair.

"No?" he murmured. "And yet its chief apostle gambolled on this very aerodrome to usher in the dawn!"

"I do not know what you are talking about, Von Zei," growled Falterbau impatiently. "Who do you mean by the chief apostle of buffoonery?"

"I mean—Zanderberg," replied Von Zei, examining his polished finger-nails. "Ah, my Falterbau, he was funny—devilish funny!"

"Intentionally?" grunted Falterbau incredulously.

"Well—hardly!" drawled Von Zei.

"That, of course, made him the more amusing. But I will tell you."

He paused to light a cigarette. Reflectively watching the bluish fragrant smoke curling lazily upwards, he resumed:

"You must understand, my Falterbau, that I and Federkiel, and one or two others, had been summoned here to meet Zanderberg. We were to discuss the ways and means of trapping the Black Hawk. I will spare you unnecessary details, but whilst we were in solemn conclave—whilst, in fact, Federkiel and Zanderberg were verging on the personal—a telephone message came through from the Wilhelmstrasse to the effect that one of Zanderberg's Secret Service agents had located a pilot who might well be the Black Hawk!"

"Where?" exclaimed Falterbau.

"At a disused Gotha hangar near the village of Abergau," replied Von Zei.

"Well, to continue. Zanderberg gave orders that an escort of soldiers was to proceed at once to Abergau from the garrison at Zarn. They were to get in touch with the Secret Service man, arrest the mysterious pilot, and convey him here without delay."

"Yes; go on!"

"In the interval of waiting to hear the outcome of this interesting affair," continued Von Zei, "we were treated to a discourse on the merits of the Intelligence Department by an exultant Zanderberg. We—poor fools of airmen

that we were—had failed to get the Black Hawk. He had succeeded where we had failed."

"He seems to have been very sure that the man was the Black Hawk!" grunted Falterbau. "Fool!"

"Not such a fool in that direction, as you will learn," said Von Zei.

"But you do not mean to say—" began Falterbau excitedly.

"Let me continue," cut in Von Zei.

"This joke is richer than you think, Falterbau. Yes, Zanderberg was very sure that man must be the Black Hawk, because it was one, Oslo, who had found him. This Oslo, according to Zanderberg, possesses, to an unheard of degree, intelligence, courage, and cunning. We listened, in silence, to peans of praise for Oslo."

"In silence?"

Von Zei shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," he replied, "for were we not blundering, heavy-handed fools who had been forced to come to Zanderberg to rid us of this Black Hawk? It was Zanderberg's hour. And he made the most of it with triumphant voice and—for us—contemptuous gesture. Ah, I assure you, there was nothing left unsaid which could be said. And then, when dawn was breaking, the telephone bell rang. It was a message for Zanderberg from the Governor of the garrison of Zarn."

"Yes, yes; what did he say, this governor?"

"He said," replied Von Zei, slowly, and with relish, "that undoubtedly the mysterious pilot at the hangar was the Black Hawk, but that he had escaped. He said also that the sergeant in charge of the escort had been killed, and he wound up with the news that there was no sign of the Secret Service agent—the mighty Oslo, you understand, who, for some unaccountable reason, seemed to have taken it into his head to vanish."

"It was the Black Hawk, you say?" cried Falterbau.

"Apparently so. A thorough search of the hangar and an interrogation of the villagers indicated that it could be no one else."

"And he got away?"

"Exactly! He slipped through the hands of the clever Oslo, to say nothing of those of the soldiers."

"But this fool of an Oslo had him!" cried Falterbau.

"That is what one felt tempted to point out to the raving Zanderberg," chuckled Von Zei. "Had him, as you say; but bungled, unforgivably! The Englishers have a proverb, my Falter-

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

The victim of a dastardly plot, young Derek Monieriff, a fearless British pilot, is accused of treachery, court-martialled and sentenced to be shot! Determined to clear his dishonoured name, however, Derek makes a daring escape by changing identities with Captain Von Arn, a dead German airman. Using as his base a deserted Gotha hangar at Abergau, the young pilot becomes known and dreaded by the Germans under the name of the Black Hawk. His black machine—with the replica of a swooping hawk on its fuselage has again and again come to the rescue of Allied machines when hopelessly outnumbered by the enemy. Oslo, the super German spy, discovers the whereabouts of this mysterious airman, but while reconnoitring near the hangar he is attacked and stunned by Baier, a seemingly harmless idiot, who is none other than Captain Darnley, a British Secret Service agent. A detachment of German soldiers arrives at the hangar at Abergau, with orders to capture their man at all costs, but they are met and scattered by a racing black aeroplane. The Black Hawk has escaped by the skin of his teeth, and with him has gone Oslo, the German spy.

(Now read on.)

bau, which I thought might soothe the almost unhinged mind of Zanderberg. So I quoted, altering but one word."

"Yes—this proverb?"

"Do not count your hawks—the Englishers say, chickens—before they are hatched," replied Von Zei. "A good proverb, but one which earned for me a soul-shrivelling curse."

"And has anything been heard of Oslo, the Secret Service agent?" demanded Falterbau.

"No, nothing," drawled Von Zei. "By one masterly stroke our Zanderberg has lost the Black Hawk, the cunning Oslo, and a sergeant of the garrison of Zarn. An excellent night's work on the part of the Intelligence Bureau."

He rose to his feet. And, as he stood looking down at Falterbau, the rays of the setting sun shone in through the window on his face which of a sudden had become stern and set.

"I found it amusing, Falterbau," he said, "as always I am amused when I see a braggart humbled by his own boasting words. But somewhere out there the Black Hawk still lives, and he is our lawful prey. It is the hour of sunset—the hour when he has always been most active along the Western Front. So let you and me go in search of him together."

"Agreed!" cried Falterbau, leaping to his feet, eyes aglint. "And I swear that if we find him, then either he or I shall never reach the ground alive!"

Out of the Dusk!

WORD was at once passed to the officer in charge of hangars, and the little scarlet Fokker scouts of Von Zei and Falterbau were wheeled out on to the tarmac. A grey-clad sergeant mechanic swung himself up to the cockpit of each machine, and the engines picked up with a shattering roar in a short but searching test.

Pilots off duty, and ground staff officers, clustered round the powerful little scouts, watching them with more than a passing interest as they stood quivering against the chocks with propellers whirling at full revolutions.

Elbowing his way towards his machine came Von Zei, smiling, and with light-hearted jest for those who gave him greeting. At his heels followed Falterbau, grim of feature, answering with either grunt or jerk of head the salutations of the onlookers.

Both men were muffled in heavy flying kit, and they lost no time in swinging themselves up to their respective cockpits, which by now the sergeant mechanics had vacated. Engines roared anew with deep pulsating rhythm as each pilot opened up the throttle in order to satisfy himself that his engine was giving its full revolutions.

Then suddenly Von Zei's gloved hand whipped up.

In response to the signal, the waiting mechanics whisked away the chocks from in front of the tired wheels of the undercarriage. The scarlet scout shot forward like a greyhound from the slips. Blinding, choking dust swirled in its wake, then the tail came up, and the machine took the air in a steep, upward climb, followed by the Fokker scout of Falterbau.

The two machines roared back over the hangars, then swung away towards the south-west, climbing as they went. Below them wound the waters of the River Main, glittering like burnished gold in the rays of the setting sun.

At ten thousand feet the Fokkers
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passed over the great railway junction of Mayence, where the symbol of the German Red Cross was prominent in blood-red on the whitewashed roofs of the northern station.

On and on they thundered, each pilot crouched behind his windshield, sweeping the sky ahead with grim and watchful eyes.

Mannheim dropped behind, far away on their left. They were well into the danger zone now; into the happy hunting ground of British machines out on long-distance offensive patrol. And not only machines engaged on offensive patrol might have to be reckoned with. A British daylight bombing squadron returning with the slowly fading day to its aerodrome behind the line would swoop to the attack with guns aflame should it sight these two fast-flying Fokker scouts.

Not that either Von Zei or Falterbau would have hesitated a moment to give battle. For, let it be said here and now, that the man who would disparage the German war pilot is a bigoted fool.

Amongst her war pilots Germany numbered men of magnificent courage and splendid sportsmanship.

The whole world paid tribute to the passing of a great aviator and fighter when the Baron Richtofen died gallantly above the battle smoke. Erwin Haertl, also, was our enemy; but his superb heroism will always live in the memory of those who flew against him. He died from wounds behind the German lines after having shot down a British machine. Half-way through that fight Erwin Haertl was mortally wounded, and in order to carry on was forced to stand up in the cockpit in order to control his machine. He knew he was condemning himself to certain death, but he stuck it till the end, and, in victory, died gloriously.

And of this breed were Von Zei and Falterbau. But they had taken the air

this evening with one grim and set purpose—the finding of the Black Hawk if he were in the air.

They had climbed by now to seventeen thousand feet, and swinging more westerly, thundered on. They were nearing the line. Far below them, along the thin ribbon of roadways, wound long, grey-clad columns of marching men, interspersed here and there with slow-moving lorries and heavy, tractor-drawn guns.

But neither pilot had any other thought than the scanning of the sky ahead, outboards, and above.

Again the machines swung, bearing towards the north. If he were anywhere he would be behind the German lines, this Black Hawk. Flying one hundred feet apart, with Falterbau slightly behind Von Zei, the Fokker scouts roared on, engaged on their grim quest.

Once, far behind them on their tails, they saw a British squadron of D.H.4's heading towards the line; and in order to avoid an encounter, the Fokkers swung eastwards into Germany, with noses down, and engines thundering at full revolutions.

Dusk was deepening now, and the mist-swathed ground far below was scarcely visible.

With a muttered curse, Von Zei signalled with gloved hand to Falterbau. His feet moved on the rudder-bar, and he headed towards distant Mannheim.

It was no use searching any longer. Their luck was out. Better to stay at Mannheim aerodrome overnight and renew the search on the morrow. Sooner or later they would meet the Black Hawk, for this was the sector over which he ranged.

It was then that Von Zei, crouching over his controls, froze for an instant into sudden tense rigidity. For, coming straight at him from out of the dusk was a black machine flying at a terrific speed.

Instinctively Von Zei's hand whipped towards the trigger of his synchronised gun. But before his fingers could close on it, the black machine roared past his port planes. And on the black fuselage Von Zei saw the dread replica of a swooping hawk.

The End of a Flight!

THE Black Hawk!" The words came from Von Zei's lips in a wild, exultant snarl. But, master of air fighting that he was, he did not throw his machine round in a sharp wing-turn in order to thunder in pursuit.

Instead, he chose the wiser course. Forward went his control stick, and, with engine thundering at full revolutions, he tore earthwards in a screaming nose dive. Only for seconds did he hold that dive, then back came the stick, and he went zooming up, and up into the dusk.

Right at the apex of the loop he pulled a perfect Immelmann roll, and knew that now the advantage of height must be his. But in those few hectic seconds he had found time to wonder why the Black Hawk had held his fire in the first moment of attack.

Yet the explanation was simple. As Derek had thundered towards Von Zei his mind had been working with lightning-like rapidity. He realised that if he were to do aught but harmlessly riddle Von Zei's fuselage between cockpit and tail plane he must instantly swing off his line of flight and close in on the Fokker at a more acute angle. And Falterbau, behind Von Zei, would undoubtedly be expecting the boy to adopt such an obvious course of action.

On that assumption Derek staked everything. He held his machine as she was, roared past Von Zei, and drove in at Falterbau. His gloved fingers clamped themselves round the trigger of the synchronised gun, and the dusk was split by lurid, belching flame.

Falterbau saw his inner starboard strut suddenly splinter, as though riven by an invisible axe. Bracing wires parted, to flap madly against the upper plane.

Livid of face, and with lips asnarl, Falterbau kicked frenziedly on his rudder-bar, whipping his control-stick across.

The Fokker scout answered gallantly, wheeling to meet the attack. Above the roar of the engine came the snarl of its spitting gun. But next instant that wicked black muzzle was silenced for all time.

Falterbau's nerveless hand fell from the trigger, and as he collapsed over the controls, shot through the lungs, the nose of the Fokker dropped, and it tore earthwards, with the engine thundering full revolutions.

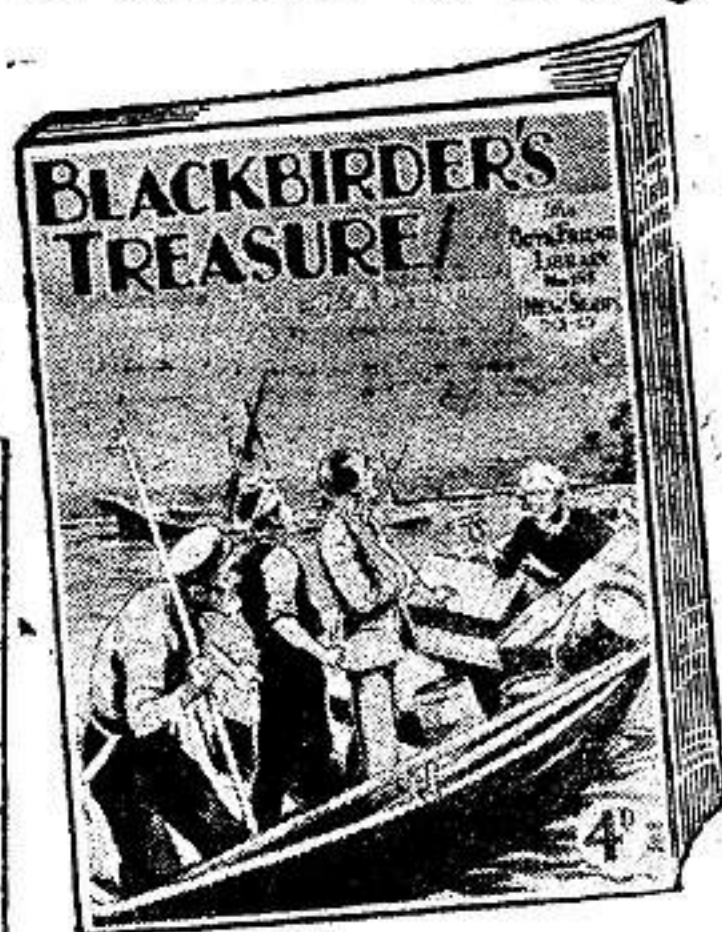
Up and up, in a wild, soaring zoom, went the Black Hawk. But like a scarlet meteor the Fokker of Von Zei came hurtling in at him, with vicious gun aflame.

Von Zei had glimpsed his comrade's death-dive, and his face was wolfish in its passion. Falterbau would be avenged before this fight was over!

Derek's dashboard shattered into riven wood and splintered glass. Bullets ricocheted off his engine cowling, but he kept the stick back, hugged close into his leather flying-coat, and completed a whirlwind loop.

Swerving on the downward dive, he
(Continued on page 28.)

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NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

IT is difficult to talk of anything else but the Boat-Race this week. On every hand one hears the same questions: "Who'll win? Oxford or Cambridge?" Therefore I am sure "Magnetites" will be interested to know something

ABOUT THE BOAT RACE.

If Cambridge manage to pull it off again this year, it will add one more to their long list of victories, for Oxford have only succeeded in winning the race once since the War, and even on that occasion they won by the short lead of three quarters of a length.

Oxford were the winners of the first race rowed between the two Universities. This was in 1829, but the race did not become an annual event until 1856. Since that date it has been rowed almost continuously. During the War, however, from 1915 to 1919, the race was not rowed. In 1912 the race was actually rowed twice, for, on the first occasion both boats sank, and the race had to be rowed again on the following Monday. The course, from Putney to Mortlake, is four and a quarter miles.

Now, having got that off my chest, let me see what my post-bag contains. Here's an unusual query, from Harry Gibbs, of Boston, Lines.

WHAT IS A SUCRE?

asks Harry. A Sucre is a coin of the republic of Ecuador, in South America. It is worth 100 Centavos, which is about 10d. Next please?

Here is M. Gardiner, of Lowestoft, asking: "Who was Fra Diavolo?" This is the name of a famous Italian brigand, who is as celebrated in his own country as Dick Turpin is here. His real name was Michele Pezza, and he flourished about the year 1799. The superstitious peasants of the country which he ravaged attributed him with possessing the qualities of both monk and demon. Even when he was outlawed, he waged war with an army composed of about 300 ex-convicts. There is an opera written about him and his exploits.

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

is a subject which interests Jim Harvey, of Croydon, who wants to know how many ships were sunk in that naval engagement. The total number was twenty-five. We lost three battle cruisers, three cruisers, and eight torpedo craft. The Germans lost one battleship, one battle cruiser, four light cruisers, and five torpedo craft.

HEARD THIS ONE?

On a recent Flag-day in a certain town, a motorist, known for his reckless driving, was asked by a smiling young lady if he would contribute a small sum in aid of the local hospital.

"No," said the motorist, unpleasantly. "I have already contributed to them."

"Oh, yes," said the young lady, still smiling, "but you must remember we are collecting money to-day, not pedestrians!"

A "Magnet" pocket-knife has been awarded to: Douglas Turner, 90, Knighton Lane, Aylestone Park, Leicester, for this joke. Now, you chaps, surely you know a good joke worth passing on to other "Magnetites." You do? Good!

Send it in and see if you can win a handy pocket-knife.

DO DRAGONS EXIST?

asks H. K. of Renfrew. What are called dragons nowadays are really flying lizards, which are found in the islands of the Malay Archipelago. They look like the popular conception of dragons, but they are only about ten inches long. It is generally assumed that the idea of dragons has been handed down from pre-historic times. One pre-historic reptile—the Pterodactyl—bore a striking resemblance to what a dragon is supposed to have looked like. And,

TALKING OF PRE-HISTORIC ANIMALS.

I know a friend who claims to have seen one! He was out in West Africa, and, hearing tales from the natives of a monstrous creature which lurked in a river in the interior, he went exploring. He tried to capture the creature in a trap made of wire ropes, but the monster broke through, and vanished down the river. My friend's description of the "dragon" fitted in with the description of a Pterodactyl, and he vows that his story is true. Of course, it is quite possible that one or two pre-historic animals have survived, and lurk in the swamps of the unexplored places of the world—but I'll believe it when I see one!

How did

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS

get its name? asks one of our girl readers, Muriel Fisher, of Whitstable. Because it is the bridge which leads from the old Courts of Justice in Venice to the prison. Anyone condemned by the court passed over the bridge—and never came back! I once paid a visit to that particular bridge, and passed over it to the cells beyond, and I can tell you fellows that I was glad I didn't live in the days when

Venice was in her glory! No light, and very little air penetrated into the cells, and at high tide the water from the canals came into them.

There is a door at the end of a long stone corridor which runs between the cells, and near this door the unhappy prisoners were executed. Their bodies were then passed through the door to a waiting gondola, which rowed them away from the city, and dropped them into the waters of the lagoon. Grrh! It makes me feel creepy to think of it!

THE MOST FAMOUS ESCAPE IN HISTORY.

occurred there. Cassanova, a Venetian adventurer, was incarcerated in a part of this prison, which was known as "the Leads," and he went to almost superhuman efforts to escape. He managed it, too, although he is believed to be the only man who ever did it. Unfortunately no one really knows how he managed it, for, although he wrote the story of his escape, he was such a puller of the long bow that no one can believe him, and he contradicts himself several times in the course of his narrative.

The subject of "escapes" reminds me of

A NARROW SQUEAK

which happened to one of our MAGNET authors—E. L. McKeag, who wrote our last "Spanish Main" serial. I told you that I would endeavour to get some of our contributors' personal experiences from them, and I've managed to get this one from him. Unfortunately I haven't room this week, but next week I'll tell you the story of his escape from the Catacombs of Paris. In the meanwhile, here's a limerick which earns a leather wallet for Robert H. Wells, of 145, Audley Road, South Gosforth, near Newcastle-on-Tyne.

When Bunter's stentorian snore
Rings over the dormitory floor,
A boot from a hand
On his nose will land,
And Bunter wakes up with a roar.

I have lots of leather wallets in stock, so if you're keen to possess one, try your skill at writing a Greyfriars Limerick, then send your effort to the address shown beneath the illustrated heading on this page.

And here's next week's programme of our usual feast of fiction:

"THE FILM STAR'S FEUD!" By Frank Richards.

Being the further adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in Hollywood.

"THE BLACK HAWK!"

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"THE HEAD'S WILD RIDE!"

Dicky Nugent's latest shocker. Order your MAGNET in good time, boys—in other words order it now!

YOUR EDITOR.

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"THE BLACK HAWK!"

(Continued from page 26.)

fore straight in at the wheeling Von Zei, and again his gun roared into life, stabbing the deepening dusk with blood-red flame. The cartridge belt was whirling madly through the chamber and the acrid fumes of burning powder swirled back in the slipstream of the thundering propeller.

Von Zei threw his machine into a spin, from which he emerged with a sudden roar of high-powered engine, to fear earthwards in a thundering dive. Above the roar of his engine sounded the shriek of wind through flying wires and struts. Then back came the stick, and the Fokker soared up in a wild and almost perpendicular zoom.

Derek followed, grimly, relentlessly, but already Von Zei had rolled, and was tearing in at the boy, intent on finishing the fight.

Derek pulled a sharp wing turn, but his lower starboard plane was rent a full eighteen inches, and three bracing wires were streaming loosely back in the slipstream of the propeller.

Behind his face-mask the boy's face was pale and set. Except for one fleeting interlude, this fight, so far, had been all Von Zei's. Had the Black Hawk, at long last, met his master?

He supposed, piloting Derek pulled clear of the stream of bullets from the Fokker's synchronised gun. Whipping his control stick forward, he went downwards in a screaming nose dive, swerving madly.

Crouched over his controls, his lips again, Von Zei followed. In his heart was wild exultation. He had got the measure of this Black Hawk. He knew it. He was harrying him mercilessly, keeping always the offensive.

Derek glanced over his shoulder at

the scarlet Fokker hurtling down on his tail, still swinging like a wreck. Only the wild swinging of his machine on that downward dive was saving him from the bullets of Von Zei's gun.

But he knew his deadly peril. At any instant his spine might be shattered by a burst from the Fokker's gun, or his tail plane and rudder shot to ribbons.

Yet purposely he held the dive. Then suddenly his foot jerked hard on the rudder-bar and he whipped the control stick across. The black machine whirled out of the dive with a jar which sent Derek sagging wildly against the side of the cockpit. Bracing-wires tautened and struts bent to the terrific strain. But grimly the boy kept his foot pressed on the rudder bar, and, with stick across, completed a whirlwind bank.

Von Zei, taken completely unawares by the amazing swiftness of the manoeuvre, yanked back his stick to pull out of his dive in a zoom.

But tearing in at him from the flank came the Black Hawk. So close were the machines that it seemed as though a crash must be inevitable. Bullets from the lurid, blazing gun of the Black Hawk tore through the Fokker's fuselage between engine cowling and rear of cockpit. And as the Black Hawk soared up to rear over Von Zei's top plane the Fokker fell away into a spin.

Derek wheeled, with nose down. Then his hand dropped from the trigger of his synchronised gun. For a tongue of flame had licked back from the Fokker's given petrol tank, and the stricken machine was plunging earthwards, a blazing mass.

Derek passed a weary hand across his forehead, his goggles. The Fokker would be burnt out by the time it reached the ground, and no help on earth could aid Von Zei now. Not that he required aid, for he was dead

on the floor of his blazing cockpit. Such was the end of the greatest of war.

Swinging his machine, Derek then dived away to the south-east. Another fight was over, and two more names would be added to that steadily mounting list of victims which the Black Hawk had claimed. Merciless, indeed, would be the reckoning should he ever fall into German hands.

Reaction had set in, and Derek was in a strangely despondent mood. What, he asked himself, would be the end of it all? Days were drifting into weeks, and still he was no nearer discovering the identity of the men who had ruined him than he had been that night when he escaped from Le Courban.

But what effort had he made to find those men? Little effort, in very truth. For, with him, England's cause had come first, and his own second.

England's cause!

He laughed bitterly. What, after all, did he owe to England? Had she not disowned and dishonoured him? And how that he had the badge and papers of Oslo he would be able to move much more freely in Germany if he took reasonable precautions. The badge and papers would prove invaluable. Why not chuck this harrying of the Boche air-men, then, and devote all his time to proving himself innocent of the charges which had been brought against him? He owed it to himself to do so.

Yes, but he owed more to his country, in spite of all. Always she must come first. He knew it, knew it was an indubitable truth. And if, in the serving of her, he could aid his own personal cause, then so much the better.

(Be sure you read the thrilling follow-on of this powerful War serial which will appear in next week's bumper issue of the MAGNET.)

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DR. BIRCHEMALL'S BUS!



DICKY NUGENT

Dr. Birchmell is not the man to look a gift-horse in the mouth, even if the said "horse" turns out to be a dilapidated motor-bus fit only for the scrap-heap! And thereafter high speeds and high jinks become the order of the day at St. Sam's!

"H, help!"

A stranger to St. Sam's, mite have thought it was an egg-headed cry for assistance that rang across the quad. As a matter of fact, it was merely Jack Jolly, the lapman of the Fourth, expressing surprise.

The chums of the Fourth had been watching an egg-headed game of hopscotch between the Head and their Form-master, Mr. Lickham, on the Sixth-Form green. The same being over, they were proceeding back to the School House, when suddenly Jack Jolly spotted something that drove the surprised egg-head from his lips.

"Oh, help!" he repeated. "Just cast your optics over there, chaps!"

Merry and Bright and Frank Fearless flung their peepers over to the Skool gates and fairly jumped.

"Why, it's a motor-bus!" egg-headed Frank Fearless.

"And what a motor-bus!" chuckled Merry.

Made in the year Dot, I should think, grinned Bright.

Certainly the antiquated model that had just rolled through the gates looked as if it was on its last legs—or, to be more exact, its last wheels. The bonnet was hoisted in, the mud-guards flapped idly in the breeze, and the body was patched and repaired all over.

Seated at the wheel, urging on the old bus, with wild cries, was a gentleman whose dial was vaguely familiar to the St. Sam's juniors. He had a shifty, sinister smile on his lips and a furtive look about the eyes. You might have taken him for a burglar or a forger. But he was neither.

"Grate pip!" I remember that Johnny said Jack Jolly suddenly. "He's Mr. Birchmell, the lawyer."

"Why, of course!" cried the rest. At the mention of the name they all remembered the solicitor, who had stayed at St. Sam's on a memorable occasion when Dr. Birchmell had been left a legacy.

"What's he here for?" murmured Jack. "Someone else dyed and left the Head an imaginary fortune, I wonder?"

in the quad of St. Sam's? Unhappily! Preposterous!

He stepped into the path of the approaching vehicle and held up his bony hand in an imperative gesture.

With a loud screeching of brakes, the bus came to a halt. Half a minute later Mr. Birchmell stepped down from the driver's seat and shook hands warmly with the astonished Head.

"You remember me, sir?" he cried. "Grate pip!" It's Cheatem, the lawyer! "What brings you from the bizzzy city to the skool?" asked the Head.

"Oh, crumb! Is that a conundrum?" asked the lawyer, rather nonplussed by such eloquent language.

No, Cheatem, it is not! I am asking you what is your business at St. Sam's?"

Ah, now you're talking! I'm here, as a matter of fact, as a very pleasing matchmaker. I am the bearer of glad tidings!

"Oh, good egg!" cried the Head, a look of greed appearing on his skollery face. "Spill the beans, then, Cheatem—or, as the vulgar would say, get on with the giddy washing!"

"With pleasure, sir! To get down to brass tax, an old pupil of yours, Sid Steerstrait, has just emigrated to America and given up his business as a bus driver. Under the circumstances, he has no further use for his stock-in-trade, and he has instructed me to give it to you—free, gratis, and for nothing."

As he spoke the lawyer jerked his thumb in the direction of the bus. The Head's glances travelled to it and his eyes began to gleam egg-headedly.

"Grate pip! This is interesting!" he murmured. "I remember Steerstrait very well. Do you mean to say he has been a jennerson enuff to leave me this magnificent vehicle on his departure for a farthing hand?"

"Exactly. There is only one condition. And what is that, pray?"

"If you brake your neck in it he is not to be held responsible."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Jolly & Co. The Head frowned fiercely.

"Good-bye, then!"

Broad hints were wasted on the Head of St. Sam's.

The lawyer cautioned off, and Dr. Birchmell was left to gaze raptly at the motor-bus which had fallen like a manna from heaven at his skollery feet.

"This is a bit of luck, Lickham, and no mistake!" he said, addressing the master of the Fourth.

"Hom! But duzzent it look a bit of an old crook, sir?"

scolded Mr. Lickham, with a rather dubious glance at the old vehicle.

"Oh, rats! You are looking at it with jaundiced eyes!"

snapped the Head. "Anyway, Lickham, a man of your years should know that it's bad form to look a gift-horse in the mouth."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure!" murmured Mr. Lickham, abashed. "But—but what are you going to do with it, anyway? You are not supposing giving the juniors joy-rides round the quad, suppose?"

Dr. Birchmell flung his assistant a withering look.

"Where's your sense, Lickham?" he asked skollery. "What are buses usually used for, you berring idiot?"

"For carrying people from place to place, I suppose, sir," answered Mr. Lickham, after a pause.

"Exactly. For what other purposes should I use this bus, then?" snorted the Head.

The master of the Fourth jumped.

you like, Lickham, but don't ask me to look at you!"

"But—but you can't ask a master of a crute skool like St. Sam's to become a bus conductor!" gasped Mr. Lickham.

"Tut-tut, Lickham! You are far too squeamish. Needless to say, I shall make it worth your while."

"Oh, well, in that case, I accept the job," grinned Mr. Lickham, a little mollified.

"Good egg! Now, boys," said Dr. Birchmell, turning to Jack Jolly & Co., "I want you to buzz off and spread the news far and wide that the St. Sam's Bus Service begins soon after lessons, this afternoon. Savvy?"

"We savvy, sir," chorused Jack Jolly & Co., and they set off to fulfil their mission. And very soon, all St. Sam's was buzzing with the amazing news that Birchmell's Bus Service had begun!

II.

THERE was a wild rush to get on the bus, after classes had been dismissed that day. Stately seniors and jinky fags pushed and screamed feverishly, and the Head fairly floated as he climbed into the driver's seat.

"Plenty of room on top, boys!" he yelled, making his voice heard with difficulty above the terrific din. "Pack 'em in like sardines, Lickham! The more passengers we carry, the bigger the prospects!"

The master of the Fourth made no reply. With a bony Six-Former's elbow in his eyes, and someone else's knee in his back, it was all he could do to preserve himself intact!

The bus was crammed to the limits of its capacity at last, and Mr. Lickham, with a frantic effort, banged his way on to the platform and jerked the bell-cord.

Bus-driver Birchmell gave a playful look on the horn. A few seconds later, with a jerk that shot off half-a-dozen passengers, the grate vehicle moved forward, and rolled majestically down the drive towards the skool gates.

Needless to say, our heroes, Jack Jolly & Co. were well to the fore. The rest of the places being taken before they arrived on the scene, they had begged front seats with the driver, and they were grinning cheerfully as the bus roared and rattled past old Fossil's lodge and out on to the open road.

"Grash! Bang! Wallop!" Sliding and swaying all over the road, Dr. Birchmell's bus persevered its merry career. It wasn't egg-headedly comfortable, Jack Jolly & Co. were holding on by the skin of their teeth. But Dr. Birchmell chuckled into his beard as though he was enjoying himself no end.

"You'd have to go a long way, boys, before you found another driver like me!" he remarked, as they missed a snipshot by a meek fraction of an inch.

"About as far as the nearest asylum I should think!" remarked Frank Fearless, with parental candour.

"How dare you, Fearless! For that, I shall birch you black and blue, when we get back to St. Sam's!"

"My hat! You mean IF we get back to St. Sam's, don't you, sir?" gasped Jack Jolly, as they glammed off a tree-trunk and cannoned into a brick-wall.

"Oh, rats!" grunted the Head, steering back into the road again. "Riding in this bus, Jolly, is as safe as riding in that bath-chair over there."

As Dr. Birchmell spoke, he crashed into the offending bath-chair that was passing, and sent it flying into the air.

"No time to stop!" remarked the Head, hastily. "In a couple of minutes we shall be at Muggleton Station, my boys! Nor for a final burst!"

He stepped on the gas, and like an un-leashed hound the bus leant forward.

Crash!

A careless motorist who failed to get out of the way was shot over the hedge into a nearby field. The Head merely laughed simoniacally, and drove all the harder.

"Thud!"

To cut off a corner, Dr. Birchmell drove clear through a house, shattering it to atoms.

Jack Jolly & Co. began to feel a bit nervous. Not that our heroes were by any means fainky; on the contrary, they were typical Britons, who larked at danger and feared nothing. But there was no sense in courting death at the hands of a maniac bus-driver, and they were rapidly arriving at the conclusion that that was the best description of the Head just then.

"Muggleton Station ahead!" cried Jack Jolly hoarsely, as the village loomed up in the distance.

"Grate pip!" gasped Bright. "We can never stop!"

Frank Fearless gritted his teeth and decided on a bold course. It was obvious that in the hands of such an inexperienced old fogey as the Head, the bus would simply crash into the station and shatter into a thousand pieces, leaving the passengers severely broosed and shaken. The only chance of escape was for some brilliant genius in the art of motor-driving to take the wheel.

To think was to act, with Frank Fearless. In an instant, he was standing up. One savage jerk at the Head's beard was sufficient to jerk the old idiot out of his seat, yelling fearfully with pain and rage. A fraction of a second later, Frank Fearless was in his place, applying the brakes and guiding the old bus with sure and steady hands through the Muggleton High Street, to pull up safely outside the station.

There was a terrific cheer from the passengers, for they could all see clearly that Frank's plucky action had averted a fearful disaster.

The only one who wasn't pleased was the Head. He rubbed his injured fizz, and stroked his damaged beard, in a state of inexpressible anger. But, as nobody took any notice of him, that didn't matter much; and even the Head forgot his troubles when Mr. Lickham came round to the front of the bus and handed over the takings.

"How much have we taken, Licky?" he asked, rubbing his bony hands in gleeful anticipation.

"One pound, three and twupence, two forin stamps, and a French franc, and a trowais button, sir!" answered Mr. Lickham.

"Good biz! Hand over the dibbs!" ordered the Head, greedily.

"Yes, the filthy lowker," said Dr. Birchmell, "or as the vulgar would say, the spondulicks. Hand it over, Licky, old bean!"

"There's the question of my salary!" murmured Mr. Lickham, with a nervous cough.

"I hadn't forgotten that," grinned the Head. "You have done well—very well indeed, Lickham, and I intend to reward you handsomely. Here you are!"

With that, the Head gave him the French franc and the trowais button, and hastily jumped up into the driver's seat again.

Mr. Lickham was left staring at his reward, almost speechlessly. Whatever prospects the driver made out of the St. Sam's Bus Service, it looked as though it would be a long time before the conductor would be able to retire on his earnings.

THE END.

(Be sure you read the second yarn in this amazing series, entitled "The Head & Wild Ride!" which will appear in next week's MAGNET. You'll vote it a side-splitter!)

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