

"FAREWELL TO THE FILMS!" This week's fine schoolboy adventure story, featuring Harry Wharton & Co.

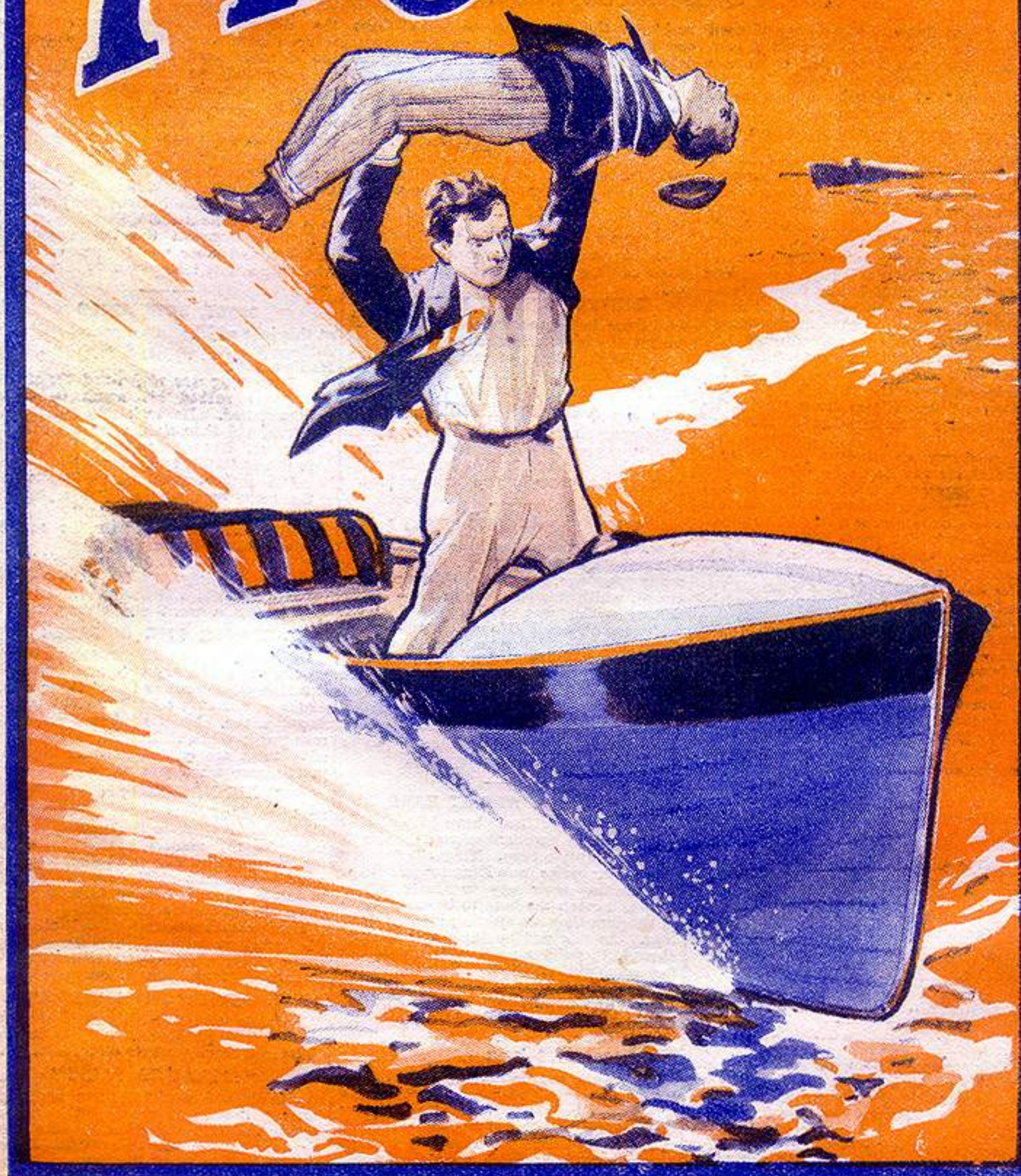
The Magnet ^{2^D}

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Week Ending May 4th, 1929.

EVERY SATURDAY.

LIBRARY



IN MERCILESS HANDS!

(Harry Wharton's success as a film star has made for him an implacable and jealous enemy in Myron Poll; the "handsomest man in Hollywood." And from that jealousy springs an adventure—told in vivid fashion in the long story inside—which all but costs Harry Wharton his life.)



Come Into the Office, Boys!

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

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

AS you know, I am always pleased to help you fellows all I can, therefore I am glad to be able to hand on a little advice to Bob McCracken, of Dumfries, who asks me to give him some information on

THE CHOICE OF A CAREER.

Bob would like to be a journalist, and as he has almost reached school-leaving age, he asks me the best way to set about achieving his ambition. Must he learn shorthand? he asks. It would certainly be better for you if you did, Bob, although shorthand is not so essential to a journalist nowadays as it was previously. Journalists may be divided roughly into two classes—sub-editors and reporters—and it is much better to commence as a reporter, although I expect that Bob, being a Scotsman, will want to be a sub-editor. We say in Fleet Street that sub-editors are one of the principal exports of Scotland! You would understand that if you knew how many Scottish sub-editors there are in "the street of ink."

A good groundwork on a local paper is essential for the boy who wishes to become a journalist. Bob should write to the Editor of his local paper and ask him if he has a vacancy for a boy on the staff. If he hasn't, Bob must find some other local paper which has, and he must be content to start in a very humble way. If he has the makings of a journalist in him he will get any amount of opportunities to advance himself. He won't be given reporting to do at first, but when he is tried out he will have to remember that his future depends upon the quality of his reports. A good journalist will always get on, and will learn to make opportunities for himself.

Jolly good luck to you, Bob! And, by the way, it strikes me that a few hints on careers might be acceptable to my readers. What do you think? Anyway, if you want advice on this important subject, don't be afraid to write to me and ask for it!

Now for a clever limerick for which N. A. Shepperd, of 20, Hereford Road, Acton, W.3, has earned a useful leather pocket wallet:

The tuckshop is Bunter's delight,
He dreams of its pastries all night,
When he's eaten a score
Of cream buns, or more,
He says: "Are the doughnuts all right?"

SPEED!

This seems to be an age of speed, what with Major Segrave smashing records almost as quickly as they are made! Sam Kirkham, of Harrow, wants to know how the time is recorded in record attempts. How do they manage to work out the time to a third decimal of a second? This is how it's done. A strip of paper runs through a clock which marks it into second divisions. An electric contactor is placed at either end of the measured distance, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,007.

and when the car crosses the first of these the clock makes a mark on the paper. When the car reaches the end of the course, another mark is made. Thus, you get the time in seconds by counting the number of clock-marked spaces, and the fraction is obtained by comparing its length with that of a clock-marked second. As the paper goes through the clock at a high speed, the accuracy of the time is obtained to the smallest fraction of a second.

Of course, I need hardly ask if you are collecting the marvellous series of picture cards dealing with mechanical mysteries and

MARVELS OF THE FUTURE

which are being presented FREE to all readers of our wonderful companion paper—the GEM. Why, of course, you are! Well, let me tell you this week's free gift is a real corker. It depicts in full colours

A DESERT LINER.

Make a point of getting your newsagent to reserve you a copy of the GEM Library containing this novel free gift. It's well worthy of a place in your den, chums.

WHAT IS HALLEY'S COMET?

is another of the unusual questions which I have been asked this week. I remember, many years ago, looking for this particular comet, which was last seen in 1910. This comet, which was discovered by an astronomer named Halley, is only seen about every seventy-five years, so it is extremely doubtful whether any of you fellows will see it. Incidentally, this is supposed to be the comet which appeared at the time of the Norman invasion of England in 1066. (That's about the only date I can remember off-hand!) It is depicted on the Bayeux tapestry.

HOLIDAYS ARE AT HAND,

and two "Magnetites" have hit on what seems to be an excellent scheme for spending an enjoyable time. They are starting off on their cycles from Kingstown, Surrey, and making their way to Dover, where they will catch the boat to Ostend. Once in Belgium they are starting off on a cycle tour. As this will be their first venture abroad, they have written to me to ask for some information. Possibly other "Magnetites" who live in the South of England might like to follow the example of these chums, so here is some useful information:

PASSPORTS ARE ESSENTIAL

for everyone who is staying more than a week-end on the Continent. These can be obtained through any travel agency, or direct from the Passport Office in Westminster. No visas are required, and my chums can, if they wish, cross the frontier into Holland without a visa—so long as they have the passport with them. They will be well advised to stay in the villages, and not the large towns, for they will get much cheaper accommodation in the

former. There are any amount of little cafes and inns in Belgium where food and accommodation is very cheap. A most interesting cycle tour can be arranged if the route of the old front line trenches is followed, and my chums will find many evidences of the War still in existence. Plans of the battlefields can be obtained cheaply in Ostend. Bruges is an interesting town that should be visited, and to vary the trip, the return journey to the coast should be made via Holland.

GIPSIES AND GITANOS

interest Harry Swanick, of Reading, who wants to know the difference between them. There is no difference. "Gitano" is simply the Spanish word for "gipsy." There is estimated to be about 900,000 gipsies in Europe, the majority of them being in Hungary. But, owing to their roving habits, no accurate census of the gipsies can be taken. The word "Romany" means belonging to the gipsies, and comes from their own word "Rom." Compared with other European countries, England is remarkably free from members of this nomadic tribe, although you will still find them in the less populated districts, and near race-courses on days when big events take place.

SMILE, BOYS, SMILE

at this joke which earns a pocket knife for Aubrey Winters of 76, Seaforth Street, Halifax, N.S.

Everything was ready, and the stage-manager rubbed his hands in eager anticipation. He took one swift look round, and then nodded for the curtain to go up. But the man whose duty it was to attend to this took no notice.

"Now then, wake up, you!" shouted the manager hoarsely. "Everything's ready. Run up that curtain."

The man standing near the curtain apparatus scowled darkly.

"Run up the curtain yourself," he replied heatedly. "I'm a stage-hand remember, not a blinkin' squirrel!"

And now a word about next week's

BUMPER BILL O' FARE!

Of course, first on the programme comes an extra-special story of your old favourites Harry Wharton and Co. After many weeks of amazing adventures out in Los Angeles, the chums of Greyfriars have returned to school. But further amazing adventures are on the horizon, boys, as you'll agree when you read:

"THE MASKED TERROR!"

next week's topping yarn by Frank Richards. As this is the type of yarn so many of my readers have been asking for it's up to all of you to trot round to your newsagent's at the earliest possible moment and ask him to reserve you a copy of next week's MAGNET.

Next comes another grand story of St. Sam's in which Dicky Nugent will bring smiles, laughs and then roams of merriment from you when you read:

"A PREZZENT FROM THE SKY!"

And, to complete this bumper issue there will be another gripping instalment of famous Carney Allan's dirt-track serial:

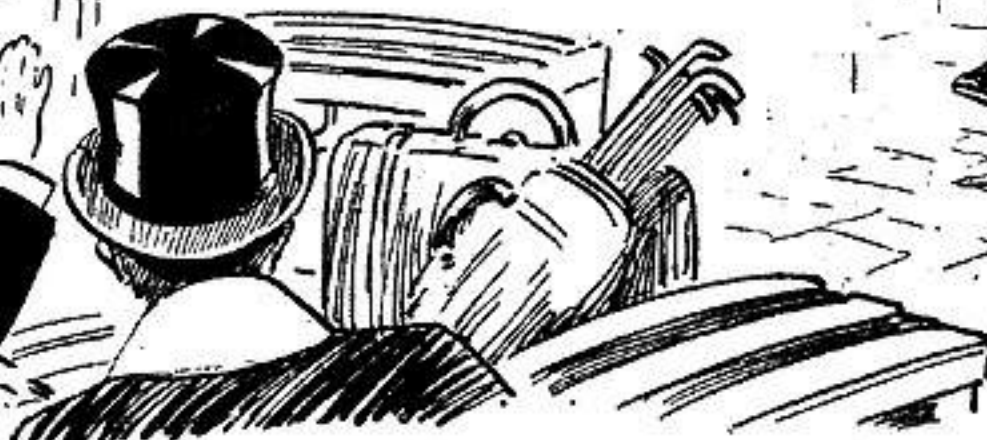
"SPEEDWAY PALS!"

in which our daring young speedster, Jimmy Beresford, meets with further exciting adventures. This, together with another "Come into the Office, Boys," completes next week's issue of your favourite paper, which, you'll admit, wants some beating.

Cheerio till next week, then,

YOUR EDITOR.

FAREWELL TO THE FILMS!



Another lively schoolboy adventure yarn featuring Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Only Way!

HOW many k's in aristocratic?" Billy Bunter asked that question.

Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting on the piazza of Long Beach Boarding-House at Hollywood in the sunny morning, when Bunter propounded that poser.

At ten o'clock the schoolboy movie actors were due at the Perfection studio on the other side of Sunset Boulevard.

Their stay in Hollywood was drawing to a close.

The big school film was approaching its conclusion, and the chums of the Remove were already discussing their return to England, home, and Greyfriars.

They had had a rather more exciting time in California than they had expected; but upon the whole they agreed that they had had a good time. But they were not sorry to think of Greyfriars again. Cinema acting was all very well in its way, but, as Bob Cherry remarked, they would get home in time for the cricket. That was attractive, though, perhaps, they were not very keen on grinding Latin with Mr. Quelch in the Remove Form-room.

Billy Bunter sat at a little table near the famous Five with a pen in his hand, a blot on his nose, and a thoughtful wrinkle in his fat brow.

Bunter was busy.

Apparently, he was in the throes of composition. Several times he had asked the other fellows to shut up—a request which they cheerfully disregarded. Bunter had borrowed Nugent's writing-pad and Wharton's fountain-pen, and was busy with both. He seemed to need to borrow a little orthography as well.

"How many which?" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"K's," said Bunter.

"In what?"

"Aristocratic."

"Oh, my hat!"

"One or two?" asked Bunter peevishly. "I don't want any mistakes in this advertisement."

"Well, I shouldn't put any," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "There are two C's, if C's will do."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter. "I know there's a K in the middle. But is there a K at the end?"

"There's no K at all, fathead."

"Rot!" said Bunter.

And giving up hope of assistance from these ignorant fellows, Billy turned his wrinkled brow on his composition again.

"What on earth are you advertising

One more and final attempt does Myron Polk make on the life of Harry Wharton. But a kindly fate watches over the Greyfriars schoolboy and snatches revenge out of the fingers of Myron Polk when death stares his victim in the face!

for?" asked Harry. "Looking for a job as fat man in a circus?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—" Bunter paused. "Is there a W in distinguished?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Well, you don't know much about spelling," remarked Bunter. "If you think there isn't, very likely there is. I say, you fellows, is figure spelt with an F or a Ph?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Make it an F," chuckled Bob Cherry.

By this time the chums of the Remove were rather interested in Bunter's occupation. Why he was drawing up an advertisement was rather a mystery. And what he had to describe as aristocratic and distinguished was more mysterious still. Those adjectives did not, so far as an observer could see, apply to William George Bunter himself.

"It's a double L in telephone, isn't it?" asked Bunter.

"Ha, ha! Only one!"

"The onefulness is terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The twofulness would be preposterously superfluous."

Bunter sneered.

"It's about time you fellows got back to Greyfriars, I think," he remarked.

"You've forgotten how to spell the simplest words."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Do shut up while I'm finishing this!"

Bunter resumed his intellectual labours.

Having completed his task Bunter turned his big spectacles on the chums of the Remove, laying down the fountain-pen.

"I say, you fellows, I think that's all right. You've been jawing about going back to Greyfriars in a week or two—"

"That's so," said Harry.

"Well, most likely I shan't be going."

"Too good to be true, old bean," said Bob, shaking his head.

"I came out here with you fellows," said Bunter, "to act on the films. I've been left out. Set aside! Treated rottenly! Old Fish can't see my value. Old Schootz can't see it. Van Duck can't see it. None so blind as those who won't see, of course. So far, nobody in Hollywood has caught on to it that I'm cut out for a Valentino part."

"The nobodifulness is terrific."

"Everybody agrees that good looks count for a lot on the films," went on Bunter. "Well, I don't think there's much doubt who is the best-looking chap in this party."

"There's no doubt who's the fattest and fatheadedest," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Look at that man, Polk," said Bunter. "They call him the hand-

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somest man in Hollywood. And they've seen me."

"Modesty, thy name is Bunter," said Nugent.

"Well, I don't believe in a lot of false modesty," said Bunter. "Facts are facts. A fellow knows when he's good-looking. What's the good of humbugging about it?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look at Mauly," said Bunter, with a nod towards Lord Mauleverer, who was reclining in lazy ease in a long chair. "Mauly's a lord. But if anybody saw Mauly and me together, which would he take for a lord—merely on looks, I mean?"

"Oh, gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"In the Perfection Studio," said Bunter. "I've been given no chance. I got on for a time at Magic Films; but there was a misunderstanding, and I turned them down. But if you fellows think you're going to swank about as movie actors, while I'm left out, you're mistaken—see? I'm taking the matter into my own hands. If things turn out as I expect, I shan't be coming back to Greyfriars. You fellows can kow-tow to old Quelchy, while I'm bagging my twenty thousand dollars a week in Hollywood. I expect to be rolling in money shortly."

"Then you'll be able to pay Coot the seventy dollars you owe him," suggested Bob Cherry. "Not to mention the eighteenpence you owe me."

"Look at that!" said Bunter, holding up the paper he had composed with such efforts. "I think that will work the oracle. I want one of you fellows to lend me a dollar to pay for it, and one of you to walk down to the 'Film Ledger' Office to put it in. If you like to stand me a taxi, I'll go."

The juniors looked at the advertisement. It was worth looking at. In Bunter's sprawling hand and uncommon spelling, it ran:

ENGAGEMENT WANTED!

Yooth of distinguished and aristocratic apperance, considered unusually handsome, elegant phigger and melodious voyce, seeks engagement as Film Aktor—Valentino part preferd, but able to take on anything, tragick or komick. W. G. Bunter, Long Beach Boarding-House, Hoollywood. Tellefone: Hollywood 101019.

"What do you fellows think of that?" demanded Bunter triumphantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter that awoke all the echoes of Long Beach Boarding-House told what the fellows thought of it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Smithy Is Wrath!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the chums of the Remove.

He seemed surprised.

Apparently, Bunter was unaware of anything of a comic nature in that advertisement, drawn up with so much care.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" roared Bunter. "I suppose this is some more of your beastly jealousy! You don't want to go back to Greyfriars and leave me cutting a dash in the cinema swim?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" said Bunter. "Wait till the answers come rolling in to this advertisement! I expect to be rung up all day long after this has appeared in the 'Film Ledger.' The thing is to make oneself known. Put your goods in the shop window—that's the idea! Hit the eye—that's the American idea! I don't think much of Americans, as a rule; but they know all about publicity. I might stay in this boarding-house for years, and nobody would know that there was a film actor here better than Douglas Fairbanks, and better-looking than Valentino——"

"You might!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"You certainly might, old bean!"

"The mightfulness is terrific!"

"Not merely years!" stuttered Johnny Bull. "Centuries!"

"Ages and aeons!" chuckled Wharton.

"Well, advertisement is the thing to stop all that," said Bunter. "I can't expect Hollywood producers to rush after me when they don't know I'm here, can I? When they see this advertisement they will know. That's all that's needed—see?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"The question is, does this advertisement give enough details?" asked Bunter. "I don't mind listening to advice from you fellows. You haven't much brains, I know; but out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know. Think I ought to put in something about my high connections at home? Americans are fearful snobs, and if they knew I was related to the peerage it might make a lot of difference."

"Oh, gad!" said Lord Mauleverer faintly.

"Look how they run after Mauly because he's a lord," argued Bunter. "Nothing else attractive about him, is there? Not good-looking, and rather an ass! You don't mind my mentioning it, Mauly?"

"Not at all!" gasped Mauly. "Go on, Bunter! It's a pleasure to hear you talk!"

"Perhaps I could work in something about my people being rich, too," said Bunter. "Americans worship money. But the trouble is, I've written out just a dollar's worth. But if you fellows will lend me two dollars instead of one——"

"Is anybody lending you one dollar?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You'd better chuck that bosh away, old fat man!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It really wouldn't bring you a rush of custom."

Bunter sniffed.

"Of course, you want to keep me in the background," he said. "You don't want me to shine as a film star while you're doing your second-rate stunts. I know all that."

"You fat chump——"

"You see, you fellows haven't any sense!" said Bunter. "You can't see that you've got a genius among you. Like entertaining an angel unawares, you know!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, who's lending me a dollar?" asked Bunter briskly. "That's the important point. I can't get this advert in without paying for it. You lending me a dollar, Bob?"

"How can I lend you a dollar when I haven't any cents?" asked Bob. "You've just told me I haven't any cents."

Bunter blinked.

"Sense, you ass, not cents!" he said. "You haven't any sense, not cents! You're awfully dense, Bob! You really are a silly idiot, old chap! Now lend me a dollar——"

"I may be a silly idiot," agreed Bob, "but not such a silly idiot as that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You lending me a dollar, Inky?"

"The esteemed answer is in the preposterous negative!" replied the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"What about you, Franky?"

"Nothing about me!" answered Nugent cheerfully.

"Bull, old chap——"

"Bow-wow!" said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, I don't think you ought to grow mean and stingy like this just because you're in America. I dare say it's catching, but you oughtn't to let it grow on you," said Bunter. "I'm as open-handed and generous as ever. I say, Mauly——"

"Don't!"

"Eh? Don't what?"

"Don't say! Don't say anythin'! Shut up!"

"You're getting as mean as the other fellows, Mauly! I suppose it's in the atmosphere here," said Bunter. "I say, Fishy——"

"Forget it!" jeered Fisher T. Fish.

"I'm not going to ask you to lend me anything for nothing, Fishy. I know you too well," said Bunter. "But if you lend me a dollar now, I'll pay you back two dollars for it next week. What about that?"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"A dinner of herbs in hand is better than a stalled ox in the bush," as the English proverb remarks," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter snorted.

"Where's Smithy? I dare say Smithy will lend me something."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy!" roared Bob Cherry, as the Bounder appeared in the doorway. "Here's a chance for you!"

Vernon-Smith came out into the piazza. There was a frown on his brow.

He came up to Billy Bunter and looked him all over, as if in search of something.

"He hasn't got it on," he said. "I was certain he'd bagged it. Any of you men seen my grey lounge jacket?"

There was a shaking of heads.

"Have you had it, Bunter?" demanded the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"You're always bagging a fellow's clobber!" growled Vernon-Smith.

"That jacket's gone, and nobody in the

GET THIS NEW PAPER, BOYS



No. 1, OUT THIS WEEK,



The battle of words between Bunter and Vernon-Smith waged loud and long. "You've sold my jacket!" shrieked the Bounder accusingly. "No!" roared Bunter. "I keep on telling you I haven't!" "I'll smash you!" "Besides, it wasn't worth much—only half-a-dollar—" Vernon-Smith shook his fist ferociously. (See Chapter 2.)

house seems to know where it is. If you've got it, Bunter—"

"If you think I'd bag a fellow's jacket and sell it to an old clothes man, Smithy—"

"What?" roared the Bounder.

"I'd never think of such a thing, of course," said Bunter. "I never knew you had a grey jacket. I didn't see you unpack it yesterday. As for dealing with an old clothes man, that's not in my line. I always give away my discarded wardrobe to the poor."

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You fat fraud, have you sold Smithy's jacket to an old clothes man?"

"I've just said I haven't, haven't I? No old clothes man has been here that I know of. I didn't see him coming up the back garden yesterday. In fact, I don't suppose there are any old clothes men in Hollywood," said Bunter.

"You—you—you—" gasped the Bounder.

"Besides, a fellow must have some money," argued Bunter. "I'm kept short of money. You know that. Old Fish agreed to pay all our expenses out here, and he won't even pay a small bill I've run up with Mr. Coot. If you've lost that jacket, Smithy, you needn't worry. You looked rather common in it!"

"What?"

"Of course, you look rather common in anything!" said Bunter. "Don't worry, old chap; we can't all look aristocratic. I say, old fellow, will you lend me—"

"You've sold my jacket?" gasped Vernon-Smith.

"Certainly not! I've never even seen it. Besides, it never suited you, as I said. If you've lost it, very likely it was a burglar took it. Or—or perhaps the cat—"

"The cat?" stuttered Smithy.

"Yes. That cat is a beast for pinching things," said Bunter. "Mauly lost a box of chocolates from his room the other day, that he'd bought to give that movie girl, Leonora. He fancied that I had bagged them—as if I'd touch a fellow's chocolates. I never knew he had them. Mauly was done over that box of choes, too—there weren't half so many in the box as they looked when you opened it. I told him it must have been the cat—didn't I, Mauly?"

"Yaas!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "You fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"You've sold my jacket!" shrieked Vernon-Smith.

"No!" roared Bunter. "I keep on telling you I haven't! Besides, it wasn't worth much—only half-a-dollar—"

"I gave three guineas for it at home!" yelled Smithy.

"Then you were done," said Bunter. "Besides, second-hand clothes don't fetch much. You know that. Buying and selling are very different matters."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. But Vernon-Smith did not laugh. He was glaring at the Owl of the Remove with a glare like a basilisk.

"Let the matter drop," said Bunter. "These discussions about money are rather sordid, you know. I want you to lend me a dollar, Smithy. Not for long—only until I get an advance on my salary as leading actor for a film company. I say—whoooooop!"

What happened during the next few minutes, Bunter hardly knew.

It seemed to him that he was mixed up with several earthquakes and cyclones and hurricanes.

"You mustn't kill him, Smithy!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"My esteemed Smithy, the ludicrous Coot will make a preposterous fuss if you burst him on this elegant piazza!" exclaimed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Smithy did not heed.

He seemed bent on slaughtering William George Bunter.

But the chums of the Remove rushed on him at last, and dragged him off.

"Enough's as good as a feast!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Yaroooooh!"

"I'll smash him—"

"Yoooooop!"

"Time to get to the studio," said Harry Wharton. "Come on."

"Yow-ow-ow-yow-ow!"

Harry Wharton & Co. started for the Perfection studio, Smithy giving Bunter a deadly glare as he went.

Bunter remained in a strewn state on the piazza.

It was quite a long time before he was able to crawl away, gasping and panting, and puffing, and blowing.

And he was still minus the necessary dollar for the advertisement that was to bring him fame and fortune.

True, there were other garments belonging to the Greyfriars fellows, which the old-clothes man might have purchased at half-a-dollar a time. But after the way Smithy had broken out, Bunter did not think of raising the wind by that means a second time. That source of revenue was cut off. Bunter still had the supply of English money he had brought with him from home. But a threepenny piece was not adequate. Fame and fortune were at his feet, and—for want of a miserable dollar—they had to remain there!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Unpleasant for Polk!

MR. SCHOOTZ, the director of Perfection Pictures, coughed. He was sitting in the revolving chair, in his palatial office in the Perfection studio on Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood. By the window lounged the elegant and exceedingly well-dressed figure of Myron Polk, the Perfection star.

The handsomest man in Hollywood was not looking amiable. And the Perfection director seemed rather uncertain and uncomfortable.

It was some time since Polk had appeared in the studio. He had long been under the hands of the most expensive beauty doctors in Los Angeles. But all their expensive skill had not been able to obliterate the scar left on his cheek, by the shot that had been fired so mysteriously on the Perfection location at Jack-Rabbit.

They had done much. But they could not work miracles. Only a faint mark was left. But it was there, and it was perceptible. The handsomest face in Hollywood was permanently marked.

That shot, the Greyfriars fellows were certain had been fired at Harry Wharton, by some of the Santa Monica boot-legging gang, in Myron Polk's pay. It had missed Wharton, glanced from a rock, and scarred the cheek of the Perfection star. So it was exactly what he deserved, and the Greyfriars fellows, at least, had no sympathy to waste on him.

The mark was slight, and could be hidden by make-up when the star appeared before the cameras. But if it had been as prominent as the brand of Cain, it could hardly have enraged the handsomest man in Hollywood more. His hatred of the schoolboy cinema star had now become an obsession with Polk. It pervaded his whole being, and haunted his thoughts night and day. Wounded vanity had started it, and the disfigurement of his good looks had been the finishing touch.

Now, in the Perfection office, Mr. Schootz had brought up the subject of Wharton. The movie director seemed unaware that the subject was gall and wormwood to Myron Polk. Mr. Schootz was going to talk business, and his business-like, practical nature had little understanding of the sensitive, passionate temperament of the handsomest, and most conceited man in Hollywood.

But he coughed rather uncomfortably. The expression on Polk's face was not encouraging.

"You see—" said Mr. Schootz.

Polk, leaning elegantly by the window, looked at him, with a glitter in his dark, handsome eyes.

"Spill it!" he said, briefly.

"Well, it's a matter of business, Polk," said Mr. Schootz. "You don't want to go off on your ear." Mr. Schootz coughed again. "Look here, we're nearly at the end of that school film. Hiram brought them kids from their school in England to act in that film, and it's sure turning out a big thing. I guess it will get the film fans where they live. But it's coming to a finish now, and the boys will be going home. But—"

"But—" said Polk, very quietly.

"I ain't keen on parting with that kid Wharton," said the Perfection director. "He's shown a lot of gift for the game. I guess I may get him to freeze on to Perfection, if I offer him a good thing. We don't want more than one school film—it's a bit of a speculation anyhow,

though Fish thought it a first-class stunt, and I agree with him. But—"

"Get it out!"

"Ham! Now you know," said Mr. Schootz, in a tone of persuasive argumentativeness, "that Wharton played your part twice in the 'Lord of the Desert' film. He got up as a sheikh, and looked the part fine. I ain't saying he's as handsome a guy as you are. But he's good-looking—and make-up means a lot on the films. He looked the part all right. He rides that Arab horse as well as you do—"

"Why not say better?"

"Well, I ain't saying that," said Mr. Schootz, though it was clear that he thought it. "But he's game for stunts that you think too dangerous. I ain't rubbing it in, Polk. You've a right to howl for safety first, if you like. I ain't denying that. But Wharton jumped the torrent at Jack-Rabbit on that cayuse. He rode the critter down the Hair-Trigger path. You jibbed at it."

"Well?"

"Well," said Mr. Schootz. "I ain't rubbing it in, but facts is facts. Them two stunts are the big punches in the picture, so far. I've planned some more. You won't want to take them on. There's a jump over the Devil's Gap in the Santa Monica hills. You won't be honing for that?"

"No."

"Well, that kid would take it on, cheerful, he's got the pluck of a man in ten thousand. Now, you are some sheikh on the films, I know that. But—look here, Polk, let's get down to brass tacks. That kid's the goods. I don't want to lose him. What about him taking your part in the 'Lord of the Desert' film, to a finish? We can keep it dark, if you like. What he loses in publicity, I'll make up in dollars. You keep the pretty scenes—that's your strong hold. The kid does the action scenes. What?"

Myron Polk breathed hard.

"I reckoned that was coming," he said. "The boy butted into my part, and he's made use of me to break into the movies. He's been trying to supplant me all along. I knew that."

"Now, you don't want to talk foolish," said Mr. Schootz soothingly. "The kid did nothing of the sort. He took on them stunts to oblige me, because you refused, and I was gone on them. You gave your permission. I reckon you figured he'd never get away with it; but that's neither here nor there. He got home all right. He can do it again. I want this 'Lord of the Desert' film to be a real big noise. Nobody can beat you in the pretty parts. But I want the stuff with a punch in it. You can't hand that out. The kid can and will, so that's that!"

"I refuse."

"Now, be reasonable!" urged Mr. Schootz.

"I'll cancel my contract, if you like, and go back to Pandora Films. They're keen enough to get me back. Keep the kid, if you think he can take my place."

"I ain't saying that, nor anything like it. You're worth your money to us. Your face attracts all the flappers in the Yew-nited States. But—"

"It's the talk of Hollywood now that the kid took my place in some of the sheikh stunts," said Polk bitterly. "It's been referred to in the papers. The boy bragged right and left—"

"He never said a word, as agreed. It got out," admitted Mr. Schootz. "Things do get out, I guess. But we'll take care—"

"I refuse."

Mr. Schootz sighed.

"Well, if you ain't taking it on, it drops," he said. "Mind, it would be a

good thing for you, as well as Perfection Pictures. The kid, in your part, would get you a reputation for daredevil riding—"

"I refuse!"

"That does it, then," sighed Mr. Schootz. "I don't see your point, Polk, I sure don't. If you come in you score all along the line. But if you ain't taking any, I'm done."

The director frowned.

"That means finishing the picture without the big stunts I've worked out," he said. "You ain't got the sand for them, Polk. No good beating about the bush—you ain't. Facts is facts. But I better let you know the alternative. You're your own master. So am I! If you won't share the 'Lord of the Desert' picture with the feller who can help to make it a big success, I shall get Wharton into a new picture on the same lines—I guess the 'Boy Sheikh' will be a telling title—and it will knock the film fans. The 'Boy Sheikh'!" repeated Mr. Schootz. "Yep! That sure will get them rubbing! I've offered you a good offer, Polk, and you ain't got no kick coming."

The Perfection star's face was quite pale.

"You're starring Wharton, then?" he said.

"A boy sheikh part!" said Mr. Schootz. "I guess he will get home with it all right."

"And I—" panted Polk.

"Don't you worry; you'll always be worth your figure as a pretty man on the pictures. I don't want to part with you. But I'm sure going all out with a new picture to star that kid," said Mr. Schootz emphatically. "There's dollars in it! Heaps of dollars! I ain't in business for my health, Polk. Money makes the mare go."

Polk's hands were trembling.

"I guess I'm getting busy with the scenario man at once," added Mr. Schootz. "We'll work up some rip-snorting stunts for the 'Boy Sheikh'! I ain't losing that kid! No, sir!"

"That's enough about Wharton," said Polk, with vivid lips. "I dropped in to tell you I shan't be able to act until next week—"

"Take your own time," said Mr. Schootz carelessly. "Any time suits you will suit me if I ain't too busy."

The Perfection star almost choked. This was not the kind of reply to which he had been accustomed. His hatred of the schoolboy who had out-done him, and, as he believed, supplanted him, was like a burning fire in his breast now.

He crossed to the door, and left without another word to the Perfection director.

Mr. Schootz shrugged his plump shoulders. Myron Polk had gone off "on his ear," as he expressed it; but that cut no ice with Mr. Schootz. So long as Myron Polk was the only pebble on the beach Mr. Schootz had tolerated, with unending patience, his airs and graces, his moods and his vagaries. But he had not liked them. Now that he was "on" to a better thing, as he considered, Mr. Schootz was rather pleased to be able to treat the supercilious star in a somewhat off-hand manner. There were plenty of men in Hollywood who would have liked to take Myron Polk down a peg or two, and Mr. Rigg Schootz was one of them.

Polk's face was white with passion as he quitted the director's office. Mr. Van Duck, the assistant director, came up to speak to him, and stared in surprise as Polk passed him without a word, unseeing. Polk hurried away towards the door on the entrance, and as he reached it Harry Wharton & Co. came across the Perfection lot, arriving at the studio

for their morning's work before the cameras.

Polk's eyes flashed at the sight of the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

That Harry Wharton, though he was interested in his work in the studio, was thinking with pleasure of his return to Greyfriars, the star did not know, and could never have believed. That Wharton would have refused the big offer that Mr. Schootz was going to make would have been incomprehensible to Polk, to whom the movies were everything, and Hollywood the Mecca of the whole world.

In the Greyfriars junior he saw a rival and supplanter, a cunning and astute and unscrupulous rival, to his distorted mind.

Wharton, catching sight of the Perfection star, drew aside to let him pass. He was well aware of Polk's bitter enmity; the narrow escapes he had had were more than enough to enlighten him. But he desired no trouble with the jealous, touchy, passionate star.

But Polk's fury was too strong for control. He turned on Wharton with his eyes in a blaze.

"So you've got away with it, you young cur!" he said, between his teeth. "You've played your game cleverly."

Wharton looked at him coldly.

"I don't understand you, Mr. Polk," he answered, "and I'd prefer you not to speak to me. Keep your distance, and I'll keep mine."

"You scheming young scoundrel—"

"That's enough," interrupted Wharton. "If you can't keep a civil tongue shut up!"

Polk, beside himself, made a furious stride at Harry Wharton, his clenched hand raised for a blow.

At that moment Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth came in. Coker butted in immediately. Wharton, as a matter of fact, was quite able to take care of himself; but Coker was the fellow for butting in.

He laid his powerful grasp on Myron Polk's shoulders, and spun him away from the junior.

"Let that kid alone!" snapped Coker. Polk panted with rage.

"Tackle me if you want to tackle somebody," suggested Coker. "You did it once, and I spoiled your jolly old beauty. I'll spoil it again with pleasure."

"Here, stop that!" exclaimed Mr. Van Duck, hurrying to the spot. "Now then—"

He jerked Coker of the Fifth away from the Perfection star. Polk, white with rage, hurried out of the studio. He threw himself into his purple auto and dashed away along the boulevard at a reckless speed, as if in the wild rush of the car he could find some vent for the rage that boiled in his veins.

"Nice man!" grinned Bob Cherry. "What's happened to upset his jolly old majesty this morning?"

"I wish he'd keep clear of us," said Harry. "Why the dickens can't he keep his distance?"

And the chums of the Remove went in to their work with the cameras, and soon forgot about Myron Polk.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Carter Gets Busy!

LORD MAULEVERER smiled brightly.

The set was forming, under the direction of Mr. Van Duck, for one of the scenes in the school film, when Leonora came along from the stairs.

Maul's gaze of respectful admiration dwelt on the movie girl.

Since he had learned that Leonora was engaged to Mr. Peter Carter, the Los Angeles detective, Maul had felt, for some time, that his young life was blighted. Subsequently, he had made the interesting discovery that it wasn't. It had gradually dawned upon his noble mind that, so far from fading away like a broken flower, he was as well as ever, and quite cheery; and possibly it had even dawned upon him that he had been in love with the "Lovely Leonora" chiefly in the realms of fancy. He still failed to see what Leonora saw in Mr. Carter; but he was quite willing to believe that there was something in that brisk, spry, and cute young man.

Leonora gave him a smile and a nod, and stopped to speak.

"Say, kid, you've just blown in?" she asked.

"Yaas."

"Did you spot my beau on the lot?"

Lord Mauleverer started. He remembered that he had seen a young man loafing on the lot, when he came to the studio. But he had not noticed that it was Mr. Carter.

"I guess I got five minutes," explained Leonora, "and I sure told him

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studio of the Perfection Picture Syndicate.

Outside, under a pepper-tree on the lot, Mr. Carter was loafing with his hands in his pockets, chewing an unlighted cigarette. He grinned cheerily at the movie girl as she joined him.

"Say, Jane, I've got on to something now," he remarked.

"Give it a name, Peter," answered Miss Jane Snookson, who was Leonora la Riviere on the films.

"I guess I'm hitting Santa Monica to-day," said Mr. Carter. "I ain't got the goods on that guy Polk yet. I guess he's too cute for me. But I'm sure after them rum-runners. I got Gomez, and I got Slick Wilson; and I guess I got a chance at the rest of the gang. They cleared off out of the Santa Monica hills; but they ain't gone out of business." Mr. Carter grinned. "There's sure heaps of hooch being smuggled into L. A., Jane. But from what I got from them schoolboys, I guess I got a line on the gang."

"And that means—"

"Promotion, if I work the raffle," said Mr. Carter; "and that will mean no more movies for little Jane, and a wedding, honey."

Leonora smiled.

"You sure talk a mouthful, Peter," she remarked.

"But I ain't brought it off yet," said Mr. Carter. "From what them kids got on to, the bootleggers was landing the stuff in a motor-boat from a steamer that came into Santa Monica bay at night. Well, that's where I'm coming in. Polk made things rather hot for me at headquarters, pulling the wires; but I guess my stock has rose since I cinched Gomez and Slick. And if I get the rest of the gang, it's the elephant's hind leg, Jane. I'm going to run a motor-boat on the bay, and look for them guys. And next time they run hooch in to this coast, I guess they will run right into a galoot about my size."

"You want to keep your eyes peeled, Peter," said Leonora anxiously. "Them bootleggers pack guns."

Mr. Carter laughed.

"I guess I pack a gun myself, when I'm looking for rum-runners, Jane," he said. "If there's shooting, that's all the better for me—I guess it will get into the papers. I sure ain't quitting till I've got the rest of that gang, and fixed it on them. You won't see me again for some time, Jane; but when you do see me I hope I'll have good news. I seen a little flat on Sunset Boulevard, Jane."

Leonora beamed.

"I guess I'll look at that flat while you're down to Santa, Peter," she said. "Only be careful."

"There ain't a guy in the United States that I'm so careful of as I am of your Peter, Jane," said Mr. Carter reassuringly. "I sure think a lot of that guy, and I'm going to see that he don't come to any harm. Say, have you seen Polk this morning?"

Leonora shook her head.

"I spotted him getting into his auto," said Mr. Carter. "He sure looked as mad as a hornet. He don't hide his feelings from the public, that guy don't. He's got it in for that kid Wharton, and I guess he will start something again. I sure am honing to get the goods on him," said Mr. Carter, with a sigh. "If that kid goes back to England before Polk starts anything, I lose the chance. And now I shall be a week down at Santa, and shan't be able to keep tabs on him. I sure would like to get Polk and fix the goods on him in a way he couldn't wriggle out

off!" Mr. Carter's sharp eyes glistened. "It would mean publicity, Jane—I guess every reporter from Los to New York would be on to it—and publicity's just as useful to me as to a movie man, Jane. But I got to give Polk a miss now, while I'm after them bootleggers down in the bay."

Mr. Carter knitted his brows.

"I've warned the kid to be on his guard," he said. "There ain't any doubt in my mind that Polk put up a guy to draw a bead on him at Jack-Rabbit. And when Slick Wilson burgled the boarding-house the other night he wasn't after the guests' grips, I reckon—he was after that kid. But Polk's kept himself clear; it ain't easy to cinch him. If he starts anything while I'm down at the bay the kid will have to take his chance. But I've warned him, and he's no jay."

"You are going out at night in that motor-boat, Peter?" asked Leonora.

"I sure ain't looking for bootleg smugglers in the daylight, Jane," answered Mr. Carter, laughing. "But you don't want to worry none. I guess Peter knows how to look after Carter. Say, you want to get back already?"

Leonora was looking at her wrist watch.

"Sure; I'm wanted on the set," she said. "I'm the headmaster's daughter in the school film."

"Oh, shucks!" said Mr. Carter. "Well, if this comes off all right you'll be Mrs. Peter Carter, in that cute little flat, Jane. Chew on that."

Leonora gave her Peter a bright smile, and hurried back to the studio. Mr. Carter turned towards the gate of the Perfection lot.

"I say, Mr. Carter—"

"Yeh?" said Mr. Carter, staring at the fat figure and fatuous face of the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, I just spotted you," said Billy Bunter, blinking at Mr. Carter through his big spectacles. "I say, I thought it was awfully clever of you, the way you got that burglar the other day."

"Sho!" said Mr. Carter.

"I don't think much of Americans as a rule—" went on Bunter.

"That's sure hard on the United States," said Mr. Carter gravely. "That gets out, and there'll sure be sobbing from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific Slope."

"Eh! But I think you're awfully clever," said Bunter. "Wonderfully clever detective, and all that!"

"You ain't much to look at, bub, but you've sure got a lot of judgment," said Mr. Carter.

"And I was thinking—" went on Bunter.

"You were?" asked Mr. Carter. "Shouldn't have thought it. What do you do with it?"

"Look here—"

"I guess," said Mr. Carter, in the same grave manner, "that I'd rather look at something else. My eyesight's fairly strong; but I ain't putting too big a strain on it."

"I've been disappointed about a remittance from England," explained Bunter. "You know the rotten way things are run in this country."

"None better," agreed Mr. Carter. "Look at the way they let queer fat animals wander around loose on this here boulevard, for instance."

"Do they?" said Bunter, missing the point of Mr. Carter's observation. "I dare say—lot of fools, if you ask me. Well, owing to the rotten way the post office is run in this fatheaded country, I haven't received my remittance. I'm short—"

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"And fat," remarked Mr. Carter.

"Short of money, I mean," said Bunter testily. "I was thinking that you might lend me a dollar, Mr. Carter."

"You want to think again," remarked Mr. Carter pleasantly. "You'll sure have to put in a whole heap of thinking before you get the dollar."

"Of course, I'll square," said Bunter. "In fact, next week I'll let you have two dollars for it. I don't expect an American to be anything but stingy, of course."

Mr. Carter gazed at him.

It is not an easy matter to extract a dollar from a citizen of the United States. And Bunter certainly was not going to work in the most tactful manner possible.

"Well, what about it?" asked Bunter. "Two dollars next week. That's a hundred per cent., you know. That ought to appeal to you, being an American, and mean."

"Bub, you've sure spilled a bibful!" gasped Mr. Carter. "Nope! I ain't lending you a dollar. Nope! But I'll lend you a thick ear for your cheek."

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as Mr. Carter made him that unexpected and unsought-for loan. "Yow-ow-ow!"

Mr. Carter strolled away down Sunset Boulevard. Billy Bunter rubbed his fat ear, and glared after him with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

WHAT NAME?

The following letters have been jumbled together purposely. Put in their proper order, they spell the name of a well-known junior at Greyfriars.

RUTLICMWLIEGBEAREON

Who is it? The answer will appear in next week's MAGNET.

Last week's solution was—
Lord Mauleverer.

Billy Bunter was sorely tempted to rush after Mr. Carter and fight the Battle of Bunker's Hill over again, with even more disastrous results to the Transatlantic side. But on second thoughts—proverbially the best—he decided to treat the fellow with contempt. He had one thick ear. He did not want another to match.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Chance!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. returned cheerfully to Long Beach Boarding-House to lunch after a morning's work in the studio.

Billy Bunter met them with a fat face that was not cheerful.

That morning Mr. Coot, the proprietor of the boarding-house, had mentioned the bill of seventy dollars that Bunter had accumulated. He had mentioned it with bitterness.

Bunter was sick of the subject. Those continual references to money he regarded as sordid.

But Mr. Coot declined to let the matter drop. And he looked more than doubtful when Bunter told him that in a week's time he would be in ample funds.

Bunter himself was a little doubtful, for those ample funds depended upon the insertion of his advertisement in the Los Angeles "Film Ledger." Once the Hollywood producers knew what a

chance they were missing there was little doubt that there would be a rush for Bunter. Publicity was the thing. But publicity, like everything else in a mercenary world, cost money. And Bunter, as usual, hadn't any money. Fame and fortune were still at his feet, and he was unable to pick them up for want of a miserable dollar. No wonder Bunter frowned at the cheery faces of the chums of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Chuck it!"

"About that dollar—"

"Bow-wow!"

"You're determined to keep me from getting my chance," said Bunter bitterly. "You don't want to be put in the shade. Jealousy, as usual."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors went into lunch.

After lunch Bunter joined them on the piazza. Bunter was a sticker. By sheer persistence he hoped to extract that essential dollar. The constant drop of water wears away the largest stone, the constant gnaw of Towser masticates the toughest bone. So the Owl of the Remove hoped to wear down resistance. In the long run, surely those beasts would consider it worth a dollar merely to shut him up.

To his surprise Bunter found that one member of the party was willing to give him a hearing, and to his greater surprise that member was Vernon-Smith. The Bunder had been a perfect beast that morning over the trifling matter of a three-guinea jacket that Bunter had sold to an old-clothes man for half-a-dollar. Now he seemed quite genial.

"I hear you're advertising, Bunter," he remarked.

"Yes, old chap," said Bunter, hopefully. "Lend me a dollar, Smithy. You're not such a mean beast as these other beasts."

"Let's look at the ad."

Bunter produced it.

The Bunder read it with a serious face.

"This ought to knock 'em," he remarked. "Anybody seeing this advertisement would know at once that the advertiser was a fellow a bit out of the common."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at, you fellows," grunted Bunter. "Smithy's quite right."

"The rightfulness is terrific."

"I say, Smithy, old chap, I'll square out of the first advance on my salary as a film actor," said Bunter.

"Done!" said the Bunder.

"And—and I say," went on Bunter eagerly. Finding Smithy in this unexpectedly amenable mood, Bunter decided to make the most of it. It was good policy to make hay while the sun shone. "We're a long way from the newspaper offices here. Lend me a taxi fare."

"Forget it," answered Smithy.

"Well, look here, you take in the advertisement for me. You're a jolly good walker, Smithy—athletic, and all that."

Smithy grinned.

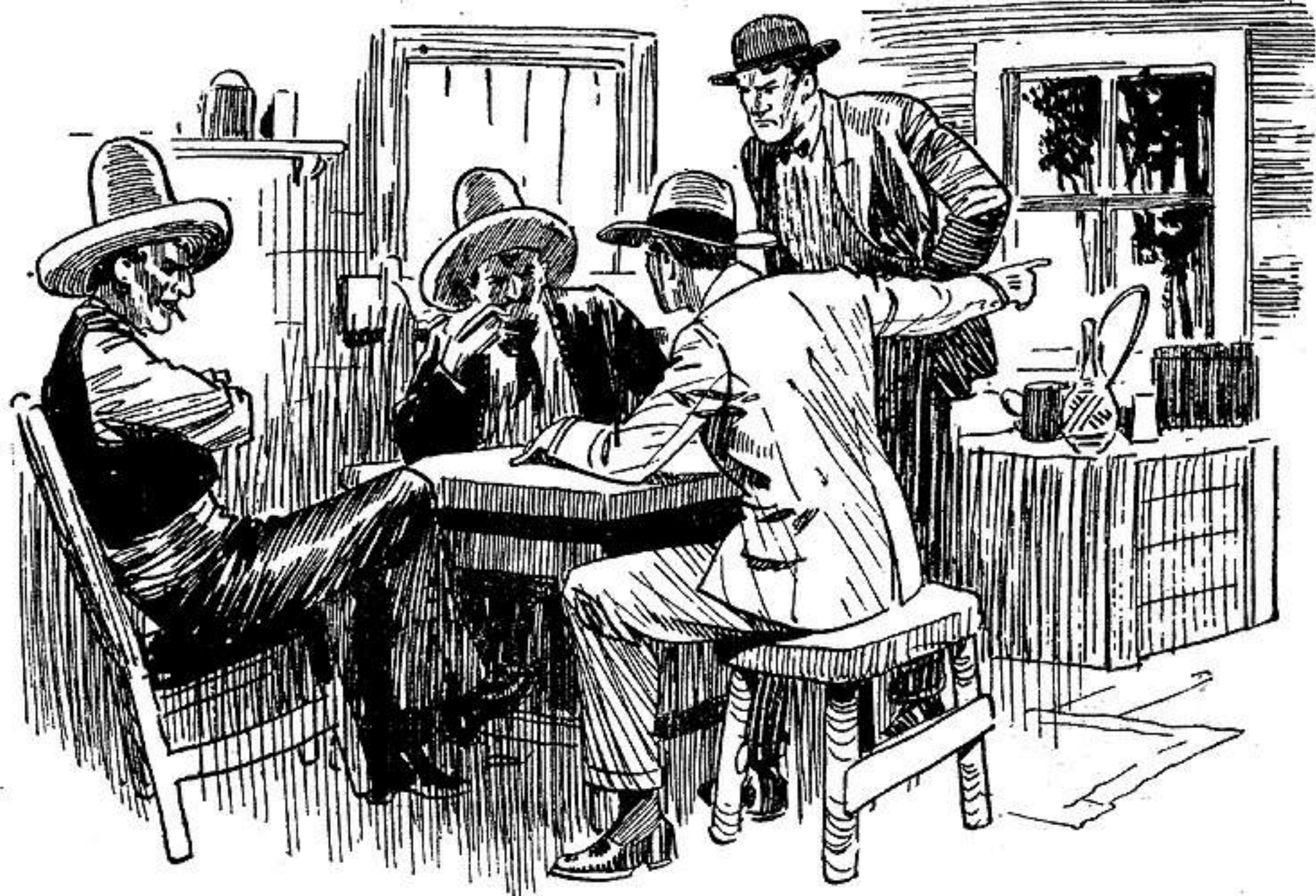
"I'll take your advertisement in," he answered. "I'm going down to Los Angeles this afternoon."

Bunter beamed.

"I say, Smithy, you're not half such a beast as you look, old chap," he said.

"Thanks! Leave it to me," said Vernon-Smith. "I'll see that you get an advertisement in the Los Angeles paper."

Vernon-Smith put the scrawled paper in his pocket, strolled out of the piazza, and sauntered down to the boulevard.



"Put Wharton on my motor-boat and leave the rest to me!" hissed Polk. "This time I shall not trust the thing to other hands—I will make sure myself!" The Mexicans nodded understandingly. (See Chapter 6.)

The other fellows stared after him, surprised.

"What on earth's this game?" said Bob Cherry. "Smithy can't be ass enough to waste a dollar putting that rot in the paper."

Snort from Bunter.

"Smithy's got some sense," he said. "He's just as mean as you fellows; but he knows I shall be rolling in money when I get my chance. I dare say he's thinking that he'll borrow money from me. That would be like him."

"Do you always express your gratitude for favours in that nice way, old fat man?" asked Bob.

"The niceness of the esteemed Bunter's gratitude is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yah!" retorted Bunter.

And he rolled away. He was done with those beasts now.

"What's Smithy up to, you men?" asked Bob.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Pulling Bunter's leg somehow, I suppose. He's jolly well not going to put that idiotic advertisement in the paper."

"He's up to something," opined Johnny Bull. "He's frightfully ratty about Bunter selling his clobber, and he's taking it out of the fat idiot somehow. Serve him jolly well right!"

"Hear, hear!"

And with that Harry Wharton & Co. forgot the matter. But William George Bunter did not forget.

Bunter was dreaming rosy dreams.

All was plain-sailing now. Hitherto, he hadn't had his chance. Now he was going to get it. A chance, of course, was all that he needed. His good looks, his many gifts, his distinguished and aristocratic appearance, his fascinating

manners would do the rest. Fame and fortune were at his feet, and he was going to pick them up. Really, it was worth a dollar—especially as it was somebody else's dollar.

When Vernon-Smith came back in time for dinner that evening, Billy Bunter met him with an eager question.

"Put it in, Smithy?"

"The advertisement? Oh, yes," answered the Bounder carelessly.

"Good! I shall be rung up to-morrow," said Bunter.

"I'm sure you will."

"I'd better mention to Coot that I expect rather a lot of calls on the phone," remarked Bunter.

"You'd better," agreed the Bounder.

"Did you bring me a copy of the paper with the advertisement in it?"

"No."

"Well, you might have," grunted Bunter. "You're just as mean as the rest, Smithy! Meaner in fact."

"Thanks," said the Bounder, unmoved.

"I'll settle up that dollar next week. But if you think you're going to be always borrowing money off me, just because you lent me a paltry dollar for once, you're mistaken. I want that to be quite clear," said Bunter. "You may as well understand that first as last, Vernon-Smith."

"Ain't he nice?" said the Bounder, as Bunter sniffed and rolled away. "Doesn't he make it a sheer pleasure to do things for him?"

"What have you done for him, though?" asked Bob Cherry, rather suspiciously.

The Bounder laughed.

"I've put in an advertisement for him," he answered.

"And you think he'll get answers?"

"Sure of it."

And the Bounder of Greyfriars walked away with his hands in his pocket, whistling.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

THE purple auto ate up the miles. Myron Polk sat at the wheel with a fixed stare under black, knitted brows. From Hollywood he had followed the road for some miles, towards Santa Monica, and then struck off to the south. "Venice" and its Coney Island sights and sounds were left on his right, as the purple car raced on. The automobile was following a road in sight of the sea; to his right, Polk had a wide view of the boundless Pacific, rolling away to infinity under the westering sun. But the Perfection star glanced neither to right nor left.

The sun dipped in the distant sea, and dusk deepened over the landscape. Polk had left main roads now, and was following a rough and lumpy lane, a track unchanged since the old days when Mexican vaqueros had ridden it on their cow-ponies, herding the droves of cattle that fed on the ranges where Hollywood now stands. Now he slackened speed under the trees that lined the track, and deepened the shadows of the way. He halted the car at last, in sight of a wayside shack that loomed up in the gloom.

It was night now, and from the window of the shack, covered by a ragged curtain, a light gleamed from a smoky oil-lamp.

Leaving his car, the Perfection star strode across the rugged ground towards the shack.

He struck on the door sharply.

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There was the sound of a hurried movement within, and the light was instantly extinguished.

Polk knocked again, angrily.

After a delay, the door was opened a few inches, and a dark, swarthy face peered out into the dusk.

"Que es esto?" muttered a husky voice in Spanish.

"Don't you know me, you fool?"

"The señor Polk."

The Mexican opened the door wide, and Polk tramped into the shack. There was the scratch of a match on leather trousers, and the lamp was re-lighted. The door closed.

Polk looked round him, in the dimly lighted shack, with disdain and disgust. The room was dirty, miserably furnished; a startling contrast to his luxurious bungalow on the hill above Hollywood. On a crazy table were bottles and glasses and cards.

Three men were in the room; the Mexican who had admitted him, another Mexican, and an American. All three were low-browed ruffians, the scum of Los Angeles, members of the liquor-smuggling gang of which Gomez had been the leader. From such men as these, Polk had been accustomed to obtaining his supplies of illegal spirits, smuggled into the country in defiance of the prohibition laws. The prohibition law and his contemptuous disregard of it, had brought him into touch with the lawless gang, and they had proved tools ready to his hand, when he drifted into crime himself.

The three bootleggers eyed Myron Polk curiously.

"You are welcome, señor," said Diego smoothly, "but what—"

"Carambo! I feared it was that hombre, Carter," said Ramon with a grin. "We have few visitors here, señor."

"I guess Carter's still combing the Santa Monica hills," grinned the third ruffian. "He ain't wise to this shebang, anyhow. But we got to keep our eyes peeled, Mr. Polk. They got Gomez, and they got Slick."

Polk made an impatient gesture.

"Gomez was a bungling fool, Slick was a jay," he snapped. "They asked for what they got. But I'm standing by the men who did my work. I've put up five thousand dollars for their lawyers, and they'll get off easy. Money talks."

"It sure does," agreed Yuma Bill. "You're square, Mr. Polk. But what's the game? You ain't moseyed along here for hooch?"

"No," snapped Polk, "I want my work done. It's got to be done. I've got reasons—pressing reasons—that I needn't explain to you. Every day is valuable now. The boy Wharton—"

The Mexicans eyed him, and Yuma grinned. The Perfection star's feud against the party of schoolboys surprised and amused the rough gang, and they were quite willing to do any lawless work that was productive of dollars. Kidnapping came as easily to the ruffians as smuggling bootleg liquor.

"Them kids is back in Hollywood now," said Yuma. "They ain't on the location any more, Mr. Polk. They ain't easy to get at in the town. Slick Wilson tried it on, and look where he is now. That guy, Carter, ain't no slouch. Search me!"

"They will be on their guard, señor, in the boarding-house," said Ramon. "Likely enough, that house is watched by the police." He shrugged his shoulders.

"There are more ways than one," snarled Polk. "The boy goes over to the Perfection studio every day."

"But at the studio, in the daytime, it

is still less easy, señor," said Diego uneasily.

"You will watch the studio in a closed car," said Polk. "One afternoon, towards dusk, you will get your chance. A sudden rush, taking them by surprise, and the boy will be in the car and hurried away at top speed."

"Por todos los Santos!" ejaculated Ramon.

The boldness of that scheme did not seem to appeal to the bootleggers. They exchanged unquiet glances.

"A bold stroke is the most successful and easy way," went on Polk. "They will be taken utterly by surprise. The car will be gone before there is a chance of pursuit. It will vanish into the hills with the boy. The cost matters nothing. Put the boy on my motor-boat, in the cove at Santa Monica bay, and leave the rest to me. This time I shall not trust the thing to other hands; I shall make sure myself." He gritted his teeth. "Get the boy there, that is all! A thousand dollars each if you succeed—"

There was a glistening of greedy eyes.

"You're sure talking now," said Yuma. "I guess you've spilled a big mouthful, Mr. Polk."

"And get busy at once," went on Polk. "I tell you, every hour is of value. I will tell you this, the boy is cutting the ground from under my feet, he is doing me harm in my profession, he is dangerous to me, a dangerous enemy, a dangerous and cunning enemy. He has made use of me, twisted me in his fingers, used me to further his own designs." Polk's eyes burned with hatred. "My position is threatened by that boy. I cannot afford to lose time. It must be done, and done at once."

"I guess we're at your orders, Mr. Polk," said Yuma. "Shucks! I guess a thousand dollars ain't picked off every bush! I guess that kid won't be long getting where you want him."

"Si, si!" said Diego; and Ramon nodded and grinned.

Ten minutes later, after carefully arranging all details, Myron Polk left the shack and returned to his car.

He drove back to Hollywood with a set face and satisfaction gleaming in his eyes.

All his schemes had failed hitherto. Fortune had favoured the schoolboy whom he was determined to believe his enemy and rival. But this time, now that he had taken the matter in his own hands, he was sure that he would not fail. The hired thugs had failed him again and again, but he would not fail himself. Once his enemy was on the motor-boat, running out to sea, under the stars—

There was little risk. The waves of the Pacific would tell no tale of what had happened out of sight of land. And the Perfection director would look in vain for the schoolboy star, whom he was planning to feature on the films in the place of Myron Polk. All unknowing, Mr. Schootz had signed the boy film actor's death-warrant.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter in Demand!

B UZZZZZ! The telephone-bell buzzed merrily in the hall of Long Beach Boarding-House.

Breakfast was over at that establishment, and the Greyfriars party were in the piazza, as usual, before going over to the studio.

As the buzz of the telephone reached

them Billy Bunter sat up and took notice.

"For me, I expect," he remarked.

Mr. Coot put his head out of the doorway.

"Mr. Bunter wanted on the phone," he said.

"Right-ho!" chirruped Bunter.

He rose from his chair and bestowed a triumphant and patronising grin on the Famous Five.

"Rather looks as if I'm getting an answer to my advertisement, what?" he chuckled. "I fancy I shan't be long booking an engagement. You fellows can go back to Greyfriars without me. I shall write to the pater, telling him I'm booked here at a big salary. As for the Head, you can tell him to go and eat coke!"

"You have not booked the esteemed engagement yet, my worthy and preposterous Bunter," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Looks as if it won't be long, though," grinned Bunter. "They haven't lost much time ringing me. The ad only came out this morning."

"They're waiting on the phone, sir," said Mr. Coot. His manner was more respectful than it had been of late. If Bunter was booking engagements he was good for his bill; and if he was good for his bill, he was entitled to respect—Mr. Coot's, at least. After all, on his looks, Bunter might be wanted for some comedy part, Mr. Coot guessed.

"I'm coming," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, trot in with me. I'd like you to hear."

"Oh, all right!" yawned Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five went in with Bunter. They were a little curious on the subject now. That Bunter's remarkable advertisement could possibly have brought the Hollywood producers after him seemed very unlikely. Still, he was rung up very soon after the appearance of the advertisement in the paper. That was certain. So they went in with Bunter to hear what was to be heard. There was a second receiver to the telephone at Long Beach Boarding-House, and Bunter picked up one and gave Harry Wharton the other.

"Now, listen!" he grinned.

Bunter squeaked into the transmitter.

"Hallo! Bunter speaking."

"Good! This is Phenomenal Films, San Pedro Street, L.A."

"Yes?"

"Esau Rook, director, speaking."

"Go ahead!"

"I guess I've seen your advertisement in the Los Angeles 'Film Ledger,' Mr. Bunter," came the nasal tones of Mr. Rook. "I reckon Phenomenal Films is the show you are looking for."

"I'm willing to give you a chance," answered Bunter.

"Eh?"

"But the fact is I'm so sought after that I shall have to consider all offers in rotation," explained Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob.

If this was Bunter's way of looking for a job it did not seem to the juniors that the job was likely to materialise. Wharton rather expected Mr. Rook to hang up. To his great surprise, the voice of the Phenomenal Films director went on:

"I guess that's so, Mr. Bunter! I'm sure wise to that! But I hope you'll give us a chance."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Wharton.

Bunter grinned ecstatically over the phone. He really was not surprised to learn that a film director was eager to secure a youth of great gifts, uncommon good looks, of distinguished and aristocratic appearance, elegant figure,

and fascinating manners. Still, it was very agreeable to have the thing proved like this in the hearing of fellows who were jealous of his good looks and his abilities.

"Give us a look-in, Mr. Bunter," went on Mr. Rook. "Let's see if we can come to business. Or perhaps you'd rather I called personally at your boarding house?"

"Oh crikey!" said Wharton involuntarily. Evidently William George Bunter was being rushed for, as he had said that he would be.

Bunter chortled. "Oh, I'll come along!" he said. "Let's see—I've got rather a lot of engagements to-day. Perfection Films want me in the morning, and I've promised Magic Films a look-in. I've an appointment at the Fairbanks studio; and I've got to see my banker, too. Look here, I could get along about ten. That all right?"

Being sought after, Bunter naturally assumed his full importance. If Mr. Rook was eager, Bunter wasn't going to appear eager.

"You've said it," said Mr. Rook. "I'll sure wait in for you. You'll find me here, Mr. Bunter."

"Ten, then," said Bunter carelessly. And Bunter hung up.

He grinned round at the astonished juniors.

"I say, you fellows, what do you think of that?" he demanded.

"Blessed if I know what to think of it!" said Harry Wharton blankly. "You seem to have hit the bullseye, old fat man."

"Didn't I tell you so?" chuckled Bunter.

"You did. But blessed if I make it out!"

"My dear chap, what's the good of this silly jealousy?" asked Bunter. "Why not admit at once that you're not in the same street with me? It's jolly queer how jealousy blinds a fellow to facts."

"Fathead!"

"I suppose you're going to lend me a taxi fare," asked Bunter. "San Pedro Street is in Los Angeles—a good way from Hollywood. I can't walk it, of course. I shall need only the fare there. I shall ask Rook for an advance of my salary when I take the engagement."

"Hem!"

"If you're going to be mean as well as jealous—," sneered Bunter.

"You put it so nicely!" chuckled Bob.

"I say, Smithy!" The Bounder lounged into the hall, and Bunter called to him. "I say, Smithy, I've got an engagement. Lend me a taxi fare, old chap."

"Already?" yawned the Bounder. "Well, why can't you take the street car? I'll lend you a quarter."

"Street cars may do for you fellows," sneered Bunter. "I'm in rather a different position—sought after by all the Hollywood and Los Angeles film directors. I decline to take a street car."

"Suit yourself," yawned the Bounder.

"Look here, if you won't lend me five dollars—"

"Right—I won't!"

"Lend me the quarter, then, you beast."

The Bounder laughed and tossed Bunter a quarter. The fat junior was about to roll away, when the telephone-bell rang again.

"That's for me, too, I expect," grinned Bunter.

And he picked up the receiver.

"Hallo! Is Mr. Bunter around?"

"Bunter speaking!" chuckled the Owl of the Remove.

"I've seen your advertisement in the 'Film Ledger,' sir—"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"I guess I'd like to see you, sir. Professor Crawjaw speaking from the Crawjaw Studios, L.A. When can I see you?"

Bunter fairly chortled with triumph.

"You put me wise when you'll be in, and I'll come along, sir," said Professor Crawjaw. "I'm anxious to see you, sir. The Crawjaw Studios are what you want. I guess I'll make that plain if you'll give me an interview, sir. What? You see me this morning—"

"I'm just going out to keep an appointment," said Bunter. "You can come along this afternoon, Mr. Crawjaw. Make it three—no, make it half-past five." Bunter wanted the other fellows to be back from the Perfection Studios when the producer came to see him. "That suit you?"

"Yep! Sure! Say, Mr. Bunter, don't you fix up with any other guy till you've seen me. What?"

"I'm taking offers in rotation," said Bunter. "I shall consider the lot, and then decide. I'm rather overwhelmed with offers at present."

"I guess that's so. But give the Crawjaw Studios a chance, sir! Jest let me see you before you decide."

"I promise that!" said Bunter cheerily.

And he hung up.

He favoured the astonished juniors with a triumphant grin and rolled away. Bunter had expected great things, but, really, he had not quite expected this. Obviously, there was going to be a rush for Bunter, and the rush was setting in early. A few minutes later Bunter was on a street car, rolling out of Hollywood into Los Angeles to keep his appointment with Phenomenal Films.

"Well, my only hat!" said Bob Cherry, as the juniors went back to the piazza. "What does this mean, you men?"

"Ask me another!" said Harry Wharton.

"It's a giddy mystery," said Bob. "I can't make it out. Have you been playing any tricks, Smithy?"

"Tricks?" repeated the Bounder.

"I mean, did you wangle that advertisement of Bunter's somehow?"

(Continued on next page.)

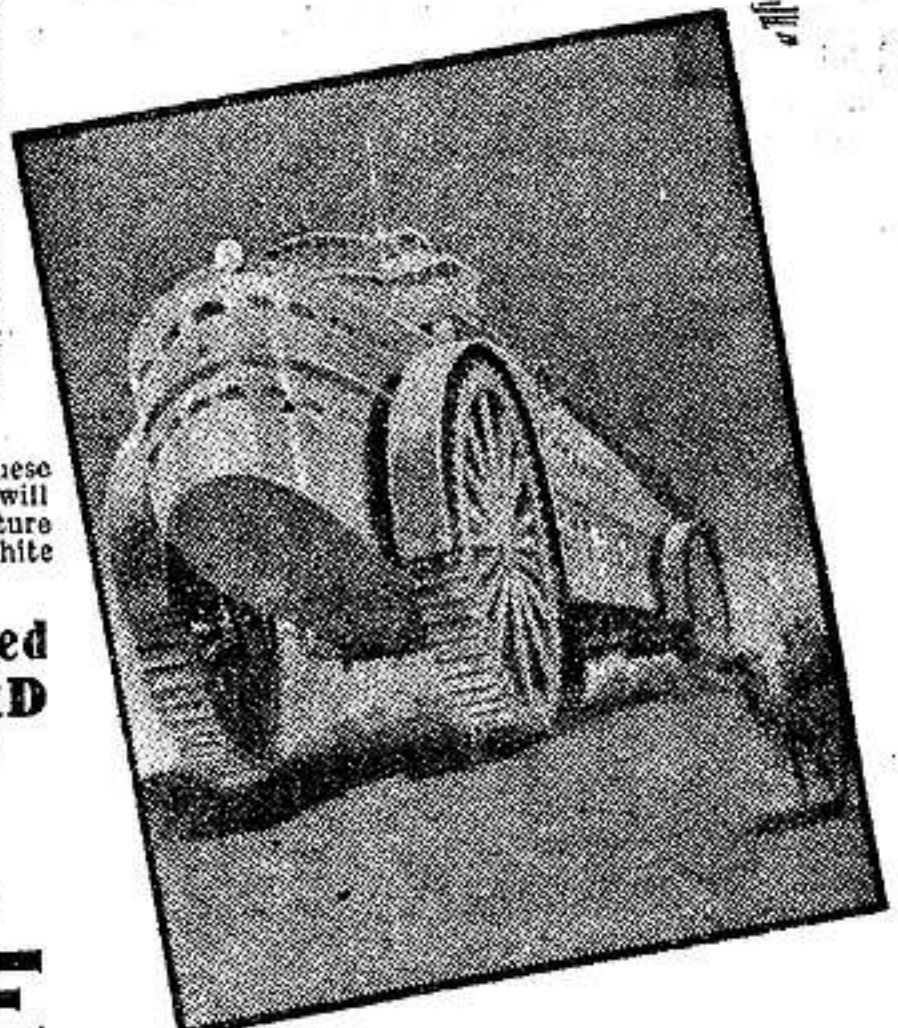
UNIQUE FREE GIFTS!

The SAHARA CONQUERED



No longer will the millions of miles of desert that cover the world present a formidable obstacle to mankind; no longer will the great Sahara Desert, 3,500,000 square miles in extent be an appalling barrier to transit—for the DESERT LINER of the FUTURE will arrive to conquer these burning wastes. Everything that Science can do to make these enormous "ships of the desert" ideal for long-distance travel will be done. They will accommodate 150 passengers who will be able to travel in absolute comfort and security.

To get an idea of what these Desert Liners of the Future will be like, take a look at the picture on the right. This black and white reproduction of a



Beautifully Coloured PICTURE CARD

ONE OF A SET OF
16
IS GIVEN AWAY
FREE

In this week's issue of the "Gem," fifteen other "MARVELS OF THE FUTURE" are being dealt with in this Topping SERIES OF CARDS, and every boy and girl should make a point of collecting THE FULL SET. Ask for

The GEM

On Sale Wednesday

PRICE TWOPENCE

"What an idea!" yawned the Bounder.

And he rolled away.

Before the juniors went over to the Perfection Studio at ten there were several more rings on the boarding-house telephone. All of them were for Bunter. Mr. Coot was kept quite busy. When the chums of the Remove went to the studio Mr. Coot was still busy.

Evidently there was a rush for Billy Bunter. It was inexplicable, though possibly the Bounder, had he chosen, could have explained it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Peculiar Interview!

BILLY BUNTER mopped a perspiring, fat brow.

The spring sunshine was warm in Los Angeles.

The "quarter" Smithy had lent him had not quite landed Bunter at his destination. He had had to change cars and he had had to walk, but he found himself in San Pedro Street at last. But when he inquired his way of passers-by for Phenomenal Films, he found few aware of the existence of that firm. Phenomenal Films did not seem quite so well known as Perfection Pictures or Magic Films. But a policeman set him going at last, and Bunter stopped before a tall building and blinked up at it, having learned that the office of Phenomenal Films was on the ninth story.

On a warm morning, after his exertions already, the most attractive engagement on the movies would hardly have tempted Bunter to clamber up the stairs to the ninth story. Fortunately, there was a lift. In the lift—or elevator, as it was called in the language of the country—Bunter shot up to the ninth floor.

His surroundings dashed his high hopes a little. The place seemed a block of offices, rather shabby offices, with rather shabby men going in and out. Bunter had hitherto associated films with lots of money, but he saw no sign of lots of money in this towering five. Still, he reflected that the actual studio was probably at Hollywood, only the office here in Los Angeles, though the office obviously was not so palatial as Mr. Schootz's or Darius Honk's. On a door was a brass plate announcing that this was the office of Phenomenal Films, and Bunter rang a bell, and the door was opened.

A fat and florid gentleman, with a shining bald head, gold-rimmed glasses, and a big signet-ring on his finger, greeted him.

"Mr. Bunter, I guess?"

"That's right," agreed Bunter. "I've called to see Mr. Rook."

"You see him," said the fat and florid gentleman, with an engaging smile. "Please walk right in! Glad to see you, Mr. Bunter! Take a seat! I was rather expecting an older gentleman, but you can't begin too early on the pictures—can't begin too early! Take time by the forelock—what? Boy prodigy, and all that! Sit down!"

Bunter sat down.

He blinked at Mr. Rook.

Phenomenal Films, to judge by Mr. Rook's general appearance and the look of his office, did not achieve phenomenal success in the financial line. There was a chipped old roll-top desk, a fling cabinet, two chipped and cracked chairs, a square of scratched linoleum, and, of course, a telephone. An American business man had to have a telephone. If Mr. Rook was going

to pay Bunter a handsome salary, it proved that he was a generous and self-denying gentleman, for he did not look as if he could afford to pay himself one.

There was one good point about Mr. Esau Rook—evidently he admired Bunter, and regarded him with immense respect, and was exceedingly glad to see him there. That, after all, covered a multitude of sins. Even if he was not, as it appeared, one of the wealthier Los Angeles producers, at least he knew talent at the first glance.

"Breaking into the films—what?" said Mr. Rook genially. "I guess it's rather a fortunate thing, sir, that you got into touch with me. Phenomenal Films can offer you exactly what you are looking for."

Bunter brightened. This was very pleasant hearing, at all events. But, in view of the general shabbiness of the place, the Owl of the Remove considered it judicious to give a hint on the subject of salary. That was an important matter. Bunter liked flattery, and he liked it, like pineapple, in chunks. But cash was indispensable.

"You think me suitable?" said Bunter.

"No question about that, sir," said Mr. Rook. "The moment I saw you, I saw that. The moment I heard your voice on the phone, I knew it was the voice for the talkies. Yes, sir. Leave that to my judgment. If you've any doubts on that subject, Mr. Bunter, dismiss them. No false diffidence, sir! I tell you your value! I know!"

Which was very pleasant to hear, and quite different from the way Mr. Fish and Mr. Schootz and Mr. Van Duck talked.

"And the salary," said Bunter—"I—I suppose there's a pretty good salary?"

"For a good man," said Mr. Rook, "the salary is naturally good. Before you've been tested on the cameras I can't say anything definite. I may mention, as a general principle in our firm, that we start nobody under a hundred dollars a week."

"Good!" said Bunter, beaming.

"Everybody," said Mr. Rook, "can't act for the films! It's a gift, and it requires looks. Now, sir, you've got the looks! You don't mind my mentioning it, I hope? I always speak frankly to clients." Mr. Rook's sharp eyes read the pleased, fatuous grin on Bunter's face, and he proceeded to lay it on a little thicker. "I may say we never engage a man who isn't good-looking and of distinguished appearance—we've heaps to choose from, and we find it pays. Good looks go far on the films; a distinguished presence goes farther. So far as that goes, you're the goods. All that remains is to see you act—and I guess a fortnight's training will see you through. Yes, sir."

"But—but the salary begins at once—what?" asked Bunter, rather anxiously.

Mr. Rook smiled.

"We must not go too fast, sir—not too fast! Phenomenal Films require at least a fortnight's training, under their own professional instructors, to begin with. If the client proves satisfactory, the salary begins then, on the spot, and it may range from one hundred dollars to five thousand, according to merit. In your case, I guess I've no hesitation in saying that you will give satisfaction from the word go, sir! I've been in the movies ever since there were movies, sir, and I know what's what and who's who. Take my word for that. Join Phenomenal Films, sir, and leave the rest to us. With your looks."—Mr. Rook watched Bunter again slyly—"with your bearing, your appearance, sir, success is

at your feet! Fairbanks has nothing on you, sir—not a thing!"

Bunter nodded.

He knew all this; but it was quite agreeable to hear it from Rook, all the same.

Waiting for a fortnight for his salary to begin was rather a blow. But, after all, two weeks would soon pass, and then the dollars would roll in. Besides, he wasn't bound to close with Mr. Rook; he had other offers.

"Now, sir," resumed Mr. Rook, rubbing his plump hands, "when can you start, sir? I want to see what you can do. I may mention that I've never interviewed a client who interested me more. I'm anxious to see you before the cameras. Name your time, sir. To-day? To-morrow? You'd like to phone an appointment, sir—what?"

"That's a good idea," assented Bunter.

"We are entirely at your service, sir," said Mr. Rook. He opened a ledger on the roll-top desk. "Please give me some particulars—full name, address, phone number, height, age, weight, and so forth, and what special kind of part you prefer."

"Well, I've often thought I was cut out for a Valentino part," said Bunter modestly.

Mr. Rook suppressed a gasp.

"Exactly! Built for it!" he said. "As it happens, we have exactly that part vacant—looking for a man with the necessary facial expressions—hem—to fill it. Sir, you're the goods! In your case, the fee will be practically nominal."

"The fee?" repeated Bunter.

"Yes. The booking fee is five dollars. That is charged to all clients, as a matter of form."

"Booking fee?"

"And the fee for a course of instruction extending over a fortnight is thirty dollars—"

"Thirty dollars?"

"In order to avoid unnecessary book-keeping," said Mr. Rook, "we make it a rule to receive payments in advance."

Bunter blinked at him.

Something was wrong somewhere.

Bunter had come there for Mr. Rook's money, and it seemed that Mr. Rook wanted Bunter's money. The position was difficult for both. Mr. Rook did not look as if he had much money. Bunter certainly hadn't any—not even his fare back to Sunset Boulevard.

"I—I don't quite understand," gasped Bunter.

"I guess I'm putting it plain," said Mr. Rook. "We charge five dollars booking fee and thirty dollars for instruction. We guarantee to turn you out a finished film actor, and to find you an engagement, if—if fitted to act before the cameras. In your case, there is no doubt on the subject—none! I will stake my professional reputation on that. I may go so far as to say that your first day's salary will probably cover all the fees you pay."

Bunter brightened again.

"That's all right, then," he said. "I suppose you won't mind leaving the fees over till I draw a salary? Then you can deduct—"

A certain coldness became manifest in Mr. Rook's manner. But he was genial again at once.

"There would be no objection to that," he said—"none whatever, except for the firm's rules of business. One thing at a time, my good sir! I am not empowered to vary the firm's rules, even in the case of a client whose success is a foregone conclusion. You get me?"

Bunter "got" him.

He had to pay Mr. Rook thirty-five dollars before he could burst on a



"What the thunder did you come here for, you young gink?" demanded Mr. Rook. Bunter blinked. "Do you figure that we're running this office for the pleasure of talking to a fat, silly, pesky, bone-headed chump?" asked Mr. Rook. Bunter blinked again. (See Chapter 8.)

dazzled Hollywood as the latest and greatest star in the film firmament.

Had Bunter been in possession of that sum, undoubtedly he would have paid it over. Surely it was worth thirty-five dollars to draw, after a fortnight, a salary that started at a hundred dollars and might run to five thousand! But Bunter hadn't the dollars. There was the rub.

"You see—" he stammered.

"Yeh?"

"I haven't any money—"

"What?"

"Except what I'm going to earn on the films," explained Bunter.

"Gee!"

"But I'll tell you what," said Bunter. "I'm prepared to pay double fees, if you like, if you can arrange to leave them over to deduct from my salary."

Mr. Rook showed no desire whatever to close with that generous offer. Possibly he had his doubts about the salary!

His genial look froze to coldness.

"We are wasting time, I guess," he remarked. "Phenomenal Films don't run a studio for their health, Mr. Bunter. But perhaps I can meet you in the matter. Your success being, in my opinion, a foregone conclusion, I can make a concession, and accept half the booking fee and one-third of the instruction fee. How does that suit you?"

"Fine!" said Bunter. "Only—you see, I haven't any money."

"Your friends, perhaps—" hinted Mr. Rook.

"They won't lend me anything," said Bunter. "They're jealous of my abilities and good looks."

"Jumping Moses!" ejaculated Mr. Rook involuntarily. "I—I mean, I—I

see! But surely, my dear sir, you have some resources?"

"None at all," confessed Bunter; "only what I'm going to make on the pictures."

"Are you speaking seriously?" demanded Mr. Rook, with all the pleasant geniality wiped out of his manner, as if it had been wiped off with a duster.

"Yes. You see—"

Mr. Rook rose.

"Then what the thunder," he said, "did you mean by that advertisement that I saw in the paper at my hotel this morning? What the thunder did you come here for, you young gink?"

"Eh?" gasped Bunter.

"Do you figure that we're running this office for the pleasure of talking to a fat, silly, pesky, bone-headed chump?" asked Mr. Rook.

Bunter blinked at him.

The change in Mr. Rook's manner and mode of address quite took his breath away. It was so sudden!

"You priceless mutt!" said Mr. Rook. "Pulling my leg, or what? Anyhow, git! Beat it, you pesky bonehead!"

"But I—I say!" gasped Bunter. "As—as I'm so certain to be a success on the films, with—with my looks, you know—"

"With your looks," said Mr. Rook, in a tone of cold ferocity, "you might get a job at scaring the crows in a cornfield. You come here wasting my time, you bonehead—you pesky jay! Beat it, before I boot you!"

"But—but I say—" gasped the bewildered Bunter.

"Git!" roared Mr. Rook.

And Bunter, in a dazed and dizzy

frame of mind, tottered to the door. He did not understand. It was like a horrid dream to him. But it was, at least, clear that he was not going to book an engagement with Phenomenal Films. Mr. Esau Rook was not handing out money; he wanted money to be handed to him! The thing was working the wrong way round, somehow. Bunter tottered from the office. In the doorway he turned to blink back at the angry face of the Phenomenal Films man.

"I—I—I say—" he bumbled.

Slam!

Mr. Rook hurled the door shut. Bunter jumped back just in time to save his fat little nose.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove found himself outside the building at last. Not having had an advance on his salary, he had to walk back to Hollywood. He rolled dismally away like a fellow in a horrid dream. What did it all mean? That was a mystery to Bunter. But it seemed to mean, at least, that it was not so easy to become a movie star as Bunter had supposed. So much meaning, at least, was clear in that extraordinary interview. The rest was wrapped in mystery.

Bunter rolled back to Sunset Boulevard, perspiring in the sunshine, and in a dazed state of mind. Phenomenal Films, he decided, must be some sort of a swindle. But, after all, that was only one of his offers. Professor Crawjaw was coming to see him that afternoon, and probably there had been a lot of rings on the telephone in his absence. Bunter took comfort. One swallow does not make a summer. There was still balm in Gilead.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Sweet are the Uses of Advertisement!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry, staring at the Los Angeles "Film Ledger," uttered that ejaculation.

Harry Wharton & Co. had finished their morning's work at the Perfection studio, and returned to Long Beach Boarding-House. Billy Bunter had not yet returned there, and they rather wondered what the fat junior was doing in Los Angeles.

The chums of the Remove were sitting in the chairs on the piazza, overlooking the sunny garden, while they waited for the lunch-gong.

Bob Cherry was glancing over the newspaper and chuckling. The Los Angeles "Film Ledger" was not a humorous paper. Half of it was devoted to film news and the other half to general news, politics, and advertisements. But there was unconscious humour in its columns, as is not uncommonly the case in Transatlantic journals.

There was an article which described how the eminent Mr. Hoover had led the indignant movement against the Restriction of Rubber Production in the British Empire. There was another article, which described how the eminent Mr. Hoover had sat on a committee for Restricting Cotton Production in the United States.

Taken together, the two articles struck Bob as humorous, and he chuckled over them cheerfully.

But he forgot the eminent Mr. Hoover and his peculiar mixture of lofty moral indignation and sharp business, as his eyes fell upon a paragraph in the advertisement columns.

The name of W. G. Bunter caught his eye.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Bunter's ad!" ejaculated Bob.

"I hope they've altered the spelling," said Harry Wharton, with a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "You boulder, Smithy—"

"What's the joke?" yawned the Bouncer.

"You've altered the whole thing—"

"You don't say so."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob. "No wonder Bunter got some phone calls in answer to this! Every swindler in Los Angeles will be after him now."

"What the dickens—" said Johnny Bull.

"Look!" roared Bob.

He held up the paper, and the juniors read the advertisement. It had been considerably changed since Bunter entrusted it to the hands of Vernon-Smith; and not only in the spelling. The Bouncer's unexpected willingness to oblige the fat and fatuous Owl was explained now, also the many phone calls that had come for Bunter:

"Wealthy youth requires instruction in film acting. Expense no object.—W. G. Bunter, Long Beach Boarding-House, Hollywood. Phone Hollywood 101019."

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"Great pip!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Smithy, you ass—"

"It's rather a rag, isn't it?" grinned the Bouncer. "Quite as amusing as selling a fellow's clobber to an old clothes man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's rather a shame!" said Harry, laughing. "That fat idiot will be hunted by all the rogues in Los Angeles now. I suppose there are a hundred places at least where they pretend to teach people to act for the films and get fees out of them."

"Not less than a dozen, anyhow," said the Bouncer. "Bunter's had a dozen phone calls."

"Poor old Bunter! Blessed if I could make out what those phone calls meant!" chuckled Bob. "I know now."

"The knowfulness is terrific!" chuckled Harree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bunter will not book an engagement with the honourable and disgusting Phenomenal Films."

"Poor old Bunter!" said Harry. "He will come crawling back looking as if he's missed a meal!"

"He won't," said the Bouncer. "He will come crawling back telling a string of lies, and making out that he's on to a good thing!"

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

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob, and he shut up the "Film Ledger," and tossed it out of sight.

Now that they knew exactly what the rush for Bunter meant, the juniors were rather curious to hear what account would be given by the fat junior.

Bunter came toiling up the garden.

He was tired, he was perspiring, and he was cross. But as he sighted the juniors on the piazza, he forced a grin to his fat face. He rolled up the steps and collapsed into a chair.

"Well, what luck, old bean?" asked Bob.

"Fine!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors chuckled. Billy Bunter gave them a disdainful blink through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, you can take my word for it that I'm on to a good thing! I've seen that man Rook at the Phenomenal Films office. He begged me to accept an engagement, and pressed a week's salary on me in advance."

"Great pip!"

"However, I decided to take my time before closing with it," said Bunter. "I've other offers to consider."

"Didn't you even touch him for your fare back?" asked the Bouncer.

"I preferred to walk," explained Bunter. "Lovely spring day, and I'm a good walker. Not a slacker, like you fellows. I say, you fellows, you should see the Phenomenal Films place! Palatial! That isn't the word! It makes the Perfection show look like a ten-cent remnant. Vast offices—immense studios. Must have cost a million dollars to fit up the place, I should say. Rook offered to run me back in his car, but I preferred to walk. I thought I'd better not encourage him too much, you know, in case I have to turn him down."

The juniors gazed at Bunter.

"You should see the place!" said Bunter. "Magnificent—imposing—"

"I guess I've seen it!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter jumped.

"It's a little hole of a place on San Pedro Street. That firm is a one-man firm, and they haven't got a studio or anything, but a dingy little office."

That galoot Rook makes a living by pretending to train jays for the pictures. He gets a fee out of them and then lets them slide. Lots of guys in that line of business in Los!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"You—you—you're mixing him up with somebody else!" gasped Bunter. "The—the Phenomenal Films place is—is enormous—"

"Forget it!" cackled Fishy.

"I was offered," said Bunter, with dignity, "a salary beginning at a hundred dollars a week—"

"I guess Phenomenal Films would have to pawn the office desk to raise fifty dollars!" chortled Fishy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I expected you fellows to run it down!" said Bunter scornfully.

"Jealousy, as usual. However, I've turned down Phenomenal Films. I think I can do better elsewhere. I suppose there's been some calls for me while I've been gone?"

"Lots!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Coot's made a list for you."

"Oh, good!"

"All about as good as Phenomenal Films!" chortled Bob.

"I'd better go in and speak to Coot." Bunter rose from his chair. "I've no time to listen to your paltry jealousy and detraction."

Bunter rolled into the house. He was tired, and he was cross; but he brightened up when he received that lengthy list of telephone calls from Mr. Coot. Evidently things were moving.

Bunter rolled out again, with a paper in his hand.

"I say, you fellows: There's been ten calls for me," he said. "I'm rather glad I turned that fellow Rook down! A hundred dollars a week is no good to me. I may fix it up with Crawjaw this afternoon. But I've got a lot to choose from. Green with envy, ain't you?"

"The greenfulness is not terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter."

"You might have expected it," said Bunter. "You try to keep me in the background. But merit will out."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Talent will make its way. So will good looks. Rook remarked that I was specially suited for Valentino parts."

"What did he charge for that?" asked Bob.

"Yah! Go on being jealous; you've got lots of cause!" said Bunter scornfully. "Green with envy—yah! Yellow with jealousy—pah! In a few days you'll be hanging round, trying to borrow my dollars—trying to get me to take notice of you! But I shan't! When I'm in the cinema swim, and cutting a big dash at Hollywood, I'm not going to have you fellows sticking on to me, simply because I knew you at school. You can't expect it. You can cackle!" added Bunter contemptuously.

"Thanks!" gasped Bob. "We will!"

And they did.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Sudden Attack!

M R. HIRAM K. FISH tapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder, as the chums of the Remove were about to leave the studio that afternoon. Work on the final scenes of the school film had been going on briskly, under the eye of Mr. Van Duck, and the juniors had been kept very busy. They were trooping away in a cheery crowd, when Mr. Fish butted in. The American gentleman grinned at Wharton in a very amicable manner.

"You want to drop in at Schootz's

office before you beat it, kid," he said. "He's sure got something to spill off his chin."

"Right!" said Harry cheerily. "I'll come later, you fellows. Don't wait. I'll follow on to the tea-shop, if you've started."

And Wharton followed Mr. Fish to the director's office, while the rest of the Co. left the studio, and walked across the boulevard to Long Beach Boarding-House.

A closed motor-car was standing by the side-walk, near the entrance of the Perfection "lot." The chauffeur was reading a paper while he waited, and he looked over the top edge of that paper very keenly as the little crowd of schoolboys came away.

They gave no heed to the car or its chauffeur, however. There was generally more than one car waiting outside the Perfection lot—many of the film actors and actresses came in cars, and Mr. Schootz and Mr. Fish always did.

They crossed the wide boulevard, and went into Long Beach Boarding-House; and the chauffeur of the closed car resumed reading his newspaper—or affecting to do so.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton entered Mr. Schootz's office, in the Perfection building, in company with Hiram K. Fish.

Mr. Schootz greeted him with agreeable smiles. The captain of the Remove wondered what was coming.

"Van Duck tells me you've been delivering the goods all right, bub," began Mr. Schootz.

"I'm glad of that," said Harry, with a smile.

"We're getting to the end of the school film now," said the director. "I guess it is going to make a big noise when it's released."

"I should smile!" said Mr. Fish.

"I hope so," assented Harry.

"According to arrangements, you go back to England when this film is finished," said Mr. Schootz. "Now, I ain't any objection to the others hitting the horizon as soon as they like. But I guess I'm going to make you an offer to stop."

"Sure!" said Mr. Fish.

"But I couldn't stop," said Harry. "We got leave from our headmaster for this trip; but we have to turn up at Greyfriars for the new term. Sorry, Mr. Schootz, but—"

"Now, don't you be in a hurry," said Mr. Schootz. "I'm planning a big thing. You sure got away with the parts you played for Polk in the 'Lord of the Desert.' Polk ain't taking any more, so far as that film's concerned. I can't make what I wanted of it. He jibs at my big scenes. That guy sure sets a high value on his bones."

Wharton smiled. He was not surprised at Myron Polk objecting to some of the big scenes planned by Mr. Schootz. The director's keenness for realism on the pictures sometimes carried him rather far. As Myron Polk had only one neck, Wharton did not blame him for taking care of it.

"Now, you've worked the riddle twice, and you can work it again," said Mr. Schootz. "I got some big scenes—a leap over the Devil's G. in the Santa Monica hills—a topmast scene on a schooner in the bay—lots of big stuff. I want you!"

"But—" said Harry.

"Listen, you! Name any figure in reason, and it's yours. Publicity you'll get for nothing! This is a chance for you to break right into the movies, and get known all over the United States, and the rest of this little old world, too.

See? I want you! Perfection Pictures wants you! You've got the ball at your feet. I guess I wouldn't put it so plain to a lad that hadn't a sensible, level head; but you ain't a conceited geek like Polk. I tell you plain, Perfection Pictures wants you, an' you're going to be billed as the Boy Sheikh. Got that?"

"It's a good offer, bub," said Mr. Fish. "I guess it lays over going back to school, what? Greyfriars hasn't a thing on that."

Harry Wharton smiled.

The offer was a flattering one, and a tempting one; but he had no idea at all of accepting it. Indeed, it was not in his power to do so. His uncle had given permission for the United States trip; but certainly he would not have approved of his nephew taking up the hectic career of a film actor for life. Neither had Harry any desire to exchange Greyfriars for Hollywood.

As an adventure, the Los Angeles trip, and the work for the pictures had been pleasant enough. But he was looking forward to the return to Greyfriars, to cricket on Little Side, to meeting old friends in the old quad; to rags in the Remove passage. He had liked his work at the studio and was glad he had made a success of it; but he had no desire whatever to settle down to the profession of a cinema actor.

"You're very kind, Mr. Schootz," he said; "but I've got to go back with the other fellows. I couldn't possibly stay on."

"Now, you want some hoss-sense," said Mr. Schootz. "You don't want to chuck away a good thing."

"I know it's a good thing," said Harry. "But I'm for Greyfriars, Mr. Schootz. I couldn't leave school if I wanted to—and I don't want to."

"You don't want to star on the pictures?" said Mr. Schootz, as if he could not believe his ears.

"No. It's all right as an experience, but I shouldn't like it for keeps," said Harry.

"Great John James Brown!" said Mr. Fish. "Bub, do you understand that there's dollars in it—thousands of dollars?"

"A whole heap o' dollars," said Mr. Schootz, "and publicity! Your photo in every paper in the United States. What?"

Wharton smiled and shook his head.

For the next half-hour Harry Wharton sat between two fires—Mr. Schootz on one side, Mr. Fish on the other. They argued and persuaded and finally they lost patience. Wharton was not to be moved. Finally Mr. Schootz told him that he was a gink, and Mr. Fish added that he was a geek. After which, Wharton was allowed to retire.

"Carry me home to die!" said Mr.

Schootz, when he was gone, with an angry grunt. "Jevver see such a gink?"

"Never!" said Mr. Fish. "When it comes to sheer, darned foolishness, the whole world has got to hand it to that kid!"

"And that guy Polk figuring that the kid was trying to root him out and slip into his place!" grunted Mr. Schootz. "I wonder what Polk will say to this?"

"He sure will be pleased!" growled Mr. Fish.

"It was a big thing!" said Mr. Schootz, with a sigh. "I guess the 'Boy Sheikh' would have knocked the film fans right on the spot. But there's nothing doing—and we got to make the best of Polk."

Harry Wharton, leaving the two directors in irritated discussion, went along to the exit. He was sorry to disappoint Mr. Schootz; but he had no idea of changing his mind. He left the studio, and walked down to the gate of the Perfection lot.

The closed car was still waiting there.

As Wharton appeared on the lot the car moved along the road, and it was just opposite the gate as the junior came out.

He crossed the side-walk to go round the end of the car and walk across the boulevard.

As he did so the door opened and two men leaped from the car.

Before Harry Wharton knew what was happening two pairs of sinewy hands were laid on him, and he was struggling in the grasp of two Mexicans.

The struggle was brief; he was tossed into the car like a bundle, and Ramon and Diego scrambled in after him.

Before they were fairly in, the automobile was in motion.

Diego reached to the door and dragged it shut. Ramon threw himself on the schoolboy in the bottom of the car, pressing a savage hand over his mouth.

The car rushed away down Sunset Boulevard.

The thing had passed so rapidly that only seconds had been required; it was doubtful whether anyone had observed it. That interview with Mr. Schootz, that had kept Wharton back after his friends had left, had given the kidnappers an opportunity for which they had hardly dared to hope. Wharton, sprawling on the floor of the car, struggling and panting, dazed by the suddenness of the happening, realised that he was in the hands of the kidnappers, and resisted furiously. But his resistance was useless against the strength of two powerful ruffians, and in a few minutes the rushing car was out of Hollywood, speeding away on the road to Santa Monica—and Harry Wharton, at last, was a helpless prisoner in the hands of his enemies.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not an Engagement!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was in a chair on the piazza of Long Beach Boarding-House when the juniors came out of the house, to go along to the tea-shop.

(Continued on next page.)



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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Coming along to tea, fatty?"

"I'm expecting a caller," said Bunter. "The esteemed and ludicrous Crawjaw?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a grin.

"Yes; he's due now," said Bunter. "You fellows can see him when he comes, if you like. I'm going to see him here, in the piazza. After he's gone I'll take the lot of you to Las Palmas and stand you a really decent spread. What? You needn't go to that small, cheap teashop of yours."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Can't you fellows ever get over this rotten jealousy?" demanded Bunter.

"Let's hang on and see jolly old Crawjaw," chuckled the Bouncer. "This interview may be worth seeing."

"Yes, rather," grinned Nugent.

"You see, I shall probably fix things up with Crawjaw," said Bunter. "I shall require a substantial advance on my salary. I shall make a point of that. So I shall be in funds. See?"

"The seefulness is not terrific."

"You fellows have lent me some small sums occasionally," said Bunter disdainfully. "Well, I shall settle up all round. I shall stand you a spread at Las Palmas. Then you can go and eat coke. I'm not coming back to Greyfriars with you. You can get on there the best you can without me."

"We might manage to survive!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"We'll wait and see the jolly old interview," said Bob. "I dare say Wharton will be along by then. He's stopped for a jaw with Schootz. Hallo, hallo, hallo, is that Crawjaw?"

A stranger was coming up the long garden from the boulevard. The juniors looked at him with interest.

He was a tall, bony man, in a shabby frock-coat, with rimless glasses perched on a prominent bony nose.

Bunter sniffed.

"That's not Crawjaw! Looks more like an old clo' man! Crawjaw is a wealthy producer."

The juniors chuckled. Considering the alteration the Bouncer had made in Bunter's advertisement—still unknown to Bunter—his visitors were more likely to resemble old clo' men than wealthy producers.

"Don't go, you fellows," said Bunter anxiously. "My caller can't be long now. It's five-thirty."

Bunter was very anxious for the juniors to witness the interview. His triumph would have an added savour with all these jealous and envious fellows witnessing it.

The bony, shabby gentleman looked round him, sighted the group in the piazza, and came up the steps.

"Mr. Bunter?" he asked, surveying the group with sharp eyes behind the rimless glasses.

"You're not Professor Crawjaw?" asked Bunter, blinking at him.

"My card, sir!" said Professor Crawjaw, presenting it. "I'm happy to meet you, Mr. Bunter. Delighted, my dear sir."

Bunter blinked at him. The general shabbiness of the professor's get-up reminded him rather unpleasantly of the shabby aspect of Mr. Esau Rook's offices on San Pedro Street. Undoubtedly there was a rush for Bunter; but the Hollywood millionaires did not seem to have joined in it so far.

Mr. Crawjaw took a chair without waiting to be asked. He leaned towards Bunter, exhaling an aroma of spirituous liquors as he did so. The professor was apparently one of the many citizens of

Los Angeles who helped to support the bootleg traffic. Indeed, to judge by a certain glassiness in his gaze and a slight uncertainty in his movements, the worthy professor had seemingly fortified himself for this interview with an allowance of "hooch."

The juniors looked on with cheerful, smiling faces. Billy Bunter's face, however, was not so bright. He had a feeling that something was wrong again, somehow.

"I saw your advertisement, Mr. Bunter," said the professor. "I guess I am exactly the man you want to meet. You're going into the films, what?"

"That's it," said Bunter.

"And you require instruction in film-acting to begin with?" said the professor. "Quite so, quite so! Our studios have turned out some of the finest movie actors known to fame. Pupils who have passed through our course are now drawing huge salaries. Our instruction—"

"But I don't want any instruction," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I've nothing to learn, you see."

"Oh!"

"I'm a finished film actor, if you come to that," said Bunter.

"Search me!" said Mr. Crawjaw, staring at him.

"What I want," explained Bunter, "is an engagement! At a big salary! That's important!"

Mr. Crawjaw seemed a little nonplussed, but he rallied.

"Quite!" he agreed. "I guess I see your point! Wealthy as you are, you naturally desire to make the thing pay financially. Well, sir, my studio guarantees that. A three-months' course—"

"But—"

"A three-months' course will develop your—er—natural gifts. The fee is nominal. We guarantee that all fees are covered by the first week's salary of every pupil. We guarantee an engagement. We take pupils on no other terms."

"That's all right," admitted Bunter.

"But—"

"Merely a booking fee of two dollars is paid at the start," explained the professor. "then we take you in hand. Not until we are satisfied that you are designed by Nature for film acting do we accept you definitely as a pupil and accept the remaining fees."

"But I suppose you're fairly easy to satisfy on that point, sir?" remarked Bob Cherry gravely.

The professor blinked at him.

"You shut up, Cherry!" said Bunter. "Don't you butt in. I say, Mr. Crawjaw, that's all very well, but what I actually want is an engagement, and a big salary. See? I'm not paying anything."

The professor started.

"You—you are not paying anything?" he ejaculated.

"No. You see, I want to receive money, not to hand it out," explained Bunter. "Besides, I haven't any money."

"You—you haven't any money?"

"Not till I make it on the films," said Bunter.

Professor Crawjaw sat and stared at him. The juniors looked on with increasing interest. They did not think that Professor Crawjaw would be willing to postpone receiving his fees until Bunter had made money on the films.

"I—I fail to understand you, sir," gasped Mr. Crawjaw at last. "I guess you've got me beat. I understood from your advertisement that you were wealthy—"

"That's right," said Bunter. "But I

happen to be short of money. My—my remittances haven't arrived."

Mr. Crawjaw gave a snort. Being a resident of Hollywood he was aware that a considerable portion of the population of that town consisted of persons whose remittances hadn't arrived.

"I want to make money—at once!" Bunter further elucidated. "With my abilities and my looks I can do it. I know that. I've had a lot of answers to my advertisement. I'm taking the best offers. If you can offer me five hundred dollars a week—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Well, say a couple of hundred, to begin," said Bunter.

"Search me!"

"I couldn't take less," said Bunter firmly. "I know my value. I haven't come to Hollywood to make fortunes for producers without getting anything for myself. I'm no mug, I can tell you."

Mr. Crawjaw rose to his feet. He swayed slightly, but recovered himself. The look in his eyes was most unpleasant as he fixed them on Bunter.

"I guess I want this clear," he said. "You are not prepared to pay any fees?"

"No fear!"

"You have no money?"

"Tons at home," said Bunter. "None here, at the present moment."

"Then what," said the professor, in a deep voice, "what do you mean by your god-darned advertisement? What do you mean by wasting a guy's time? You dog-goned, pesky, slab-sided, pie-faced mutt, what's your game?"

"Eh?"

"You figura that I've walked a mile and a half for the pleasure of seeing your fat, flabby face and listening to your squeaky voice?" demanded the professor.

"Look here—"

"Some sort of a joke, what?" hooted the professor. "Gee! You reckon you can pull a guy's leg and make a fool of him! You take me for a boob! You guess you can waste my time and get away with it? You pesky, pie-faced scallywag—"

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

"Take that!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as he took it.

No doubt the professor had reason to be exasperated. He had come there to spoof a mug. He found that he was expected to play the part of a mug himself, and that so far from getting any dollars from this aspirant to the films, the aspirant hadn't any dollars to be got. That disappointment, added to the effects of wood-alcohol, was too much for Mr. Crawjaw's temper. He smote Bunter, and smote him hard.

Bunter jumped up, roaring, to find his collar in the grasp of the professor's left hand, while the professor's right was busy in boxing his fat ears. Bunter roared and struggled.

"Yaroooh! Help! I say, you fellows— Whoooop!"

The juniors rushed to intervene. Mr. Crawjaw did not seem satisfied yet, but Bunter had had enough. Half a dozen hands grasped the angry professor and jerked him away from his victim.

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

"Beast! Wow!"

"You pesky gink!" roared the professor.

"Enough's as good as a feast!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "This way, Mr. Crawjaw!"

"I guess—"

"This way!" chortled the Bouncer.

Professor Crawjaw was escorted down the garden, pushed out of the gate, and left on the boulevard.



As Harry Wharton came out of the gate two men leaped from the car. Before the junior could quite realise what was happening, two pairs of sinewy hands were laid upon him, and he was struggling desperately in the grasp of two Mexicans.
(See Chapter 10.)

The juniors returned to the piazza.

"I—I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter. "That—that man's potty, I think. I—I say, I—I haven't got an engagement, after all."

"Better come along to our small, cheap teashop," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Las Palmas is off."

"Of course, I've got some more appointments," said Bunter, recovering a little. "It will be all right, you know. To-morrow—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" snapped Bunter. "Lend me fifty dollars and I'll stand you that feed at Las Palmas. I'll settle to-morrow—out of the advance of the salary of my first engagement."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! Lend me—"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

The juniors started for the teashop—the small, cheap teashop, which was beneath Bunter's notice. But Las Palmas—evidently was off, and a small, cheap teashop was better than no teashop—at tea-time. So William George Bunter, on second thoughts, followed on.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

HARRY WHARTON lay on the floor of the closed car, silent, breathless, exhausted. For long minutes, while the ruffian Yuma was driving out of Hollywood, Diego and Ramon had held him in a savage grip, a rough hand grasping his mouth. But as soon as the car turned into the Santa Monica hills, out of the way of traffic, out of hearing of a cry for help, they proceeded, more at leisure, to bind

his hands and feet and fasten a gag in his mouth. His resistance availed nothing, and he lay a prisoner, helpless in the power of the kidnappers.

The car was not a large one; their feet rested on him as he lay on the floor, pinning him down. They rolled and smoked cigarettes, grinning down at the schoolboy occasionally, and muttering in Spanish. The car ran on for miles and miles, and Wharton wondered what could be its distant destination until it occurred to him that the ruffians were simply using up time till dark. When dusk was descending on the hills the car glided back to the road, but stopped before reaching it—the motor road from Hollywood to Santa Monica. Ramon dropped from the car and exchanged a word with the driver.

"Get him on the phone and tell him to be ready with the boat at twelve," said Yuma.

And Ramon nodded and disappeared. The car glided into the hills again by unfrequented paths. Diego remained with Wharton, smoking endless husk cigarettes. Darkness thickened on the Santa Monica Mountains.

Wharton had heard the driver's words, and he could guess who was the "him" to whom the Mexican was to report. He did not need telling that Myron Polk was behind this. Polk was to be ready with a boat at midnight; until then he was to remain in the hands of the bootleggers, hidden in the dark hills. Wharton understood that much. And what was to happen when he was taken aboard the boat with Myron Polk?

In the daylight, so long as it lasted, the car had not rested; a halted car might have attracted attention. Now

that it was dark the car drew to a halt on a lonely track, deep in the hills, and Diego and Yuma Bill descended and loafed under the shadowy trees, chatting and smoking. Wharton remained alone, lying in the car.

His reflections were dark enough.

Muttered words came to him from the two ruffians at intervals. They did not seem to care whether he heard or not. If he had not guessed already, he would have learned now what was intended. He was to be taken on the Perfection star's motor-boat and run out to sea, and then— The talk of the ruffians left little, if any, doubt, but it was hard for the Greyfriars junior to realise it. That Myron Polk had hired Gomez and his gang for kidnapping, he knew already; but it was a darker crime that was intended now. The hours that passed slowly on leaden wings were terrible to Wharton. Again and again he struggled with his bonds, with the gag in his mouth, but unavailingly. It seemed to him that centuries dragged by as he lay in the darkness, hearing nothing but the sigh of the wind in the trees, and the mutterings of the bootleggers. Those mutterings told him, only too plainly, what was intended, yet he could not believe it.

At long last Diego entered the car again, stumbled over Wharton, and sat down. And Yuma took the driver's seat. Without lights the car glided away in the darkness of the night.

Wharton could see nothing, but the smoother running of the car told him, at last, that they were on the motor-road, and out of the hills. The car glided swiftly on a road deserted at that late hour.

It halted under a bunch of shadowy trees by the roadside. Diego stepped down, and through the open door Wharton heard the sound of the sea.

He was close by the coast now. The Mexican grasped him, and lifted him from the car.

Wharton stared round him in the glimmering starlight. There was a moon, but it was hidden by drifting clouds.

But the light was clear enough for Wharton to recognise his surroundings. He knew where he was—on the road about a mile from Jack-Rabbit Canyon, near the gully in the cliffs that ran down to the little cove—the place where the rum-runners had been accustomed to landing their cargoes of "hooch" before Mr. Carter got on their tracks and scared them to new haunts.

Yuma backed the car off the road and left it hidden in the darkness under the trees, and joined his associates. Wharton's feet were released now so that he could walk. The ruffians took an arm each and forced the junior along between them down the rugged path to the gully.

Wharton stumbled down the path.

With a grip on either arm he was forced down the rocky way through the gully to the beach.

The tide was at flood, and the Pacific washed into the gully. As he stopped on the last rim of rocks the wide, starlit sea lay before him, the black mass of the cliffs behind. Far in the distance across the corner of the bay lights twinkled from the town of Santa Monica. From that direction Wharton could guess Polk would arrive in the motor-boat.

His two companions were listening, but, so far, there was no sound.

Wharton looked at their faces—dim in the stars. There was nothing but indifference in their looks. An appeal to them would have been futile, even had he been able to speak.

He thought of his friends. They must have missed him long since—doubtless were searching for him. They might have gone to the police. But he had no hope in that. He was more than twenty miles from Hollywood, and the car had left no trace to be followed. The kidnapping had been so swift and sudden that he doubted whether it had been observed at all. And even had it been observed the car had darted away too swiftly for pursuit. The hours that had elapsed since showed that the bootleggers had nothing to fear.

Search, undoubtedly, was being made for him, but it was not likely to reach this solitary spot on the beach so far from the film town. There was no hope.

What did they intend? Kidnapping—detention in some solitary spot? Unless Myron Polk was out of his senses he could not mean worse than that. But the muttered words of the bootleggers had told a different tale.

Chug, chug, chug, chug!

"I guess that's him," muttered Yuma.

A light gleamed from the sea.

Like a shadow a boat ran into the shelf of rocks where the bootleggers stood with their prisoner in the gloom. Yuma uttered a shrill, prolonged whistle—a whistle from the sea answered. The shadow glided by the level rock, the engine chugged into silence. A man stood up and stared ashore with eyes that burned in a white face.

"You've got him?"

It was the voice of Myron Polk.

"You bet, boss!"

"Put him aboard!"

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The bootleggers, splashing into the water, lifted their prisoner into the motor-boat. Wharton fell, rolled, and lay still. For a moment Myron Polk's white, bitter face, the scar glowing from the pallor of his cheek, bent over him.

"My turn—at last," he said, in a hissing voice.

Wharton could not speak.

Polk muttered a few words to the bootleggers, and they splashed back through the tide and tramped away up the gully and vanished. Taking no further heed of the junior for the moment the Perfection star turned the boat's nose seaward, and the engine chugged again.

From the dark line of the Santa Monica Mountains from the hills above Hollywood the moon sailed out of fleecy clouds, and shone down in silvery radiance on the sea. Over the silvery waters the motor-boat fled fast, chugging and churning, carrying the captain of the Greyfriars Remove out into the lonely Pacific—to what?

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

Dinner was over at Long Beach Boarding-House, and the chums of the Remove were growing a little anxious about Wharton. As he had stayed behind in the studio to talk to Mr. Schootz, and had only to cross the boulevard when he was through with the Perfection director, there seemed no cause for alarm. But Bob Cherry had gone across to the studio to see if he was still there. He found it closed for the night, and returned. And after some discussion it was decided to ring up Mr. Schootz at his bungalow, and ask whether Wharton was with him. Mr. Schootz's surprised reply was in the negative. Fisher T. Fish thereupon rang up his popper at the Grand Hotel, to ask the same question, receiving the same reply from Mr. Hiram K. Fish. So far as the two directors knew Wharton had left the studio soon after six o'clock, and gone across to Long Beach.

"Something's up," said the Bouncer sententiously.

"The upfulness is terrific, in my esteemed opinion," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what?"

In a worried group in the piazza the juniors discussed the matter. That anything could have happened to Wharton in broad daylight on the open boulevard seemed improbable. But why had he not returned? The juniors were in no mood for the conversational fascinations of Billy Bunter just then. They waved the Owl of the Remove away.

"He wouldn't clear off for anything without letting us know, after what happened the other night," said Frank Nugent. "He would know we should be anxious."

"Something's happened," said Bob.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I dare say Wharton's gone to the theatre," said Bunter. "You needn't worry about Wharton."

"You fat ass! He wouldn't go off to the theatre without telling us," growled Vernon-Smith.

"He jolly well might," said Bunter. "I think it's very likely, myself."

"What reason could he have, ass?"

"Well, he had a remittance from England to-day," argued Bunter.

"What on earth difference does that make?"

"Lots! He might have thought you fellows would expect him to stand tickets for the lot of you if he told you he was going."

"What?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"So, you see, it's jolly likely he went off without saying a word," explained Bunter. "In fact, it's just what I should do myself."

"Kill him, somebody!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"For goodness' sake, shut up, Bunter!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You fellows, we've got to do somethin'. Somethin's happened to Wharton, and that rotter Polk is at the back of it, same as before."

"Oh, forget it!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Might be the bootleg guys. But Polk's all right. I tell you, that galoot gets fifty thousand dollars for a single picture——"

"Cheese it, Fishy!"

"I say, you fellows! I think—— Yaroooh!" Billy Bunter rubbed the place where a boot had landed, and retired from the discussion.

"What about that man Carter?" said Nugent. "If we could get in touch with him——"

"He's gone out of town," grunted Bob.

"Bogad! Might get him on the phone," suggested Lord Mauleverer.

"Know his number, ass?" grunted the Bouncer.

"No."

"Then talk sense, fathead!"

"Yaas!" assented Lord Mauleverer urbanely. "I'll try, dear man. Miss La Riviere will know where to get him on the phone; and I know Leonora's number in Hollywood."

"Bravo!" Bob Cherry clapped his lordship on the back. "That's it! Get Leonora on the phone, and ask her where we can get Carter."

"Yaas!"

Lord Mauleverer went into the house and rang up the movie girl. Leonora's voice answered him after some delay.

"Mauleverer speakin'," said his lordship. "Sorry to bother you, Miss La Riviere—awful sorry——"

"Spill it, boy!" said Miss La Riviere crisply.

"Wharton's not come in——"

"Search me!"

"We think somethin's happened to him," said Mauleverer. "It's close on nine now, and he seems to have left the studies at six by himself. Nothin's been seen of him. Of course, it may be all right; but——"

"But I guess it ain't!" said Leonora.

"If you could tell us where to get Mr. Carter——"

"I guess I'm phoning Peter, and I'll put him wise," said Leonora. "I've got his number at Santa, and he's to take a call from me at ten. I'll sure put him wise then."

"Thanks!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"You better beat it to the police station," said Leonora. "I guess something has sure happened to that kid. Pronto, boy."

Lord Mauleverer hung up, and re-joined his friends.

"If Carter's at Santa Monica, he can't help much," he said. "Miss La Riviere thinks we'd better go round to the police; and I think she's right."

There seemed nothing else to be done; and the police station was accordingly visited and information given. After which, the juniors returned to the boarding-house, in the faint hope that Wharton might have come back in their absence. But Wharton had not come back.

Their anxiety was deep and intense now.

"The worst of it is that a fellow can do nothing," said Frank Nugent miserably. "There's no clue—anything—"

"It's that villain Polk!" said Bob between his teeth.

"The Polkfulness is terrific. But what has he done with our esteemed and ridiculous chum?" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

It was a baffling mystery. Wharton seemed to have vanished into thin air after leaving the studio. There was not a shadow of a clue to follow. At bedtime the juniors came in from a hopeless ramble along Sunset Boulevard. But they were not thinking of bed.

When Coker & Co. came in from a theatre at a later hour they found the juniors in a dismal group in the piazza. Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish had gone to bed. But no other member of the Greyfriars party was inclined for sleep. Coker of the Fifth glared at the Removites.

"You fags ought to be in bed!" he snapped. "What the thump do you mean by this?"

"Oh, shut up, ass!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Anything up?" asked Potter of the Fifth.

"Wharton hasn't come in."

"Cheery young ass!" said Coker. "Staying out late like this—"

"Something's happened to him, fat-head!"

"Gone for a walk, perhaps," suggested Greene of the Fifth.

"Idiot!" Bob was too worried to be polite.

"Look here, you cheeky fags—" said Coker.

"Fathead!"

"Look here—" roared Coker.

"Don't wake up all the boarding-house, old chap," said Potter.

(Continued on next page.)

BIG MEN OF THE FINAL!

A summary of the personalities who are due at Wembley on Saturday, April 27th, to battle for possession of the most coveted of all football trophies—the Football Association Challenge Cup.

BOLTON WANDERERS and Portsmouth will this season fight the last round for the most coveted of all football trophies—the Football Association Challenge Cup. Of course, we all call it the English Cup, but just for once I have given it the real title.

The presence of Bolton Wanderers in the Final tie does not cause anybody to raise an eyelid. In recent years they have made a habit of getting there, and if somebody doesn't watch these Trotters they will make a monopoly of the business of Cup-winning. Twice they have won since Final ties were played at Wembley, and supporters of the Wanderers are confident that on the twenty-seventh they will complete the Wembley hat-trick.

Proud Pompey!

But Portsmouth will be there to stop them, if at all possible. Frankly, very few people expected Portsmouth to be in the Final tie at all. In the first place, they have never been anywhere near it before. In the second place, they have shown very indifferent form in their League games this season. Can anybody tell me why a club should lose League matches one after the other, and then when they switch over to Cup-ties they should keep up a winning sequence? Isn't it funny?

Portsmouth are the big surprise of the season—the jack-in-a-box of the football world. And it should not be taken for granted that the Cup has already been labelled with Bolton as its destination. In the Semi-Final popular opinion was to the effect that Portsmouth hadn't a chance against the renowned Aston Villa; but the lads from Pompey pulled through. Their battle-cry is "Victory," the word which is

written on that famous ship which now lies in Portsmouth Harbour.

I can certainly see these Portsmouth fellows fighting every inch of the way. I remember not long ago seeing them in a League match at Highbury against the Arsenal. Their centre-forward, a boy named Weddle, bumped his head hard against an opponent, and cut it open. He had a couple of stitches put in the wound, and came back to the field with a huge bandage round his head. A few minutes later Nichol, their right half-back, also received a bad head wound, but he copied Weddle's example—went off the field for a couple of minutes and came back with a bandage round his head which was quickly stained with blood. I tell you that story to suggest the fighting spirit of which the Pompey club is so proud.

Though the motto in a Cup Final—and in every football game—must be "All for the team!" the personalities of the team provide a big point of interest.

The Big Five!

If it is an advantage to have been at Wembley before, the men of Bolton certainly have that advantage, for no fewer than five regular members of their team have already two Cup-winners' medals. When you think that there is only one player in modern football who has three Cup-winners' medals—Clem Stephenson, of Huddersfield—you will realize the possibility of the Trotters being unique. Fancy, if Bolton win they will have five men with three winners' medals.

These five—and to a very large extent they are the big men of the team—are Goalkeeper Pym; Haworth, the right-back; Seddon and Nuttall, half-backs; and Butler, the outside-right. One other Bolton player of the present time is unlucky not to have two medals. This is left-back Finney, who helped them to win the coveted trophy in 1923, but was unable to play, owing to injury, in 1926.

From the International standpoint, too, Bolton Wanderers certainly have the pull. In their present team they have five men who have all played for England, including the whole of the three half-backs—Kean, Seddon, and Nuttall.

The other Internationals are Pym and Butler.

By a strange coincidence, while all the Bolton half-backs are English, all the Portsmouth middle men are Scottish-born. McIlwaine, the centre-half, and Thackeray, the left-half, have not long been away from their native



JACK SMITH, Portsmouth's captain, and inside-right.

country, and Portsmouth are the only English club for which they have played. Nichol, however, previously played for Gillingham.

It is rather a strange mixture, this Portsmouth team. If Irvine is included as inside-left—and he is the first choice, if fit—it is made up of five Scotsmen, three Englishmen, two Irishmen, and one Welshman.

The Schemer of the Side!

The Welshman is the big personality of the side, even though he is the tiniest player of the lot. This is Freddy Cook, the outside-left. He is a wee mite of a fellow, but he can dash round big players, and he was the merry minstrel of the party in the Semi-Final against Aston Villa.

The captain of the Portsmouth team is Jack Smith, the inside-right. He used to be at South Shields, joining Portsmouth soon after Mr. Jack Tinn, the present manager of Portsmouth, left South Shields with a "single" ticket to the South. Smith is the schemer of the side, and it should not be allowed to pass unnoticed that on the two occasions when Bolton Wanderers have won the Cup they have had a schemer named Smith in the forward line.

All Bolton's Scots are in the forward line—three of them—and by another of those curious coincidences which crop up, the Wanderers' outside-left is named Cook. He came from Dundee recently, and, like Cook of Portsmouth, is the midget of the team.

The captain of the Bolton team is Jimmy Seddon, he of what opponents call the telescopic legs. There is no getting away from Seddon's legs anywhere down the middle of the field, according to one player who has appeared against him.

So there you have a quick summary of the personalities. How will the game go? I cannot tell you definitely. The odds are on Bolton; but David has slain Goliath at this game of football before now, and may do it again—at Wembley to-day.

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JIMMY SEDDON, skipper of Bolton Wanderers—a great Cup-fighting team.

"Who's waking up all the boarding-house?"

"You are—and most of Hollywood, too! Let's go to bed," yawned Potter. And he went, and Greene followed him.

Coker glared at the juniors; but their distressed faces mollified him. He spoke quite kindly.

"It's all right, you kids! Wharton's gone to the pictures or something. You'd better go to bed."

"Dummy!"

"What?"

"Chump!"

Horace Coker snorted; and followed Potter and Greene.

Lights were out in the boarding-house now. Mr. Coot came to the door, blinked at the juniors, and went to bed, leaving them up. Staying up, no doubt, was of little use; but they could not think of sleep. Midnight passed—and every minute was bitter with anxiety to the chums of the Remove, as the long, long night dragged by.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Getting the Goods!

CHUG, chug, chug!

Harry Wharton panted, as the gag was drawn from his mouth. For a moment the Perfection star had bent over him.

Chug, chug, chug!

The noise of the engine filled Wharton's ears. It seemed deafening, in the silence of the night on the Pacific.

Polk, as he steered seaward, looked at him, his eyes blazing. Wharton sat up limply, his arms aching in their bonds. His face was pale and set, but there was no fear in it.

"At last!" Polk's bitter voice came to him through the chugging of the engine. "You dog! At last!"

"You rotter!" came back Wharton's voice, now that he could speak. "What is your game, you cur? What do you mean by this?"

Polk laughed.

"Look!" he said. "We're dropping the coast—we're heading out into the open sea! We're alone here—you and I! I shall be quite alone when I run back to Santa Monica!"

"You can't mean—"

"You'll see!"

The Perfection star laughed again.

"You've played your game cunningly, boy! You've sure been cute—as cute as any man three times your years! You've cut the ground under my feet! You've been clever! But you've got to the end of your rope!"

"You fool!" answered Wharton contemptuously. "I've done nothing of the kind! I took on your movie stunts because you were afraid! You were a coward then, and you're a coward now! Unloose my hands, you cur; and I'll take care of myself!"

"Likely!" Polk made a gesture towards the wide dark blue of the Pacific. "You finish there! You go over the side with your hands tied—as soon as we're far enough away from land to make sure that you'll never be washed up by the sea. You get me, you scheming young scoundrel? This is the finish for you!"

The boat chugged on.

Moonlight lay on the sea, in a sheet of silver. The Pacific was calm as a pond. Far away loomed the hills on the Californian coast. Back from the sea came the echoing of the engine's throbbing. It seemed to Wharton's ears, that the echo came back with a strange clearness, like the throb of another engine on the sea. Polk did not notice

it—he noticed nothing—he was in a state of strange excitement, and Wharton, catching the burning glitter in his eyes, wondered if the man was in his right senses. That a sane man could contemplate so terrible a crime, for so slight a cause, seemed impossible. Wounded vanity—professional jealousy—unreasonable suspicion and distrust—could these drive a man to such a deed? Polk's feverish excitement was, perhaps, very near to insanity, just then.

"Schootz will not be starring you as the film sheikh!" said Polk, with bitter banter. "That was the game? You will not make a fortune in the movies at my expense, boy! Schootz will have to look a long time for his new star!"

"I have already refused Mr. Schootz's offer—"

Polk laughed with mocking unbelief.

"You fool!" exclaimed Wharton.

"You mad fool! I'm booked to return to England the week after next. I shall never see Hollywood again! I don't care two straws for the films!"

"So you've come down to lying, to save your life?" grinned the Perfection star. "I reckoned you would weaken at the finish."

"I tell you—"

"Keep it up!" Polk chuckled. "Beg for your life, you cur! That's why I've

Here's another Greyfriars limerick which earns for its author a useful leather pocket-wallet.

A dashing Sixth-Former named Gwynne,
Went out on his bike for a spin;
But a pig on the stray
Got right into his way
And Gwynne hit the road with his chin!

L. Hampson, of 116, Wigston Lane, Aylestone, Leicester, is now the happy possessor of a good quality pocket wallet. Why don't YOU have a shot at winning one of these useful prizes?

taken off your gag—to hear you beg and cringe. Keep it up."

"You will not hear me beg," said Harry, scornfully. "You will not see me cringe, you cowardly rotter. I've told you the truth."

A mocking laugh answered him.

Wharton was silent.

Polk did not believe him—did not dream for one moment of believing him. He drove the motor-boat on to the open sea, his eyes fixed on the boundless expanse of water.

Chug, chug, chug!

It was murder that the man intended—Wharton knew that now. Hatred and rancour had unhinged his mind, or very nearly unhinged it. The man was hardly responsible for what he was doing. His face was white, and an unnatural fire burned in his eyes, his hands were trembling with excitement, and his low chuckle was more like that of a madman, than a sane man.

Chug, chug, chug!

Wharton raised his head to look back on the sea. Surely that steady throbbing was not merely an echo!

A dark shape loomed on the silver sea, astern.

Wharton's heart bounded.

It was not merely an echo. Polk, in his mad excitement, heard nothing, observed nothing. But the Greyfriars junior knew now that another motor-boat was on the sea—in pursuit. The motor-boat raced on.

The Californian coast had dropped to a hazy blur in the moonlight. Round the throbbing boat rolled the vast Pacific.

"Why don't you speak?" Polk's voice came again at last. "You dog! Why don't you beg?"

Wharton answered him, quietly.

"Can't you understand that you're mistaken, you fool? I tell you, I'm going back to England—I've refused the part Mr. Schootz offered me—I've no idea at all of acting for the films, and if I had, I shouldn't dream of ousting another fellow—"

Polk laughed.

"Think of something better than that!" he taunted.

"You mad fool!" answered Harry.

The boat rushed on. Suddenly Polk shut off the engine.

"We're far enough out!" he said.

"Now—"

Chug, chug, chug!

He had shut off the engine, and stooped over the bound schoolboy. But from the sea came the steady throbbing of an engine, and even the excited Perfection star realised now that it was not an echo. It would have to be now or never! With a hissing intake of breath, he seized hold of Wharton, and hoisted him at arm's length above his head. Maniacal rage seemed to have lent the man strength.

"Help!"

Wharton put all his strength into that shout.

"Silence!" hissed Polk.

Chug, chug, chug!

Under Polk's startled, scared eyes, the dark shape rushed up out of the moonlight. With an oath Polk dropped Wharton into the boat again, and gazed about him defiantly.

The engine shut off, and in the sudden silence came a sharp voice. A man was standing up in the other boat, and the moonlight glinted on the barrel of an automatic.

"Hands up, you skunk!"

"Carter!" yelled Wharton. "Help!"

"I guess I'm on hand, bub," drawled Mr. Carter. "You Polk, you put up your hands, pronto."

With a ringing curse, the Perfection star whipped a revolver from his hip pocket.

"I've warned you!" roared Mr. Carter. "You locoed gink—" The roar of the automatic succeeded, just in time as the maddened star raised his revolver to fire.

There was a scream from Polk, as he dropped headlong into the bottom of the boat, the revolver flying from his hand.

"I guess you howled for it!" rapped out Peter Carter, as he ran in close, and hooked on.

Wharton panted breathlessly.

There was a groan from Polk. The lean Los Angeles detective leaped aboard.

"Say, bub, I reckon you're glad to see a guy about my size, what?" he grinned.

"Thank Heaven you came!" panted Wharton. "That mad fool—"

"I guess I'm wise to his game," Mr. Carter grinned. "I was looking for rum runners, bub, but Jane phoned me up this evening and told me you was missing, and when I spotted Polk's motor-boat, I sure tumbled." He bent over the groaning star. "You sure howled for what you've got, Polk—but let up on it, you ain't a dead man yet! I guess that bullet is in your arm—you're worth a lot of dead guys, you surely are. Say, you reckon a galoot has got the goods on you at last?"

Mr. Carter cut through Wharton's



Myron Polk walked over to Harry Wharton. There was a deep flush on the face of the "handsomest man in Hollywood." "I'm sorry, Wharton," he said awkwardly. "I've sure been a fool—the world's prize boob!" "All serene!" smiled Harry, and he shook the other's uninjured hand warmly. (See Chapter 15).

bonds, and the junior rose and stretched his cramped limbs. He looked at Polk, who lay, white as chalk, groaning.

"He's not—not—" he faltered.

Mr. Carter laughed.

"He's surely not, bub," he answered.

"I guess the prison doctor will fix him to rights. Bub, I've got the goods on that guy at last—caught him fairly in the act! The superintendent sure won't tell me to take a holiday again, when I talk about Polk? You figure I've got the goods on him, what?"

Mr. Carter was fairly bubbling with satisfaction.

"Getting the goods" on Myron Polk was the triumph of Peter Carter's career.

"You certainly have," said Wharton, with a smile, "and you've saved my life, Mr. Carter."

"Sure!" assented Mr. Carter, cheerily.

"I don't know how to thank you—"

"Taken as read!" answered Mr. Carter, crisply. "I guess I'll tie him up, and we'll be getting back to Santa. Quit howling, Polk—don't I keep on telling you you ain't hurt?"

Polk groaned, and then relapsed into silence. Under the moonlight, the motor-boat rushed back shoreward—Wharton's face bright, and Mr. Carter grinning with glee. At long last, after so many failures, Mr. Carter had "got the goods" on Myron Polk, and like the ancient classical gentleman, he was like to strike the stars with his sublime head.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Good-bye to Hollywood!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"Wharton!" roared Bob Cherry.

A car had stopped at the gate of

Long Beach Boarding-House, in the first glimmer of the sunrise over Hollywood.

It had been a sleepless night for Harry Wharton's chums. As the car stopped at the gate they ran down the garden, in the hope that it was news. It was Harry Wharton who stepped from the car.

The juniors surrounded him.

"Wharton—"

"Safe and sound—"

"My esteemed and / ridiculous chum—"

"But what—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm all right," he said. "Safe as houses—no damage done! What I want most of all is some sleep. And some grub."

As his chums led him into the boarding-house Wharton gave a brief account of what had happened. Mr. Coot had turned out, and he met the returned junior with a stare as he came in. Mr. Coot was not pleased with these irregular proceedings in his boarding-house. However, he sorted out a meal for the junior, and left him to it; and over the meal—of which he was in need—Wharton gave some more details of his night's adventures.

"That man Carter's some guy!" said the Bounder.

"Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "There's somethin' in that chap, you men. I couldn't help wonderin' what Leonora saw in him, you know; but there must be somethin' in him, what?"

"Quite a lot," said Harry, with a smile. "He's saved my life—and he's got Polk. Now to bed."

And all the chums of the Remove were glad enough to get to bed at last.

They were very late down in the morning.

In fact, breakfast and lunch were the

same meal, to all the party except Fisher T. Fish, and Billy Bunter, and Coker & Co.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter greeted them when they came down to lunch; "of all the slackers—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, old fat bean!" Bob Cherry greeted the Owl of the Remove with a terrific whack on the shoulder. "Wharton's back."

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I told you he was all right, you silly ass!" snorted Bunter. "But never mind Wharton. I've got something more important to speak about. I've seen that advertisement of mine in the 'Film Ledger'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They got it all wrong, somehow," said Bunter. "I've been rung up all the morning by a lot of rogues and spoofers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want you to lend me a dollar for another advertisement, Wharton. It's the least you can do, after giving me an anxious night—"

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"I can guess exactly how anxious you've been, fatty. But here's the dollar. Now shut up!"

"I'll take this advertisement to the office myself," said Bunter, with a suspicious blink at the Bounder. "I shan't trust you again, Smithy."

And after lunch Bunter rolled down to the office of the Los Angeles "Film Ledger," and it was done; after which Bunter waited complacently for the Hollywood producers to rush for him. He waited—with less and less complacency as the days elapsed.

The Hollywood producers did not rush.

(Continued on page 27.)

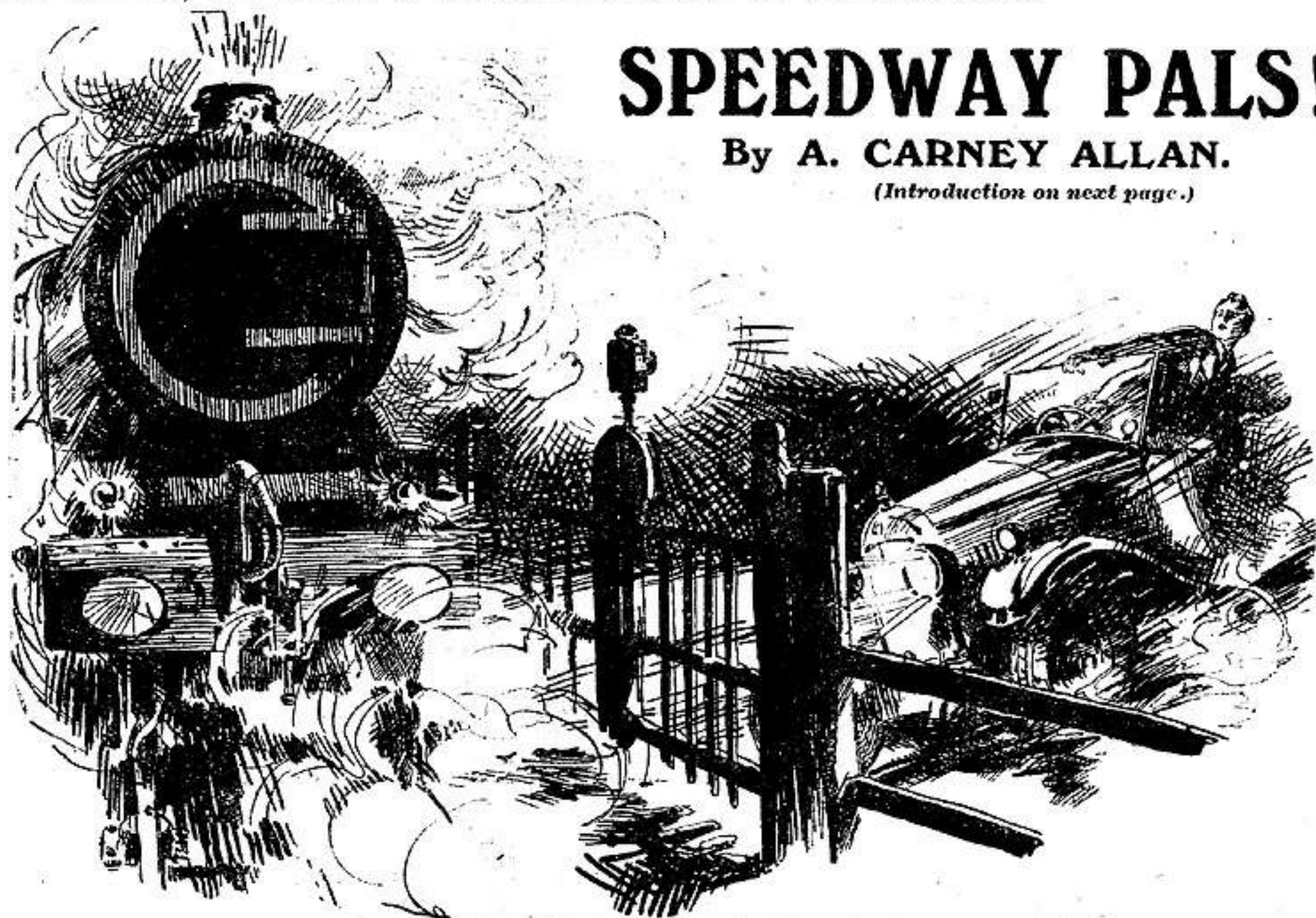
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OUR BRILLIANT NEW SERIAL OF THRILLING ADVENTURE ON THE DIRT-TRACK!

SPEEDWAY PALS!

By A. CARNEY ALLAN.

(Introduction on next page.)



The Level Crossing!

JIMMY BERESFORD was not alone—of that he was sure—and the tension of the moments that ensued was well-nigh unendurable.

He felt keyed up to the highest pitch, and his nerves were acutely on edge. The only sound of which he was distinctly conscious was the hammering of his own heart against his ribs, but an unerring instinct told him that he was in danger.

His eyes had not yet become accustomed to the darkness that had followed the failure of the lights, which he no longer imagined to be accidental. Moreover, the windows of the bed-room were screened by rich velvet curtains, so that the gloom was intensified.

Jimmy suddenly sprang back and tore these curtains aside, and as he did so he saw the dim figures of three men in slouched caps.

The men were vague and indistinct, but he classed them as ruffians of the kind who could be hired for any grim work at a fair price, and he was not long in doubt as to the part they intended to play, for with one accord they rushed him.

Jimmy side-stepped quickly, and the first man blundered past him into the window-hangings. The second changed his course and made for the youngster with arm upraised. But, before that arm could descend, Jimmy swung his right into action.

The blow clipped the rogue on the point of the jaw, and he finished up in a heap. The third man fared even worse, for as he tried to close he was met by a flying rush on the part of the youngster.

Dashing for the door, Jimmy caught the ruffian with his lowered head and butted him half-way across the room. Jimmy's bid for escape was not to be so easily effected, however, for all at

once the door was flung open from the other side.

On the threshold stood the man in the white coat, whom Jimmy had taken for his father's male nurse.

The door came into violent contact with Jimmy's forehead, and the shock sent him staggering backward. Before the youngster could recover himself his assailants were upon him again, and with the advent of the man in the white coat the odds were four-to-one.

Jimmy fought with desperate fury, and for the moment he had the advantage of his adversaries because they hampered one another. The man in the white coat was knocked reeling by a jab from the youngster's elbow, while another collapsed under a six-inch jolt to the solar plexus and lay groaning.

Semi-conscious in the back of a runaway car that roars down a steep hill at the foot of which is the main railway track . . . the thunder of an approaching express . . . it would seem that young Jimmy Beresford's number is up, until—

Out of the corner of his eye Jimmy saw two others in the room, two others whom he had not previously noticed. They played no part in the fierce melee, but lurked close to the wall, watching, and in the instant of glimpsing them Jimmy fancied that one of them looked like Otto.

He fought the more furiously, but his enemies clung to his tall figure like leeches, clawing and tearing at him, and striving to pull him down. The ruffian who had been felled still lay groaning under-foot, but the man in the white coat was hovering near by, and in the writhing, scrambling struggle, Jimmy realised that he had pulled a length of lead piping out of his jacket, and was waiting his chance.

That chance came at last, for Jimmy,

tripping over the body of the man on the floor, went down on his knees. The two who clung to him fell with him, and lost their hold. Before Jimmy could reach his feet the man in the white coat swung the lead-piping with all his force.

The cowardly blow might have brained Jimmy had it not been for the fact that he was wearing a cap. As it was, he sank under the stunning impact.

Jimmy was not unconscious, but there was an ugly throbbing in his head and his limbs seemed to have lost all power. As from afar he heard voices, and he was dimly aware of being lifted up and carried from the dark room. Then, for a while, the youngster's senses seemed to desert him, and when his mind drifted back to a state of stupefied

semi-consciousness he discovered that he was lying on his back under the stars.

This realisation dawned on him vaguely. As vaguely, he realised that he had been laid down on the gravel drive outside the garage which was attached to the house.

The gates of the garage had been opened, and Otto's

car was standing inside with its side-lamps shining. Once more Jimmy heard voices, and in a dazed way he grasped fragmentary sentences. They were voices that seemed remote to him, but one of them might have been the voice of Otto.

What was it saying? Something about the car, the cream car with the green wings, which Jimmy had driven from the North.

"Get him in here— The express from the South—due in a few minutes—It'll look like an accident—"

Again Jimmy was lifted, this time into the back of the car. He offered no resistance, for though he was not senseless his vitality was at its lowest ebb. The blow on the head had left him weak and listless, and in his stupor he

did not care very much what happened to him. He was concerned mainly with a throbbing sensation that made him close his eyes.

The car was wheeled out of the garage and along the drive to the road, Jimmy being but faintly aware of what was going on. Towards the left this road bent round in the direction of the station, but towards the right it sloped away in a straight, steep descent.

It was towards the right that Jimmy's captors turned the car, before pulling on the handbrake to bring it to a standstill. The car had not been started up, but had been pushed to that spot by the united efforts of the men, and now these men proceeded to make hasty preparations for the scheme that was evidently afoot.

Jimmy lay motionless in the back of the vehicle, unable to grasp what was happening. He felt sick and ill, and was incapable of movement. When he tried to open his eyes the pain in his head became intolerable, so he kept his lids closed.

Someone must have peered in at him, for all at once a voice drew attention to him.

"He's still 'out,'" the voice said. "Small wonder, considerin' the way I hit him. But something else is goin' to hit him, something that'll put him 'out' for all time——"

"Look!" another voice interrupted, the voice that sounded like Otto's. "Isn't that a light down there? Yes, and you can see smoke. Quick, all of you! Shove that car forward!"

The automobile began to move down the hill, and on the long, steep descent it rapidly gathered speed. Jimmy felt it sway slightly, and the motion of it lulled him. He wanted to lie where he was and let consciousness slip away from him altogether.

But the pain in his head seemed to be intensified, and as the car jolted over a series of bumps there was a stabbing sensation in both his eyes. Painfully he managed to raise himself into a sitting posture, thinking the ache might be less violent if he was upright.

At the same moment Jimmy's lids flickered open, and for the first time he grasped the fact that he was alone in the car. There was no one behind the steering-wheel, yet the vehicle was careering downhill at a speed of more than thirty miles an hour on its own momentum.

The shock of this discovery partially cleared the mists from Jimmy's brain, but his real awakening came when he recognised the stretch of road on which the car was travelling, and saw a blot of lurid smoke against the darkness down below him.

At the foot of the hill was a pair of level-crossing gates, and between them lay the metals of the main line to the north. The lurid blot of smoke came from the engine funnel of an express train, and the train was hurtling towards the crossing.

Jimmy rose to his feet unsteadily, and dragged himself over into the front seat, collapsing behind the steering-wheel. He was still faint and dizzy, but danger had quickened his senses, and he had the presence of mind to step on the brake.

It was slack underfoot, and, with a dread suspicion growing on him, Jimmy made a grab for the handbrake. It was as ineffectual as the pedal had been, and he knew then that both brakes had been disconnected.

Meanwhile, the car was racing down the hill towards the level-crossing gates, and it was clear that one of two things must happen. Either the car would be hurled aside by the express, or she

would crash through the gates and wreck herself against the coaches of the train.

Jimmy turned his attention on the steering, thinking to switch the car off the road and plunge through the hedge. It was a desperate resolve, and there was a ditch that would probably wreck the tourer, but he would stand more chance of escaping with his life than in a smash which would involve the express.

He might have known that his captors had jammed the steering, but not until he tried to turn the wheel did he realise this.

Jimmy was now almost upon the level-crossing. He had a vivid impression of the train, the bold front of the gigantic engine, the belching, flame-tinged smoke, a man leaning from the swaying cab, and starting back in pale horror, the long line of coaches, and, with the impression, a deafening thunder of wheels.

Then Jimmy opened the near-side door and jumped. It was his only hope, and he lengthened the odds in his favour by flinging himself at the thick hedge by the roadside. The youngster struck the foliage and dived through, landing on a ploughed field with an impact that knocked the breath out of his body.

In the same instant Jimmy saw the touring-car smash through the gates on to the line, and she was bumping over the metals when the engine of the express hit her. There was a terrific, shattering collision, and the car was thrown off the track, finishing up in a heap of twisted wreckage. Then came a screaming of wheels as the train's Westinghouse air-brakes were applied.

Jimmy stood up. He was bruised and shaken, but the thickness of the hedge had broken his fall, and, except that the throbbing in his head was more acute than ever, he felt little the worse. Then the driver, fireman, and officials came running towards him.

His first impulse might have been to announce the whole ugly truth, but he thought of his father and the consequences of such a revelation reaching the ears of a man so ill as he was, paralysed by a stroke and already at death's door. When the men from the train reached him Jimmy had prepared an answer for their excited questions.

"The brakes of the car were out of order," he told them. "I had to Jimmy assured the officials that there

THE STORY SO FAR.

Jimmy Beresford, a cheerful, athletic youngster, is the son of Gordon Beresford, the head of Beresford Motors. Mr. Beresford is considering the plans of a new motor-cycle engine invented by Ron Connolly, Jimmy's pal. Mainly owing to an encounter with his cousin Otto, Jimmy is told by his irate father that he will either have to take a position in the works or fend for himself. Jimmy decides to do the latter, and, helped by Ron's expert mechanical knowledge, turns to dirt-track racing, winning several thrilling races at the Evesham Speedway. It is soon evident that Volson Motors, Beresford's unscrupulous rivals, in whose employ is "Tornado" Rossiter, the mystery champion of the track, will stop at little to obtain the plans of Ron's invention. They are stolen from Gordon Beresford's house by a representative of Volson's, and it is only through Jimmy's pluck and resource that they are recovered. The youngster makes the discovery that, beside being in league with Beresford's rivals, his rascally cousin Otto is ready for any villainy to get rid of him, but the serious illness of Jimmy's father makes it impossible for him to be told of Otto's double game. Later after a successful day at the speedway, Jimmy receives a message urging him to return home at once. At the house, he hurries to his father's room, to find it in darkness and the bed empty. With the stealthy closing of the door behind him, Jimmy knows that there are others in the room with him! — (Now read on.)

was no need for medical attention, as he was uninjured, and they accepted his word for it, merely taking particulars for the report that would be sent in to the head office. Jimmy then made his way up the hill towards home, and the train moved on, with the passengers peering out of the carriage windows.

Inadvertently, Jimmy walked in the shadow of the hedge, and he was glad that he did so, for when he was still a little way from the gates of the house he saw two men come from the drive.

The youngster pushed through the foliage and crouched behind the hedge. The two men were walking down the hill at a round pace, and as they approached the spot where he had concealed himself Jimmy recognised them. One was Otto and the other was "Mr. Brown."

Face to Face!

THE two swung by, and when they had passed Jimmy began to shadow them, taking a parallel course on the blind side of the hedge. He guessed that they had separated from the men they had employed for their nefarious purpose, and were making their way downhill to find out what had actually happened.

Jimmy's surmise was correct, for at the shattered crossing-gates they stopped to inspect the wreckage of the car. Jimmy stopped, too, crouching just within earshot.

He heard Brown laugh.

"It made enough mess of the tourer," the lean man said. "I wonder what your precious cousin looks like? He must have been killed instantaneously."

"Instantaneously," Otto repeated slowly, with a slight inclination of the head. Then he shivered. "Gad, Brown, what a death when you come to think of it!"

Brown looked at him.

"Getting squeamish, Otto?" he inquired, with an ugly little leer. "Why, young Jimmy Beresford couldn't have known a thing about it! You forget that he was unconscious when we pushed the car on its way. Anyhow, he couldn't have felt much when the express hit him. It would be all over in a flash. It was too dark to see very clearly, but you know what the impact sounded like, and you've only got to look at the wreckage to realise that it was a quick death."

"Well, he's better out of it," said Otto. "If anything happened to my uncle I'd come into Beresford Motors as next-of-kin now."

"Unless Jimmy Beresford has given you away to the old man," put in Brown.

"Not him," was the rejoinder. "He gave me away to Robertson, the old man's manager, and, as you know, Robertson 'fired' me on his own authority. But in the letter that he wrote to me Robertson mentioned that confirmation of the dismissal would come later, when my esteemed uncle was well enough to know the facts. He's in a bad way, Brown."

"And when your 'esteemed' uncle is well enough to know the facts," Brown queried, "what about Robertson then?"

"I'll be the first to see the old man," said Otto significantly, "and I'll make things hot for Robertson. I'll tell the old boy that Robertson is out to gain control of Beresford Motors now that 'poor' Jimmy is dead. I'll accuse him of forging an incriminating letter to make the case look black against me. Brown, you don't know what my uncle thinks of me. I'm a little tin god in his eyes, and by the time I've finished

he'll kick Robertson out of the managership."

Brown had ceased to listen to Otto's confident words. He was staring at the wreckage of the car, and suddenly stooped to pick up something. It was a gauntlet, such as the ones used by riders on the dirt tracks.

"This is what comes of changing out of speedway togs in a car," Brown said. "It belongs to a mutual friend of ours—Rossiter." And he laughed.

Otto laughed with him. But as he regarded the smashed automobile his sallow face became serious again.

"Brown," he muttered in a voice that held a note of anxiety, "I suppose—I suppose Jimmy was killed? I've heard of miraculous escapes. We talk as if he were gone, but you never know."

"When a car's crumpled as that one is," the other man scoffed, "it doesn't leave much room for doubt. But, look!" He pointed to a signal-box that stood not far away. "If you want to make sure, ask the fellow in there. You can easily tell him that it was your car, and that your cousin had taken a run in it."

Otto sent a furtive glance in the direction of the signal-cabin, and he was on the point of taking a step towards it when Jimmy stepped through the hedge.

"Here's your answer!" he said quietly.

Brown and Otto spun round, and for the instant they must have imagined that they saw a ghost, for their faces blanched. Otto's hand went to his throat, as if his collar had suddenly grown too tight for him.

"You!" he managed to whisper.

"Yes," Jimmy told him. "Safe and pretty sound, as you and Brown are going to find out. You've spoken a whole lot about dad not being in a fit state to hear the truth for many a long day. Well, you're right, but there's one thing I can do."

Jimmy moved forward, and Otto retreated hurriedly as he discerned the glint in the youngster's eye. But retreat did not save him, for Jimmy sprang at him and hit out straight.

The punch took Otto full in the face and sent him staggering backwards into the hedge on the other side of the road. As he fell, Jimmy turned on Brown.

Brown tried to defend himself by throwing up one arm, but Jimmy struck it down with his left and swung his right to the lean man's jaw. There was a sharp thud as the blow connected, and Brown tumbled into the ditch by the roadside.

Jimmy left the two of them where they had fallen, Otto propping himself on one elbow and wiping blood from his mouth with the back of his hand, Brown grovelling in the ditch and trying to collect his wits. From the shattered level-crossing gates the youngster made his way along by the railway line to the station, where he awaited the next train.

Some time later Jimmy arrived back at the "digs" which he shared with Ron Connolly. He found Ron preparing for bed, but bed was forgotten when Jimmy related what had happened.

"Great Scott!" said Ron. "Things can't go on like this, Jimmy. You've got to go to the police—you've simply got to! They're out to kill you, Otto and the Volson people!"

"I know that well enough," Jimmy answered. "But what the dickens can I do? You talk of going to the police,

Ron, but I can't. I'm tied, and Otto and the Volson people know it. Don't you see? I've got dad to consider, and Otto is like a son to him. Dad paid for his education, shoved him into the firm, gave him all sorts of chances. That's why Otto is to be so thoroughly despised for the dirty, treacherous game he's playing. But, at the same time, dad couldn't stand up to the shock if the truth were made known to him, not in his present condition, anyhow."

"Couldn't you call in the police without letting your father know anything about it?" Ron suggested. "After all, he's away in a secluded nursing home."

"True," said Jimmy. "But think of the stir it would cause if I made a case against Otto and the Volson people. No, Ron, no. There would be too much chance of it reaching dad's ears. We've got to wait."

There was a silence, and then Jimmy spoke again.

"By the way, Ron," he asked, "you've taken out a patent for your invention all right, haven't you?"

"Sure!" was the answer. "There's no need to worry about the invention any longer, for it's safeguarded now. It's you we've got to worry about."

Jimmy thought of that moment when the express had flung the crumpled touring-car out of its path. Yes, the future held unknown dangers for him. Night and day there would be a feeling of suspense, and every dark corner would hold a threat, until the day of reckoning came.

And whose day of reckoning would it be? His own, or Otto's, Volson's, and Brown's?

Broadside Beresford!

TIME had passed, and Jimmy Beresford, advancing step by step, was well on the road to being famous as a speed demon.

He was no longer the novice who had ridden in the club competitions. With a natural bent for the dirt-track, with a natural streak of reckless daring, he had dashed on from triumph to triumph, and already the "fans" were beginning to hail him as "Broadside Jimmy."

It had not all been plain sailing for the youngster. There had been times when he had been defeated, times when he had crashed in attempting too much on the bends; but such set-backs had only fired him with fresh resolution, and he had made up for them with subsequent successes.

He was now "one of the boys," with his own special contingent of admirers, who waited at the exit of the pits and clamoured for his autograph, or cheered him when he raced his speed-iron first across the finishing line.

Jimmy's speed-iron was not the old "twin" on which he had started as a novice. It was a late-model Beresford, supplied to him by Glendale Richards, and specially adapted for track work, a machine he had purchased with the money he had managed to save from his earnings.

The premises of Glendale Richards saw a good deal of Jimmy, as his bike was often there for tuning and repairs. But one Saturday afternoon Jimmy called at the motor agents on a matter that did not concern his speed-iron.

He found Ron Connolly at work on the faulty engine of a track racer.

"Great news, Ron," said Jimmy. "I've just had word that dad is fit to leave the nursing home. It's suggested that he should go to the South Coast

for a month or two, and I'm going to get him from the sanatorium after to-day's meeting at the Elsenham Park Speedway. Could you fix me up with a car?"

"Sure, Jimmy!" was the answer. "Listen! You go on to the speedway, and I'll be down with a car later. Expect me about five o'clock."

Jimmy agreed, and with a cheery "so long!" he turned on his heel. But before he had gone many paces Ron called him back.

"Jimmy," he cried, "you're entering the handicap to-day, and you'll be riding against men who are better than any you've met before. To-day's race is a big event for you, Jimmy, and it will bring you a whole lot nearer the championship if you win."

Jimmy nodded.

"The championship!" he mused. "Rossiter's still top of the tree, and his records for half a dozen tracks have never yet been broken. By gad, Ron—that's my ambition, to knock the Elsenham Park record to blazes on a Beresford speed-iron, to beat the time that Rossiter made with his Volson 'Twin.' And Ron, here's another ambition of mine. I want to meet Rossiter in a match-race and lick him, so that the Volson people will have to alter the wording of their advertisement, where they say that the champion recommends this bike. The future champion is going to recommend a Beresford."

The two youngsters laughed, and then Ron spoke again:

"Jimmy," he said, "do you remember seeing Ben Stevenson riding against Rossiter in a match-race? Well, Stevenson's in the handicap to-day, and if you both get through your heats you may be up against each other in the final. Stevenson was never in Rossiter's class, but it would be jolly good to know that he can't hold a candle to you either."

Not long afterwards Jimmy put in an appearance at the Elsenham Park Speedway, where the stands were already crammed with spectators, and the programme of events already begun.

The third event on the "bill of fare" was Heat One of the handicap, and with special interest Jimmy watched Ben Stevenson ride to victory, qualifying for the first semi-final together with the rider who had gained second place.

The second heat was run, and the two leaders of this likewise qualified for the first "semi." In the third heat, first and second man were eligible for the second semi-final, the winners of the fourth heat being matched with them in that event.

Jimmy qualified by gaining second place in the fourth heat. Then came the first semi-final, and again with special interest Jimmy saw Stevenson cross the finishing-line with a lead of several lengths, thus qualifying for the final. The second man, Lorrimer by name, was also transferred to that event.

In the fourth heat Jimmy shared the honours with "Sonny" Melville, a youngster who had leapt into the limelight in very much the same style as himself.

These four, then, were moved forward to compete in the final—Ben Stevenson and Lorrimer, both with a handicap of three seconds, Jimmy Beresford and Sonny Melville, with four and five respectively.

(Don't miss next week's gripping instalment, which tells how Jimmy Beresford, our plucky young speed-merchant, fares in this gruelling race.)

"FAREWELL TO THE FILMS!"

(Continued from page 23.)

Bunter's advertisement—as amended by Smithy—had brought him a lot of answers. But the second one, carefully inserted by himself, brought none!

It was perplexing to Bunter. But there it was.

Meanwhile, the last scenes of the great school film were shot, and the task of the Greyfriars film actors drew to a close.

A few days before the date fixed for their departure from Hollywood, Mr. Schootz came to see Wharton—to talk turkey to him, as he expressed it. Mr. Schootz had given up his idea of booking Wharton for a boy sheikh part now. He did not want to lose his own sheikh in addition. No doubt he severely condemned the conduct of Myron Polk. But business was business.

"You see, bub," said Mr. Schootz, "Polk's a big noise! He's the goods! Perfection wants him! He's some scallywag! He sure is that, and a few over! But he's the goods in the movie business! You get me? What's the good of him to me if he's tucked away for ten years in the pen? What? You get my point?"

"I don't care two straws about Polk," answered Harry quietly. "I shall never see him again, and that's good enough for me. I certainly don't

want to hang on here for his trial—and if you can get him off you're welcome. I'll be only too glad to drop the whole thing."

Mr. Schootz was greatly relieved. "Boy, you've sure spilled a big mouthful," he said.

Myron Polk was out on bail before the juniors left Hollywood. How the matter was "fixed" the Greyfriars fellows neither knew nor cared; but they realised that money must have "talked," with considerable emphasis. But they gave no thought to Polk. The day before they left, there was a wedding to which the whole party were invited; and Lord Mauleverer, a little to his surprise, found that he was quite merry and bright when Jane Snookson, otherwise Leonora la Riviere, became Mrs. Peter Carter.

The next morning Harry Wharton & Co. quitted Long Beach Boarding-House.

"Where's Bunter?" roared Bob Cherry, when the juniors and the Fifth-Formers and their baggage were on the point of starting. "Bunter! Bunter! Bunt!"

Bunter came out of the house at last.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Roll in, fathead!"

"I say, I'm coming back with you," said Bunter. "I've had some rather good offers from the film people—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But I'm not going to stay here and

desert my old pals," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I'll come home with you."

And he did!

Waiting for the train to start at Los Angeles Station, whilst Bunter was blinking round anxiously for the candy-boy, Harry Wharton caught sight of an unexpected face. Myron Polk, with his arm in a sling, came up to the train. There was a deep flush on the face of the handsomest man in Hollywood.

"I'm sorry, Wharton," he said awkwardly. "I've sure been a fool—the world's prize boob! And—and a scallywag, too! I'm sorry. I—I guess it's going to be a lesson to me. I'm sorry, kid!"

"All serene!" said Harry, with a little effort. "Schootz says the whole thing will blow over when I'm gone. I'm glad!"

Polk hesitatingly held out his injured hand. There was no doubt that the Perfection star realised his folly, and was in a very chastened mood.

Harry Wharton shook hands with him, and the train rolled out of Los Angeles.

THE END.

(Now look out for another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "THE MASKED TERROR!" It's the real goods!)

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BE TALL!

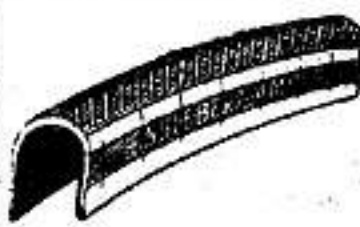
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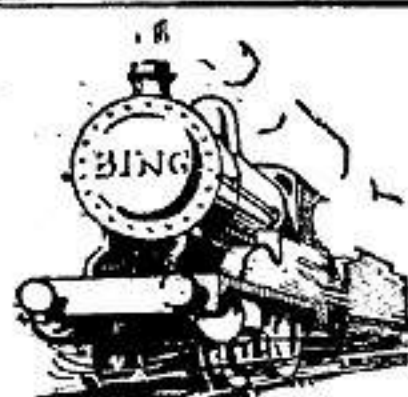


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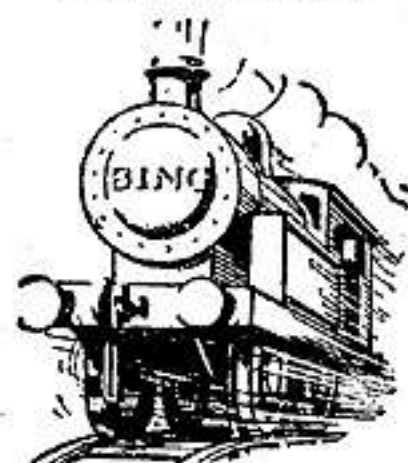
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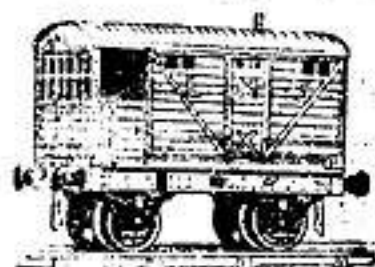
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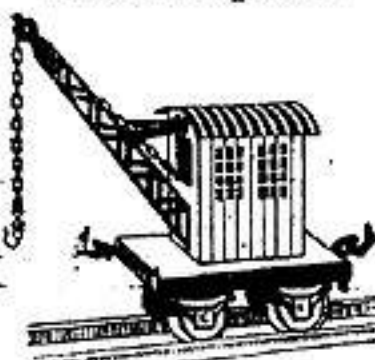
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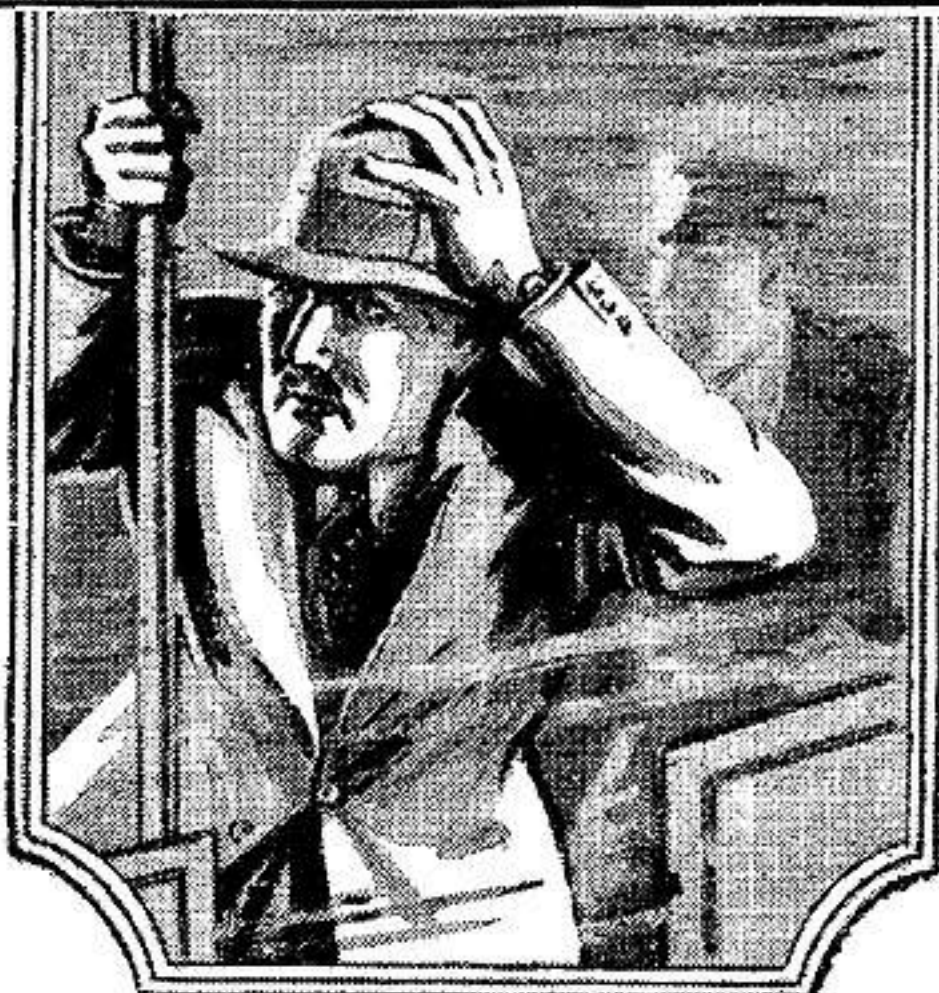
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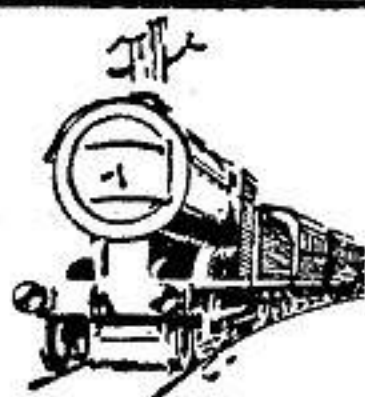
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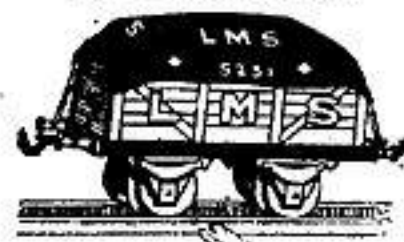
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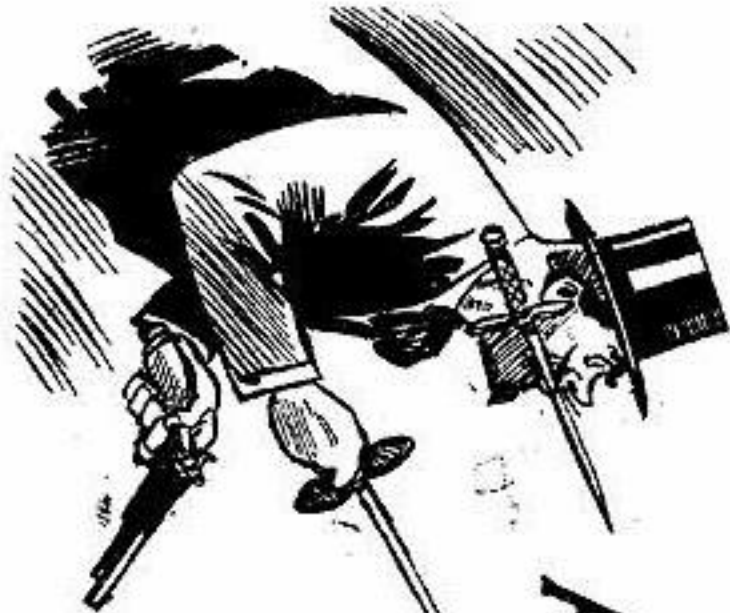


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A DUEL to the DEATH!

by DICKY NUGENT

They have had some sensations at St. Sam's, but never one to equal that which involves Dr. Birchmell and Monsieur Froggay in a duel to the death!



“COMING along to the school armory, Lickham?” asked Dr. Birchmell, the self-proclaimed headmaster of St. Sam’s, after morning lessons one day.

“The school armory?” asked Mr. Lickham, in surprise. “Whatever do you want to go there for?”

“The Head wanted,” said Lickham, in surprise. “Whatever do you want to go there for?”

“I don’t want to go at all; unfortunately I’ve got to do so, to choose my weapons for my approaching duel with that rotter Froggay.”

“Oh, crikey, of course! I’d forgotten!” cried the master of the Fourth.

“Very well, sir. I’ll come, with pleasure.”

The two skollery gentlemen trotted off to the school armory.

Four grinning juniors followed. Needless to say, they were our heroes, Jack Jolly & Co. of the Fourth.

Jack Jolly & Co. had a special interest in the duel that had been arranged between the Head and Monsieur Froggay, the French master. And knowing what an awful coward their headmaster was, they were anxious to find out what kind of a weapon he, as the challenged party, would decide on.

Grinning all over their faces, our heroes tramped into the armory in the wake of the two peddags, and watched with great interest as Dr. Birchmell detached a couple of swords from the wall.

The Head examined these useful-looking weapons rather gloomily.

“Dashed if I like the look of these butter-slicers!” he remarked. “How-ever, it may be that I have a natcher-ial leaning towards swordsmanship, so I’ll try my hand. Grab hold of this one, Lickham, and we’ll have a cut at each other.”

“Oh, great pip!” exclaimed Mr. Lickham, in alarm. “Look here, sir, much as I’d like to do it, I’m afraid it’s impossi-ble for me to hold a sword at present. I’ve sprained my ankle, you see!”

“So much the better for me!” retorted the Head, gallantly. “Here you are! Now, Lickham, on guard!”

“Grooooo! Oh, by dose!” moaned the Head, rubbing his injured nasal organ as he rose to his feet again. “I think after that experience, Lickham, I’ll leave swords severely alone.”

“So I should think, sir!” grunted Mr. Lickham. “And I might add that if you expect me to act as your target, you’ve made a grate mistake. If I stay here, it’s going to be on the distinct understanding that you practice on your own.”

“Oh, all right, then, bust you!” snuffed the Head. “Now, what other weapons might prove suitable, I wonder?”

Mr. Lickham grinned slightly. Now that there was no risk to himself, he felt in the mood for making one or two suggestions.

“Well, what about the pike? That’s a fine Old English weapon,” he said brightly.

Dr. Birchmell looked dubious, but reached for a heavy pike which adorned the wall. The wait of it almost overwhelmed him, but he manfully lifted it shoulder-high. Unfortunately, at that moment, he felt compelled to rub his nose again. That rub was fatal. The wait of the pike was too grate for his remaining hand, and it dropped out of his grasp and crashed on to his feet with a sickening thud.

“Grooooo!” shrieked the Head, jumping about the armory like a dancing Dervish.

“Hurt yourself, sir?” asked Mr. Lickham, simperethetically.

“Of course I’ve hurt myself, you dummy!” hooted Dr. Birchmell. “That rotten pike landed dead on my pet corn, Lickham! Groooo! Take the thing away before I am tempted to bash you on the napper with it!”

Mr. Lickham hastily obeyed his master’s voice, while Jack Jolly & Co. fairly held their sides with mirth. The Head as a duellist struck them as the funniest sight they had seen for a long time.

Jack Jolly wiped the tears of merriment from his face, and addressed the Head.

“If I might make a suggestion, sir—” he began.

Dr. Birchmell nodded encouragingly.

“Coff it up, Jolly—or, as the vulgar would put it, pray proceed.”

“What about those battle-axes up there? Don’t you think they would make eggcellent weapons for duelling purposes, sir?” asked the captain of the Fourth, with owl-like gravity.



“P-p-pea-shooters!” stuttered the Head’s listeners.

“Eggactly!” said the Head, beginning to grin a little as he thought of the matter. “The pea-shooter is a weapon far more in keeping with

which Jack Jolly handed him, with a grate show of interest.

“Quite a handy little article, I suppose,” he merrimented patronisingly. “I take it that one raises it over one’s head and endeavours to knock out one’s opponent.”

“Just so!” grinned Jack Jolly.

“Something like this, I suppose?” said the Head.

He swung the danierous weapon up in the air, with the intention of striking a fierce and warlike attitude. What he struck, however, was something quite different from that—as a matter of fact, he struck the middle of his bald pate a resounding thwack with the butt end of the axe!

With an aggrisen yell, Dr. Birchmell collapsed once more, to the accompaniment of an historical roar of laughter from Jack Jolly & Co. and Mr. Lickham.

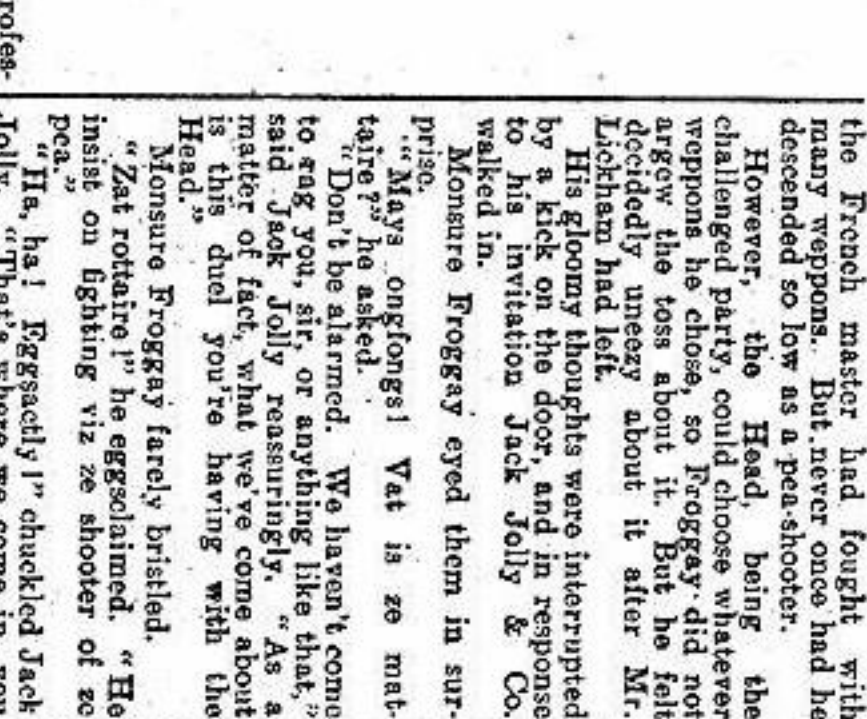
“Oh, my giddy aunt! If you’re not the funniest I saw in my life, sir!” cried Mr. Lickham.

“You’d earn a small fortune on the boards, sir!” gurgled Merry, assisting the Head to his feet again.

“Groooo! How dare you, you dis-respectful raskals!” growled Dr. Birchmell. “If I felt up to it, I’d wade in and mop up the floor with you! Get out of my way! I’m going back to the safety of my study!”

“But you haven’t decided what weapons you will duel with yet, sir,” pointed out Mr. Lickham.

“Haven’t I?” sneered the Head. “That’s all you know.”



“I will tell you, my vizit to this place to-day has convinced me that the weapons generally used in duels are much too barbarous to be used by a civil-ised skoolmaster,” said Mr. Birchmell gravely.

“I shall therefore decline to fight Monsieur Froggay with swords, pistols, or anything of that natcher. Nevertheless, I shall accept his chal-lenge, on condition that the duel is fought with pea-shooters.”

“P-p-pea-shooters!” stuttered the Head’s listeners.

“Eggactly!” said the Head, beginning to grin a little as he thought of the matter. “The pea-shooter is a weapon far more in keeping with

my dignity as a skoller and a profes-sional gentleman than anything in this armory.”

“Oh, crikey!” said the Head. “I fight Monsieur with pea-shooters, or with nothing. So that settles that!”

“Well, if you say pea-shooters, pea-shooters it is!” said Mr. Lickham, go and inform Monsieur Froggay of your decision at once.

“Right-ho, Lickham! And tell him, with my compliments, to prepare him-self for the licking of his life!” said the Head, baring his teeth in a crool smile.

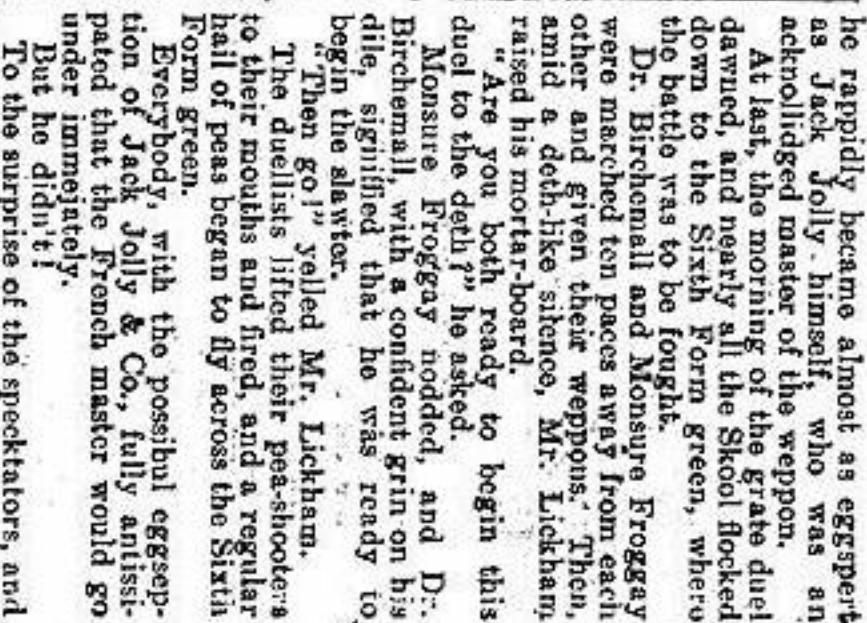
Mr. Lickham vanished on his errand, and Dr. Birchmell and Jack Jolly & Co. then buzzed off to their respective lairs.

II.

NATCHELLY, Monsieur Froggay wasn’t at all pleased when he heard the Head’s decision. During his long and adventurous career as a skoolmaster

the French master had fought with many weapons. But never once had he descended so low as a pea-shooter.

However, the Head, being the challenged party, could choose whatever weapons he chose, so Froggay did not argue the toss about it. But he felt decidedly uneasy about it after Mr. Lickham had left.



His gloomy thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door, and in response to his invitation Jack Jolly & Co. walked in.

Monsieur Froggay eyed them in sur-prise.

“Mays onglongs! Vat is ze mat-taire?” he asked.

“Don’t be alarmed. We haven’t come to rag you, sir, or anything like that,” said Jack Jolly reassuringly. “As a matter of fact, what we’ve come about is this duel you’re having with the Head.”

Monsieur Froggay fairly bristled.

“Zat rottaire!” he eggclaimed. “He insist on fighting viz ze shooter of ze pea.”

“Ha, ha! Eggactly!” chuckled Jack Jolly. “That’s where we come in, you see, Monsieur. The Head thinks he can mop up the floor with you when it comes to a duel with pea-shooters.”

“Hela! I fear zat is right. Of shooting ze little pea I know nozing,” said Monsieur Froggay, shaking his head gloomily.

“Never mind, sir. Don’t despair,” said the kaptein of the Fourth con-solingly. “We’re going to help you in this desprite emergency.”

“You help me?”

“Jack Jolly nodded.

“You see, Monsieur, we’re all egg-perts with the pea-shooter. What we don’t know about pea-shooting isn’t worth knowing, is it, you chaps?”

“No fear!” grinned the rest of the Co.

“So if only you’ll allow us to give you a thorough training during the next day or two, we may be able to knock you into shape in time for the duel,” eggplained Jack Jolly. “Then you’ll be able to meet the Head on level terms, and give him the shock of his natcherel. Savvy?”

“Mong dew!” cried the French master, his eyes beginning to shine eggsticly. “You sink I can become ze egg-part in ze shoot of ze pea in time for ze duel!”

“Absolutely certain of it,” replied the kaptein of the Fourth confidently. “You leave it to us, sir. We’ll see you righted, won’t we, you fellows?”

“What-ho!” cursed the Co.

“Mong dew! Zen I am saved! Say bien! Say magnifick!” cried Monsieur Froggay, dancing a French nativ dance round the study in his eggstement.

“Bring me a shooter of ze pea, may onglongs, and we will begin our lesson at vance—if not sooner!”

During the next few days Jack Jolly & Co. spent all their spare time training the French master in the art of pea-shootship.

Monsieur Froggay proved an apt pupil—so much so, in fact, that

he rapidly became almost as eggspert as Jack Jolly himself, who was an acknowledged master of the weapon.

At last, the morning of the grate duel dawned, and nearly all the Skool flocked down to the Sixth Form Green, where the battle was to be fought.

Dr. Birchmell and Monsieur Froggay were marched ten paces away from each other and given their weapons. Then, amid a death-like silence, Mr. Lickham raised his mortar-board.

“Are you both ready to begin this duel to the death?” he asked.

Monsieur Froggay nodded, and Dr. Birchmell, with a confident grin on his die, signified that he was ready to begin the slaughter.

“Then go!” yelled Mr. Lickham. The duellists lifted their pea-shooters to their mouths and fired, and a regular hail of peas began to fly across the Sixth Form Green.

Everybody, with the possible eggsep-tion of Jack Jolly & Co., fully antisi-pated that the French master would go under immediately.

But he didn’t!

To the surprise of the spectators, and the dismay and shagrin of Dr. Birchmell himself, Froggay stood his ground and didn’t yield an inch. But more im-portant still, he used his pea-shooter with such skill and swiftness that the Head found himself peppered with peas at the rate of about a dozen a second.

There was an eggsticd roar.

“Good old Froggay!”

“Go it, Monsieur!”

The Head tried desperately to turn the tide in his favor. But lack of training told against him, and he found that he couldn’t get going at all.

“Yooooop! Look here, Lickham, this isn’t fare!” he roared, jumping, and dodging about all over the place. “What about calling half-time?”

“This is a duel to the death!” was Mr. Lickham’s stern answer.

“Yaroooo! Lamme alone!” yelled the Head feendishly. “I’m not up to my usual form this morning! Let’s postpone it! Groooo!”

The spectators fairly roared as they saw how the battle was going.

“Give him beans, Monsieur!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Monsieur Froggay had turned out a credit to his trainers. He was abooting like a veteran at the game, and Jack Jolly & Co. yelled themselves hoarse as they watched.

Suddenly the Head threw down his pea-shooter, with a gesture of despair.

“Yarooo! This is too thick! I’m off!” he yelled, and with that he turned tail and bolted for dear life. The roar of farther that followed him could be heard for miles away.

“Honnair is satisfed!” eggclaimed Monsieur Froggay, beaming all over his die. “Ze vijlan is vanquished!”

“Hear, hear!”

“Good old Monsieur!”

“Three cheers for the winner!” yelled Jack Jolly.

And the cheers were given right heartily.

Thus ended the grate feud between Dr. Birchmell and Monsieur Froggay.

And as the Head, nashing his teeth, listened to the cheers in the solitude of his study, he couldn’t help feeling that from his point of view the affair had not been a success!

THE END.

(Next week’s MAGNET will contain the first story of another amusing series of St. Sam’s yarns, entitled: “A PREZENT FROM THE SKY”.)

Don’t miss this BIG LAUGH whatever you do, chums.)

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