

COMPLETE SHERIFF'S OUTFIT FOR EVERY READER

FOR FULL DETAILS SEE PAGE 11.

The MAGNET 2nd

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EVERY
SATURDAY.

Week
Ending
Sept. 29th,
1934.



Complete
**SHERIFF'S
OUTFIT
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FOR
EVERY
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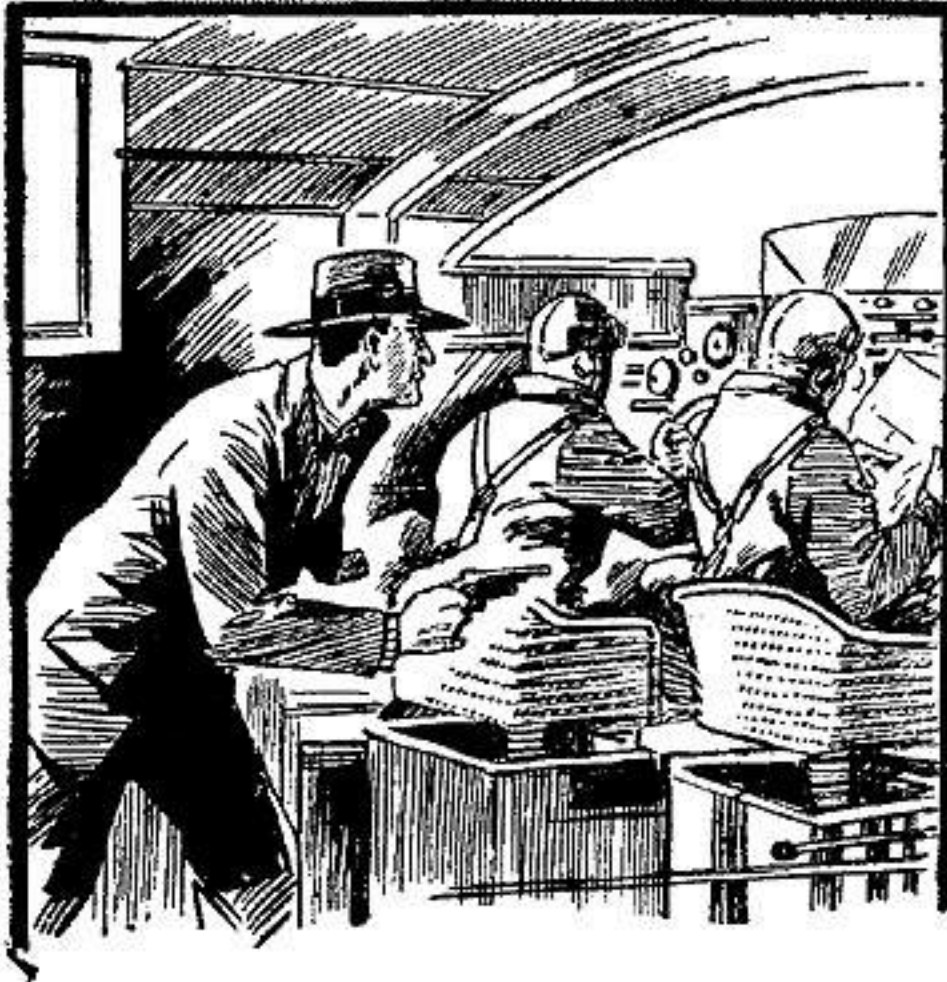
*Be a
Sheriff!*
NEXT WEEK

**2 GRAND
GIFTS
Next Week**

**SHERIFF'S
STAR**
*IN SHINING
METAL
and*

**INVISIBLE
WRITING
PENCIL**

PERIL IN THE AIR!



THE FIRST CHAPTER

Sharp!

READY, Bunter?"
 "No!"
 "Buck up!"
 "Shan't!"

"Look here—"
 "Oh, blow you!" came a peevish voice from within the bathing-cabin occupied by Billy Bunter, the Greyfriars billionaire. "I can't squeeze into this beastly costume. I jolly well knew it was too tight! I'll sack that fool Jarvis."

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.
 On the beach at Posilippo, at Naples, they were clad in light and airy bathing costumes under the blaze of the Italian sun, ready for a dip in the sea.

The glorious Bay of Naples, and the blue Mediterranean, stretched before their eyes, with Ischia and Capri in the distance. In another direction lay Mount Vesuvius, a thin stream of smoke rising from its summit to the azure skies.

There were crowds of bathers up and down the beach, and the blue water was dotted with heads. Farther out, boats glided on the calm sea, and from some of them came the singing voices of the merry Neapolitan sailors. It was September, but still very hot at Naples—as hot, Billy Bunter complained, as August in Margate! Bunter was hotter than ever in the rather stuffy bathing-cabin struggling with a bathing-suit which, it seemed, was disinclined to go on.

Probably that was not the fault of the bathing-suit. Billy Bunter had never been slim. Since he had been a billionaire and lived on the fat of the land—and lots and lots of it—he was fatter than ever. In buying the bathing-suit in the Galleria Umberto Primo, that circumstance had not been allowed for. Or perhaps it was the roomiest that his man Jarvis could find. Anyhow, there seemed to be difficulties.

"Beast!" came Bunter's voice. "I'll

Backing-up Bunter, the Greyfriars billionaire, against the crooks who are after his enormous wealth, provides Harry Wharton & Co. with a very hectic summer holiday. Give yourself a second holiday by joining in their exciting adventures in this long complete story

By

FRANK RICHARDS

sack him! Does the silly ass think I'm a skinny skeleton like you fellows?"

"Try a shoehorn!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

"How long are we going to loaf about here?" inquired Johnny Bull. Johnny had come down to Posilippo to bathe, not to wait outside a bathing-cabin listening to the dulcet tones of Bunter the Billionaire.

"Well, Naples is a place for loafing!" remarked Frank Nugent. "Everybody here loafs!"

"And the esteemed English proverb remarks that half a loaf is better than the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well!" observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Good old English proverb!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Ready yet, Bunter?"

"No! Beast! No!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, let's sit it out!" said Johnny Bull resignedly. He plumped down on the beach.

The next moment he leaped to his feet with a fearful yell.

"Yaroooh! Whoop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What the thump—" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Johnny, wriggling like an eel. "Oh crikey! Wow!" He wriggled and roared. "I've sat on something—wow!"

"He, he, he!" Bunter's door opened, and he blinked out through his big spectacles in time to witness Johnny's impromptu performance. "He, he, he! I say, you fellows, they warned us to look out for shells on this beach! He, he, he!"

"Ow! Wow!" groaned Johnny Bull. He wished that he had not sat down with such emphasis. He had sat on one of those sharp-edged shells which are the drawback of the beautiful beach of Posilippo. It seemed to be rather painful, judging by Johnny's frantic contortions.

"He, he, he!" Bunter seemed amused. "You fat, footling fathead!" roared Johnny Bull. "What is there to cackle at, you frowsy frump?"

"He, he, he!"

"Come on, let's get into the water, if Bunter's ready at last," said Harry Wharton.

Johnny Bull snorted, and marched off, still wriggling. Billy Bunter rolled out of the bathing-cabin.

He had succeeded at last in parking his fat person in the bathing-suit, which fitted like the skin of a drum.

It was quite a distinctive costume, with bars of blue and red and orange; and Bunter glimmered in the sunshine of Naples rather like a tropical beetle.

Quite a number of people looked at him as he rolled down to the water with Harry Wharton & Co. That costume struck the eye, and struck it hard; and some of the natives, no doubt, wondered how Bunter had wedged himself into it.

Bunter, aware of the attention he was getting, attributed it partly to his handsome and distinguished looks and partly to his fame as a billionaire. So he swaggered happily along into the water.

"Ow! Wow!" remarked Johnny Bull, with another wriggle. He was still feeling the effects of that sharp shell.

—THRILLS AND FUN YOU'LL REVEL IN!

"He, he, he!"
"If you don't stop cackling—"
breathed Johnny.

"Don't make such a fuss about it, old chap!" advised Bunter. "Dash it all, you're not made of putty, are you? Don't make such a fuss about a little pain. Bear it!"

"You babbling, burbling, blithering bletherer—"

"Be a man!" said Bunter. "You never hear me setting up a howl about a little pain. Grin and bear it. Be a man!"

Johnny Bull stepped into the water and splashed. A mighty splash smote Billy Bunter, flooding him fore and aft, so to speak; and he gave a gurgling howl and sat down in the shallows.

"Urrggh!" gurgled Bunter as he sat.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
For a fraction of a second Bunter sat on sand, with the Mediterranean Sea flowing round his fat neck. But only for a fraction of a second. Then he bounded up, roaring.

"Yoooooop!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo—what—"

"Whooop!"
"What the dickens—"

"Yarooooop! I'm out! I'm wounded! I'm gashed! I'm cut to pieces! Yaroooo!" roared Bunter frantically.

"Oh, my hat—more shells about!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull.

Bunter danced and hopped, making almost a waterspout. He roared and howled and raved. He, too, had sat on a sharp-edged shell; and, like Johnny Bull, he found it painful. He seemed to have forgotten his injunction to Johnny to bear it like a man and not to make a fuss about a little pain! He danced like a cat on hot bricks. He howled and yelled; and, like the young man of Hytho who was shaved with a scythe, did nothing but wriggle and writhe!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-whooop!" roared Bunter. "Oh lor'! Oh crikey! I'm hurt—I'm wounded—I'm injured—Yaroooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Yow-ow-ow! Whooo-hooooop!"

"O listen to the band!" chanted Bob Cherry.

"Wow! Beast! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leaving Bunter wriggling and roaring, the Famous Five plunged out and swam. They had come there to bathe, not to listen to Billy Bunter doing a solo on his chin! In a few minutes they were out of the sound of Bunter's dulcet tones, swimming out in the bay and enjoying themselves immensely. They were out of Billy Bunter's sight when, at last, he ceased to yell and yelp, and splashed out into the water like a porpoise.

glasses with a grin, and turned to the boatman.

"I guess you're holding on here till I get back, Amedeo!" he said.

"Si, signore," assented Amedeo.

"There ain't much wind," said Mr. Bronx. "But what there is, is coming off the shore. You figure you'll be able to run across to Ischia?"

"Si, signore."

"Watch out, then. It's five hundred lire for you if we get clear away with the pesky geck I'm going for."

"Va bene, signore."

Bronx slid into the water.

Amedeo, the boatman, watched him, lounging lazily over the tiller. Five hundred lire was a large sum to a Neapolitan boatman. Why the long, lean American had hired him and his boat to kidnap a bather, Amedeo did not know; neither did he care. He was thinking of the five hundred lire, and the quantity of good Salerno it would buy in the wine shops of Naples.

Billy Bunter, disporting himself in the sunny waters, was quite oblivious of danger.

Certainly he had not forgotten Tiger Bronx, the gangster, who had so mysteriously trailed him ever since he had become a billionaire. In Paris, in Venice, at Rome, the fat billionaire had had narrow escapes from that relentless pursuer. In fact, the Kingfisher, the magnificent Airways plane in which the Greyfriars party were travelling in the holidays, had left Rome quite suddenly, because the gangster had turned up there. At the present moment, however, Bunter was not thinking of Bronx. He had no doubt that the gangster would turn up again sooner or later; but he certainly did not expect to come upon him in a crowd of bathers at Posilippo.

That, however, was precisely what Bunter was destined to do.

Billy Bunter could swim, more or less, but he was careful not to go out deeper than his fat neck. After splashing about for a time like a hippopotamus in an African river Bunter stood up, wiped his spectacles, and blinked round for the Famous Five. They were not to be seen.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

The Famous Five had not come there to wallow in the shallows with Bunter. They had already swum out as far as the line of boats across the bay.

"Well, I'm jolly well going in, and they can go and eat coke!" grunted Bunter. "If they're late they'll find the car gone, and they can jolly well walk, and be blowed to them!"

A long, lean swimmer shot like a shark towards Bunter. A lean hand fastened like a limpet on his fat arm.

"Here, leggo, you silly ass!" snapped Bunter, blinking round. "Who the

dickens— Why, what— Oh lor'!"

The colour faded from Bunter's fat face, and his eyes bulged behind his big spectacles at the sight of the lean, hard face at his side.

Tiger Bronx grinned at him.

"I'll say I've cinched you this time, fat boy!" he remarked. "Don't you yaup! Not a whisper, bo, unless you want me to duck your cabeza under water, and keep it there!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"I'll say it would pay me better to put you under," said Bronx. "But I always was a soft-hearted cuss. But don't you hunt for trouble, boy, or you'll find it—bad!"

Billy Bunter did not look like hunting for trouble.

He shivered like a fat jelly in the grasp of the gangster.

"I—I say—" he gasped.

"Don't spill anything," said Tiger Bronx. "Jest you come a-swimming with me. I got a boat out yonder to take you aboard. You get me?"

"Oh lor'! I—I say, I—I can't swim out any farther!" groaned Bunter. "I—I might sink, you know."

"You might, if you start chewing the rag with me," said Bronx. "But you come quiet, like a good little man, and I guess I'll see you through. It's a quarter of a mile out to my boat, and I guess I can see you safe. You coming, or going under?"

"Oh dear! I—I'll come!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'd like to come."

"Yep; you look it!" said Bronx. "Anyhow, you're coming! Get down to it, fat boy!"

There were dozens of bathers close at hand as Billy Bunter swam out, with a helping hand from the muscular gangster. But there was nothing in the incident to excite alarm or suspicion.

A single yell for help from Bunter would have given the alarm, but he dared not utter it.

All the other bathers saw was a man helping a clumsy schoolboy to swim, and there was nothing unusual in that sight.

Bunter found the swim easy enough, as far as that went, with Bronx's strong hand to support him. He was in no danger, unless the gangster let him go, which he was not likely to do. But his feelings were dismal as he went. It had occurred to the fat junior several times that it was hardly worth while being a billionaire at all on these terms. Now he felt convinced of it. That beast, Jarvish, had transferred to him an immense fortune, and with it the deadly pursuit of the man from Chicago. Just now Bunter would willingly have parted with the fortune if he could have parted with Bronx.

But he couldn't. Helpless in the grip

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bagging Bunter.

"I 'LL say that's the gink!"
The tall, lean American sitting in the boat with a pair of field-glasses to his eyes, scanned the beach and the bathers. The boat, with its brown patched sail lowered, was almost motionless on the calm sea, a swarthy Italian boatman lounging over the tiller.

"Tiger" Bronx, the gangster from Chicago, was in bathing-dress, which showed off to advantage his long, lean limbs. Sitting in the boat he picked out a fat figure in a glaring costume of red and blue and orange, with the help of the glasses. He shut up the

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will contain a

**SHERIFF'S STAR and an
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FREE Editor.

of the gangster's lean fingers, Billy Bunter swam out to the distant boat, and the shore of Italy sank into a blur behind him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rescue!

"RIPPING!" said Bob Cherry. "The ripfulness is terrific!" "Topping, and no mistake!" Harry Wharton agreed.

The Famous Five had had a long and enjoyable swim. They were out beyond many of the boats that lay on the calm waters.

"Can't you see anything of Bunter?" remarked Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that distance from the shore they were not likely to see anything of the fat Owl of the Remove. Bunter preferred to do his bathing with his feet on something solid.

"What about a rest before we go back?" asked Harry. "Lots of people sun-bathing in those boats. Look for an empty one."

"Good egg!" agreed Bob.

There were bathers lounging and sprawling in many of the boats that rocked on the water. Harry Wharton lifted his head, and looked out for one that was unoccupied, and could be hired. There was only one in sight that had only a boatman in it; and Wharton pointed it out to his comrades, and they swam for it.

They came on it from the seaward side. The man in it was staring landward, as if interested in the bathing nearer the shore, and he did not see them till Wharton, holding on to the gunwale, called to him.

Then he glanced round, and shook his head. It was Amedeo, and though his boat was unoccupied at the moment, it was shortly going to be. Already he had sighted a long, lean swimmer who was piloting a fat figure in a glaring bathing-suit towards the boat.

"No, signore, non posso!" said Amedeo. "You go!"

"But we want to hire your boat," explained Wharton, puzzled by the man's refusal.

"E impegato questo battello!" answered Amedeo.

"I wonder what that means when it's at home," remarked Bob Cherry.

All five of the swimmers were resting their hands now on the seaward gunwale of the "battello."

"It means that the boat's engaged," said Harry. "But even if it is, whoever's engaged it isn't here, and I don't see why the man can't let us get in. Still, it's his boat. Hang on, anyhow!"

The Famous Five held on. They had had a long swim, and there was rather a long swim before them to get back, and a rest was welcome.

That the boatman could have any objection to swimmers holding on to his gunwale for a few minutes did not even occur to them.

But Amedeo proceeded to make it clear. He waved dusky and unwashed hands at the schoolboys.

"You go!" he exclaimed. "Andate— andate in fretta! Go 'way!"

"Nice sort of a polite johnny, I must say," remarked Bob Cherry. "Most of these Neapolitans are jolly polite. What's the matter with the brute?"

"Go 'way!" repeated Amedeo excitedly.

Bronx was drawing near with his prisoner now. But for the fact that the

juniors were on the seaward side of the boat, they would have spotted him.

As it was, they were only puzzled, and a little angry.

"Look here, you silly ass! What's the harm in holding on to your boat?" demanded Johnny Bull surlily. "Do you think we shall sink it, or rub the paint off? Can't see any to rub off."

"Go 'way!" hooted Amedeo.

"Rats!" answered Bob Cherry.

"You no go 'way, I make!" exclaimed the Neapolitan boatman, and he grabbed up an oar from the bottom of the boat.

"Oh, my hat! He's getting ferocious!" said Bob. "The dear man doesn't seem to like our looks! If Bunter was here I should think it was his features did it! But it can't be ours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You go!" snapped Amedeo, and he poked the oar at the juniors hanging on the gunwale to knock their hands off.

Bob Cherry promptly grasped the blade of the oar and gave it a tug. That was rather unexpected on Amedeo's part.

He staggered and fell towards the juniors, and as the boat rocked, pitched on his hands and knees.

Bob Cherry jerked the oar from his grasp as he dropped, and gave him a poke in the ribs with it, and Amedeo, with a howl, rolled in the bottom of the boat.

"Good man!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"What the dickens is the brute cutting up so rusty for?" said Harry Wharton. "We—why—what—who—"

He broke off in sheer amazement as a nasal voice called, from a swimmer on the other side of the boat:

"Say, you Amedeo, you lend a hand with this fat gink! I'll say he's some weight to heave into a boat!"

In dumb astonishment, the juniors listened to that nasal voice which they knew well. A fat squeak followed it:

"I—I say! Oh lor'!"

They hung on to the gunwale, while Amedeo sprawled, panting, in the boat, almost stupefied with astonishment. Only the boat was between them and Tiger Bronx—with the kidnapped billionaire in his grip! It flashed into their minds now why the boatman did not want strangers hanging on to his battello.

Amedeo scrambled to his feet.

Bronx was close to the boat now, with the gasping, gurgling Bunter at his side. Bunter's fat hand was grabbing at the gunwale; Bronx's lean hand caught hold beside it. The gangster stared up at Amedeo in angry surprise.

"Say, you gone to sleep?" he barked. "I'm telling you to lend me a hand with this fat geck!"

"Signore—" gasped Amedeo.

Before he could get further, five active fellows were scrambling into the boat on the other side.

Harry Wharton, without a moment's hesitation, struck out, catching Amedeo under the ear with a clenched fist, and sending him crashing and sprawling over the tiller.

The boat rocked wildly as the juniors plunged across it. Bob Cherry grabbed hold of Bunter's arm, Nugent of his hair. Johnny Bull hit straight at the astonished lean face of the gangster.

The Famous Five had been surprised by Bronx's arrival. But their surprise was nothing to Bronx's, as he saw them in the boat. The grisly spectres of the Greyfriars fellows could hardly have startled him more.

He glared up from the water in utter amazement and rage, at the unexpected sight, and dodged too late as Johnny Bull's fist came crashing at his lean face.

Johnny's knuckles landed on his nose, and Tiger Bronx gave a yell and released his hold, slipping back into the water.

A gurgle came from him as he went under.

"Get Bunter in!" panted Wharton.

"Urrrrggh!" gurgled the bewildered Owl. "Owl! I say, you fellows— Gurrgh! I say— Wurrgh! Oh crikey!"

The fat billionaire was heaved up over the gunwale into the boat. He collapsed there, gurgling.

Bronx's face came up. It was livid with rage, and his slits of eyes glittered. He swam savagely at the boat.

Bob Cherry whirled up an oar. As the gangster came on he brought it down with a crash, and Bronx ducked under only just in time to save his head. There was a terrific splash as the oar struck the water.

"Go it!" grinned Johnny Bull. "That's the stuff to give the troops!"

Bob whirled up the oar again.

He was ready for the gangster to make another attempt to get aboard. But Bronx came up a dozen feet away, and did not approach the boat again. He realised that there was nothing doing.

He lifted a fist from the water and shook it furiously at the juniors, and then, turning, swam away. His long strokes cleft the water rapidly, and his head was soon a speck in the distance and vanished.

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. He sat up dizzily in a pool of water. "I—I say— Oh lor'! He—he got me, you know! Oh crikey! You beasts shouldn't have left me alone! After all I've done for you—"

"That's Bunter's way of thanking us for getting away from the blighter!" remarked Johnny Bull. "What about kicking him?"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, let's get back! I say, I can't swim back, you know! I say—"

"We're going back in this boat!" said Harry Wharton. "And this black-jowled rascal is going to row us!" He grasped Amedeo by an unclean collar and sat him up in the boat. The boatman gasped and blinked at him, and scowled as he pressed a hand to an aching ear. "Get back to the shore, you rogue!"

Obviously Bunter could not swim the distance. He had to go back in the boat, so the Famous Five gave up the idea of swimming back. Neither were they disposed to stand on ceremony with Bronx's boatman. It was evident that the man had been in Bronx's pay to help him get away with Bunter. So when the angry and exasperated Amedeo, in an angry mixture of Italian and English, refused to row, the chums of the Remove made matters clear unto him in the most unceremonious way.

"Not going to row us ashore?" asked Bob.

"No!" yapped Amedeo, rubbing his damaged ear. "Mail! Mail!"

"Lend a hand!" said Bob.

And Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh lent willing hands, and Amedeo was grasped, and his curly, greasy head rapped on the tiller hard. Amedeo's yell rang half over the Bay of Naples.

"Getting a move on now?" asked Bob.

"Ah! Si! Si! Si, signore!" howled Amedeo. "Oh! Si! Si! Non posso di piu! Si! Si! Andiamo! Andiamo!"

The wind was off the shore, and the sail useless. Amedeo sat to the oars and pulled. It was a heavy old boat—and well laden with the Famous Five and the fat and podgy billionaire! It was a long and a strong pull for Amedeo—which the chums of the Remove considered a just punishment for his rascality—and he slaved and sweated in the blazing sunshine unpitied.

Billy Bunter gasped with relief when he got to land; but probably he was not so relieved as Amedeo

Little as the Greyfriars billionaire had suspected it, James Jarvis had not intended him to remain in permanent possession of the wonderful fortune with which he had provided him. But the sleek rascal's schemes were so deep and so tortuous, and so wrapped in mystery, that a less obtuse brain than Bunter's might have failed to elucidate them.

Harry Wharton & Co. distrusted and suspected the valet—and they had what amounted to proof that he had, more than once, planned to betray his master into the gangster's hand!

Yet what his motive could possibly be was a mystery to them. It was another mystery to them why Bunter

Bunter. But the gangster had "got wise" to that at last, as well as the juniors. But now Jarvis had gone to the length of getting into actual communication with Bronx—the man who had once hunted him like a bloodhound—and passing on information to help him "bag" the billionaire.

It was for that reason that he did not expect Bunter to return from the bathing trip with the Co. And when at last he heard footsteps coming along the corridor from the lift, and the sound of voices, he listened intently, and was not surprised that he did not catch Bunter's fat voice among the others. That fat voice, Jarvis hoped, he was never going to hear again.



While Harry Wharton struck out at the Italian boatman, sending him sprawling over the tiller, Johnny Bull hit straight at the astonished lean face of the gangster, making him yell and release his hold on the boat. "Urrrghh!" gurgled Billy Bunter. "Ow! Save me, you fellows—!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Surprise.

JAMES JARVISH, Bunter's incomparable valet, was brushing a coat in the fat billionaire's dressing-room in Bunter's magnificent suite at the Hotel Barcolini, in Naples. Every now and then he paused in his work, and went to a window and glanced out into the sunshine of "bella Napoli" with sharp, sly, furtive eyes. Then he resumed brushing the coat.

There was a pucker of anxious thought in Jarvis's sleek brow, and anyone who had observed him would have seen at once that he was worried and uneasy. He was waiting for the billionaire and his friends to return from the bathing trip to Posilippo—but he was not expecting Bunter to return with the Co. If Mr. Jarvis's plans that day were successful, Billy Bunter was done with billionairing!

did not, for his own safety's sake, sack the valet. What sort of a hold Jarvis had over the fat Owl of the Remove they could not guess.

Certainly, they had an idea that Billy Bunter's new and amazing wealth somehow proceeded from his association with Jarvis. But this was so extraordinary that it seemed hopeless to try to make out what it all meant.

But they were keeping very wary eyes on Jarvis, since they had detected his treachery, and the sleek rascal found that his task was harder than he had anticipated—and growing harder.

Jarvis was, in point of fact, growing a little desperate. He was more than tired of playing the part of valet to Bunter, with Bunter in possession of the billions. He had not intended the comedy to last anything like so long as this.

At first he had played his part so cunningly that even Bronx did not guess that he was double-crossing

The door opened, and Harry Wharton & Co. came in. Jarvis, coat and brush in hand, turned his head, and looked at them. They came in and shut the door, and he breathed a little quickly. Utterly unscrupulous and ruthless schemer as he was, Jarvis had the disadvantage of lacking the courage of his rascality; indeed, it was his wretched cowardice that had been at the bottom of his amazing transactions with Bunter.

He was well aware that if Bunter had been kidnapped at Posilippo, the juniors would suspect him of complicity. There was no proof of it—not a vestige of proof! But he felt an inward tremor as the chums of the Remove came towards him. He could hardly keep a quaver out of his voice, as he addressed them.

"Has not my master returned with you young gentlemen?"

"Did you expect him to?" asked Harry Wharton, his lip curling with contempt.

"Certainly, sir!"
 "You didn't know that Bronx was at Naples?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I was quite ignorant of it, sir! I trust that my master has not met that dangerous character!" said Jarvis.

"You didn't suggest that bathing trip at Posilippo to-day to give him a chance at Bunter?" asked Johnny Bull with a snort.

"Really, sir—"
 "You didn't know he was there in a boat, waiting and watching for the fat duffer?" asked Nugent.

"I was certainly quite unaware—"
 "You didn't select a bathing costume for Bunter that a blind man could spot a mile off, so that Bronx couldn't miss him?" asked Harry.

Jarvis drew a deep breath. All this could only mean that his plot had been a success, and whatever the juniors suspected, they could prove nothing.

"Am I to understand, gentlemen, that something has happened to my master at Posilippo?" he asked.

"You are to understand that Bronx got him in the sea, and forced him to swim out to a boat, where another rascal was waiting to hoist the sail and get him away!" answered Wharton.

Jarvis's sly eyes gleamed. It was success then!

"This—this is very serious news, sir!" he said. "I fear that something disastrous may occur, if my master is really in that desperate man's hands. The police must be informed, if what you state is correct."

"And they'll get a lot of help from you, won't they?" snorted Johnny Bull. "You treacherous rascal, what are you playing these tricks on Bunter for? He's a silly troublesome ass, but you're not bound to stick him if you don't want to. What's your game, you rascal?"

"I decline to listen to these wild accusations," said Jarvis, setting his lips. "You cannot and shall not lay the blame on me if harm has come to my master in your company. Neither shall I accept your word that such an extraordinary event has occurred at all—"

"Wha-a-t?"
 "It sounds to me," continued Jarvis calmly, "more like a foolish and thoughtless schoolboy lark than a statement of facts. Unless you can produce other and more creditable witnesses to the occurrence, I shall decline to take any notice of your statement at all."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob.
 A faint sneer came over Jarvis's sleek, smooth face. Convinced now that Bunter was missing, and not likely to turn up again, James Jarvis proceeded to show his hand, as it were, a little more plainly.

"As my master has not returned with you," he went on, "I conclude that you have been playing some trick upon him, as you have often done before. I shall wait until this evening, at all events, before I make any move."

"Then you are not thinking of informing the police?" asked Harry with a very curious look at the valet.

"At present no, sir!" said Jarvis calmly.

"You're leaving that to us?"
 Jarvis smiled a rather unpleasant smile.

"Certainly you may go to the police with any wild tale you care to invent," he answered. "I hardly think they will take it seriously. If they refer to me, I shall have no hesitation in stating my belief that it is all a foolish practical joke."

"You mean," said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, quietly, "that

you're going to give Bronx all the time you possibly can to get clear with Bunter before anything is done to follow him?"

Jarvis wound his smooth hands together.

"You may take that view, or any other you please," he remarked with cool impertinence. "With all respect, I am quite indifferent to your opinion."

"You scheming rascal!" breathed Bob.

"Kindly moderate your expressions, sir!" said Jarvis. "I have been a servant in the very best families, and am not accustomed to personal abuse. If the matter is indeed as you state, and my master does not return, I may point out that the sooner you take your departure the better."

"Go on," said Harry. "Let's have it clear!"

"You have been my master's guests," said Jarvis. "If he has indeed disappeared, that state of affairs comes to an end. I decline to take any responsibility for you. I may, perhaps, pay your expenses up to the present date, from the funds left in my hands, but only on condition that you leave Naples by the first train in the morning."

"Oh!"

"As for the aeroplane," said Jarvis, "that will be dismissed. I shall not go to the expense of chartering it further on your account. You may as well try to realise that, if Master Bunter is gone, you have no standing here whatever, and I tell you plainly that I will listen to no insolence and to no foolish and unfounded accusations."

"The dear man's coming out into the open!" remarked Bob Cherry. "So you fancy you're master here, Jarvis!"

"I should not put it so crudely, sir, but you have stated the exact facts!" said Jarvis rubbing his hands. "To be quite frank, the sooner you go, the better; and if you remain here, you do so at your own expense. And the charges of the Hotel Barcolini, I fear, are somewhat beyond your means."

Harry Wharton laughed.
 The man's insolent triumph was irritating, but it had its comic side in the circumstance that Bunter was not missing at all. The juniors had told him what Bronx had done, but had not yet given a hint that he had been defeated at the last moment.

"Well, we've got it plain now," said the captain of the Remove. "Bronx gets away with Bunter, and Jarvis is going to give him every chance he can of getting clear—and get rid of us, so that we can't make a fuss about it. I should think that that was plain enough for even an ass like Bunter! He may as well come in now."

Jarvis jumped almost clear of the floor at the last words.

"Wha-a-t?" he stuttered.

Bob Cherry threw open the door. James Jarvis's eyes almost bolted from his head as Bunter the Billionaire rolled in.

It was quite a surprise!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Warpath.

BILLY BUNTER blinked at Jarvis.

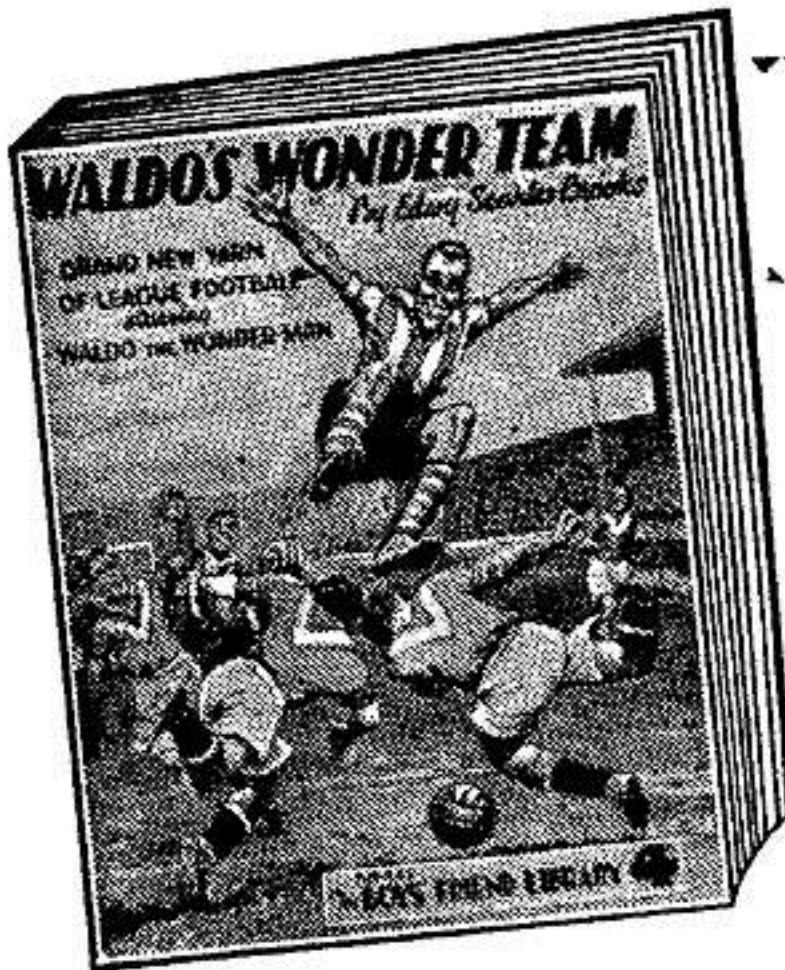
Jarvis stared at him with starting eyes.

The fat billionaire pointed a fat and accusing finger at him.

"You cheeky rotter!" he hooted.
 "Oh!" gasped Jarvis.

"You double-dealing beast!" roared Bunter.

"I—I—I—" stammered Jarvis. He was utterly taken aback.



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He realised now, with bitter anger, that his leg had been pulled. He had been led into showing himself in his true colours, and Billy Bunter was not missing at all! His sly eyes twinkled with rage.

"I—I—I—you—you—you are safe, sir!" he stammered. "These—these young rascals told me that—that Bronx had seized you, and I—I was greatly alarmed—"

"We told you the truth," said Harry contemptuously. "Bronx got him as far as his boat! Then we got him back!"

"And Bunter knows exactly how much you were alarmed, as he has heard all that you said!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" gasped Jarvis. Bunter rolled towards him, his little round eyes gleaming behind his big round spectacles. His fat fist shot out, and James Jarvis caught it with his chin! The valet gave a howl as he went over backwards.

Crash!
"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.
"Man down!" grinned Johnny Bull.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jarvis lay sprawling on the floor, on his back. He blinked up at Billy Bunter, who stood over him with clenched fists and gleaming eyes and spectacles.

"Get up!" roared Bunter.
"Oh, sir!"
"I'm going to knock you down again!"

"Oh, Master William—"
"Make him get up, you fellows! Hold him on his pins while I knock him down again!" squeaked the fat billionaire.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I'm jolly well going to keep my valet in order!" roared Bunter.
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

Jarvis made a movement to rise. He popped back again as Bunter's fat fist shot out, just in time.

"Hold on, Bunter!" gasped Frank Nugent. "You can't mop up a valet you don't like, in this style. You can sack him."

"The sackfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter," grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"We'll kick the rascal out of the hotel for you!" said Johnny Bull.

"All hands!" said Harry Wharton. The Famous Five gathered round Jarvis. They were prepared to sling him out if Bunter gave the word, promptly. And after what had happened, they expected Bunter to give the word.

Jarvis gave them a look of mingled fear and hate. Then his eyes turned on Bunter the Billionaire with a threat in them.

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" gasped Bunter.

"Hold on to Jarvis?" asked Bob.
"Nunno! I—I'm not sacking him."
"You're not sacking him!" roared Johnny Bull.
"Nunno!"

"Look here, Bunter, don't be a fool!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "You may have doubted before whether the rascal was betraying you to Bronx, but it's proved now. You know you're not safe with him."

"I—I know! But—"
"But what, you fat ass?"
"I—I'm not going to sack him! I'm going to give him a jolly good hiding instead!" explained Bunter.

"Well, my hat!" said Nugent blankly.
"I should think he would sack himself if you do that!" remarked Bob Cherry with a chuckle.

"Don't I wish he would!" said Bunter. "But—he won't! The beast won't go! Look here, Jarvis, will you sack yourself?"

"I am too much attached to you to leave your service, Master William!" answered Jarvis, still on the floor.

"You see, you fellows—"
Harry Wharton set his lips. The mystery of Billy Bunter and his mysterious valet had bothered the chums of the Remove a good deal. Now they were fed-up with it.

GREYFRIARS CARTOONS
By Harold Skinner.
CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE
(The aristocratic Captain of the Upper Fourth.)



Behold the lordly Temple struts,
Ye common mortals, lie down flat!
Hail, Temple, King of all the Knuts,
Pray tell us, whereja get that hat?

We'll have to take him down a peg,
This supercilious autocrat,
It's quite good fun to pull his leg,
Hey, Temple, whereja get that hat?

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry
"The thing's quite clear! We've made it clear, even to a silly ass like you—"
"Oh, really Wharton—"

"We've saved you again and again from that lawless brute, Bronx! We can't go on like this! That scoundrel on the floor is playing into Bronx's hands. You know it as well as we do, now. Next time he may get away with it. You're going to kick him out."

"Look here, I can do as I jolly well like, I suppose!"
"That's so—and so can we!" snapped

the captain of the Remove. "If you keep that man, plainly a crook, with you, you can keep him, and do without us. We're not taking on the job of protecting you from a rascal whom you choose to keep with you to play treacherous tricks."

"It's not sense!" said Bob Cherry. "Anyhow, it's time we got home—The hols won't last much longer."

"I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter in alarm. "You're not going to desert me! You can't let a fellow down."

"Kick that scoundrel out and we'll stay with you until the end of the holidays!" answered Harry Wharton. "But we won't stay with that villain, and that's that!"

"The thatfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"You—you see—" stammered Bunter. "I—I'd jolly well like to sack him, but—but I can't!"

"Rot!"
"Rubbish!"
"I say, you fellows, if you knew—" gasped Bunter.

"Well, we shall know, if you explain!" snapped Wharton gruffly. "I can tell you I'm fed up with all this idiotic mystery. What does it all mean? Why can't you sack your own manservant, if you want to sack him?"

"You—you see—"
"The trouble is, we don't!" said Bob.

James Jarvis made a cautious movement to rise. Billy Bunter had an eye on him, however. By the time Jarvis had got to his knees, the fat billionaire landed out with a fat fist, catching him on the ear.

Jarvis rolled over again with a yell. "Take that, you rotter!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"I'll keep the rotter in order," gasped Bunter. "You leave it to me! I'll make him squirm."

"You'll sack him!" said Harry.
"I tell you I can't!"
"In that case, you fat fooler, tell us why you can't!" roared Johnny Bull.

"You—you see—"
"Are you kicking him out?" demanded Wharton.

"No!" gasped Bunter.
"Then we'll clear! Come on, you men, let's get out of this and leave him to his precious valet!" growled the captain of the Remove.

"I—I say, you fellows, hold on!" squeaked the alarmed Owl. "I—I say, stop—come back you beast and—and I'll explain! Oh lor'!"

And the Famous Five, who were going to the door, turned to listen to the fat billionaire's explanation.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
A Puzzler!

"I—I SAY, you fellows—" "Get on with it." "The fact is—" "Cough it up!" "You—you see—" stammered Bunter.

It was evident that Billy Bunter found it difficult to explain, and that he was very unwilling to explain. He started, and stopped; re-started, and stopped again. As he stood blinking at the Famous Five through his big spectacles, James Jarvis squirmed along the floor to a door leading into another room, whipped through it, and vanished.

Bunter blinked round.
"That beast's gone!" he exclaimed.
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"Never mind him now—"

"I was going to jolly well thrash him—"

"Valets aren't thrashed, you fat ass—they're sacked!" said Bob Cherry. "You can't thrash Jarvis."

"I jolly well can, and I jolly well will!" retorted Bunter. "I'll teach the sneaking beast to play rotten tricks on me!"

"Now you know he's a sneaking beast, why not sack him?"

"I can't!" mumbled Bunter. "You fellows don't understand! You see, I—I shall lose the money if I do."

"The money!" exclaimed Bob.

"You—you see, I—I got it from Jarvis—" stammered Bunter.

"You got tons of money from Jarvis, a man-servant!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "And where did Jarvis get it I'd like to know, and why the thump did he give it to you?"

"I—I don't know where he got it! He used to be a valet to an American millionaire named Shook, he's told me! I don't know if he got it from him! Anyhow, he got it, and—he made it over to me."

The Famous Five gazed blankly at the fat Owl of the Remove. They had known that Jarvis, somehow, had something to do with Bunter's wonderful accession to wealth. But this was a surprise.

"Jarvis made a big fortune over to

Bunter. "Then all the money goes back to Jarvis, of course."

The juniors looked at the fat billionaire. It was difficult to credit this strange tale.

But it was clear that Bunter, for once, was telling the truth. And the tale, strange as it was, explained many things that had puzzled and mystified the juniors.

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I can understand part of it," he said. "We saw that cowardly rotter Jarvis scuttling from the lanky Yankee; never saw a man in such an awful funk. Bronx is after the cash—and Jarvis landed him on Bunter by landing the cash on Bunter. It was a weird idea—but that much is clear."

"But it's not clear why he wanted to be Bunter's valet," said Harry.

"Well, we know that, too; it's so that he can land him in Bronx's claws," said Bob. "He couldn't do that if he wasn't with Bunter."

"Yes. But why does he want to do that?"

"Ask me another!"

"It's a jolly old puzzle, unless the man's potty!" said Nugent.

"He's anything but potty," said Harry Wharton dryly. "And he can't have handed over a big fortune to Bunter, intending him to keep it. Nobody would! He's got some scheme for getting it back."

"Oh, that's rot!" said Bunter confidently. "He can't get it back unless I peg out—and I can jolly well tell you that I'm not going to!"

"It doesn't leave him where he was before. Bronx will be hanged if he knocks Bunter on the head, and Jarvis will be safe from him."

"Oh crikey!" yelled Bunter.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Is it possible—" he ejaculated. "Could any man be such a villain as to lay a scheme like that?"

"I'd rather not think so, but it's plain enough. That's the rascal's motive, because he cannot possibly have any other," said the captain of the Remove. "He planned the whole thing from the beginning and took in Bunter—like the silly fathead he is—"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"All that's saved Bunter so far is the fact that Bronx isn't such a ruthless brute as Jarvis believed him to be," said Harry. "He's a brute and a ruffian, but he stops short of shedding blood. He's set out to kidnap Bunter—I suppose with an idea of frightening the money off him. Very likely Jarvis's own life wasn't in danger, as he supposed—he was such a rotten coward that he may have fancied his danger greater than it was. We've prevented Bronx kidnapping Bunter, but we couldn't have prevented him from putting a bullet through the fat idiot if he'd wanted to. Bunter can thank his lucky stars that Bronx has a limit—though Jarvis hasn't."

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter. "I—I remember now the beast said more than once that it would pay him better to wash me out, as he called it."

The fat Owl sank limply into a chair. He dabbed perspiration from his forehead. It was fine to be a billionaire—but there were undoubtedly drawbacks to being a billionaire on these lines.

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, don't

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you!" repeated Harry Wharton, almost dazedly. "What on earth for?"

"Well, I got him away from that lanky Yankee, you know, who was after him, before we broke up at Greyfriars for the hols. Practically saved his life, with courage—and—bravery—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Beast! Well, he had tons of money, and he was frightened out of his wits at that beast Bronx! I—I daresay that had something to do with it," confessed Bunter, "because ever since I've had the money, Bronx has been after me instead of after Jarvis. You—you see, I wasn't going to refuse, when he offered me a huge fortune—only for my lifetime, you know—"

"Only for your lifetime!" repeated Nugent. "That's a queer condition, when Jarvis must be twenty or thirty years older than you."

"Yes, but I didn't mind—why should I? If I peg out, it all goes back to Jarvis; that's in the documents," said Bunter. "We had them drawn up by a lawyer at Margate, all fair and square. Of course, I'm not going to peg out—a fellow splendidly fit and athletic like me may live to be a hundred. What are you cackling at, you beasts?"

"Splendidly fit—ha, ha—and athletic!" roared Bob. "Ha, ha, ha! Go it, old fat bean! You're frightfully entertaining."

"Beast! Well, that's how it is," said Bunter. "Only Jarvis made it a condition of the agreement that I should take him on as valet and never part with him. I rather liked the idea, you know; he was such a splendid valet, and such a good servant in every way."

"Blessed if I catch on to it at all!" said Bob.

"You see, I can't sack him without breaking the agreement," explained

Harry Wharton gave a violent start.

At those words there was a flash of illumination in his mind, and he saw in a sudden glimpse the whole tortuous plot of the sleek scoundrel who had enriched the fat Owl of the Remove.

His face became quite pale.

His comrades looked at him. They could see that some deeply disturbing thought was in his mind.

"What on earth are you thinking of now, Harry?" asked Frank Nugent rather uneasily.

Wharton clenched his hands.

"The scoundrel!" he said, between his teeth.

"But what—"

"Can't you see the game?" panted Wharton. "If I'd known before what that fat ass has just told us, I should have spotted it before. He never meant Bunter to keep the billions—of course he never did! What man would part with an immense fortune simply because he was afraid of a Yankee gangster? He's made that fortune over to Bunter for his life-time only—"

"Well, ain't that all right?" demanded Bunter. "It only prevents me from leaving it in my will."

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But I don't quite see—" began Frank

"It's plain enough!" said Wharton impatiently. "That's why he's keeping on as Bunter's valet and betraying him to Bronx. Now Bunter's got the money the gangster is after him, instead of Jarvis. And if he knocks Bunter on the head—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Well, in that case, it all goes back to Jarvis, and leaves him where he was before," said Bob.

you leave me!" groaned Bunter. "I've done a lot for you, you know! You stick to me! Oh lor!"

"All you've got to do is to sack Jarvis and make an end of it," said the captain of the Remove; "then the money goes back to him, and he can handle Bronx himself."

"You silly idiot!" gasped Bunter.

"What—"

"You're jolly careless of other fellows' money!" snorted Bunter. "Think I'm going to chuck away millions of pounds? No fear!"

"It's not yours!" snapped Wharton. "And I dare say it never was really Jarvis's! He's not a man to come by such sums honestly. How could he?"

"But I'm blessed if I see where Bronx comes in, all the same!" said Bob Cherry. "It's still a giddy mystery. Why did he pick Jarvis to get after? Lots of millionaires. Why Jarvis specially?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he has some claim on the money," answered Harry. "He's a lawless scoundrel, but he hasn't struck me as a man who would be a thief. Jarvis may have robbed him, for all we know."

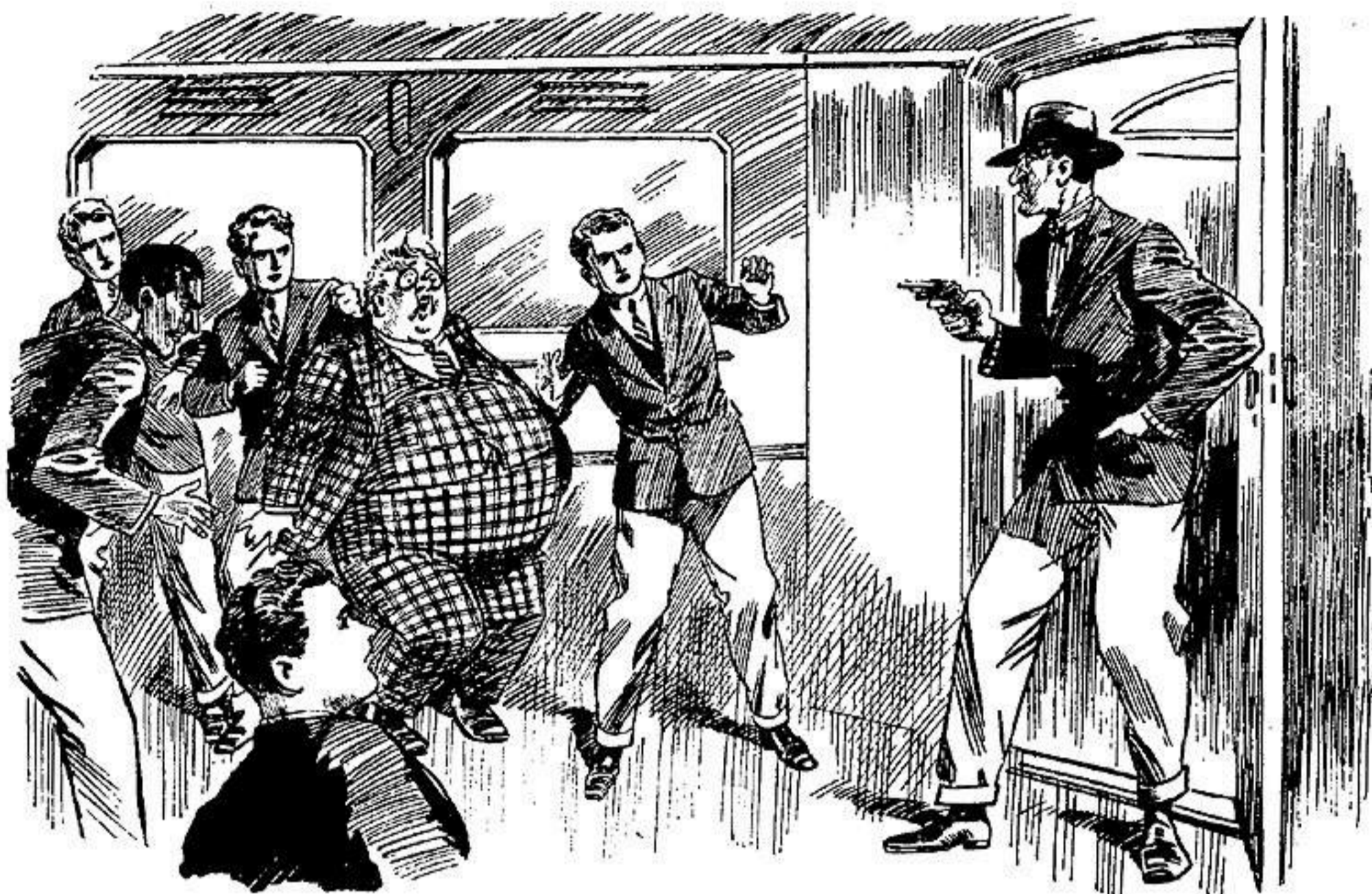
"Oh crumbs!"

"Rot!" said Bunter. "Rubbish! The fact is, Jarvis said at the time that he was making over the money to me because he wanted nothing better than to serve me as a valet, and, after all, it's natural enough—"

"You blithering idiot!" roared Bob.

"Beast!"

"The best thing you can do, Bunter,



"Stick 'em up!" came the cool, menacing voice of the gangster from the doorway to the plane's cabin. Harry Wharton & Co. spun round in amazement, and Billy Bunter gave a terrified squeak. It was a hold-up in mid-air!

is to chuck the whole thing," said Harry.

"I'll watch it!" said Bunter.

"You can't keep the money without keeping Jarvish, as you said yourself."

"Well, I'll keep him. I'll jolly well keep him in order, too!" said Bunter. "You fellows stand by me and it will be all right. You see, I can't sack Jarvish without losing the money. But if he sacks himself, I'm all right."

"He won't!"

"Perhaps he will if we keep on kicking him!" suggested Bunter hopefully. "You fellows kick him jolly hard, you know, every time you see him—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And I'll punch him in the eye every time he comes near me," went on Bunter.

"Great pip!"

"Don't you think he'll get fed-up and sack himself in the long run?" asked the fat billionaire, blinking at the astonished chums of the Retnove. "I think it very likely myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The seriousness of the situation was quite broken up by Bunter's remarkable suggestion for dealing with Jarvish. The juniors roared.

"Well, I think it's a jolly good idea," said Bunter. "You can cackle, but I think it's a winner. Let's all kick him all over the shop. See?"

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

Bunter rang for Jarvish.

But he rang in vain. Jarvish did not come. That dramatic method of Bunter's was unavoidably postponed.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The "Goods"!

M OONLIGHT glimmered on Naples and its beautiful bay. The Hotel Barcolini blazed with lights, and the strains of the orchestra floated out into the soft,

starry Southern night. But in the park-like grounds surrounding the huge hotel the shadows were deep.

A lean man who clambered over a high fence and dropped within, skulked in shadows, unseen. "Tiger" Bronx with a scowling face stared towards the lighted building as he picked his way among trees and flower-beds.

He stopped in an open space where a strange huge shape stood black against the moonlight.

It was the Kingfisher plane.

The Hotel Barcolini had its own landing ground in its spacious park; and the Kingfisher had landed there to remain till the Greyfriars party resumed their aerial trip.

Bronx stood staring at the plane with knitted brows. No one was on the watch by the machine; it was safe enough in the private drome of the Barcolini. The crew, which consisted only of the two pilots and the steward, had nothing to do till the plane took off again. That, however, was likely to be soon, as Bronx knew. He had little doubt that now Bunter had seen him in Naples the fat billionaire would give orders for departure. It only needed a sight of Tiger Bronx to set Bunter tripping again. And the gangster knew that if he was to cinch the fat gink before he left Naples, probably he had only that one night to work in.

A shadow moved in the moonlight; and Tiger Bronx promptly ducked out of sight under one of the huge wings.

A rather saturnine-looking figure came along the field from the direction of the hotel building.

Bronx's slits of eyes glittered as he recognised Jarvish.

The valet approached the door of the aeroplane cabin. He was about to ascend the steps when Bronx stopped out of his cover.

Jarvish gave a violent start as the

tall shadow fell across him in the moonlight. He caught his breath.

Bronx grinned.

"I guess you don't want to be skeered, you geck," he said contemptuously. "I ain't eating you, Jarvish! You ain't my game now. That fat gink Bunter's my game—he sure is my mutton with the wool on."

"Keep out of sight!" muttered Jarvish. "Step into the plane—there's nobody on board at present."

"Sure!" assented Bronx.

He followed the valet up into the cabin. Jarvish did not switch on the lights. They peered at one another in the shafts of moonlight that fell in at the windows.

The gangster's lip curled with contempt. Jarvish was trembling; though it was by his own contriving that the ruffian was there. The mere presence of the man from Chicago sent a chill of dread through the valet's pusillanimous heart. He feared the man with a deep fear.

"Waal, I guess I'm here," grunted Bronx. "You got me on the phone, and I'm sure here! Quit shivering, you geck—I ain't going to bite you." He stared at the lighted hotel from the cabin window. "I guess the gink's there, what?"

"He is there, and will not stir out of doors again, till he steps into the plane!" answered Jarvish. "You've failed—and frightened him off once more."

"Then he's quitting?"

"My master," said Jarvish, with a world of venom in his voice as he uttered the words, "has given me instructions to prepare for flight at dawn. He is leaving Naples and returning to England."

"Search me!" grunted the gangster. "I guess I'd rather he stayed in foreign

parts—too many cops about in the Old Country."

"The school holidays are near their end," said Jarvis. "And his friends seem to have persuaded him to return. They have learned from him some things that I did not wish to come to their knowledge; and now that they know that his money came from me, they dislike the idea of any of it being spent on their account."

"I guess you been listening to their talk!" grinned Bronx.

"Quite so!" assented Jarvis. "I have heard a discussion in which the matter was settled. It would suit me admirably if they left him; but he is too afraid to be left; and as they intend to return home he has decided to do the same. He does not feel safe without them."

"I guess he's O.K. there!" said Bronx. "But for them young geeks I'd have had him half a dozen times." He stared from the window again. "Then I got to get him to-night, or not at all."

"You cannot get near him in the Hotel Barcolini," answered Jarvis. "He is in such a state of funk that it is impossible. Two of the boys have beds in his room and the doors are locked. Even with my help, you could do nothing without an alarm being raised."

The gangster gave an angry grunt. "I got to get him!" he growled. "If he gets away in the plane in the morning that lets me out."

"I have charge of the baggage-room on the plane," said Jarvis. "The key is in my keeping."

Bronx peered at him. "Meaning?" he asked.

Jarvis wiped a clot of perspiration from his sleek brow.

"Matters are getting to a climax," he said. "The present state of affairs cannot continue. It has, in fact, become impossible. Shakespeare has observed that desperate diseases require desperate remedies. You've got nerve."

The gangster laughed. "I'll say so!" he agreed.

"Nerve enough to stow yourself away on the plane and take the chance of getting matters into your own hands?"

"Search me!" Jarvis rubbed his perspiring sleek hands together.

"That is the only way now!" he said. "I believe that in your rather remarkable career as a gangster in Chicago you have held up the staff of a bank at the pistol's point. It will be no new experience for you, though the conditions will be new."

"You've said it."

"I shall see the baggage stowed before any of the crew or passengers are about; the door will be locked; and the key lost—if inquired for. Nobody will have the faintest suspicion that you are in the baggage-room."

"By the great horned toad!" said Tiger Bronx, his eyes glistening. "I guess this is the real goods."

"You've nerve enough to handle it?"

"I should smile."

Jarvis looked at him in something like wonder. With every kind of unscrupulous rascality in his nature he had neither nerve nor courage. He found it difficult to understand how any man could have nerve enough to stage a hold-up on a plane three thousand feet above the earth; where an accident meant sudden and terrible death to all on board.

But though he could not understand it, he knew that Bronx could and would carry out such a desperate scheme, and would be glad of the chance. That was enough for him.

"So that's why you phoned me to meet

up with you here to-night?" said the Tiger, grinning.

"That is it! You can conceal yourself in the baggage-room now, and I will lock you in. Nothing can be suspected."

"It's sure the goods!" repeated the gangster. "Once well away in the sky I'll handle the game! I guess the pilot will steer where I want, with the muzzle of a gun to his ear! Just a few."

Jarvis shuddered at the thought of it.

"But I'll say I'm sure surprised at you!" went on the Tiger. "Where'd you pick up the nerve, Jarvis? Say anything goes amiss you'll be in as much danger as any other boob in the bunch."

"I shall not be on the plane!" said Jarvis.

The Tiger gave a contemptuous snort.

"I sure might have guessed that one!" he sneered.

"My master is anxious to part with me," said Jarvis venomously. "I shall allow him to do so—when he starts. I shall remain behind."

The Tiger looked at him.

"I'll mention that I'm durned a few if I spot your game, Jarvis," he said. "I'm making use of you, just as you're making use of me. But I ain't spotted where you come in. You're a cunning lobo-wolf—look at the way you twisted round Old Man Shook, and got him to leave you a life interest in his big fortune—leaving out his own nephew—that's me. Me, the only relation he had in the wide world—and all the dollars going to you, for your lifetime. I guess it didn't take you long to savvy that I should go gunning after you, Jarvis, and give the dollars a chance to get where they belonged. But—now you've fixed it on that fat gink Bunter, you've got him between you and me—but if I get him, where do you come in?"

Jarvis did not answer that question. What had occurred to Harry Wharton had not yet, evidently, occurred to the gangster's mind. And Jarvis was certainly not likely to tell him where he expected to "come in."

"Anyhow, this suits me fine!" said Bronx as the valet did not speak. "You got something dirty and tricky up your sleeve; but that cuts no ice. I guess I'm on to this!"

"That's settled, then?"

"It's sure a cinch! I'll say it's the opossum's eyelids!" answered Bronx. "I'll tell a man that it's the hippopotamus' side-whiskers!"

When, ten minutes later, Bunter's "man" walked back to the hotel, there was a hidden occupant of the plane standing in the park of the Barcolini. And that hidden occupant was not likely to be discovered till the plane was in the clouds the following morning. And then—

Of what would happen then, Jarvis would not be a witness; he would be safe on terra firma, while the gangster was "holding up" the crew of the plane in the clouds. As the rascally valet had said, desperate diseases required desperate remedies; and this plan, desperate as it was, could not fail—so far as Jarvis could see! He rather forgot the old adage that there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bumps for a Billionaire!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. strolling in the park-like grounds of the Hotel Barcolini the following morning, stopped, as Billy Bunter rolled up.

They had breakfasted and gone out, leaving Bunter still at it—breakfast

being a rather long process with Bunter.

That morning the Kingfisher was to take off to start on the return journey. The baggage was on board—packed away under the supervision of James Jarvis. The two pilots and the steward were on the plane, and all was ready—when the passengers were ready.

Bunter was grinning as he came up.

"It's all right!" he announced.

"Which and what?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"He's sacked!"

"Jarvis!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes!" Bunter chuckled. "I say, I chucked a boot at him, and landed him on the side of the head! He, he, he!"

The Famous Five grinned. Since the fat billionaire had started to make James Jarvis tired of being in his service, there was no doubt that the sleek valet had had rather a rotten time.

Whatever his motive for sticking to Bunter it seemed improbable that he could keep it up indefinitely in face of Bunter's extraordinary methods of making him "come unstuck."

"Mean to say he's given you notice?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Well, not exactly!" admitted Bunter.

"But he says that, as I do not seem to desire his services any longer he will remain behind when we leave Naples, and he hopes that I will think over it."

"Good egg!" said Bob. "So long as he remains behind, it's all right! We shall be shut of him! As for you thinking over it, you can't do that!"

"Why not?" asked Bunter.

"You've nothing to do it with!" explained Bob.

"You silly ass!" roared the fat billionaire.

"Then Jarvis won't be coming on the plane?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No! He's fed-up with my chucking boots at him!" grinned Bunter. "I told you it was a jolly good idea! I've got rid of the brute! There's only one real difficulty—it's practically impossible for me to travel without a valet!"

"Eh!"

"You see, I'm not like you fellows," explained Bunter. "I'm accustomed to the decencies of life! I've always been waited on hand and foot! I've often told you fellows about the crowd of liveried menials at Bunter Court—"

"You howling idiot!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"If that's the only difficulty, we can manage to pull through somehow!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Well, it's a bit of a fix," said Bunter.

"Of course I could engage an Italian valet here, but I don't trust these foreigners. The only thing for it, that I can see, is that you fellows should do some valeting for me till we get to England and I can engage a new man."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Not a bad idea, is it?" said Bunter, blinking at the astounded juniors through his big spectacles. "You could whack it out—it would be rather a lot, perhaps, for one fellow! You can brush the clothes, Wharton—"

"I can brush the clothes!" repeated Harry, dazedly.

"Yes—and Bob can look after the boots—"

"I—I—I can look after the b-b-boots!" stammered Bob Cherry.

"Nugent can help me dress and all that—he's the handiest of the lot—and if he's careful and painstaking, I shall be satisfied."

Frank Nugent seemed deprived of speech. He just gazed at Bunter.

"Johnny and Inky can make themselves useful generally," went on Bunter. "If you all play up and do

your duty, you know, I don't see that I shall miss Jarvis an awful lot, till I get a new man! See?"

For a long moment the Famous Five gazed at the happy Bunter! Then, as if moved by the same spring, they hurled themselves upon him.

The Greyfriars billionaire smote the gravel path with a smite that made the gravel fly in showers.

"Yaroooh!" he roared, as he hit Italy.

"Bump him!"

"Yoooooop!"

"Scrag him!"

"Burst him!"

"Rag him bald-headed!"

"I say, you fellows—yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter. "I say—whoop! Oh crikey! Help! Fire! Murder! Yarooooop!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Give him some more!"

"Bump the fat blighter!"

Bump, bump!

"Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "Wharrer you cutting up rusty for, you beasts? Oh crumbs! Yaroooooh!"

Bump, bump!

"I say, you fellows——"

Bump!

"Oh, scissors! I say—yarooo-hoop!" raved the Greyfriars billionaire.

"Leggo! Oh, jiminy! Wharrer you up to, you beasts?"

"Valeting!" explained Bob Cherry. "This is how we do our valeting, old fat bean! Give him some more valeting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Whooo-hooo-hooooop!"

A final bump left the fat billionaire gasping and sprawling on the gravel. He sprawled, and gasped, and gurgled, and roared, while the Famous Five walked away, leaving him to it.

It was ten minutes before Billy Bunter recovered sufficient breath to pick himself up and limp away. He gasped and gurgled as he went.

Whether Bunter the Billionaire could possibly travel without a valet or not, it was likely to be a long time before he requested the Famous Five to do any more valeting for him!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not to Plan!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH had a deeply thoughtful wrinkle in his dusky brow.

He had been silent for some time while his comrades chatted about the coming trip. The chums of the Remove had enjoyed the aerial voyage in the Kingfisher and their adventures in foreign lands, but they were not sorry to be homeward bound. The holidays were near their end, and the new term would soon be beginning at Greyfriars School, and their thoughts were turning to Greyfriars again—to Quelch in the Form-room, and football on Little Side, and ragging Coker of the Fifth, and keeping their end up with Loder, the bully of the Sixth, and rags in the Remove passage.

But Hurree Singh was thinking of other things. Bob Cherry gave him a lunge in the ribs at last.

"Penny for 'em, old black bean!" he said.

The Nabob of Bhanipur smiled a dusky smile.

"I have been thoughtfully reflecting," he said. "It strikes me as terrifically queer that the esteemed and execrable Jarvis is staying behind."

"Fed-up with Bunter!" said Bob.

"No wonder."

"Who wouldn't be?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The fed-upfulness is probably preposterous!" agreed the nabob. "But the queerfulness is also great. If the absurd Jarvis allows the idiotic Bunter to go without him, he is giving up his execrable plans—why?"

Wharton looked quickly at the nabob. "You think there's something behind it?" he asked.

"Exactfully."

"Well, I had a sort of idea of the same thing," admitted the captain of the Remove. "But I can't see anything in it. So long as Jarvis is with Bunter he plays his treacherous tricks,

was villain enough, he couldn't do it—the pilots are too jolly careful and watchful for that."

"No! But——" The nabob shook his dusky head again. "It is not that, my esteemed chum, but it is—something! If the execrable Jarvis stays behind, it is because he thinks that his rascally plans will be carried out better than by his coming in the plane."

"That's rather deep!" said Johnny Bull, doubtfully.

"I shouldn't wonder if Inky's right," said the captain of the Remove, slowly.

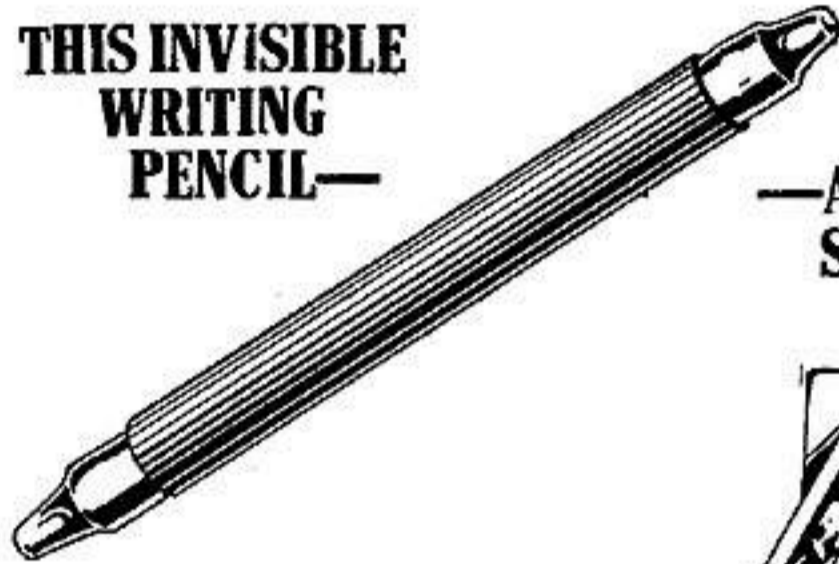
"But—if the rascal has some awfully deep game on, I don't see how we're going to spot it."

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but if he stays behind, we shall soon be hundreds of miles away from him, and what can he do then?"

"All clear, then!" said Frank Nugent.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh shook his head.

"We shall be safe from him in the plane, surely!" said Bob, puzzled.

"It is not the esteemed Jarvis's object for us to be safe from him, my worthy Bob! If the idiotic Bunter was safe with Jarvis staying behind, the execrable Jarvis would not stay behind."

"But—what?" said Harry, slowly. "He can't have fixed up anything to happen to the plane, Inky! Even if he

"Got any idea, Inky?" asked Nugent. "I think so!" said the nabob. "If Jarvis wished to come in the plane, I should suggest leaving him behindfully. As he wishes to stay behind, I suggest making him come in the plane."

The Co. stared at the dusky nabob for a moment or two. Then they grinned. To all of them Jarvis's unexpected decision to remain behind seemed deeply suspicious. They could not understand his letting Bunter get out of his hands; and now that the keen-witted nabob mentioned it, they had little doubt that this move was part of some cunning scheme. What that

scheme was, however, even Inky could not begin to guess.

But whatever it was, if it depended on Jarvish staying in Naples, it would be knocked on the head if Jarvish went in the airplane with the party. That was a certainty.

The Famous Five chuckled at the idea. There was something rather amusing in the sleek rascal laying his cunning plans, only to have them nipped unexpectedly at the last moment.

"Inky's right," said Wharton. "If the plotting rotter wants to do one thing, and we make him do the exact opposite, it will put paid to him, though I can't begin to imagine what he's up to."

"Right as rain," agreed Johnny Bull. "We've got to see that he comes in the plane—and that's that. If anything's going to happen to us after we take off, it can jolly well happen to Jarvish, too."

"Hear, hear!"
It was time to get on board now, and the juniors walked down to the Kingfisher. Their minds were made up. Anxious as they were to see the last of James Jarvish, he was coming on the trip—simply because he had planned not to do so. It only remained to see that he did.

The pilots were in, the steward was buzzing about the plane. All the baggage was on board now, and Jarvish was coming down the steps when the Famous Five arrived there.

He gave them a quiet, sly, furtive look, and stepped respectfully aside for them. Wharton looked at him, but there was no reading in the sleek, sly face the tortuous thoughts in the cunning mind behind it. Neither did the captain of the Remove care very much what Jarvish's scheme might be. Whatever it was, it was going to be kyboshed when the Kingfisher took off.

A number of the Barcolini Hotel people were gathered round to see the start. The manager himself came down to the plane with Billy Bunter, escorting the billionaire in the most impressive manner. What the manager thought of Bunter personally was not revealed; but there was no doubt what he thought of his billions.

The fat billionaire rolled into the passengers' cabin.

He frowned at the Famous Five there. Apparently he had not quite recovered from the bumping he had asked for, and duly received.

The steward came to close the door. The engine began to drone; Jarvish stood in the watching crowd winding his hands together, and there was an expression of eager anxiety on his face. It was clear that he was anxious to see the plane gone.

"Hold on a minute!" said Bob.

"Bunter, old bean—"

"Beast!"

"Call Jarvish in."

"Blow Jarvish!"

"Will you call him in?"

"No; I won't."

"Dear man, will you call him if I kick you, and keep on kicking you till he barges in?"

"Ow! Beast! Keep off, you ruffian! Jarvish!" squeaked Bunter. "Jarvish, come in here, blow you! Can't you come when you're called, you silly idiot? Are you going to keep me waiting?"

"Yes, sir; coming, sir!" answered Jarvish.

He came up the steps to the cabin to hear Bunter's last message, whatever it was.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton took him by his elbows, and perked him in through the doorway.

"You can close up now, steward," said Harry.

"Is Mr. Jarvish coming, sir?"

"Yes; he's coming."

"Very good, sir!"

The steward fastened the door.

Jarvish, surprised and alarmed, was wriggling in the grasp of the two juniors. But they had his arms in a secure grip.

"Let me go!" panted Jarvish.

"What does this foolery mean? I am not coming in the plane! You are aware—"

"You are," answered Harry coolly.

"And if you kick up a fuss, Jarvish, we'll stick you on the floor and sit on you!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Release me at once!" shouted Jarvish, struggling fiercely. "How dare you lay hands on me? I insist—"

"You can insist till you're black in the face if you like!" answered Harry.

"But you're coming, all the same."

"Release me!" shrieked Jarvish.

He was utterly alarmed and dismayed.

His plan was to leave the fat billionaire at the gangster's mercy; but by travelling in the plane he placed himself also at the mercy of the man from Chicago.

That did not suit Jarvish at all.

But he had no choice in the matter. As he struggled and wriggled he was pitched down on the floor, and Johnny Bull sat on his chest.

The steward stared at the peculiar scene. But it was no business of his, and he went along the gangway to his own quarters.

Jarvish wriggled wildly under Johnny Bull. His face was white, his eyes almost starting from his head.

His terror was so evident that the juniors could not possibly have any further doubts that he had planned some hidden treachery, though even yet they could not guess its nature.

"Let me go—let me go! Release me!" screamed Jarvish, as the drone of the engine deepened into a roar.

"I say, you fellows, what's the game?" demanded Bunter, as astonished as Jarvish by this unexpected move on the part of the Famous Five.

"What are you bagging Jarvish for? We don't want him with us!"

"On second thoughts, old bean," said Bob Cherry, "we've decided that you can't possibly travel without a valet.

Suppose you wanted somebody to blow your nose for you, and there was nobody available?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Let me go!" shrieked Jarvish. "I refuse to go in the plane—I refuse—I will not go! I—I—"

"And why not?" asked Harry, looking the squirming rascal in the face.

"What rotten trick have you planned this time, you scoundrel, that we're upsetting by taking you?"

"I will not go! I—I—"

"You will!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The plane was taxiing along the ground now. It was too late for Jarvish to jump out, even if the juniors had released him. But they did not release him. Johnny Bull sat steadily and heavily on his chest, and the valet was safely pinned down. There was hardly a jolt as the plane left the ground.

"We're up!" said Bob.

Jarvish ceased to struggle. He lay panting, his smooth, sleek face spotted with perspiration and white as chalk.

Even when Johnny Bull rose from his chest he did not get up. He dragged himself to a sitting position, and then, as if his strength failed him, leaned against a seat, limp as a rag.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at him.

The crowd in the hotel grounds were tiny in the distance; the great hotel itself had sunk to a small size. The city of Naples and the great blue bay were spread out like a map. The plane was fairly off—started on its long journey.

And that fact had evidently overwhelmed James Jarvish with terror and desperation.

It was not "air funk." He had travelled in the plane before with perfect calmness. It was not merely chagrin at the defeat of his secret scheme—whatever that was. It was terror that convulsed his pallid face, and the juniors wondered. Obviously Hurree Singh had been right—some secret plan had been defeated by forcing Jarvish to travel in the plane.

But there was more to it than that. His rage and resentment were comprehensible enough. But why that overpowering fear?

"You unutterable rascal!" said Harry Wharton, at last. "What is it that you've planned this time? What are you afraid of?"

"There can't be anything wrong with the plane," said Bob. "He can't have done anything of that kind."

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

"But what—?" said Nugent.

"What is it, you scoundrel?" asked Harry. "You treacherous rogue, what is it you've planned for us, and got landed in yourself?"

Jarvish did not answer. He sagged limply against the seat, and the juniors, in wonder and disgust, turned from him and left him there.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Stick 'Em Up!"

"**A**DDIO, mia bella Napoli!" sang Bob Cherry cheerfully, as the city of Naples faded away behind the Kingfisher.

It was a glorious September morning with a light wind, and hardly a cloud in the azure sky.

The plane was climbing fast to a height of three thousand feet, as the juniors ascertained by a glance at the altimeter on the wall.

Southern Italy was spread out below them, and the blue Tyrrhenian Sea, Capri and Ischia, dots in the distance, the smoke of Vesuvius fading away to the south.

It was going to be a long "hop" on the homeward way, no descent till Milan was reached, far away to the north.

The chums of the Remove would have enjoyed the trip to the full; nothing would have pleased them more. But every fellow had a sense of something impending.

Even Billy Bunter realised that there was some sort of trouble in the air, and although it was more than an hour since he had breakfasted he did not call to the steward for refreshments.

Jarvish still sat where he had sat at the start, leaning limply on the seat. The wretched man was obviously in such a state of hopeless funk that he was quite unable to pull himself together. It seemed as if his fear was so deep that it had paralysed his faculties.

Yet the cause of it was an utter mystery to the other passengers in the plane.



With a gasping howl, Tiger Bronx pitched headlong from the doorway of the plane, and Bob Cherry landed full on top of him. The rest of the Famous Five leaped after him, crashing down on the prostrate gangster.

The man was so treacherous, so false to the very core, that they would not have been surprised had it transpired that he had played some trick to endanger the plane. That would have accounted for his terror in being forced to travel in it.

But clearly it was not that! That magnificent Airways plane was in its usual perfect order and condition. Never had it flown more sweetly than it was flying now.

The pilots were in their places; the wireless aerial trailing; the steward in his pantry; the engines droning steadily. Like a graceful dragonfly, the big plane soared in the blue. There was no danger of that kind—the soaring plane was as safe as a railway train, or safer. Yet the wretched Jarvis lay supine with fear.

Again and again the juniors glanced at him. He did not meet their glances; he did not raise his eyes; he did not speak. They could have pitied him, but for the knowledge that his strange state was the result of his own secret and mysterious treachery. Something had been planned—and whatever it was Jarvis was now involved in it, as well as the Greyfriars party. But what was it? What could it be?

That there was a stowaway in the baggage-room was not likely to occur to anyone. Only Jarvis knew that.

Little did the juniors dream that, as the plane soared to the sky, a long-limbed, lean-faced man from Chicago examined a loaded revolver with sedulous care, and took a key from his pocket to let himself out of the room where the baggage was packed.

"What on earth is the matter with the brute?" asked Johnny Bull at last. "He's afraid of something—what?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, if there's any danger—"

"There can't be any danger!" said Nugent.

"That's all very well," grunted the Greyfriars billionaire. "But if there isn't any danger, what is Jarvis afraid of?"

"Ask us another, old fat bean!"

"I think perhaps we'd better go down," said Bunter uneasily.

Jarvis seemed to collect himself a little as he heard that. He made a movement and looked up.

"Let us descend!" he said huskily.

"There may yet be time before—"

He broke off.

"Before what?" asked Harry quietly.

Jarvis did not answer that question.

"It is for you to give orders, Master William," he said. "If you send instructions to the pilot to descend at the first possible landing place—"

"And why?" demanded Wharton.

"There is danger," said Jarvis desperately. "You are all in danger on the plane, I most of all. A thousand curses—"

"You can pack up all that!" said Wharton contemptuously. "Tell us what the danger is, you cur! Whatever it is, you have planned it! That's why we made you come! Tell us what it is!"

"I—I—I—"

A cool, drawling voice broke in:

"I'll say you needn't spill anything, Jarvis! I guess the guys will be wise to what's on, now!"

Jarvis gave a groan at the sound of that voice. He had known that there was no chance; that the gangster would emerge at a sign that the journey was to be abandoned. Bronx had not waited for that. He was here!

Harry Wharton & Co. spun round at the sound of the gangster's voice,

wondering whether they were dreaming.

Billy Bunter gave a terrified squeak. It was difficult for the Greyfriars fellows to believe their eyes.

Standing just within the passengers' cabin, with a revolver in his hand, was Tiger Bronx!

The revolver was lifted and aimed at the group in the cabin. The gangster's slits of eyes glittered over it.

"Bronx!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"The gangster!"

"My only hat!"

"So that's it!" said Harry Wharton between his teeth. "That's it—that scoundrel hid him on board, and—"

It was all clear now!

"Stick 'em up!" came the cool, menacing voice of the gangster. "I've got you covered, the whole bunch of you, and if this here little barker begins to bark, you sure won't know what hit you! Stick 'em up!"

The juniors stared at him blankly. The long lean figure was just within the cabin. He had come from the forward baggage-room, so where he stood he cut the passengers off from the steward and the pilots. They, obviously, were not yet aware that a stranger was on board the Kingsfisher.

The revolver in Bronx's hand was steady as a rock. His eyes had a deadly glitter in them.

"I'm saying stick 'em up!" he said menacingly.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"You scoundrel—"

"I'll mention that that's enough from you!" said the Tiger. "Get it clear, big boy! I'd hate to spill your juice over that nice polished floor, and I guess I'm not honing to hurt any guy here present. But if you sing out

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,339.

PERIL IN THE AIR!

(Continued from page 13.)

a single yaup, or put across any trouble, I'll sure pot you one after another, like you was a bunch of partridges! You get me?"

The Greyfriars fellows clenched their hands. In every mind of the five was the same thought—what chance was there of making a rush, in defiance of the levelled revolver?

But there was no chance, and they knew it.

If the gangster was desperate enough to shoot, he could sweep the cabin with bullets, and not one of them would have reached him alive.

And that he would shoot was clear from the hard, grim set of his lean face and the merciless glitter in his slits of eyes. This was the last throw of the dice for Tiger Bronx, and he was out on business! As he had said, he did not want to shoot; but if he had to he would—without ruth or pity! There was sharp death in that levelled revolver, and the eyes that glittered over it. And as the juniors hesitated to obey his order, a savage, snarling look came over the lean face—the tigerish look of the gunman resolving to kill!

"Last time of asking!" said the gangster between his teeth. "You sticking 'em up—or—"

Another moment, and hot lead would have been whizzing! There was no help for it, and the Famous Five of Greyfriars, with rage in their faces, lifted their hands above their heads.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Hold-up in the Clouds!

TIGER BRONX gave one swift, sharp glance over his lean shoulder. He had to be watchful for danger behind, as well as in front. It was no light matter for a man to "hold up" a plane in flight single-handed. Only an iron-nerved desperado could have dreamed of it. But the gangster was doing it—and he was getting away with it. Nobody but he on board the Kingfisher was armed. And the deadly weapon in his hand, and his ruthless determination to use it if necessary, made him master of the situation.

That swift glance over his shoulder told him that, for the moment at least, there was no danger in the rear. The chief pilot was at the wheel far forward, the second pilot with him. The steward was in his pantry—a clinking of washing glasses could be heard when there was a lull in the drone of the engines. And they were all the crew.

Instantly the Tiger's gleaming eyes returned to the bunch before him—the Famous Five with their hands up; Jarvis crawled in abject terror; and Billy Bunter glued to his seat, incapable of movement.

"Keep 'em up!" snarled Bronx. "I guess I ain't honing to shoot! But if I fire one shot, you guys, I guess I ain't leaving any jay alive on this

plane to tell the world about it! Nope!"

"Oh crikey!" moaned Bunter.

"If a fellow had a chance——" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Keep quiet!" said Bronx. "I got to handle the rest after I've handled you, and I keep on telling you that I don't want to shoot. Jarvis!"

The wretched valet gave him a haggard look. He received a savage grin in reply.

"I'll say I never banked on seeing you here, Jarvis! They got wise to it that you was double-crossing them somehow, and made you come!"

Jarvis muttered indistinctly.

"I'll mention that I'm powerful glad to see you," grinned the gangster. "I'll say it's the opossum's eyelids! I got the fat gink—and I got you, too! Get up!" Jarvis crawled to his feet.

With his left hand Bronx drew a coil of cord from his pocket, that he had brought from the baggage-room.

He tossed it to the valet.

"You want to cinch them guys in that rope, and you want to do it quick, and you want to do it safe," he said. "I guess I could have handled the job on my own, but you being here makes it easier, a few. I guess you can wait on me, James, like you used on my old uncle, Old Man Shook. Get to it!"

Jarvis did not speak. He seemed incapable of speech. He took the cord, uncoiled it, and proceeded to knot it round the wrists of the Greyfriars juniors.

They breathed hard, but resistance was impossible under the watchful eyes and levelled revolver of the gangster. The game was in his hands, and the juniors could only submit and hope for a turn of fortune.

Knot after knot was tied; and the valet made every knot secure. He dared not do otherwise, even if he wished.

In a minute, or less, the Famous Five were helpless prisoners, their wrists bunched together and securely bound.

"I guess that lets you out!" remarked Bronx. "Now stuff something into their bully beef traps, James. Don't you young guys worry any. I'm jest saying your lives for you. If you ain't quiet I got to shoot."

Jarvis, in trembling silence, gagged the five juniors, one after another. Then the gangster lowered the revolver and stepped towards them and carefully examined both the bonds and the gags.

He gave a nod of satisfaction.

"You're a real good servant, James!" he said, with malicious mockery. "You sure know how to do like you're told! I guess I may take you on as valet when Old Man Shook's money comes back where it belongs."

Jarvis licked his dry lips.

"Now tie up that fat gink. I guess he ain't frightfully dangerous, but I'm sure taking no chance."

"I—I say——" moaned Bunter.

"Don't spill anything!" rapped Bronx.

And the fat billionaire quavered into silence.

Jarvis tied his fat hands behind him and inserted a gag into his extensive mouth. Billy Bunter leaned back in his seat, blinking at the gangster through his big spectacles, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a serpent.

Tiger Bronx slipped the revolver into his pocket. He cut a length from the cord and made a gesture to Jarvis to put his hands together. A few moments, and the valet was bound and gagged, like the rest.

The gangster grinned as he met the

silent fury in the looks of the Famous Five.

"I'll say this is pie, so far!" he remarked. "Jarvis, you big stiff, it was surely the big idea to stow me away on this plane! I'll say it was the opossum's eyelids, and then some!"

He touched the bell for the steward.

The prisoners could only watch him in silence. They knew what he was going to do, but they could do nothing to prevent him, or to put the man on his guard. Indeed, it was, perhaps, better for the steward to be taken by surprise and made a prisoner, for there was not the slightest doubt that the desperado would shoot, if gentler measures failed.

The steward came into the cabin—to meet a muscular grip that twirled him over on the floor.

As the astounded man opened his mouth for a startled yell the muzzle of a revolver clicked against his teeth.

"Park it!" said Tiger Bronx.

That yell was never uttered.

The steward, in the gangster's grip, gazed up at him, bemused with amazement. Bronx jammed a gag into his mouth, dragged his hands together, and tied them. Then he rose, leaving the man lying on the floor, staring up at him with dazed eyes.

For a full minute the lean man from Chicago stood, breathing rather hard.

So far it was, as he had said, "pie." The hold-up in the clouds had been a perfect success—easier, indeed, than the holding-up of a bank in Chicago, an exploit with which the Tiger was more familiar. But the most difficult and dangerous part of his task still lay ahead. To handle the pilots, on whom the safety of the plane and the lives of all on board depended, was a task which even an iron-nerved and reckless desperado might have shrunk. But Tiger Bronx did not shrink from it.

He glanced at the altimeter. It registered 3,500 feet.

The Kingfisher was cleaving the vast dome of blue, a few fleecy clouds floating below.

He glanced from the windows to see the dark Apennines on one hand, the blue Mediterranean on the other.

The expression on his lean face grew hard and dark, set and desperate. With the revolver gripped in his hand, he left the cabin and disappeared forward.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

They could not speak, but their looks were expressive. The gangster was gone to deal with the pilots! If they gave trouble—as certainly they would, if they had the ghost of a chance—what would happen then? A plane uncontrolled, whirling downward in the death-spin! With beating, thumping hearts they listened, and every second seemed to drag by slowly at endless length.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Africa-Bound!

THE pilot sat at the wheel. His face was calm, almost expressionless, but his eyes intent. He looked almost as if the steering of a giant aeroplane through the skies was no more than driving a bus from Victoria to Golders Green.

The second pilot was bent over a map, tapping off points on it with his forefinger. Both of them were feeling content. Weather was perfect, wind favourable, engines running like a sweet song. Almost the length of the long Italian peninsula was to be covered in that "hop," but they had got away well, and all was going smoothly. Neither of the men looked in the least as if flying

was anything like an adventure to them. But adventure—wild adventure—was close at hand.

The second pilot, leaning over the map, suddenly leaned farther over it, slumping.

He was senseless.

He did not know what had hit him. The hard, metal butt of a revolver had rapped from behind, so suddenly and sharply that he was knocked insensible before he knew that anything was happening.

With a man to handle who was handling the wheel, it was not possible for Tiger Bronx to proceed with the usual gangster formula: "Stick 'em up!" That was his game in the passengers' cabin; here, it was useless. That sudden, sharp tap relieved him of one enemy at the start. The stunned man was safe for ten minutes, at least. And that was that!

The man at the wheel made a movement, and as he did so the muzzle of a revolver was pressed behind his ear.

"Keep moving!" said Tiger Bronx. "Carry on, bo!"

It said much for the pilot's iron nerve that he did not fail his machine in that terrible and unexpected moment.

That such a thing as this could happen, he would have said, if he had been asked, was impossible.

Never was a man more surprised and taken aback.

Impossible as it seemed, unheard of, undreamt of, it was happening. He was "held up" by a man with a gun as he steered a plane at 3,500 feet, with clouds drifting below.

Even Bronx might have wondered, at that thrilling moment, whether he had not taken too much risk, and whether the pilot might not drop the machine into a spin that spelt death for all on board.

If so, his doubt would have been unfounded.

Taken by surprise, amazed, astounded, enraged, the pilot carried on as calmly and coolly as a bus-driver casually

spoken to by a passenger. There were lives at stake, all depending on the steady nerve of the Airways pilot; and that nerve did not flicker for a fraction of a second. Indeed, the expression on his cool, indifferent face hardly altered.

The gangster drew a deep breath.

For a second the pilot glanced at him. That was all. He could not deal with the gangster without throwing away all the lives on board. Alone in the plane, he might have acted differently. But it was "passengers first." Life, not death, for the people in his charge, was the over-riding rule of the Airways pilot.

The pistol-muzzle pressed lightly behind his ear. He knew that there was a finger on the trigger. He spoke, and his voice came clearly through the drone of the engines, in almost a casual drone.

"You hound!"

"Pack it up!" said Bronx. "Swearing sure won't buy you anything. You jumping to orders, big boy?"

(Continued overleaf.)



If you are in doubt over any Soccer problem, write to, "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and then watch for his reply in this weekly feature.

TRY A CHANGE!

SOMETIMES, when watching football matches, either as played by leading clubs or junior organisations, I find myself wondering how many people in this game could be properly described as square pegs in round holes. In other words, I wonder what proportion of footballers play in the position to which their particular football ability is best suited.

I fancy I have young players among my readers of the MAGNET to whom the same question has occurred from time to time. In my post-bag this week is a letter from a reader in which he tells me he is not sure whether right half-back is his best position, although he is playing there, and he asks me how he can put his theory to the test.

There is only one way, so far as I know, and that is to make experiments—play in other positions from time to time. Having made those experiments, then the thing to do is stick to the position in which the greatest measure of success is achieved, and the one in which the player feels most "at home."

Even the big football clubs are continually making experiments on this line—sometimes owing to force of circumstances, and sometimes because either the player himself, or the manager of the club, thinks that a change would be all to the good.

At the start of the present season Wolverhampton Wanderers converted a very good centre-half—Hollingworth—into a right full-back, and he immediately settled down well in the new position.

In one of the practice games before the start Manager "Billy" Walker, of Sheffield Wednesday, told the players that for this particular game, they could choose their own positions. I have not heard at any great discoveries were made by

this idea of letting the fellows play where they wanted to play rather than where the manager thought was best for them. But I do know plenty of footballers who have only found their best positions after considerable experiment.

Even in the Sheffield Wednesday side there is one player—Alf. Strango—who thought that he had the best chance of making good as a forward. In the front line of attack, however, he made very little progress. Then he was converted into a wing half-back, and in that position has played many times for England.

Even apart from the mere object of finding the best position for a player, I am quite sure that an occasional switch is worth while. A half-back is none the worse for having a go in the forward line, because such experience will at least give him a better knowledge of the sort of passes a forward likes to receive.

USE BOTH FEET

A GAIN, the very best cure for a failing which afflicts many footballers is to make a switch of positions. I refer to the fellows who have only one leg for kicking purposes. Every real footballer should be able to use both feet effectively, but there are plenty, even in the top class, who cannot be said to have reached the ideal in this respect. A very good plan would be for outside rights to have some games on the left wing, and vice versa.

Sam Hardy, who became the greatest goalkeeper we have had in recent times, started his football career as a centre-forward. There are just two bits of advice which I would hand out to my readers in regard to these experiments, however. The first is this: don't switch about from one position to another for the mere sake of change. Switch, if you like, till you have found your best position, and then stick to it. In this game of football, as in other things, it is possible to become a "Jack of all trades and master of none."

The other bit of advice is that a player cannot be quite sure whether a switch is likely to be a success or a failure as the result of the experience in one game.

"I have heard a lot since the start of the season," writes another "Magnetite" "about the scrapping of safety first methods by the leading teams, and hear that more and more they are taking as their motto, Attack the best defence. Do you agree with this?"

In a way I do believe that attack is the best defence in football. After all, if the players of one team are swarming round the other team's goal, the other fellows are not very likely to score goals themselves. That is certainly true, and I am all for attack.

On this head, however, it is also necessary to put in a word of warning. There must be certain players always on the look-out for a breakaway, and in position to check such an effort by the opposition.

ON THE WATCH

LET me just quote one case from the present season to illustrate this point. When Chelsea were playing Derby County at Derby on the opening day of the season the Pensioners were awarded a penalty kick. A full-back of Chelsea was called up to take the kick. Instead of scoring, as, of course, all good footballers should do with a penalty kick, he sent the ball straight at the Derby goalkeeper. This fellow saved, kicked the ball out, and forthwith the Derby County forwards ran down and scored a goal.

What had happened was easy for all to see. When the Chelsea full-back moved up the field to take the penalty kick, no member of the team fell back to take his place in the defence. And, during the breakaway which followed, the Chelsea defence, lacking a full-back who was up the field, was easily beaten. So it is wise to be on the watch even when attacking.

In the foregoing is one reason why a one-time rather popular habit has been dropped. Goalkeepers were often called up to take penalty kicks. They don't do it now, because if a penalty kick taken by a goalkeeper failed, and the ball was suddenly rushed to the other end, there would be no goalkeeper to hold the fort.

"LINESMAN."

"Hardly!"

"I'll spell it out," said Bronx. "You start anything, and you get yours. I've handled a plane before, and I guess I'll have a shot at handling this packet—though she's not the sort I've ever steered. If anything happens we all go over Jordan in a bunch—you first. Get me?"

"Quite!"

"You've got hoss-sense!" said the Tiger approvingly, "and I'll say you've got sand! Your side-pardner here has gone to sleep a few; but don't you worry any—he ain't hurt a whole lot. I guess I had to get him quiet while I talked turkey to you, bo!"

"I'd like to meet you on land!" remarked the pilot casually. "Perhaps I shall, after this! I'll wring your neck like a chicken's."

"You'll sure be welcome, big boy, if I let you do it!" agreed Bronx. "Jest now, I'm the man holding the gun, and you're at the wrong end of the gun! You got that clear?"

"Quite, thanks."

"If I have to spatter your thinkables over that wheel, I shall sure be sorry—but that's the programme if you start anything. Play peaceful like a good little man, and you'll find me as nice as clam pie."

"You blighter!" said the pilot.

His glance was deflected for a second below. The steel rim pressed a little harder behind his ear.

"Forget it!" said Bronx softly. "We're not going down, big boy! I guess you're banking on hitting Milan this hop?"

"Yes."

"Wash it out! Milan ain't in this picture!"

No answer. But the pilot twisted to look over his shoulder, and Tiger Bronx grinned.

"All safe!" he said. "Tied up like turkeys for Christmas! I began at the other end of the plane, bo."

"If you've hurt anybody—"

"I ain't even stroked their hair the wrong way! All tied up tidy!" said Bronx. "I'm aiming to get through this trip without spilling any vinegar. I sure ain't no baby-killer. Treat me well, and you can feed from my hand."

"What do you want?"

"Jest a trip! I ain't got no curiosity to see Milan! I've got a hunch for flying the Mediterranean. You playing up?"

"Unless I get a chance to twist your neck."

Bronx chuckled.

"You're sure the kind of guy I like," he said. "You got a nerve on you, and I'll say you ain't no slouch. Say good-bye to Italy, boy, and keep me in a good temper."

The passengers in the cabin felt the machine banking.

The feelings of the pilot, with the gun behind his ear, and his assistant lying senseless almost at his feet, were deep. But his feelings did not count. Lives were in his charge, and he had to preserve them. He could only preserve them by carrying on.

Harry Wharton & Co. bunched together in their bonds in the cabin aft, staggered to the window and looked out.

Very soon they saw the blue Mediterranean below the plane.

The shores of Italy were sinking to the eastward. They realised that they were not likely to see Milan that day; if at all.

Tiger Bronx was in command of the plane! The change of course made that clear to them.

Where was he taking them?

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,389.

They could not guess.

They could only wait in tense anxiety; thankful, at least, that there had been no shooting and that the plane was not spinning earthward to destruction.

For a long ten minutes no word was spoken on the plane. Tiger Bronx was silent, watching the sea below.

There was a faint moan from the man on the floor. The assistant pilot was recovering consciousness.

Bronx's slits of eyes gleamed down at him.

"Carry on!" he said quietly. "I guess I'm going to tie up that guy; but you want to remember that the gun's ready; and it sure will talk sudden if you try any shenanigan."

The muzzle was withdrawn from the pilot's head. He drew a deep, deep breath and looked round.

But the revolver remained in Bronx's hand as he took a cord with his left to bind the stunned man and he did not turn his back. One hostile movement would have drawn a shot; and whether Bronx could have replaced the pilot in time to save the machine from falling into the sea was a very doubtful question. There was nothing doing; and the pilot, with set teeth, carried on.

Swiftly, Bronx knotted the cord on the wrists of the assistant pilot. The man's eyes opened with a wild stare. But he was safe now; and the gangster gave him no further heed.

He lounged closer to the pilot, who sat like a statue, his hands firm on the wheel.

"You was aiming to hit Milan!" he drawled. "I guess I ain't ever hooped it, but I'll say that was about a four-hundred mile hop."

The pilot nodded.

"Africa's sure nearer than that, if you slew your bus round to the south and give Sicily a miss on your left."

Another nod.

"I'm giving you a shorter trip than you aimed for, bo! You want to hop over the Mediterranean—this bit of it that they call the Tyrrhenian Sea—and give Tunis the once-over."

"Tunis!" repeated the pilot.

"You ain't dropping in at a drome there!" grinned the gangster. "Nope! You're hitting the desert behind Tunis! I guess I've been there in my time, and sort of know my way about. I'll say that I travelled with my uncle, Old Man Shook, when I was a good boy, and he wasn't an old curmudgeon, and we did the sights from Tunis to Biskra! Yep! You figure that you could hit the desert t'other side of Biskra?"

No reply.

"I guess you can—and I calculate you will!" said Bronx. "This here plane ain't going down till you do, big boy. I've sure got a fancy for African deserts, and I'm the sort of guy that has to be let have his fancy. You get me?"

The pilot did not speak.

"We're all in the same basket," said Bronx. "If anything goes, we all go! I'm sure taking the chance! If I have to sit where you're sitting, bo, and steer this plane, you won't be watching me do it! You'll be dropping in on the fishes down there in the pesky water. Mebbe we'd all foller you—I guess I'm ready to take the chance! What about you?"

The gun pressed the pilot's neck.

He breathed hard.

"You got a kick coming?" demanded Bronx.

"Not now! I've got lives to save!" said the pilot quietly. "But if you think you can get away with the plane, you're making a mistake. You'd be wise to let me land you and go while the going's good."

The gangster laughed.

"That ain't what I'm here for," he said. "I guess I'm going to work this rifle and come out at the big end of the horn. Sit tight!"

Tiger Bronx cut lengths of rope and bound the pilot to his seat, taking care to fasten the knots behind him out of his possible reach. Then he strolled coolly along the plane; master of the Kingfisher, and—for the present, at least—monarch of all he surveyed! He hummed a tune as he went.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. looked at the gangster as he came back into the passengers' cabin aft.

From the fact that the aeroplane was swinging to the south and that Italy had disappeared save for a blur of mountain-tops to the east, they knew that he was master of the situation.

The grin on his lean, hard face showed them that matters were going entirely to his satisfaction.

Deep as their anger was, they could not help feeling a sort of respect for the nerve of a man who had carried out such a desperate enterprise, at more than three thousand feet above the earth.

He had risked all the lives on board; and his own as carelessly as the others.

He gave them a nod and a grin as he met their eyes. Carelessly he took away the gags that had kept them silent. That alone showed that he had now nothing to fear.

"You rotter!" was the first remark, made by Johnny Bull.

"You terrific villain!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Billy Bunter, as soon as he had the use of his fat voice. "I say, you fellows— Oh crikey!"

Jarvis did not speak. He lay huddled and slumped, his sleek face colourless. Bronx looked down on him, grinning.

"Say, you big stiff, you enjoying this trip?" he asked. "It was surely a big idea to help me stow away on this here plane! You feeling gay about it?"

Jarvis gave a low groan. If ever a plotting rascal repented of his rascality, James Jarvis did just then.

"You 'uns made him come?" asked Bronx, glancing at the juniors.

"Yes," answered Harry. "We knew that he had some treacherous scheme on, and we made him take his share."

The Tiger chuckled.

"It was sure bright of you!" he said, "and I'll say it couldn't have worked out better! I guess James wouldn't have packed me among the baggage last night if he had known that he was coming on the plane."

"I fancy not!" said Harry, with a glance of contempt at the valet. "He's for it now, the same as we are! May we ask you where you are taking us, Mr. Bronx?"

"Sure!" said the gangster amiably. "It ain't no secret! I guess if you keep your peepers open, you'll see Africa afore long."

"Africa!" exclaimed the juniors breathlessly.

"Ever been back of Biskra?" asked Bronx.

"We had a holiday once, at Biskra, with my father," said Bob Cherry. "We've seen the country."

"Waal, you're going to see it again. Fine country—open spaces—call of the desert, and all that!" grinned Bronx. The lean man was evidently in a high good humour at his success. "We ain't



"Take that!" Billy Bunter squeezed the trigger of the soda-water syphon, and the syphon's contents swished with deadly accuracy full at the rascally Jarvis. Bunter's method of "sacking" his manservant was certainly novel!

dropping in near any of the French military posts—you won't see any white men. Heaps of Arabs, if you like 'em—sheiks and such! Not film sheiks—real sheiks with fleas!" He chuckled. "Jarvis knows the country—don't you, James? 'Member our last trip?"

The juniors stared at him.

"You've been there before with Jarvis?" exclaimed Bob.

"Sure! Ain't that all-fired gink let on that he was valet to my uncle, Old Man Shook?" asked Bronx.

This was news to the chums of the Remove. They had heard from Bunter that his man had once been valet to an American millionaire named Shook. But that Bronx was that millionaire's nephew they had never known or imagined.

"I'll say I was a good boy in them days!" said Bronx. "Apple of old uncle's eyes, and all that! We did the Europe trip together, and James was uncle's valet! I guess if I'd known then what a double-crossing treacherous lobo-wolf he was, I'd have dropped him somewhere in Africa, when we was doing the desert trip, for the lions to chew. Mebbe I will yet!"

Jarvis shuddered.

"I—I say, Mr. Bronx—" mumbled Billy Bunter.

"Spill it, fat boy!"

"I—I'll give you a thousand pounds if you'll let the pilot land us! I—I'll give you ten thousand," mumbled the Greyfriars billionaire.

"You don't say!" ejaculated Bronx sarcastically.

"I—I mean it," gasped Bunter. "I—I've got lots of money! I—I'll give you anything you like, to land us safe."

"I guess you're landing safe, in the desert back of Biskra," answered Bronx, "and I'll say you're coughing up

more'n the sum you mention, fat boy! You're coughing up every dollar and every cent that Jarvis has robbed me of."

"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. It seemed to them that they were going, at last, to see light on that strange mystery of the amazing wealth that had come to Bunter, the billionaire.

"Is that true, Mr. Bronx?" asked the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, quietly. "Is that where the money came from? We've learned that Bunter got it from Jarvis, but—"

"And where'd you figure Jarvis got it?" jeered Bronx. "You fancy he made millions by brushing coats and tying dress ties?"

"Hardly!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You figure that he saved it up out of his salary as a gent's gent?" demanded Bronx.

"No, but—"

"I guess I'll tell you the how of it if you ain't got wise to it," said the gangster. "I surely don't want you to figure that I'm a pesky bandit after another man's dust! Nope! I'll say that dust is mine—every dollar and every cent, if right was right! Yep! Ain't I Old Man Shook's only living relation—and his natural heir? Didn't he bring me up, making out that I was going to have all he left? I'll tell a man!"

"If that's the case, how the thump could Jarvis have got hold of it?" asked Bob Cherry. The Famous Five were very keenly interested in hearing Mr. Bronx's version of the strange story.

"I guess he twisted it out of old man Shook!" growled Bronx. "I'll say the old man was mad with me, and got his

pesky back up! Mebbe he had reason—and mebbe he hadn't—I'm no angel, not so's you'd notice it."

"We never took you for one, Mr. Bronx," said Bob blandly. "Rather the reverse, in fact." And the juniors grinned.

"It was that geek's doing, a whole lot of it," said Bronx. "He put the old man agin me, with his cunning ways—I guess you've noticed that he's a sly and twisting worm, yourselves. And being kept short of dollars, I'll own up I took 'em where I could, with a gun to help sometimes."

The juniors were getting a glimmering of the truth now. An old and crusty millionaire, in the hands of a cunning and plotting valet who had influence over him, with a nephew who had taken to bad ways and become a lawless rascal—that was the state of affairs.

Between Jarvis's cunning slyness on the one side, and the nephew's reckless ruffianism on the other, the old millionaire had cast off his only relative, instead of leaving him the fortune he had expected to inherit.

But Tiger Bronx, evidently, considered himself a wronged party in the transaction; making ample allowances for himself and none for Jarvis.

It seemed to the juniors that they were a pair of rascals of different kinds. But to Mr. Bronx, only Jarvis's rascality was apparent.

"So Old Man Shook makes a new will and leaves me a cold deck!" said Mr. Bronx. "I'll say he had billions! Biggest fortune ever made out of canning horse in Chicago! Dollars in heaps! Stacks! And where do I come in when the will's read after Old Man Shook kicked the bucket? Twenty

thousand dollars for me—I'll tell the world that that was the whole lot! Search me!"

Bronx paused to give the shivering Jarvish a glare.

"And the rest," he went on, "all left to Mr. Shook's faithful valet for faithful service and care—huh! Left to him for his life-time to come along to me afterwards! You get me?"

"Oh," ejaculated Wharton.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "No wonder Jarvish was scared when you got after him with a gun!"

The juniors understood now.

The whole thing was clear to them.

Jarvish had only a life interest in the Shook billions. It was no wonder that he trembled for his skin when the next heir was Tiger Bronx, who was so handy with a gun.

"I'll say," went on the Tiger, "that when I got wise to it I set out to look for James with a gun all ready to shoot him up! I figured that his life interest was going to be a short one!"

The wretched Jarvish wriggled.

"But I'm a soft-hearted cuss," added Mr. Bronx. "I oughter shot him up—but I couldn't pump lead into a shivering rabbit like that! No sir! I reckoned I'd cinch him instead, and make him hand over the billions peaceable—mebbe twisting his neck a little to help him on with the good work. I'll mention that I've had some experience in that line, and that a guy in my hands has always coughed up what was wanted after I'd attended to him a few! Yep! I'll tell a man I know how to work that kind of raffle."

He gave Jarvish another glare.

"Then he double-crosses me again!" he went on. "Making over the money to that fat gink Bunter for his life-time. That let me out! I got to get it off Bunter instead of off Jarvish! So I go gunning after the fat gink, and, but for you young jays, I'd have had him long ago."

"Oh lor'!" mumbled Bunter.

"Now I got 'em both!" said Bronx with satisfaction. "Jarvish wanted me to get Bunter—he's helped! He wanted to stand clear himself—but he ain't got by with that! I got him."

Jarvish groaned.

"You guys figure what would suit me best?" demanded Bronx. "Making it last sickness for that fat gink!"

"Ow!"

"I shouldn't wonder if that was what the double-crossing lobo-wolf was planning all along," said Bronx. "S'pose I'd shot up the fat gink! Then the money goes back to Jarvish—and the police hunting me all over the world with a rope! Jarvish safe with the billions! What?"

The juniors had no doubt of it; and evidently Bronx, at last, had penetrated to the cunning and dastardly scheme of the sleek rascal.

"But I ain't no baby-killer!" said the gangster. "Nor I ain't such a jay as to let James get the goods on me that-away! No sir! That fat gink's got my dollars but I guess I'll get 'em off him without pushing him off the earth! He won't argue a lot about it when I begin persuading him to cough up."

"Oh crikey!"

"I'm going to talk turkey to you, Bunter boy, when I get you into the desert back of beyond!" said Bronx. "Chew on that, you pesky geek!"

And leaving Bunter the Billionaire to chew on it, the gangster went back along the plane to the pilot's seat.

The juniors looked at one another.

"So that's it?" said Nugent.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,389.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

"The man's a brute" said Harry.

"But he's nothing like such a detestable scoundrel as that slinking worm Jarvish."

"No fear!"

"The money's not his," said Johnny Bull. "Old Shook had a right to leave his own money where and how he liked. But I suppose there's no doubt that that cur Jarvish twisted it somehow."

"It's perfectly plain that he meant that ruffian to knock Bunter on the head and take the consequences of it," said Harry. "That was his plan to save his own rotten skin! If Bronx had been the merciless villain he believed him to be Bunter's life wouldn't have been worth much."

"Oh jiminy!"

"Luckily for Bunter, Bronx isn't quite such a brute as that!"

"Quite a nice man, in comparison with Jarvish!" said Bob, with a grin. "But nice as he is, I'd be jolly glad to see the last of him! How on earth is this going to end?"

"Goodness knows!"

The juniors moved to the window. The plane was shooting through the blue, the pilot evidently carrying out Bronx's orders.

Far below loomed mountain-tops to right and left, and the Greyfriars fellows knew that they were passing over the sea between Sardinia and Sicily.

They were heading direct for Africa, and Tunis was the first part of that great continent that would greet their eyes.

They were still in the dark as to Bronx's intentions. But whatever the gangster's intentions were, they could not prevent him from carrying them out.

He was master of the plane, and though they had learned—and did not doubt—that he was unwilling to resort to the extreme of crime, neither was there any doubt that he would hesitate at nothing to carry out his plans.

There was nothing to be done but to wait.

Everyone on the Kingfisher, excepting Tiger Bronx, was a bound prisoner; there was no one to say him nay.

The long, long minutes passed wearily enough as the plane boomed on high over the blue Mediterranean.

It was late in the afternoon that the loom of land was picked up, to the south, from the windows of the passengers' cabin.

"Africa!" said Wharton in a low voice.

In the red of the sunset the plane dived on over Tunis, and on and on to the desert of the interior.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Prisoners!

A GLITTER of lights came from the velvety darkness under the droning plane. Night had fallen, but the moon was not yet up. The stars that twinkled in the sky only seemed to make the darkness visible. The plane was flying high, keeping steadily on. Where they were the Greyfriars fellows had no knowledge, except that they were somewhere over French Africa, and had left the sea and the coast far behind. That burst of light from below told them that they were passing over a town, and they wondered where and what it might be. As they looked from the window, speculating on it, they were rather startled to hear the voice of Jarvish.

"That must be Biskra, young gentlemen!"

"Biskra," repeated Harry Wharton. "Yes, no doubt. And after that—the desert."

He glanced round at the valet.

It was the first time Jarvish had spoken during the long weary hours in which he had lain slumped against a seat.

The light was not on in the passengers' cabin and the dusk was deep. Wharton caught the glimmer of the valet's shifty eyes in the gloom.

His loathing for the man's unscrupulous wickedness was deep and strong, yet he could almost have pitied him in his abject fear.

To the Greyfriars fellows that flight had been weary and dismaying; to Jarvish it must have been a long-drawn-out horror in his terror of the gangster and of what was to follow when the lean man had the helpless prisoners in some hidden nook of the African desert. In spite of Bronx's evident reluctance to use his "gun" unless he were driven to it, the cowardly rascal feared with a deep fear for his miserable life. That fear, indeed, was at the bottom of the whole tortuous plot by which Billy Bunter had so unexpectedly become a billionaire, and the other Greyfriars fellows had been drawn into this strange adventure.

The day had seemed endless to all of them. Bronx had given them food, but without releasing them from their bonds. Several times he had examined those bonds to make sure that they were safe—aware, from his former experiences with the Famous Five, that they were the fellows to take a chance if one came their way.

The steward and the second pilot had been locked up in the baggage-room; the chief pilot was still bound to his seat, carrying on under the orders of the desperado who was master of the plane.

The rest of the prisoners were left in the passengers' cabin, and every now and then the gangster came along to give them the "once-over," as he called it.

But since darkness had fallen he had remained with the pilot, and for some time the juniors had not seen him.

Needless to say, they had made every effort to free themselves. But all their efforts had been in vain; Bronx had taken care of that.

Billy Bunter sat in a collapsed state, his big spectacles glimmering in the gloom, every now and then uttering a dismal groan.

Bunter liked being a billionaire, but he had made up his fat mind by this time that he wished that he had never met James Jarvish and had never had "Old Man Shook's" billions transferred to him.

Billionairing on these remarkable lines was neither grateful nor comforting.

Indeed, great and glorious as it had been to be a billionaire, with unlimited money to burn, the obtuse Owl of the Remove realised by this time that he had been simply a tool in the hands of a cunning knave.

That immense fortune had never been intended to remain permanently in his fat hands; it was to remain there only so long as it served the purpose of the sleek rascal who had used him.

Bunter would have given it all at the present moment to feel his feet safe on firm land at a distance from Tiger Bronx.

Jarvish's voice came again in a soft and sibilant whisper.

"We are passing Biskra. Beyond is the desert. We are all lost if we land there with—with him."

"Whose fault is that?" asked Wharton contemptuously

"I'm jolly glad you're landed in it as well as us, you rotten rascal!" growled Johnny Bull. "That's one comfort, at least."

"The gladfulness is terrific."

Jarvis licked his dry lips.

His voice was trembling, but there was something of his old sleek, smooth deference in his tones as he spoke again.

"I hope, young gentlemen, that you do not believe all that that man has said of me. He is a desperate character, a man with a very black record, and it was, indeed, for that reason that his uncle disinherited him. And with regard to myself, I—I could explain—"

"Oh, cut it out!" interrupted Wharton, in utter disgust. "We know the kind of crawling worm you are, Jarvis—a worse man than Bronx any day, though he's bad enough. Don't tell us any lies. What's the good?"

"At least, sir, you will not refuse to take a chance of getting free from that ruffian?" muttered Jarvis.

"We'd jump at the slightest chance, of course. Do you think we like being handled like this by a gunman?" growled Wharton. "But there isn't any chance that I can see."

"Now it is dark he is keeping with the pilot; he is anxious about the landing," said Jarvis in low tones. "There may be a chance of acting without his eyes falling on us—"

"But what—"

The valet did not reply for a moment or two; he sat listening and trembling. Only the steady drone of the aeroplane cleaving the dark skies could be heard. So accustomed were the voyagers to that sound that they hardly heard it and did

not heed it. They noticed it only when the drone deepened to a roar.

Jarvis was listening for a sound of the gangster coming along the plane, and the juniors listened, too. They guessed that the valet had some project in his mind which gave them a chance if Bronx kept off the scene for a time. Deeply as they loathed the treacherous rascal, they were, so to speak, in the same boat with him at present, and only too eager to hear what he had to say. His voice came at last, whispering.

"He is not coming. There's a chance. If you have the courage—"

"We're not rotten funks like you!" grunted Johnny Bull. "For goodness' sake, get to it, and not so much jaw!"

"I carry a sheatknife at the back of my belt," muttered Jarvis. "He has not taken it—has not seen it—it is fairly well hidden—a secret weapon in case of need—"

"The kind of thing a worm like you would carry!" grunted Johnny.

"It may be useful now, sir. If one of you could get hold of the handle in his teeth and draw it out—"

"Oh, good!" breathed Wharton.

"But—but be careful if he should come!" said Jarvis, between chattering teeth. "But—but if you are free when he comes you may be able to seize him, in spite of his revolver, taking him by surprise—"

"We'll jolly well chance it, anyhow!" said Bob Cherry.

"What-ho!" said Johnny Bull emphatically. "And we shan't expect you to help, you cur; you can lie there and shiver!"

Jarvis made no reply to that.

Certainly the chums of Greyfriars had no help to expect from him if it came to a struggle with Tiger Bronx.

But they cared little for that. All they wanted was a chance to handle him themselves.

"Get to it!" said Harry, curtly. "We've got a chance while he stays with the pilot, but he may come back any minute."

Jarvis twisted over, so that his coat-tails fell away. A silvery glimmer of the rising moon came in at the window, and it revealed the haft of a sheath-knife sticking up from the back of his belt.

It was not surprising that the gangster had not suspected it; certainly none of the juniors had ever suspected that the sleek valet carried such a hidden weapon.

Wharton's eyes gleamed. On his knees he bent over the valet and gripped the handle of the knife with his teeth.

A jerk, and the blade came out of the scabbard.

It was a small weapon, not more than six inches long, but it was double-edged, and each edge was sharpened as keen as a razor.

"By gum!" breathed Frank Nugent, as the blade glistened in the glimmer of the moon. "That's all right! Hold it in your teeth, old bean, while I saw this cord across it."

Wharton nodded; he could not speak with the knife in his teeth. Frank moved closer, and proceeded to draw the cords that bound his wrists along the sharp edge of the knife.

It cut like a razor, and in a few seconds the cords fell apart. Frank Nugent's hands were free.

"Oh, good egg, good egg!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Nugent took the knife in his hand. It was but the work of a few moments
(Continued on next page.)



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Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line at the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Flectway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

WELL, the cat's out of the bag! You know now what those free gifts I have been telling you about in previous issues are—or, at least, if you don't, you soon will if you'll turn to the announcement on page 11. Aren't they ripping?

I can see a lot of fun ahead when you chaps get your hands on those sheriffs' outfits. Wearing your badges as a sign that you are allies, you and your friends will be able to send one another secret messages in invisible writing by means of those amazing invisible-writing pencils; to make your "arrests" with the aid of the amazing six-shooter gun; to take thumbprints with the thumbprint recorder; and to correspond in cipher with the specially designed secret code.

Naturally, I am printing an extra-large number of copies of the MAGNET during the gift-weeks to meet the increased demand, but even so there will be a limit to the number of copies available, and those fellows who don't get in the rush to the newsagents early are likely to be met with, "Sorry, all copies of the MAGNET sold out!" The only way to make quite sure of your copies is to place an order for them with the newsagent NOW!

OUR BUMPER NUMBER!

An extra-special bumper number of the MAGNET has been prepared for next week—the first of the gift numbers. Frank Richards has written one of his very best stories, a really thrilling yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. versus their old enemy, Gerald Loder, the tyrant prefect; there is the first instalment of our magnificent new serial, "Captain Crimson": by famous Morton Pike; a full-of-laugh number of the "Greyfriars Herald"; and more hints from that expert football coach, "Linesman."

Morton Pike, whose thrilling tales have been published in the MAGNET many times in the past, has written the best adventure-story he has ever penned in "Captain Crimson," and it is a real "scoop" that this yarn should have been secured for the MAGNET.

THE QUESTION CORNER.

"Magnetite," of Hartlepool, wants to know why we raise our hats to show respect to other persons? How did the custom originate? It dates back to the days "when knights were bold." Knights in armour had their eyes protected by visors, and, naturally, they could not be recognised until the visors were raised. The custom was carried on even after armour passed out of being, and to-day, instead of raising a visor, we raise our hats.

THE EDITOR.

(Continued from previous page.)

now to cut his comrades free—and he did not lose a fraction of a second.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh, and Johnny Bull were released, one after another, and then came Billy Bunter's turn.

Bunter blinked at them, in the shadows, through his big spectacles.

"I—I say you fellows, wha-a-at are you going to do?" he mumbled.

"Collar that bully, as soon as we get a chance, fathead!"

"I—I say, he—he—he's got a revolver, you know—"

"You can stand in front of us, and stop the bullets!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, we're going down!" exclaimed Bob, as the aeroplane banked and tilted. The juniors knew now why Bronx had remained so long with the pilot. He was picking out a landing-place.

"Young gentlemen—" whispered Jarvish.

"Oh, I'd forgotten that brute!" said Frank, and he cut the valet's bonds. "Feel like lending a hand when we bag him, Jarvish?"

"I—I—I will help, if—if I can, sir!" muttered Jarvish. "But—but I suggest remaining as you were, so—so that he will suspect nothing when he comes back along the gangway. If he sees that you are free, he will undoubtedly use his revolver, and—"

"That's a good tip!" said Harry. "Let the brute think we're still tied up when he barges in. Free or not, we've not got the ghost of a chance if he begins shooting."

And the prisoners of the plane resumed their former positions, with their hands bunched together, leaving nothing to undeceive Tiger Bronx when his keen eyes should fall on them again. Jarvish would be of no use when the scrap started, but his cunning, at least, came in useful. Then, with beating hearts, they waited, while the Kingfisher slanted down to its landing-place on the sands of the Sahara Desert.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

In the Desert!

"I SHOULD smile!" remarked Tiger Bronx, in tones of satisfaction.

The pilot of the Kingfisher did not speak. Probably his feelings were too deep for words.

High over the desert sailed the moon of Africa.

Biskra had been left more than a hundred miles behind. Below the soaring plane stretched the bare, uninhabited desert—broken occasionally by a range of sandy, rocky hills, here and there by a wandering watercourse—dotted at wide spaces by oases.

Vast, limitless, the prospect stretched from the plane lighted by the gleaming moon in a sapphire sky.

On those vast stretches of level sand the machine could land as if on the drome at Croydon.

Tiger Bronx, with his slits of eyes keen as an eagle's was watching no doubt for a place he knew. He had been over the desert country before, and it was a known land to him. He could hardly have picked a more secure place to convey his prisoners and the stolen plane.

The vast desert was uninhabited, save by wandering bedouins and tribes that dwelt by the date-trees in the widely scattered oases. The French military posts were few and far between. Nominally the country belonged to France, but it was probable that there

was not a Frenchman within a hundred miles of the space over which the plane was now soaring.

The Tiger grinned with satisfaction. It was some time since he had given his prisoners the "once-over," but he was not worrying about them. The steward and the second pilot, locked in the baggage-room, were powerless, and the prisoners in the passengers' cabin were bound hard and fast. Four or five times, at least, he had examined their bonds and found them safe. Not till he began to look out for a landing-place had his eyes been off them for long. He had no uneasiness on that score. The game was in his hands, and he was full of confidence.

The Kingfisher was flying lower now, the gangster scanning the desert below in the bright light of the moon.

"I guess you'll land easy, bo!" he said. "I reckon I'll be giving you the word soon. You flown this before?"

"No!" said the pilot briefly.

"I'll put you wise! We got to hit Sahara on the other side of the Oued Nal, and I'll say I can spot that oued now!" His slits of eyes picked up a dark line of a watercourse on the trackless desert. "Yep! I'll say I know my way about, big boy. Ninety miles to the nearest French post—the Froggies won't trouble us a whole lot! I should smile!"

And the man from Chicago smiled!

The pilot, weary, but showing little sign of his weariness, carried on in silence. Through the steady drone of the plane flying low came a staccato sound from the desert below. It was the beat of horse's hoofs.

Bronx looked down again.

Far below, a moving shadow on the earth, was an Arab horseman, his white burnouse blowing in the wind, a spear in his hand. As he rode, he stared up at the strange thing in the skies above him.

"I'll say we've surprised that guy, a few!" remarked Bronx. "The French planes don't hit this quarter often."

The galloping horseman vanished behind.

Bare of life, the desert stretched below again. The dark line of the "oued" was growing clearer, more distinct. Beyond it, a bunch of date-palms broke the monotonous surface of the desert. It was an oasis of the Sahara.

Bronx, in the second pilot's seat, ran his eyes over a map on which he had marked his course. He gave a nod.

"I'll say we're hitting it right!" he said. "O.K. big boy! You'll find a level stretch between the oued and them palms, like you could fancy you was at home and dropping down to Croydon. You get me?"

A nod from the pilot.

"And you don't want to get the wind up if you see some Arab guys moseying around!" went on Bronx. "You give that pesky oasis the once-over and you'll sure spot tents there! I guess that's where the Sheik Sourad Din hangs out, and I'm saying we'll find him at home. I guess you're going to be his guest of sorts while I'm handling this piece of business! But don't you worry—you ain't going to be hurt. I guess Sourad Din is a real-to-goodness sheik, and he wouldn't murder a man unless he was paid to do it!"

The pilot made no rejoinder.

As the plane swooped down in the vast level space between the bunch of date-palms and the watercourse, a sound was heard from the shadows of the distant palms. It was the crack of a rifle. No doubt it was a signal shot from some Arab who had sighted the plane in the

moonlight against the sky. Dark as it was, the hour was not yet late, and it was probable that the gang of desert Arabs who dwelt by the Oued Nal had not yet retired to their tents to sleep. Bronx grinned as he heard the shot.

"I'll say they're at home!" he remarked.

The plane swooped and circled.

Once it passed almost over the oasis, and there was a glimpse of wild dark faces staring up, and ragged, dirty turbans and burnouses, and the gleam of spear-points.

But the plane swooped on, leaving the bunch of palms more than a mile away as the pilot picked his landing.

Down came the Kingfisher at length, landing as sweetly and gently as on a drome, the landing-wheels picking up and revolving, the plane, taxiing along in a little cloud of spurting sand.

The Kingfisher came to a standstill. The pilot leaned back, breathed hard, and gave Tiger Bronx a look. He did not speak, but that look spoke volumes.

The Tiger laughed.

"Take a rest, big boy!" he said. "You've had a long trip, and I guess you'll sleep sound to-night in an Arab tent, if the fleas'll let you."

He took a turn of a rope round the pilot's wrists, and knotted it to make assurance doubly sure.

Then he strolled along the gangway through the plane and stepped into the passengers' cabin, with a cheery grin on his lean, hard face.

He switched on the light there, and the juniors blinked in the sudden illumination.

Bronx gave them a keen glance.

His prisoners, to all seeming, were just as he had left them—Jarvis slumping on the floor, Bunter on a seat, the Famous Five bunched with their wrists circled by cord. Tiger Bronx did not know that that cord was now cut, and could be dropped at any moment. The juniors felt their hearts thumping.

"So we've landed," said Bob Cherry, steadying his voice with an effort, as he tried to speak casually.

"I'll say so," agreed Bronx.

"Where are we?" asked Wharton.

"In the country of the Oued Nal, if you've ever heard of it," sneered the gangster. "Friends of mine hereabouts, and I guess you're going to be introduced." He chuckled, crossed to the door, and threw it open.

The wind of the desert blew in, with sand particles on it. Faintly, from a distance, came a sound of many horses and camels. Bronx looked round at the juniors.

"You hear that?" he asked.

"Arabs?" asked Harry.

"Sure! You're going to see Sheik Sourad Din, and I sure hope you'll like him as much as a sheik on the pictures," grinned Bronx. "You'll be staying with him a piece while I'm handling them ginks."

"Shall we?" murmured Bob.

"I'll mention that you may be late getting back to your school," added Bronx. "You won't be let go till I'm through. But you ain't going to be damaged if you don't try to put any trouble across. You give them guys any backchat, and you'll get yours from a spear with a blade like a chopper. Yep! I'm jest putting you wise out of good nature."

The juniors breathed hard.

How Bronx was planning to "handle" Bunter the Billionaire, and Jarvis, his rascally valet, they did not know; but they could guess that his methods were not going to be gentle. And while he was putting that business

through, they, and the crew of the plane, were to be prisoners in an Arab encampment in the heart of the desert, in hourly danger of their lives.

That, if they could help it, was not quite good enough. Scoundrel and traitor as James Jarvis was, they could have been grateful to him, at that moment, for having given them a chance. It was perhaps a desperate chance, but they were going to make the most of it.

Evidently the Arabs at the oasis had observed the landing, and some of them were coming to investigate. Whether Bronx had been in communication with them beforehand the juniors did not know. Possibly they were merely coming on the chance of looting a plane that had been forced to land. Anyhow, they were coming, and if Bronx was to be handled, he had to be handled before he had overwhelming help on his side. The juniors exchanged a quick glance.

Bronx leaned out of the doorway, staring into the moonlight. His eyes were fixed on the dark mass of the oasis in the far distance, and on another mass—of riders—detaching itself from the larger one. Believing that not a single hand was free on the Kingfisher, he had not the remotest suspicion at that moment of danger.

Bob Cherry dropped the cut cord from his wrists.

He made one bound.

Then his head butted into the middle of the gangster's back like a battering-ram, sending him spinning out of the doorway.

With a gasping howl Tiger Bronx pitched headlong down, and crashed on the sand, and in less than a split second the Famous Five of Greyfriars leaped down after him, and crashed on Tiger Bronx.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Touch and Go!

"WAKE snakes!" spluttered Tiger Bronx.

He hardly knew what had happened.

He was face down in choking sand, half-stunned by the sudden crash of his fall. Bob Cherry had landed on him on his knees, which were jammed in his back. The other fellows had dropped on him and round him, and were all grasping him.

It seemed like a wild nightmare to the astounded Tiger. Never had there been so sudden and startling a turning of the tables.

"Pin the rotter!" panted Nugent.

"Keep the brute down! Get his gun!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth. He groped for the gangster's "gun" as he spoke.

Bronx heaved under the clinging juniors choking with rage, and with sand. He heaved and struggled and squirmed and fought. He made frantic efforts to get his hand to the revolver at his hip.

But Harry Wharton got hold of his lean wrist and twisted it back, with such fierce force that the bones almost cracked, and the Tiger gave a howl of agony. Then the captain of the Greyfriars Remove grabbed the revolver from the hip-pocket, and snatched it away.

"Quiet, you brute!" he snapped, as Bronx yelled. He yelled at the top of his voice in words that the juniors did not understand, but which they guessed to be Arabic. He was yelling to the mob of savage, dirty outcasts of the desert who were riding from the oasis towards the landed plane.

But that yell, desperate as it was, did not reach the distance. The bunch of riders was not yet near at hand.

Bang!

Wharton brought the butt of the revolver down on the gangster's head. It was for life or death now, and no time to stand on ceremony.

"Now shut up, you scoundrel!" he rapped.

"Yank his paws together!" gasped Bob. "I've got a bit of rope here. Your turn to be tied, Mr. Bronx."

"One good turn deserves another stitch in time, as the English proverb remarks," grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Bronx, his senses spinning from the rap on the head, still resisted. But his hands were wrenched together and tied.

Leaving him sprawling in the sand, his hands fastened behind him, the juniors leaped to their feet.

They gave a hasty glance towards the oasis.

Twenty wild-looking horsemen and camel-men were riding towards the plane in the moonlight. But they were yet at a distance.

"Quick!" panted Wharton.

Tiger Bronx was struggling frantically to get on his feet. The chums of Greyfriars gave him no further heed.

They scrambled back hurriedly into the plane. The door was slammed and fastened.

"I say, you fellows——"

Wharton ran along the gangway, heedless of the fat squeak of the Greyfriars billionaire, and of a shivering call from Jarvis, still squatted in abject terror on the floor. He caught up Jarvis's knife as he went. He could guess that Bronx had left the pilot a bound prisoner. He would hardly have taken the risk of leaving him otherwise. The pilot's head twisted round as the breathless junior reached him. He had heard Bronx's fall, and the yelling and scuffling that had followed, and wondered. His bronzed face lit up at the sight of Harry Wharton.

Wharton, without a word, began to saw at his bonds. The pilot gave him a faint grin.

"You've downed that gunman?"

"We've pitched him out of the plane and got his gun away!" panted Wharton. "But there's a mob of savage Arabs riding up——"

"Touch and go!" said the pilot. "We'll see. Get my pal loose. That villain's locked him in the baggage-room. Leave it to me."

The familiar drone of the engine broke on the silence of the desert. Wharton ran to the baggage-room and unlocked the door. The second pilot, his head bandaged with a handkerchief, and the steward, came out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! We're moving!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Nugent.

"The thankfulness is terrific!" Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stared from a window. "The esteemed and execrable Bronx will meet his delectable friends a little too latefully."

Jarvis was on his feet now. He stood with a sickly face, winding his smooth, plump hands together; washing them, as usual, with invisible soap, in imperceptible water.

He stared from the window. Harry Wharton came back into the passengers' cabin, and joined his chums, looking out.

Bronx was on his feet now, and running towards the advancing bunch of riders. He was shouting, but the roar of the engines drowned his voice.

He ran clumsily but rapidly, with his

hands tied behind him; his long shadow zigzagging eerily in the moonlight on the sand.

The juniors watched him breathlessly. They saw the bunch of ragged Arabs on horses and camels drawing rapidly nearer. Bronx was hurrying to meet them, yelling as he went. They caught the flashing of spearpoints, the glimmer of rifle-barrels in the gleam of the bright moon. But the plane was in motion now, taxiing along the smooth sand, preparing to take off.

It was, as the pilot had said, touch and go! The juniors felt the thrill of a deep excitement as they watched the enemy and listened to the deepening roar of the engines.

Bronx was at a good distance when they saw the riders swoop round him, and he disappeared from sight among horses and camels and flowing burnouses. The cavalcade had halted round him.

But it was only for a few moments.

Evidently it did not take Bronx long to make matters clear to his desert confederates. The crowd of Arabs opened again and Bronx was seen—free from his bonds now—and mounted on a tall camel. He drove the animal on towards the aeroplane, and by his side rode a brawny man with a dark bearded face under a jewelled turban—the juniors wondered whether this was the Sheik Sourad Din. Behind them came the rest of the wild desert crew, riding hard.

The plane's speed increased. Spurts of sand shot up from the landing-wheels, revolving too fast for the eye to follow.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Some of the Arabs, as they rode, were loosing off rifles. The juniors heard the spattering of lead among the fuselage. Jarvis leaned on the wall, shuddering from head to foot. There was a squeak from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—"

"We're off!" roared Bob.

The whizzing wheels were no longer touching the ground. The Kingfisher was leaving the earth.

Up she went, circling; and crack, crack, crack, crack, came from the rifles below amid the thunder of hoofs. Up and up and up; and the gang of desert robbers, Bronx in their midst, rode furiously below, trampling over the track of the landing-wheels—waving spears, yelling, loosing off rifles.

The juniors stared down, fascinated by the scene—wild and thrilling in the bright light of the African moon.

But it was brief!

The group of wild riders became a blur below; the desert itself became a blur; the last crack of a rifle was drowned in the roar of the engines. Up and up and up, into moonlit skies—and the Arabs and the Sahara vanished from sight like a scene reeled off the screen.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Wheeze!

"JARVISH!"

"Sir!"

"A soda siphon!"

"Yes, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had rather expressive looks. Johnny Bull gave a grunt.

The Greyfriars fellows were on the balcony of the Hotel Grand Continental at Tunis. The balcony looked out on the wide and splendid Avenue de la Marine with its rows of fig-trees. Under the awning that kept off the glare of the sun the chums of the Remove were taking their ease in easy-chairs.

After that wild adventure in the desert the Kingfisher had borne them back to Tunis where they had come down. They were by no means unwilling to have a look at French Africa before they returned to Europe; though the school vacation was now so near its end that there was not much more time to spare. Anyhow, they were going to have a day or two at Tunis—greatly changed since the old days when it had been a hotbed of the Mediterranean

pirates—and that was all right! But seeing Jarvis still about was not all right—it was all wrong!

With a nerve that was rather remarkable, considering that the Greyfriars fellows knew everything now, James Jarvis had dropped back coolly into his old place of respectful, deferential valet, looking as if butter would not melt in his mouth. And here he was, waiting on Bunter the Billionaire as of old; and apparently expecting to get away with it. Which, in the opinion of the Famous Five, was not good enough.

To the opinion of those cheery youths, Jarvis seemed indifferent. He did not heed their expressive looks as he glided off the balcony to carry out his master's commands.

"Now, look here, Bunter, you frabjous ass!" said

Harry Wharton. "This has got to be chucked, see?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I don't know whether the law can take hold of that smooth-faced rascal," went on the captain of the Remove. "It might be difficult to prove that he stowed Bronx away on the plane. But we know he did—and we know that he's only watching for another chance to play another such trick. He's got to go!"

"The go-fulness of the execrable Jarvis is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bronx will turn up again before long!" growled Johnny Bull. "Next time, Jarvis will help him get hold of you without getting landed himself."

"Do listen to a chap—"

"You're not safe with him, you fat ass," said Nugent.

"You fellows are like a sheep's head—all jaw!" said the fat billionaire peevishly. "I'm as keen as you are to get rid of the beast, but I can't sack him without losing the money."

"Blow the money!"

"Blow your own money, if you like—but I can tell you, I'm not going to chuck up being a billionaire to please you!" retorted Bunter. "I've thought it out—and I told you fellows at Naples what I'm going to do. If I sack Jarvis I break the agreement and the money all goes back to him. He's had it all put in black and white. If he sacks himself he breaks it—and he can't do anything. I'm going to make him sack himself."

"He will watch it!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You'll see!" said Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Yah!"

Jarvis came back with the siphon of soda-water on a tray. Bunter had a glass of lemonade beside him, and no doubt the valet supposed that he was going to add soda-water thereto.

That, however, was not the Greyfriars billionaire's intention.

He took the soda siphon from Jarvis and rose to his feet with a vengeful gleam in his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles.

The nozzle was turned on Jarvis's smooth sleek face.

Swoosh!

The soda-water flew in a showering stream. It caught James Jarvis fairly in that smooth sleek face.

"Urrrggghh!"

A horrible gurgle came from Jarvis as he caught the stream. He staggered back, quite taken by surprise and sat down with a heavy bump.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Gurrgrgghh!" gurgled Jarvis.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!"

Bunter rolled towards the dazed valet. He squirted soda-water over his head, showered it on his ears and down his neck. Jarvis gasped and gurgled and squirmed frantically away.

There was a squeak from the exhausted siphon. Jarvis had had all the soda-water. He was drenched with it! He streamed with it. He oozed with it. He gave a dizzy watery blink from watery eyes in a watery face.

"Wurrgrgghh!" gurgled Jarvis.

He staggered to his feet, and for a moment the juniors thought that he would leap at Bunter. The fat billionaire brandished the empty siphon, and Jarvis jumped back hastily.

"Jarvis!" rapped Bunter.

"Groooogh!"

"Go and fetch me another soda siphon!"

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"Wha-a-t?" gasped Jarvis.
 "Don't hang about there—go and do as I tell you at once!" roared Bunter.
 "Gurrngghh!"
 Jarvis tottered away from the balcony. He left a trail of dripping soda-water as he went. Billy Bunter laid down the siphon and turned a grinning blink on the astonished chums of the Remove.

A dozen hotel guests along the balcony stared in utter wonder. Bunter did not heed their staring. A billionaire could do as he jolly well liked!

"How's that, you fellows?" asked Bunter complacently.

"Out!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" said Bunter. "When Jarvis brings back the other siphon I'm going to give him another lot."

"I hardly think he'll be in a hurry to bring it in the giddy circumstances," chuckled Nugent.

Bunter frowned.

"He'd better!" he said darkly. "I shan't stand any disobedience from a manservant in my employment, I can jolly well tell you. If Jarvis doesn't like it, he can go. I'm prepared to receive his notice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I mean business, I can jolly well tell you! He's an ungrateful beast," said Bunter. "I've treated him well, haven't I? Allowed him to wait on me hand and foot, and all that! Then he turns on me! Talk about ingratitude being a sharper serpent than a toothless child!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" said Bunter. "But I fancy I'm on the mark. Jarvis is bound to sack himself, at this rate. I can't sack him, but if he sacks himself it's all right. And I fancy he will!"

The juniors chuckled.

Bunter's methods with that deeply attached valet were remarkable and drastic; but, for once, it really looked as if the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove had been thinking to some purpose.

Jarvis had played that extraordinary game with Bunter, knowing him to be a fool. He had rather overlooked the fact that in dense and obtuse persons there is sometimes a vein of slyness. And it looked as if Jarvis, in overlooking that, had overreached himself!

Cunningly enough, he had made Bunter's possession of the Shook fortune depend on Bunter's retaining his personal services as a valet, so that he could have every opportunity of carrying out his precious scheme. Bunter could not discharge him without cancelling the agreement and losing the money. Evidently, it had not occurred to Jarvis that Bunter might take measures to make him discharge himself!

That was the plan. And it seemed likely to work. Bunter, at least, felt cheerfully assured of it.

"That cheeky beast's a long time!" he remarked, after a pause. "He'd better come back with that siphon. If he doesn't, I shall go and look for him. Where did I lay that malacca?"

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

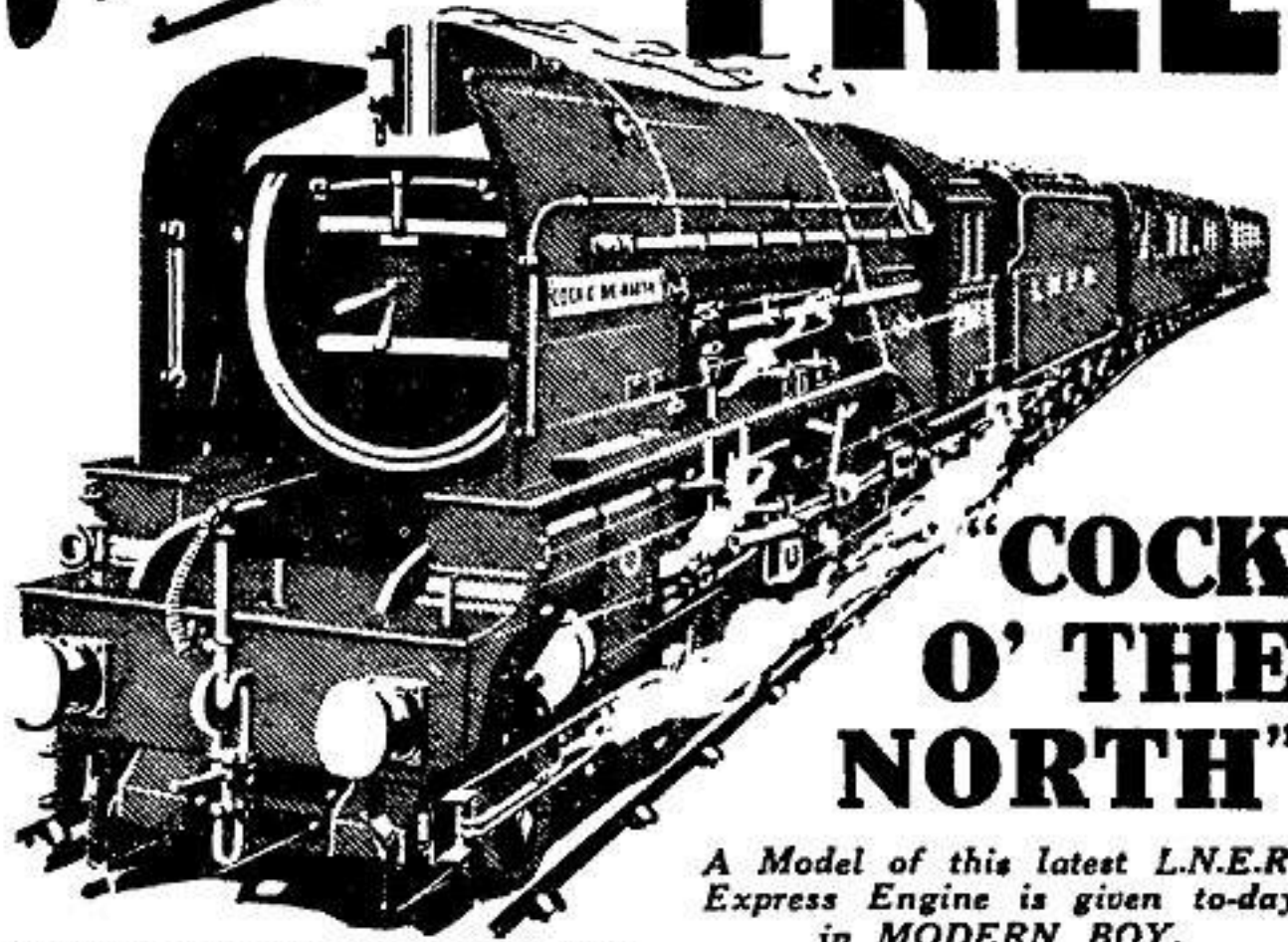
Billy Bunter blinked round through his spectacles, picked up his malacca cane, and rolled into the hotel—to look for Jarvis! Harry Wharton & Co., chuckling, went down the steps to have a stroll round Tunis and see the sights, leaving the fat billionaire to carry on.

(Continued on next page.)

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THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Getting His Own Back!

"Owl! Here you are!" jeered Bunter.

The fat billionaire rolled into his suite in the Hotel Grand Continental. The malacca was under his fat arm.

Jarvis was there. He was towelling off soda-water. His sly, shifty eyes gleamed round at Bunter. There was a gleam in those eyes that might have warned the Greyfriars billionaire of coming trouble, had William George Bunter been a little more observant. But the fat Owl of the Remove never observed anything till it happened.

He blinked at Jarvis and slipped the malacca down into a fat hand. Having started on that wonderful system with his unwanted manservant, Billy Bunter was going to carry on with it. Whopping a valet, like a prefect whopping a fag at Greyfriars, was perhaps a little high-handed. But if the fellow did not like it he could give notice and go. And that was that!

"I ordered you to bring me another siphon!" said Bunter, in his most imperious tone.

"Really, sir—" murmured Jarvis.

"Do you think I'm going to keep a servant who doesn't obey orders?" demanded the Greyfriars billionaire.

"Master William—"

"Don't 'Master William' me, you worm!" said Bunter. "Think I haven't found you out, and that I don't know your game, you rotter?"

Jarvis gave him a venomous look.

Well aware of Bunter's fatuous obtuseness, perhaps he hoped to lull the Owl's suspicions to rest and resume his old footing. But there was a limit to even Billy Bunter's obtuseness, and Jarvis had to realise that that was a chicken that would not fight. The dose of soda-water had made it plain, and the malacca in Bunter's fat hand helped to make it plainer.

"Very well, sir!" said Jarvis, gritting his teeth. "I will speak plainly. You cannot discharge me without losing the money I have made over to you. You will never do that, and go back to your former impecunious state, you miserable, poverty-stricken, cadging young cad!"

"Wha-a-t!" gasped Bunter.

This was the first time that James Jarvis had told him what he thought of him, and it came rather as a shock to the Greyfriars billionaire.

"I found you," said Jarvis, "at your school, a poor, needy, greedy, lying, bragging young rascal and fool! You were so stupid, and so self-satisfied, and so conceited and dense that I considered you would answer admirably for my purpose."

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter.

"I find," continued Jarvis, "that while you are the silly, conceited, obtuse fool that I took you for, you have also a certain silly cunning, which you now propose to exercise at my expense."

"You cheeky rotter!" gasped Bunter. "Why, I'll jolly well thrash you! In fact, I've come here to thrash you! I'll make you cringe. If you don't jolly well sack yourself I'll make you tired of life. I'll—"

"Quite so, sir!" said Jarvis. "I fully perceive your intentions, sir. No doubt I should prefer to give you notice to terminate my service, sir, if you continued as you have begun. Certainly I

could not continue to attend you, as your valet, under any such conditions."

Bunter grinned.

"You're giving me notice?" he inquired.

"Not at all, sir! I have no such intention," said Jarvis. "I shall remain your faithful valet, sir, so long as you live to enjoy the possession of the fortune that I have transferred to you. But not, sir, under the conditions you propose. You have stated that you have come here to thrash me, sir. I beg to point out that that is an error on your part."

Bunter swished the malacca.

"I fancy not!" he said.

"Only fancy, sir, I assure you!" said Jarvis, still smoothly, but with glittering, ratty eyes. "I have the misfortune to be of a somewhat nervous temperament, and I do not deny that I am terribly afraid of that ruffian, Bronx. But I am not in the least afraid of a fat, clumsy, stupid schoolboy, as I shall proceed to prove to you, sir."

"Why, you cheeky—"

"You will not thrash me, sir," went on Jarvis, "because—"

"Because what?" sneered Bunter.

"Because," said Jarvis calmly, "I am going to thrash you, sir!"

And with that, the valet made a jump at Bunter and grabbed the malacca cane from his fat hand.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I say—"

Jarvis's left hand grasped his collar. The fat billionaire was swung over a tapestried settee.

He wriggled wildly, in awful anticipation. It dawned on his fat mind that the worm had turned, and that his extraordinary method in dealing with James Jarvis was a game at which two could play!

"I say!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! I say—yarooooooh!"

Whack!

The malacca came down across Billy Bunter's tight trousers. It came down with a terrific, resounding whack.

The yell that the fat billionaire uttered awoke every echo of his expensive suite at the Hotel Grand Continental.

Whack! Whack!

"Yaroo! Help! I say, you fellows—whoop!" roared Bunter.

Whack! Whack!

Bunter roared, and yelled, and wriggled! He squirmed, and he writhed, and he raved! He howled and yelped!

But Jarvis's left held him firmly pinned down, and Jarvis's right wielded the malacca with terrific vim. Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Bunter had come there to thrash Jarvis. But the thrashing was what Hurree Janset Ram Singh would have called a boot on the other leg! Billy Bunter was receiving, instead of giving, that thrashing; and there was no doubt—not a shadow of doubt—that it was one of those things which are more blessed to give than to receive.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Owl! Wow! Murder! Fire! Help! Yaroo! Leave off! Leggo! Whoop!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yaroo! I say, I won't sack you. I won't whack you. I won't whop you. I say, leave off! Chuck it! I say, Jarvis, old chap—dear old chap! I say, dear old fellow—yaroooh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yoo-hoooooop!"

"There!" panted Jarvis. He

released Billy Bunter's collar at last, and the malacca ceased to rise and fall. "There, you fat, gluttonous, obtuse young fool! What have you to say to that?"

"Yaroooooh!"

"If you want any more—"

"Owl! Wow! No. Stop it! Beast! Wow!"

Jarvis flung the malacca into a corner. He stood panting after his exertions. He had put a great deal of beef into that whopping, and he seemed tired—though perhaps not so tired as Bunter!

The fat billionaire squirmed off the settee, blinked at him, and backed away, spluttering with wrath and anguish.

"Now, sir, we had better come to terms!" said Jarvis calmly. "I warn you that if you pursue the plan you have formed, the result will be the same in the next instance. I think, sir, that you will find it judicious to abandon that plan."

The valet glided from the room, the hapless billionaire blinking after him through his spectacles in dismay.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He wriggled painfully! Jarvis had laid on the malacca not wisely but too well!

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter. "The beast! The cheeky beast! Oh crikey!"

The fat billionaire realised that he had to give up that wonderful plan for getting rid of Jarvis! It was, unfortunately, a game that two could play at, and Bunter was getting the worst of the game! It looked as if that faithful valet was going to remain attached to him like the Old Man of the Sea to Sinbad, the Sailor. But—

But it was the unexpected that was going to happen!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Visitor!

"MY esteemed chums—" "What's up, Inky?" "The ridiculous and execrable Bronx!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. came to a sudden halt.

They had been strolling around Tunis, enjoying the strange sights and sounds of that half-African, half-European city. They walked through the Souk-el-Berka, the slave-market where, little more than a century ago, captured Christians were sold as slaves by dusky auctioneers. Now it was a market of gold and silversmiths, and dealers in "antiquities"—mostly modern. From which change for the better, they realised that it was rather a good thing that the French had annexed the country and established white men's government there.

From the Souk-el-Berka they sauntered through the crowds of Arabs, Moors, Turks, Italians, people of all races and colours; White Kabyles of North Africa and negroes black as the ace of spades. And at one of the little open-air native cafes near the souk the Nabob of Bhanipur's keen eyes fell on a lean, long-limbed figure sprawling on an ottoman under a striped awning.

And the juniors, stopping, stared rather grimly at Tiger Bronx.

The gangster had turned up again! It was only a couple of days since they had last seen him amid the wild

mob that rode and fired under the rising aeroplane in the desert. Now he was in Tunis. They had fully expected him to follow on the track of Bunter the Billionaire, and evidently he had lost no time.

There was a glass of liqueur at his elbow, but he was not touching it. He had a newspaper open in his hands, and was perusing it with a peculiar keenness, and he did not look up, and did not see the Greyfriars fellows.

"So here he is!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "We'd better keep an eye on him while one of us goes for a gendarme. The sooner that ruffian is run in, the better."

"The betterfulness will be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But, I say, something's up with the man!" murmured Nugent, his eyes curiously on the lean face of the gangster. "He looks as if he's had a knock."

Bronx laid down the newspaper—an American newspaper—on the table by his elbow and sat with a strange expression on his face—a sort of stunned look!

What he had been reading in the paper had apparently given him a severe shock! He looked like a man who had received a heavy blow.

His eyes fell on the juniors.

He gave a slight start, but made no movement to rise. Neither was his look hostile. He seemed utterly indifferent to them, and to the fact that they had only to call the gendarmes to have him taken into custody.

To their surprise, he uttered a deep sigh—almost a groan! His look was so strangely changed from all that they had known of him, that they felt their hostility melt away.

They drew nearer to him, keeping round him so that he could not escape if he attempted to do so. But he did not move.

"So you're here, Mr. Bronx!" said Harry Wharton.

"Sure!" muttered the gangster.

"I suppose you know that you can, and will, be sent to prison for what you did to the plane!" said the captain of the Remove rather perplexed.

"You can sing out to the French cops jest as soon as you darn well choose," answered Bronx dismally. "I guess I'm all in! I'll say I'd jest as soon walk off to the jug, as not."

He leaned back in his seat, and gave another groan. It was amazing to see the hard, desperate gangster crumpled up like this. All the vitality seemed to have been crushed out of him.

The juniors exchanged curious glances.

"I guess I'm down and out!" groaned Bronx. "Get on with it—call your gendarmes! Not that it'll cut much ice now! Your fat gink ain't got no call to shiver in his shoes no more! Nope! You can take him home and tell him he's said good-bye to Tiger Bronx for keeps! Search me."

"You've chucked up going after Bunter?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yep!"

"If that's true, Mr. Bronx, we've no quarrel with you," said Harry Wharton. "You can go back to America, or go to Jericho, or anywhere you like, for all we care! But—"

"You young geck!" growled Bronx. "I guess I'd sock you and walk away over what was left of you, if there was anything left, only—"

"Only what?"

"The game's up!" groaned Bronx. "I'm let out! I've sure come out at the little end of the horn! I'm done!"

CAPTAIN CRIMSON!

■■■■■■■■■■
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"CAPTAIN CRIMSON!"

Dished! Flummoxed! You can tell that fat gink, Bunter, it's O.K. You can tell Jarvis I'm done with him! I guess I'm hitting the first steamer for U.S.A., if I can raise the dust to pay the fare! Oh, wake snakes!"

The Famous Five simply stared at him. It was clear that the gangster was in earnest; but what could have caused this extraordinary change in him was a deep mystery to them. Something, it was evident, had happened!

"But what—" asked Nugent.

Bronx thumped the newspaper with a lean fist.

"It's all there!" he said. "That's what's given me the knock! I sure do feel all washed out! It's hit me where I live! I got it, and got it bad!"

"Something in that New York newspaper?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yep!" groaned Bronx.

He stared at the juniors with glassy eyes. It was difficult to recognise that crumpled and crushed figure as the truculent gangster of Chicago.

"Old Man Shook has sure put it across me!" he groaned, "and across that geck Jarvis too! Oh, carry me home to die!"

"But what on earth's happened?" asked Harry.

"I guess it ain't no secret!" muttered the Tiger. "I'd sure have knowed it sooner if I'd looked at the papers instead of being so all-fired fixed on getting that fat gink! Ain't I told you that my uncle, Old Man Shook, the Chicago billionaire, left a will leaving a life interest in his billions to that lobo-wolf, Jarvis?"

"Yes, but—"

"And he landed it on Bunter 'cause he was afraid of being shot up, and put me after Bunter—"

"We know that! But—"

"Waal, now you know, too, that there ain't no billions!" groaned Bronx.

"What!" gasped the juniors. This was rather startling news,

"That's the how of it! I'll say it's fierce!" Bronx passed a hand over his forehead, wiping away beads of perspiration. "It's sure fierce! I'll tell a man it's fierce! Old Man Shook's will was proved, and that gink Jarvis walked into the money, and I got my twenty thousand dollars—and I've sure spent most of it on this here trail. And now—"

"Now—" said all the juniors together, deeply interested.

"Now," groaned Bronx, "they've found a later will!"

"Oh my hat!"

"Another will dated months later—I guess the old guy found out the kind of lobo-wolf Jarvis was, perhaps—or maybe suspicioned him—or perhaps it was jest his sheer cussedness—anyhow, there's a later will, and now it's got to the lawyers. Search me! And the old guy's left everything to the Home for Lost Cats in Chicago."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Every dollar—every cent! Every pesky dime! Why, they'll be asking me to hand back them dollars I've spent! They'll be wanting Jarvis to account for all he's let Bunter spread over Yurup! Sure! I tell you I don't come in at all, and Jarvis don't come in at all, and Bunter don't come in at all; and the game's up, and I'm jest oozing out at the little end of the horn."

The Greyfriars fellows stared at him.

It took some moments for this startling information to sink into their minds, with all its implications.

Mr. Shook had evidently been a rather uncertain and unreliable old gentleman! The discovery of a later will was an awkward jolt for Jarvis, who had stepped into his billions; for Bunter, who had had the fortune transferred to him; and for Tiger Bronx, who had broken laws right and left, like so much crockery, in his truculent pursuit of the elusive billions!

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Those billions, it seemed, were, in point of fact, far out of the reach of all of them!

"Well, my only summer bonnet!" said Bob Cherry at last.

"So that's the jolly old trouble!" said Johnny Bull.

"That's what's the matter with Hanner!" agreed Mr. Bronx. "I'll say it's the biggest sell ever! I got after Jarvis with a gun—but I sure can't get after the Chicago Home for Lost Cats with a gun! Nope!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That geek Jarvis twisted the old man into making a will in his favour," said Bronx. "The old guy thought better of it afterwards, and made a new one, and never let on to Jarvis! If I'd knowed—" He thumped the newspaper again. "I guess I'm streaking for home!"

He rose to his feet.

"Say, you take that paper to Jarvis!" he said. "I guess that's a bit of comfort—it will knock that geek out, just as it's knocked me out! Yep! Take him that paper, and watch his face!"

And Mr. Bronx, evidently comforted by the thought of James Jarvis's face when he saw the startling news in the paper, chuckled.

He gave the Greyfriars juniors a nod, and walked away.

They stared after him.

They were not thinking of calling gendarmes now! Tiger Bronx had "got his," as he would have expressed it in his own language. They were done with him, and the tall lean figure disappeared among the crowds in the Tunisian "souk," and disappeared for ever from their eyes.

Harry Wharton picked up the American newspaper.

He read through the news item that had so startled and dismayed the gangster, his comrades reading it at the same time.

They smiled.

"Let's get back!" said Harry.

And they walked back to the Hotel Grand Continental, the last grand hotel in which Bunter the Billionaire was ever to splash money about!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Old Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bunter, old chap—"

Harry Wharton spoke gently. There was a terrific kick coming for Bunter the Billionaire, and the chums of the Remove desired to break it as gently as possible.

But the fat billionaire was in a wrathful mood. He fixed his big spectacles accusingly on the Famous Five.

"You cheeky rotters!" he bawled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What—"

"Letting a fellow down after all I've done for you!" howled Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you this won't do! Look here, I went to thrash that brute Jarvis, and he thrashed me instead—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" roared Bunter wrathfully. "But I'm blessed if I see anything to cackle at—"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Shut up, Wharton! I've a jolly good mind," said Bunter angrily, "to chuck you this blessed minute, and leave you to pay your own bills here!"

"Exactly what we are going to do!" said Harry, laughing, "and I fancy that we shall have to scrounge up the cash to pay yours, too!"

"Don't be a silly ass! I've got tons of money—"

"Riches take unto themselves wings and fly away!" said Johnny Bull. "Don't gas any more, Bunter! You've got a jolt coming."

"Shut up, Bull! Look here—"

"Cheese it, Bunter," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We're sorry for you, old fat bean, but—"

"Check!" interjected Bunter.

"But it turns out that the man Jarvis got the money from made a later will—"

"Eh!"

"And Jarvis doesn't get the oof at all—"

"What?"

"So there aren't any more billions—"

"Oh crikey!"

"You won't be bothered by Jarvis any more! He will sack himself fast enough when he sees this newspaper," said Harry. "Ring for him, and let's get it over."

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

Bob Cherry touched the bell.

Jarvis entered.

He gave Bunter a look—and then glanced suspiciously at the Famous Five.

"You rang, sir!" said Jarvis.

Harry Wharton handed him the New York paper.

"Read that!" he said.

Jarvis raised his eyebrows in surprise. But he took the paper and looked at the startling news therein.

"Oh!" he said.

He stood very still! For some moments he seemed knocked over! Then the fury that flashed into his face was not pleasant to see.

"So the old fool fooled me at the finish!" said Jarvis gritting his teeth, and he tore the newspaper up and hurled the fragments across the room.

"I almost begin to believe that honesty is the best policy after all. I never dreamed of this—and instead of feathering my nest while I had time I have been wasting my time on that fat fool—"

He broke off, made a rapid stride towards Billy Bunter, and before the juniors could intervene, punched the Greyfriars billionaire on his fat little nose.

Thump!

Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter sat down.

The next moment five pairs of hands grasped James Jarvis! He was up-ended and hurled headlong out of the room, and went sprawling and yelling along the corridor.

There, he picked himself up and crawled away, and the Greyfriars fellows never saw him again! Bunter, no longer a billionaire, had seen the last of his incomparable valet!

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL began the new term a few days later. Harry Wharton & Co., in cheery spirits, walked arm-in-arm across the old green quad, nodding to fellows they knew, greeting Smithy, and Redwing, and Toddy, and Lord Mauleverer, and pausing a minute to knock the hat off the head of Coker of the Fifth.

"I say, you fellows!"

A fat figure rolled up.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Bunter!"

"The esteemed and ridiculous Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows!" The Owl of the Remove blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "I say, would you believe it, I had a jolly good tip from a titled relation, but I left it at home at Bunter Court!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, I've actually arrived here without any money! But I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"A postal order!" said Bunter. "From one of my titled relations, you know! I say, you fellows, considering what a ripping time I gave you in the vac, I think you might cash that postal order for me—without waiting till it comes, I mean. It's for a pound!"

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

"I mean ten shillings—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, look here, what about five bob?" asked Bunter. "Make it five bob, dear old chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The dear old chaps made it five bob, and passed on, laughing! Bunter, once the Billionaire, was himself again!

THE END.

(Harry Wharton & Co. are back at school again in next week's ripping story: "A TYRANT RULES GREYFRIARS!" Don't miss this magnificent yarn!)

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