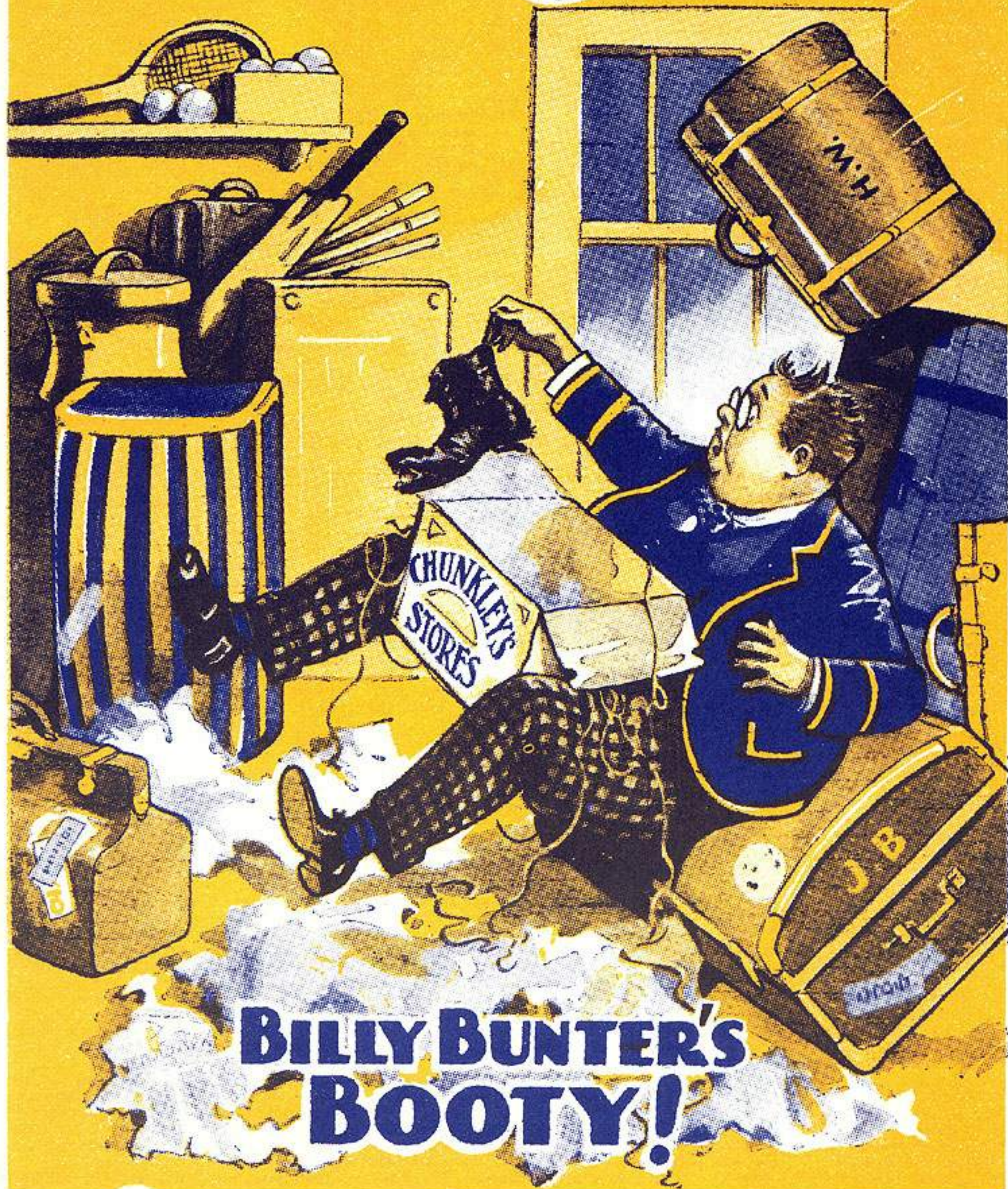


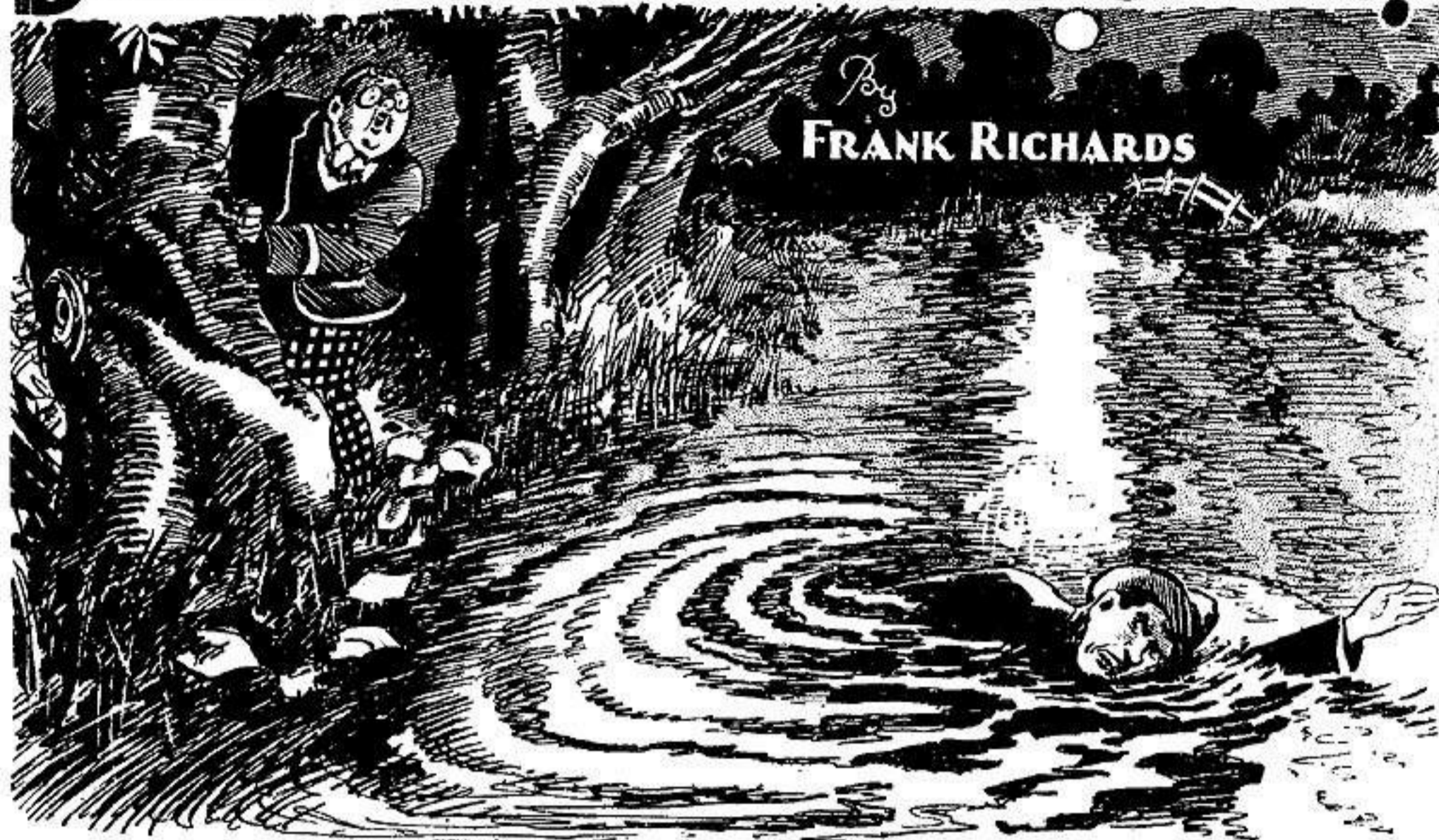
**“BILLY BUNTER’S BURGLAR!”** This week’s great  
Greyfriars story.

# The Magnet 2<sup>D</sup>



**BILLY BUNTER'S  
BOOTY!**

# BILLY BUNTER'S BURGLAR!



By  
**FRANK RICHARDS**

—Featuring the Ever-Popular **HARRY WHARTON & CO.**, of Greyfriars.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Bricks for Bunter!

“SAFE enough here—”

“Not if Bunter spots it!”

“Oh, that’s all right!”

Billy Bunter grinned.

The door of Study No. 1 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars was half-open. Billy Bunter was about a foot from the door. So every word spoken in the study came quite clearly to the fat ears of the Owl of the Remove.

The five fellows in the study did not seem to be aware that William George Bunter was just outside. At any rate, they spoke as freely as though there were no fat ears to hear.

Bob Cherry had dumped a large parcel on the study table. It was wrapped in brown paper, tied with plenty of string with many knots. Billy Bunter did not need telling what that parcel contained. He knew that there was to be a picnic on Popper’s Island, up the river, that afternoon.

Ever since dinner Billy Bunter had been keeping his eyes, and his spectacles on the Famous Five. One or another of them had been under his observation all the time. He was ready to start when they did. And as their girl friends from Cliff House School were to be present, Bunter astutely calculated that they would not be able to slaughter him when he turned up for the picnic.

“Leave it here,” went on Bob. “It will be all right while we’re seeing about the boat.”

“But if Bunter sees it—” said Frank Nugent.

“Well, if he does, he won’t know what’s in it.”

“No; that’s so.”

Billy Bunter, in the passage, winked. He was quite amused.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,479.

“Come on, then!” said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter moved quickly away from the door. He was two or three yards off when the chums of the Remove emerged from Study No. 1.

He blinked at them through his big spectacles as they passed him, going towards the stairs.

“I say, you fellows!” squeaked Bunter.

“Can’t stop!” said Bob.

“Oh, really, Cherry—”

“Ladies to meet,” explained Bob. “They’re pretty certain to be late; but we mustn’t be, not even for the pleasure of hearing you wag your chin, old fat man.”

“I say, if you fellows would like me to come—”

“Jolly big ‘if!’” remarked Johnny Bull.

“The likefulness would be terrific,” declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh. “But the objectfulness of the esteemed Marjorie and the beauteous Clara would be enormous.”

“Oh, all right!” said Bunter scornfully. “I know you don’t want me about when there are girls present. It’s rather mean to be jealous of a fellow’s good looks.”

“Oh, my hat!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“You can cackle,” said Bunter. “But if you think Marjorie would take any notice of you when I’m present, it only shows what conceited asses you are. You can cackle.”

“Thanks!” said Bob. “We will. Ha, ha, ha!”

And the Famous Five chortled as they went down the Remove staircase. It was true that Bunter’s fascinating company was not desired at the picnic. But really and truly that was not on account of jealousy of his good looks. The fact was that nobody but Bunter

himself had ever noticed that he was a good-looking fellow at all.

The fat junior watched them till they disappeared. Then he blinked out of the landing window, and spotted them again in the quad, going down to the gates.

He grinned.

The coast was clear now. Billy Bunter rolled up the passage again to Study No. 1.

He rolled into that study and fixed his eyes and his spectacles on the big parcel on the table.

As it was only a couple of hours since dinner, and he had eaten only enough for three or four fellows, Bunter naturally was hungry. He was tempted to open that parcel, and begin on its contents on the spot.

But he realised that that would not do.

Those beasts would be coming back for it when they were ready to start up the river. If they found Bunter engaged in demolishing the contents, they were quite likely to get engaged in demolishing Bunter.

The fat junior lifted the parcel from the table.

“Oh crikey!” he gasped.

It was heavy!

It was, in fact, very heavy indeed! Judging by its weight, Bob Cherry had packed huge supplies of foodstuffs in that parcel.

Billy Bunter did not like exertion. But he was prepared to exert himself with that heavy parcel. In fact, the heavier such a parcel was, the better Bunter liked it.

He heaved it to the door, and carried it out into the Remove passage. He bore it along to his own study—No. 7. Bunter’s idea was to lock himself in that study, and then get busy on the parcel.

Unluckily his study-mate, Peter

Todd, was in Study No. 7. Peter stared at the fat Owl of the Remove and his burden.

"Hallo! What have you got there?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Bunter.

And he rolled on up the passage with his plunder, leaving Toddy staring.

At the end of the Remove passage were the box-room stairs. The fat junior clambered up the stairs, gasping under the weight of the big parcel.

He rolled breathless into the box-room at the top, shut the door, and turned the key.

All was safe now.

Harry Wharton & Co. could come back to Study No. 1 for that parcel as soon as they liked. They could hunt for it if they liked, and as long as they jolly well liked.

It served the beasts right. Bunter had offered, fair and square, to come to the picnic. They had refused. So they could take what was coming to them, and be blowed! Billy Bunter felt quite justified, in the circumstances, in snaffling that huge consignment of tuck. Though, as a matter of fact, he was thinking more about the tuck than the justification.

Having dumped down the parcel on the lid of Lord Mauleverer's big trunk, the fat junior fumbled for his penknife, and sawed through the string.

Then he unwrapped the sheets of brown paper.

His eyes glistened in anticipation behind his big spectacles. Already, in his mind's eye, Bunter beheld stacks of cakes, jam tarts, cream puffs, cheese cakes, bottles of ginger-beer—all sorts and conditions of good things.

It was a glorious vision—in his mind's eye. But it was not, alas! to be seen by any other eye.

The wrappings removed, a large cardboard box was revealed. Bunter jerked off the lid.

Within were a number of objects wrapped in old newspapers.

Why Bob Cherry should have wrapped up tuck in old newspapers was rather a mystery. But the mystery was soon revealed. Bob hadn't.

Unrolling the first that came to hand, Billy Bunter was astonished, if not delighted, by the sight of a brick.

He stared at it blankly.

Why Bob had packed a brick in a picnic parcel was an absolute puzzle. Bunter hurled it aside, and unrolled the next item. That also proved to be a brick.

"What the thump!" gasped the astonished Owl. "Is the silly ass potty, or what? What the dickens was he going to do with bricks at a picnic?"

He grabbed another item and unwrapped the newspaper. His little round eyes almost bulged through his big, round spectacles at the sight of a third brick. It was really amazing. Bob, it seemed, had gone round collecting bricks for a picnic.

The fat Owl grabbed packet after packet and unwrapped them. They did not all contain bricks. One contained an ancient boot; another a dis-used potato; a third, several empty sardine tins. Nothing of an edible nature came to light. Billy Bunter could eat almost anything; but even Bunter drew the line at bricks, old boots, mouldy potatoes, and sardine tins.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He stood glaring at that precious parcel with a glare that might have cracked his spectacles.

The dreadful truth dawned on his fat brain.

Those beasts—those awful beasts—had jolly well known that he was listening outside Study No. 1.

They had fixed up this dud parcel, and left it for him to snaffle!

And while he was thus engaged, they were clearing off for Popper's Island in their boat—leaving Bunter behind!

No wonder they had chortled as they went!

This was the sort of thing that the beasts considered a joke!

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He had lost his interest in that parcel. Leaving string and wrappings, and old newspapers, bricks, and sardine-tins strewn about the box-room, Billy Bunter rolled hurriedly down the stairs again—scuttled breathlessly along the Remove passage, and fairly bolted out of the House. He headed for the boathouse as fast as his fat little legs could go. But he had a feeling that he would be too late!

And he was!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### A Change in the Programme!

**S**EVEN smiling faces looked merry and bright in the roomy old boat that pulled up the shining Sark.

It was a glorious June afternoon.

**Alone with a well-filled picnic-basket, Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, is in his element. But he'd rather starve for a month of Sundays than be stranded at midnight on an island with a thief and a bag of "swag"!**

There were plenty of Greyfriars' fellows on the river, on the landing-raft, and on the towpath; and all of them looked cheerful. But the merriest and brightest were the party in the Remove boat.

Wharton and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Nugent, pulled at the oars. Hurree Janset Ram Singh sat in the bows. In the stern sat Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn, of Cliff House School. Fellows in other boats cast envious glances at the Famous Five and their pretty passengers.

Looking back, Bob Cherry, as he pulled, grinned over his oar at a fat figure that appeared on the raft by the boathouse.

It was small in the distance, but recognisable.

It was brandishing a fat fist after the boat—and probably shouting, but if so, the distance was too great for William George Bunter's dulcet tones to carry.

Boathouse and raft and Bunter dropped out of sight as the boat pulled on. It was a roomy boat, and well loaded; but four oars pulled it swiftly up the current of the Sark.

In the boat reposed a picnic-basket. It had been placed there before Bob Cherry conveyed the dud parcel to Study No. 1 in the Remove for the special behoof of Billy Bunter.

Having left Bunter behind to snaffle that dud parcel, the Famous Five had trotted down to the river, got their boat out, pulled across the Sark, and picked up the Cliff House girls on the opposite

bank—Marjorie and Clara being, fortunately, only a few minutes late!

Now they were well on their way up the river—minus Bunter! It was going to be a gorgeous afternoon. Pulling up the shining river, in the summer sunshine, under a blue sky dotted with fleecy clouds, was a sheer pleasure. And there was going to be a picnic on Popper's Island—rather regardless of the fact that that island was out of bounds.

Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, was quite fierce on the subject of camping on the island. But, important gentleman as Sir Hilton was, the cheery chums of the Remove had actually forgotten him!

It would have surprised the lord of Popper Court could he have known, and realised, that his important existence could be forgotten! But there it was—the thoughtless schoolboys had given no more thought to Sir Hilton Popper, baronet, than to the gnats that buzzed in the summer sunshine.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, that's jolly old Coker!" remarked Bob Cherry, when the Remove boat was about a mile up the Sark.

Sounds like a thrashing whale reached the ears of the Remove party. They could have guessed without looking that Coker of the Fifth was at hand. When Coker of the Fifth was rowing he always seemed to be earnestly intent on digging up the river.

Smiling faces glanced round at the Fifth Form boat. Greene was steering it, Coker and Potter were pulling. Potter, at least, was pulling—Coker was catching a marvellous succession of crabs. He was putting his beef into it, and his rugged face was red with effort; but the progress of the boat did not correspond with Coker's efforts. It crawled.

"What'll you give for a tow, Coker?" called out Bob, as the junior boat glided by.

Coker stared round.

"You cheeky young scoundrel—" he bawled. Then, catching sight of the Cliff House girls in the boat, Coker checked his eloquence.

"Race you, Coker!" chortled Johnny Bull.

"The racefulness would be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"For goodness' sake, Coker, let Greene take that oar!" muttered Potter of the Fifth. "We don't want to be passed by every crew of cheeky fags on the river."

"Greene can't row, any more than you can, George Potter!" retorted Coker. "Why don't you pull? We're simply crawling."

"Leave off pulling, then, and we shall get on quicker."

"Don't be a silly ass, Potter!"

"Well, look here—" began Greene.

"Don't jaw, Greene!"

Harry Wharton & Co. pulled on, leaving the Fifth Form boat floundering behind. The next bend of the Sark hid it from sight.

At that distance from the school the Famous Five had the Sark to themselves. Ahead of them rose the green mass of the island in the river. They pulled for the channel between the island and the Popper Court bank.

"Is that Sir Hilton Popper?" asked Marjorie Hazeldene, glancing at a tall, angular figure on the towpath.

"Oh!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

He glanced round at the towpath. The angular old gentleman in riding-clothes, with a whip under his arm, was staring at the boat with bent brows over a gleaming eyeglass.

"Old Popper!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Popper!"

"What rotten luck!"

"What does it matter?" asked Miss Clara.

"Um! Well it does, rather," said Harry. "Old Popper kicks up a fearful row if anyone lands on the island. He fancies it's his."

"Like his cheek!" remarked Miss Clara.

"But isn't it his?" asked Marjorie.

"Well, he says so, and nobody seems keen on going to law with him about it!" said Harry Wharton. "But everybody else says it's public land."

He glanced doubtfully at his comrades.

"The trouble is that the Head's put the island out of bounds, to stop bickering about it," he went on, "and old Popper, being a governor of the school, it's rather awkward. Perhaps—hem—per—"

"No perhaps about it," said Bob. "We can't land on the island with old Popper watching us with that pane in his eye!"

"Bother him!" said Harry.

"Blow him!" agreed Bob.

"Bless him!" said Nugent.

Grimmer and grimmer grew the frowning brow of the lord of Popper Court as the Remove boat drew nearer. Sir Hilton had not the slightest doubt that he had spotted a picnic party bound for his island—as, indeed, he had!

It was, really, quite a nice picnic party—not the sort to do any damage. But trippers sometimes landed on that island, and left empty bottles and disused cans and tins lying about, and dragged down the brushwood for a camp-fire. Which, of course, no landowner could possibly like.

Sir Hilton slipped his riding-whip down into his hand and waved it to the schoolboys in the boat.

"Here, you!" he called out.

"There, you!" called back Bob Cherry cheerily.

"What—what?" ejaculated Sir Hilton.

"Which—which!" answered Bob in the same cheerful tone. And the boat's crew chuckled.

They had certainly intended to land on Popper's Island. But they had not landed on it yet, so that was all right! Sir Hilton, so far, had nothing to report to the headmaster of Greyfriars. So Bob saw no reason for not exchanging a little light badinage with the irascible old gentleman.

"What!" exclaimed Sir Hilton.

"Boy! You are impertinent!"

"Man!" retorted Bob. "Same to you, and many of them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad," exclaimed Sir Hilton, "if I were near enough, you impudent young rascal, I would lay my riding-whip round you!"

"Jump!" suggested Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, and Marjorie and Clara smiled. The boat was a good dozen yards from the lord of Popper Court. It would have been a long jump for Sir Hilton.

"You—you—you—" spluttered Sir Hilton.

"Me, me, me!" assented Bob. "Jump, sir! If you miss the boat, I'll catch you in my hat."

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

Sir Hilton's face was quite purple. He came to the very edge of the bank, his eye gleaming through his eyeglass, gripping the riding-whip. It was clear what he would have done with that

whip had Bob Cherry been within reach of it. Fortunately, Bob wasn't.

"Pull round the dashed old island," said Harry, laughing. "We can't picnic there now, that's a cert!"

"Better not!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"Much better, I think," said Marjorie, smiling. "Sir Hilton looks quite cross."

"He does—a few!" chuckled Nugent.

The boat pulled on. Sir Hilton Popper followed, along the towpath, his fiery eye on the juniors. Evidently he suspected them of intending to land on that island, and he was not going to lose sight of them.

Having passed the island, the juniors pulled round to the other side, and turned back down the current. The wooded mass of the island hid the boat from the baronet's fiery eye.

"It's all right," remarked Harry Wharton. "We'll pull to that backwater we passed a quarter of a mile down; it's a lovely spot for camping, and no Poppers about!"

"Good egg!" agreed Bob.

The boat floated down on the current. The island hid Sir Hilton from the juniors, as it hid the juniors from Sir Hilton. But they heard his powerful voice ringing across the river:

"Joyce! Where are you, Joyce? Joyce! Where is that man? By gad, I will discharge him— Oh, you are here! Joyce, a boat has gone round the island, under my very eyes! They are landing on the other side! They must be turned off immediately!"

"Yes, Sir Hilton! But—"

"Do not argue with me, Joyce! You will fetch a boat immediately, and I will cross to the island with you, and—"

"But—"

"Why are you standing there arguing, Joyce? Why do you not carry out my orders? Go at once!" thundered Sir Hilton.

"But, sir, is that the boat?" gasped the keeper.

"Eh! What! Oh, gad!"

The Remove boat glided into view again, past the lower end of the island. Sir Hilton glared at it. Joyce suppressed a grin.

"Oh!" gasped Sir Hilton.

He realised that the schoolboys had not landed on the other side of the island. They had simply circumnavigated it, and were going back down the river.

Seven smiling faces were turned towards the baronet on the towpath.

Bob Cherry waved his hand in farewell.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he called out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Impertinence!" spluttered Sir Hilton.

"You—you need not fetch the boat, Joyce; apparently they have not landed on the island! You— Are you laughing, Joyce? How dare you laugh! Do you wish to be discharged, sir? I discharged Lecch this morning for impertinence. If you desire to be sent away with Lecch—"

"Oh, sir! No, sir! I—!" stammered Joyce.

"You may go! Pah!"

Sir Hilton turned and stalked along the towpath; and Joyce did not grin again till his lordly back was turned.

As the boat pulled down the Sark, the angular figure of the lord of Popper Court stalked it, along the bank. Sir Hilton was still suspicious of the intentions of the picnickers.

But the chums of the Remove had quite given up the idea of camping on the island that afternoon. For Sir Hilton, great gun as he was, they did not care two straws; but they did not

want a row with the Head when they got back to the school.

For a quarter of a mile the Remove boat pulled down the Sark, and then turned into a shady little backwater on the opposite side of the river, and disappeared from Sir Hilton's sight.

For ten minutes or more Sir Hilton paced the tow-path, watching that backwater across the Sark, with an angry brow and a gleaming eye. But the boat did not reappear, and the lord of Popper Court gave it up at last, and stalked away.

Quite indifferent to Sir Hilton, the chums of the Remove punted the boat up the shady backwater, to camp for the picnic on the bank, under a shady oak-tree.

And it was a happy picnic; really quite as good as camping on Popper's Island, with the additional advantage that there were no Poppers about!

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Off and On!

"I SAY, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter.

More than an hour later, the fat figure of the Owl of the Remove stood on the towpath, opposite Popper's Island—on the very spot where Sir Hilton had stood.

The spot was deserted now, save for the fat Owl!

Billy Bunter stood there, dusty, fatigued, and perspiring, and hailed the island with his loudest squeak.

Having been left behind by the Remove boat, Bunter had walked. Walking in itself had no appeal for Bunter; but a picnic had—and rather than miss the picnic, Bunter had walked.

It was a hot June afternoon, and Bunter's weight, considerable to start with, seemed to grow heavier and heavier as he proceeded. There were several short cuts through the woods, which saved following the winding bank of the river, and Bunter took advantage of them all. Still, with the shortest of cuts, it was more than a mile to cover, and a mile was 1,759 yards too long for Billy Bunter's comfort.

Standing on the bank, wiping a fat, perspiring face with his handkerchief, the Owl of the Remove hailed the picnickers on the island—not having the faintest or remotest idea, that nobody was there!

Bunter knew that the picnic had been planned for Popper's Island. He had heard it discussed and settled. He had seen the chums of the Remove start up the river in the boat, with the Cliff House girls. So how was he to doubt that they had arrived at the island, and landed there according to plan?

He did not think of doubting it. They were there, of course—camping and picnicking in the shade of the old trees, hidden by bushes and foliage from view. The fact that he received no answer to his hail did not enlighten him. He was aware exactly how anxious the juniors were to see him! It was like the beasts to keep doggo, and pretend that they didn't hear a fellow!

"Wharton!" yelled Bunter.

Certainly his fat voice reached the island, and carried beyond it. If they were there, they must hear. And he was certain they were there.

"Bob Cherry, you beast!" roared Bunter.

They had had plenty of time to pull up to the island. Bunter, indeed, could have followed along the bank, keeping the boat in sight, had he been a little more active and a little less of a heavy-weight. They had reached the island long ago, and that was certain to Bunter.

That they had turned back after reaching it, and were now camped across the river a quarter of a mile down, he had no means of guessing.

"Inky, you beastly nigger!" bawled Bunter.

His voice echoed; but there was no other answer. The fat Owl shook a fat fist at the greenery on the island—greenery which, he was convinced, hid a grinning party of picnickers.

"Nugent, you rotter!" howled Bunter.

But answer there came none!

"Bull, you silly fathead!" shrieked Bunter.

He paused for breath. Breath was always rather short with Billy Bunter; and it was shorter than ever after a mile on a hot afternoon.

He fanned off flies with his handkerchief, dabbed streaming perspiration from his fat face, and breathed wrath.

"Do you hear?" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows! I say, Wharton, I've got a message for you from Wingate of the Sixth!"

No answer.

"I say, you fellows! Quelch is coming up the bank; he jolly well knows you're there!"

That ought to have been a winner, so to speak! The alarm of their Form-master in the offing should have been enough for the picnickers.

Still there was no answer—no sign from the island. Bunter gasped for breath, leaned on a tree by the towpath, and blinked across at the island through his big spectacles, in speechless wrath.

If they did not come off in the boat for him, Bunter was done! And it was getting clear that they weren't going to! Apparently they were sitting tight, at

That Marjorie could hear, unmoved, the news that her brother, Hazel of the Remove, had fallen down the stairs and broken his leg, seemed improbable. Billy Bunter could not doubt that he would get an answer this time.

But no answer came!

Bunter paused again—less for a reply than for breath. Not one of the picnickers was to be drawn; and he was unhappily unaware of the fact that they were a quarter of a mile away, down the river, far out of the sound of his voice.

Any other fellow, probably, would have given it up at that point. If the picnickers were on the island, it was plain that they did not want Bunter there. Some fellows would have been a little coy about barging in where they were not wanted.



Sounds like a thrashing whale reached the ears of Harry Wharton & Co. and their girl chums of Cliff House. They glanced round, with smiling faces, to see Coker and Potter pulling in the Fifth Form boat. Potter, at least, was pulling—Coker was catching a marvellous succession of crabs. "Yaroooh!" yelled Potter, as Coker's oar caught him a crack on the head.

"Beasts!" he howled.

They could hear him—of course they could. They weren't going to fetch him across, chiefly because the Cliff House girls were present, and they were jealous of Bunter's good looks! Which was really unnecessary, for Bunter was not thinking of Marjorie or Clara, charming as they were; he was thinking of the tuck! He had been hungry when he started. Now he was fearfully hungry! And he had no doubt that a handsome spread had been provided, with such distinguished guests present.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter. "I jolly well know you're on that island! I say, if old Popper's about, he will hear me, and you'll get into a row."

Bunter fancied that that would make them sit up and take notice.

No doubt it would have done so had they been on Popper's Island. Certainly they would not have wanted the attention of Sir Hilton or his keepers drawn to the fact that they were there.

the risk of Bunter's yells bringing keepers to the spot.

"I say, Marjorie!" howled Bunter. "I say, tell those beasts to bring the boat across. I've got a message from your brother."

Bunter paused, like Brutus, for a reply. But he had no better luck than Brutus! There was no reply.

Even Marjorie failed to play up! Which was not surprising, as she was not there! But which was very surprising to Bunter, who had no doubt that she was there! Bunter knew the effect of his good looks on the softer sex. He knew that Marjorie Hazeldene had what he elegantly termed a "squash" in his direction! If it was so, she concealed the fact remarkably well; but Bunter, at least, had no doubt about it.

"Marjorie, old dear!" squeaked Bunter. "I say, I'm here, you know! I say, your brother's fallen down the Remove staircase and broken his leg."

Not so Bunter! Bunter was not particular about a hospitable welcome. What he was anxious about was the feed.

If he could, by hook or by crook, land himself on the picnickers, it was all right! They could not kick a fellow out, with girls present. Short of being kicked out, Bunter did not mind what his reception was like.

He blinked over the shining Sark through his big spectacles. Few fellows came so far up the river on a half-holiday; school bounds did not extend so far without special leave. Still, there was a chance of spotting a boat and getting a lift across.

From up the river, in the direction of Courtfield Bridge, a boat glided into sight.

Billy Bunter fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on it.

As it came nearer he gave a grunt of annoyance. He recognised three

Fifth Form fellows in the boat—Coker and Potter and Greene.

Coker of the Fifth was the last fellow at Greyfriars to take the trouble to give a fag a lift.

Not that Coker was not a good-natured fellow. Ho was! But Coker was of the Fifth Form, Fifth Formy, so to speak. He would have regarded such a request as cheek. And Coker was not the man to stand anything in the nature of cheek from juniors.

Still, it was a case of any port in a storm. Bunter would rather have asked any other fellow for a lift; but no other craft was to be seen on the river. He resolved to ask Coker! If the beast refused, he would be no worse off.

As the Fifth Form boat came nearer, matters did not look promising for asking favours. All three of the seniors looked cross and annoyed.

Coker, clearly, was in a bad temper. Potter and Greene had goaded looks. Generally they were tactful with Horace Coker. But Coker's series of crab-catching exploits going up the river had tried their tempers sorely, especially as he had splashed them both from head to foot with water, at the same time telling them, with biting scorn, what clumsy duffers they were, and advising them to leave boats alone, and stick to a tub on a pond.

There had been argument in Coker's boat—warm argument. The idea had been to pull up to Courtfield Bridge, and thence walk to the bunshop for tea. But at the rate at which Coker's boat progressed, it looked as if they would reach the bridge about the time they were due at Greyfriars for calling-over. Giving up all hope of tea at the bunshop, Potter and Greene recklessly told Coker what they thought of his rowing, and of him personally; and Coker de-

clared that he was jolly well fed-up with them, and would jolly well turn back—which Coker jolly well did!

Thus it was that Coker's boat came floating down the river past Popper's Island, in time to give Billy Bunter a lift—if Coker was so disposed!

As it slid into the channel between the island and the bank, Billy Bunter hailed it.

"I say, you fellows!"

Coker gave him a glare.

"I say, give me a lift across to the island, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter.

"I say, my friends are picnicking there, and I'm late. I say, you might give a chap a lift across. I can't make Wharton hear!"

"Go and eat coke, you fat frog!" growled Potter.

"Shut up, you young ass!" snapped Greene.

That did it!

Coker, already glaring at Bunter, had been about to bark at him. Potter and Greene spoke first—which was enough for Coker! Automatically, as it were, Coker took the opposite view.

Instead of barking at Bunter, he barked at Potter and Greene.

"No need to bite the kid's head off!" he snapped. "Why shouldn't we give him a lift across?"

"Oh, rot!" grunted Potter.

"Rubbish!" grunted Greene.

That was more than enough for Coker! Opposition had its inevitable effect on the great Horace.

"Well, you can call it rot and rubbish if you like," he said, "but I believe in being good-natured! We're giving that kid a lift, see?"

"Look here—"

"You needn't jaw, Potter! You've jawed enough this afternoon! Pull in to the bank, and shut up!"

"We're wasting time!" growled Greene.

"You've wasted most of the afternoon already, Greene. A few minutes more won't hurt! Don't be a rotter!"

Potter and Greene suppressed their feelings. The Fifth Form boat pulled in to the bank.

"Hop in, Bunter!" said Coker.

Bunter thankfully hopped in.

"Thanks, old chap!" he gasped.

"Do you want a thick ear?" asked Coker unpleasantly. "If you do, you've only got to call me 'old chap' again."

Bunter did not want a thick ear! Judiciously he remained silent, while the seniors ferried him across to the island. He jumped ashore at the landing-place, and Potter pushed off again.

Coker's boat glided on down the river. Voices floated back from it—not in amicable tones. Coker was still catching crabs, and Potter and Greene making no effort to conceal what they thought of his rowing style. Billy Bunter grinned as the voices floated back.

"You fathead! You've splashed me again!"

"Shut up, Potter!"

"Did we come out for a row or a bathe?"

"Stop jawing, Greene, for goodness' sake!"

Voices and splashing died away down the river. Coker & Co., and their boat, were gone. Billy Bunter, safely landed on Popper's Island at last, plunged through the trees and the underwoods, towards the glade in the middle of the island, where he expected to find the picnickers camped.

He reached the glade.

He found it empty.

The fat Owl blinked round him through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked.

Silence!

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "I know you're here! Dodging a fellow! I say, you rotters!"

Dead silence!

Bunter's first impression was that the picnickers knew that he had arrived, and had dodged him in the trees. But there was no sign of a picnic having been going on in the glade. For the first time, a dismaying doubt smote him. They were there—he was sure they were there! But it looked as if they weren't!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He rooted through trees and bushes.

Nobody was there!

He was alone on Popper's Island!

"Oh crikey!" repeated Bunter.

The picnickers were not, after all, there! There was no spread for Bunter! More serious still, if possible, there was no boat to take him off the island again!

He plunged back through the thickets to the water's edge. But it was futile to blink along the river for Coker's boat. Coker's boat was far out of sight by that time.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

All that afternoon he had been anxious to get on Popper's Island. Now he was on it, and only anxious to get off!

It had been difficult to get on! It was impossible to get off!

Bunter was stranded!

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"BUNTER!"

"Adsum!" answered Bob Cherry.

Wiggins was engaged in calling the roll.

## JAPERS of ST. JIM'S!



Amazing and unprecedented happenings at St. Jim's! Mr. Ratcliff has been a thorn in the side of Tom Merry & Co. ever since he has been at St. Jim's. Fed up to the back teeth with his tyrannical treatment, the juniors plot plots and scheme schemes, all having for their object the deep discomfiture of the tyrant Housemaster. You'll find fun and thrills galore in this grand book-length yarn of Tom Merry & Co. told in Martin Clifford's most fascinating style. Don't miss it, whatever you do!

No. 270 of

## SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

On Sale at all Newsagents and Bookstalls, 4<sup>d</sup>.

Harry Wharton & Co. had returned, after the picnic, in good time for calling-over. They were in their places with the Remove, in Hall, when Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Third, came in to call the names.

One member of the Remove was not there. That member of the Form was, in his own fat estimation, the most important member—being no other than William George Bunter.

In the estimation of other Removites, however, Billy Bunter's unimportance was unlimited—and plenty of fellows did not even notice that he was not there!

It was when Wiggins called his name that Bob became aware that Bunter was absent.

Without stopping to think, Bob answered for him.

It was not uncommon for a fellow to be late for calling-over, on a fine half-holiday. Neither was it uncommon for a good-natured fellow to keep him out of a row by answering to his name—if that little trick could be played successfully.

Had Mr. Quelch been taking roll, no one would have ventured. Quelch's gimlet eyes penetrated to the duskiest corner of Big Hall; his keen ears would have detected the slightest difference of voice.

But with Wiggins it was easy.

The Third Form-master was neither keen nor observant. He was, in fact, a little careless. He blinked owlily at Form lists through his glasses, and hardly looked at anything else. So long as "sum!" echoed back when he called a name, Wiggins was satisfied and unsuspecting.

With Wiggins up, any fellow was ready to do another fellow such a good turn. It was on record that, when Wiggins was up, Vernon-Smith of the Remove had once answered to half a dozen names in succession, amid suppressed chuckles, and got away with the same.

So it was all right now!

"Adsum!" in answer to Bunter's name was good enough for Mr. Wiggins. In the happy belief that Bunter was present, he omitted to mark him absent. So, if the fat Owl came rolling in late, he was safe from lines or detentions, which was Bob's friendly object.

Bob, certainly, was a little thoughtless. Schoolboys often are. The happy, youthful mind does not always realise that there are good and solid reasons behind the rules laid down in a school.

Roll-call was not, as the juniors often considered it, merely a worry. It had its reasons and its uses.

It was a hundred to one that a fellow who cut roll was merely late. But there was always the odd chance that something might have happened to him.

Bob's cheery mind pictured Bunter, rolling home with weary fat legs from somewhere, late for roll-call. Certainly, he did not dream, for an instant, that the hapless fat Owl was stranded on the island in the river, with no possibility whatever of getting off till he was fetched.

Having answered for Bunter, and saved him, as he supposed, from a row, Bob dismissed the trifling matter from his mind.

After roll-call, he was thinking of anything but Bunter. There was boxing in the Rag to while away the time till prep. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull had the gloves on with Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing. Nobody was likely to remember Bunter.

Calling-over established—or was supposed to establish—the fact that a fellow who answered to his name was in the House. Bunter's name having been answered, Bunter was—officially—in the House—and that was that!

When the Remove went to the studies for prep, only two fellows noticed that Bunter did not turn up. They were Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, his study-mates in Study No. 7.

But they did not give that fact much heed. Bunter was unpunctuality itself. He loathed prep. He was quite likely to keep away from his study, unless a prefect spotted him.

Even Bunter, however, seldom or never cut prep entirely, as he did on this particular evening. Prep over, Peter wondered where the fat Owl was, and what he fancied he was up to. So he walked along to Study No. 1, and looked in on Wharton and Nugent.

"Seen a fat owl blithering about?" he asked.

"Bunter?" asked Harry. "Isn't he in your study?"

"He hasn't turned up for prep."

"The silly ass!" commented Nugent.

"I haven't seen anything of him this evening," said Peter. "I suppose he came in for roll."

"Must have," answered the captain of the Remove. "He would have been missed before this, if he hadn't."

"You were on a picnic this afternoon," remarked Peter. "Wasn't Bunter with you?"

Wharton and Nugent chuckled.

"No; we dodged him."

"Well, I suppose he's about somewhere," said Peter. "He will get into a row with Quelch in the morning for cutting prep. Silly ass!"

And it was left at that.

Thus it came to pass that it was not till bed-time for the Remove that Billy Bunter was missed. Wingate of the Sixth had the duty of shepherding the Remove to the dormitory; and then the fact transpired that Bunter was absent.

"Where's Bunter?" Wingate inquired.

Nobody knew.

"Go and look for him, Wharton!" said the prefect, frowning.

The head boy of the Remove went to look for Bunter.

The rest of the Remove were in bed in their dormitory, and Wingate waiting impatiently to switch off the light, when Harry Wharton arrived there—without Bunter.

"Can't find him, Wingate," said Harry.

"You can't find Bunter!" exclaimed Wingate.

"No; I've rooted all over the place."

"He's in the House, I suppose!" grunted the Greyfriars captain.

"I suppose so—he must have answered at roll. But I can't find him anywhere."

Wingate gave a grunt.

"Turn in!"

Wharton turned in, and Wingate switched off the light and went down to report to Mr. Quelch that one of his Form had failed to turn up at dorm.

Bob Cherry sat up in bed.

"Hasn't that blithering idiot come in?" he asked.

"Must have come in," answered Harry Wharton. "They'd have been after him long ago, if he hadn't answered at roll."

"Oh crikey!" said Bob in dismay.

There was a chuckle from Hazeldene's bed.

"Didn't you answer for him at roll,

Cherry?" he asked. "I thought you did."

"I jolly well did!" said Bob.

"You did!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes! I thought the silly ass was coming in late, and—"

"Oh, my hat! Then he may not have come in at all."

"Looks as if he hasn't!" said Peter Todd. "Bob, old man, you're rather a silly ass!"

"Oh, rot!" grunted Bob. "I've answered for you before now, Toddy."

"Um! Well, yes! But—"

"The butfulness is terrific in this absurd case!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and idiotic Bunter is still out of gates."

"Oh jiminy!" said Bob.

"What on earth can he be doing out of gates at half-past nine?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Anybody know where he went?"

"We saw him on the raft this afternoon," said Nugent. "That was before four o'clock. Anybody seen him since?"

Nobody had seen him! Not a fellow in the Remove had the faintest idea where Billy Bunter might have spent his half-holiday.

It was five or six hours since he had been seen. He had not come in. Clearly, he could not be staying out of gates after bed-time of his own accord! Something had happened to Bunter!

"Dash it all!" said Johnny Bull. "It's rather a rotten idea to answer for another fellow at roll, when you come to think of it."

"Fat lot of good thinking of that now!" grunted Bob.

Rather late in the day, Bob realised those good, solid reasons that lay behind the rules laid down by the school authorities.

Bunter was missing, and that unthinking, good-natured act had prevented him from being looked for till after darkness had fallen.

"Quelch will have to know," said Harry. "It's rotten luck, Bob, old man, but Quelch's got to know."

"I know that!"

Bob was already slipping out of bed. It was not pleasant to face his Form-master with a statement of the facts. But, obviously, the Remove-master had to know that a member of his Form had not returned to the school. Already fellows were wondering whether the short-sighted Owl might have been run over by a car.

Bob Cherry slipped on trousers and left the dormitory. He hurried down the stairs, and made his way to Masters' Passage in an extremely uncomfortable frame of mind.

Mr. Quelch's door stood open. Wingate of the Sixth was there, and the Remove master was speaking to him.

"I can hardly understand this, Wingate. I was not present at calling-over, but Bunter must have answered to his name, or I should have been informed."

"That is so, sir," said Wingate. "But—" He stared round as a half-dressed junior appeared in the doorway.

Form-master and prefect stared at Bob Cherry. Bob's face was crimson. A glint came into Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes.

"What does this mean, Cherry!" he snapped. "Why are you out of your dormitory?"

"About Bunter, sir," stammered Bob.

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch's frowning brow

cleared. "If you are able to give me any information regarding Bunter—"

"He never came in, sir."

"He was present at calling-over, Cherry," said Wingate.

"He—he wasn't," stammered Bob.

"Nonsense!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "If any boy in my Form had failed to answer to his name, Mr. Wiggins would have informed me immediately."

"I—I answered, sir."

"What!"

"I—I answered for Bunter, sir!" gulped Bob.

Mr. Quelch looked at him. Handing out an "adsum" for a fellow late for roll, was regarded as quite a trifling matter by thoughtless school-boys. Mr. Quelch's expression indicated that he did not regard it as a trifling matter, however. And, indeed, it was not, as was now only too clear to Bob Cherry.

"You answered for Bunter!" repeated Mr. Quelch enunciating each word with terrifying distinctness.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bob. "I—I just thought he was late, sir, and—and—" His voice trailed off.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips like a vice.

"Then Bunter was not present at roll-call?" he exclaimed.

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Do you know where he is?"

"No, sir."

"Something must have happened to the boy," said Mr. Quelch. "If there has been a serious accident, you have very much to answer for, Cherry."

"I—I know, sir!" groaned Bob.

"I—I'm sorry."

"No doubt," said Mr. Quelch dryly. "Unfortunately your regret cannot undo the harm you have done. You may return to your dormitory, Cherry. I will deal with you in the morning, Wingate, search must be made immediately for Bunter. I will ring up the police station and ascertain whether anything is known of an accident. You may go, Cherry."

Bob Cherry went.

"Licked?" asked half a dozen voices, as he came back to the Remove dormitory.

"I'm getting that in the morning," answered Bob. "What on earth can have become of that fat ass?"

"Walked into a car," suggested Skinner.

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!" said two or three fellows.

Bob Cherry turned in—but not to sleep. For quite a long time there was a buzz of voices in the Remove dormitory. Fellows dropped off to sleep, one by one; but midnight had sounded before Bob's eyes closed. And the missing Owl had not returned.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter's Night Out!

"O H lor'!" groaned Billy Bunter. It was uncommon—very uncommon indeed—for the fat Owl of the Remove to be awake at midnight.

But at midnight's stilly hour Billy Bunter was awake—wide awake—very wide awake indeed.

How long he had been on that beastly island Bunter hardly knew, but he knew that it seemed like centuries.

He was sleepy; but he could not sleep. He was hungry—fearfully hungry! It was a night of horror to Bunter.

At first the fat Owl had hoped to see some craft pass on the river, and

get a lift off the island. Unfortunately Coker's boat was the last craft that passed.

It was not till the summer dusk was falling that Bunter resorted to the desperate expedient of shouting for help. If his shout reached any ears, those ears were most likely to belong to one of Sir Hilton Popper's keepers—and that meant a row at the school for having trespassed on Popper's Island.

But desperation at last drove Bunter to take that risk. But he took it in vain. No one appeared on the towpath—no figure in velveteens emerged from the shadowy woods along the Sark.

Darkness fell.

After dusk the spot was as lonely a one as any lover of solitude could have desired. Billy Bunter entirely failed to see the charms which sages are said to have seen in the face of solitude. He loathed it.

No sound came to his fat ears, but the whisper of the summer wind in the branches, and the unending ripple of the Sark in the rushes.

A silver crescent of moon came out in a sky of darkest blue. It gleamed on the rippling river. The scene was one of great beauty had Bunter been in a frame of mind to appreciate it. But Bunter wasn't.

The scene upon which Billy Bunter would have been glad to feast his eyes was not moonlight on a rippling stream, but a steak-and-kidney pie on a dish.

Standing on the little landing-place on Popper's Island under the thick shadow of heavy branches, the fat Owl of the Remove blinked at the rippling river with a hopeless blink through his big spectacles.

He was stranded for the night!

He had to realise it.

By that time the Remove were in bed. Evidently no one had any idea where Bunter was. It had not even occurred to the Famous Five that the fat Owl had contrived to land himself on Popper's Island, in the belief that they were there.

Coker & Co., certainly, might remember that they had ferried him across. But as he had told them that his friends were there they would hardly guess that he was stranded on the island without a boat.

Certainly no man in the Fifth was likely to notice whether a junior answered his name at roll or not. Not unless Bunter was inquired for up and down the school would Coker & Co. recall him to mind.

That might have happened, but for Bob Cherry's unlucky, though well-intentioned act, in answering "adsum" Bunter's name.

Bunter nourished a hope that missed at roll-call he would be inquired for, and then the Fifth Form men would remember putting him on the island, and mention the fact.

It meant an awful row if a boat had to be sent for him to take him off a spot out of school bounds. But that was better than a night on the island.

It was an unpleasant alternative—but unpleasant as it was, it was not available. For, owing to Bob's hapless intervention, Bunter was not missed till bed-time, and Coker & Co. knew nothing of it.

Bunter's hope faded away as the summer night grew older.

Luckily it was a fine warm night—a lovely night in June. That was all right, so far as it went. But Bunter was sleepy, hungry, and growing very nervous.

Absolute solitude spelled safety, but there was something terrifying in it, all the same, and in the thickening, darkening shadows.

Bunter had long ceased to shout. If nobody had heard him before darkness fell, nobody was likely to hear him at a later hour.

Moreover, at a late hour of the night, unpleasant characters might be abroad—rough poachers in the Popper Court Woods; tramps camping out along the river. Bunter longed to see a human face—but not that of a poacher or a tramp.

He groaned.

Almost any fellow in the Greyfriars Remove, excepting Bunter, would have risked a swim across the channel to the towpath. The distance was not great.

Bunter did not even think of it.

Any fellow who had asked Bunter whether he could swim, would have been told that he was the best swimmer in the Remove, if not in the whole school. But at the bottom of his fat heart Billy Bunter had a misgiving about his swimming powers. He would have stated that he could swim like a duck. But once in the water he had reason to fear that his exploits would rather resemble those of a stone than a duck.

Anyhow he did not think of trying it on.

He thought of curling up in the thickets and trying to sleep. But he was too hungry and alarmed to sleep. In fact, he hardly dared to blink into the dark circling shadows.

It was, in fact, awful. Billy Bunter's career as a grub-hunter had often landed him in trouble, but never in trouble so bad as this. He would have given that picnic, and a dozen picnics, to be safe in bed in the Remove dormitory, even without supper. But at the mere thought of supper Bunter groaned in anguish of spirit. He knew now what shipwrecked men felt like in an open boat at sea.

He sat down at last at the foot of a tree, among the willows at the edge of the island. Hungry and alarmed as he was, he was getting more and more sleepy, and he nodded a little. He was dozing dismally, when a sound from the silence of the woods reached him.

It was a distant shout.

The fat Owl started into wide wakefulness. Was it rescue at last? Had those beasts guessed where he was? Or had that ass Coker told what he knew? Someone, at all events, was at hand—and what could it mean but rescue?

Bunter's little round eyes gleamed through his big round spectacles. A caning from Quelch, even a whopping from the Head, meant little, if only he could get to supper and bed.

There was another shout, distinctly echoing. A light flashed in the darkness of the woods on the river bank, but there was no sign or sound of a boat on the river.

Bunter groaned dismally. It was not rescue; it was something going on in Popper Court Woods—most likely Sir Hilton's keepers after poachers.

Again came a shout, and then another and another. Several voices were calling from different quarters; they seemed to be coming from the direction of Popper Court, Sir Hilton's residence, a mile away across the wood.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

But he had a glimpse of hope now. He was ready to face even the wrath of Sir Hilton Popper to get off that dreadful island. If any of the keepers





Mr. Quelch and Wingate stared round as Bob Cherry, half-dressed, appeared in the doorway. "Why are you out of your dormitory?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I've come to tell you, sir, that Bunter was not present at calling-over!" gulped the Remove junior. "I—I answered for him, sir!"

came within call, Bunter was going to howl for help and chance it.

Across the channel, from the towpath, came a sound of rustling as someone hurriedly forced a way out of the thick wood. Bunter had a glimpse for a second of a figure that emerged on the towpath.

But he did not call out.

He blinked at that figure in terror.

It was not a keeper; it was a man who stood panting, with bent head, listening; obviously a fugitive. And Bunter did not doubt that he was a poacher for whom the keepers were hunting.

Only for a few seconds the hunted man stood there, then there was a splash in the water.

The man was swimming the river.

Bunter leaned on the tree, blotted from sight in the darkness under it, his fat heart thumping. Till then the solitude had seemed awful; now the fat junior realised that solitude was infinitely preferable to a meeting in the dark with a lawless and desperate man.

He knew that the man was not swimming across the Sark; he was heading for the island. He heard the swift strokes as the swimmer cleft his way across the channel; he heard the splashing as he landed and the rustle of the willows as the man plunged among them.

His fat heart stood still.

He could not see the man in the blackness under the branches, neither could the man see him; but within a dozen feet of him a desperate man, dripping with water, crouched, and Bunter heard his panting breath. Another sound, strange enough, reached his fat ears—a clinking sound, as of metal. The man was carrying something—something that clinked like pots and pans in a bag. Bunter noticed the sound without heeding it.

Silence followed.

The panting breath was subdued; not a sound reached the Owl of the Remove. He could almost have fancied that it was a dream, and that he was still alone on the island in the river. But he knew—knew only too well—that the surrounding darkness hid a crouching, desperate man. The man was silent; and Billy Bunter was, if possible, still more silent. Not for worlds would he have made his presence known to that hunted skulker of the night.

Lights flashed in the dark wood again. Footsteps and voices sounded, and dim figures appeared in the moonbeam on the towpath.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Thief in the Night!

"JOYCE!"

"Sir Hilton—"

"You have missed him!"

"I think he came this way, sir!"

"You are mistaken! He did nothing of the kind! I am convinced that he was making off towards the common."

"I heard—"

"Nonsense!"

"I think—"

"Nonsense, Joyce!"

Billy Bunter heard every word across the narrow arm of the Sark. He could see the tall, angular figure of Sir Hilton Popper, and catch the gleam of the monocle in the baronet's eye.

Joyce, the keeper, stood silent. The autocrat of Popper Court was not a man to be argued with.

That they were in pursuit of the unknown man who had swum out to the island, Bunter knew. He could have called across the information they wanted. But he did not dare to utter

a sound, with the hunted man crouching so near him in the gloom.

Bunter knew what they wanted to know—but Bunter, like Brer Fox, lay low and said "nuffin."

"He has escaped!" Sir Hilton's angry bark came clearly. "It was Leech; I saw him distinctly! It was Leech, Joyce! The man I discharged this morning for impertinence! It was Leech! You can swear to that, Joyce!"

"I only saw a shadder, sir—"

"You are a fool, Joyce!"

"Yes, Sir Hilton."

Joyce, the head keeper of the Popper Court estate, had a wife and family to consider. The lord of Popper Court was far from realising that he was taking advantage of that circumstance. But he would have been surprised to hear what Joyce thought of him, could Joyce only have ventured to put it in words.

"I saw him distinctly!" barked Sir Hilton. "I heard a noise and woke up, Joyce, and went down. And I tell you I saw the man distinctly as he jumped from the library window. Do you hear me, Joyce?"

"Yes, Sir Hilton."

"No doubt he would have escaped unseen had I not awakened. My keepers, I have no doubt, would have taken no notice of him and allowed him to escape with his plunder."

"As soon as I heard you call, sir—"

"Don't argue with me, Joyce! You have not done your duty! None of my keepers have done their duty! It was Leech—I am absolutely convinced that it was Leech! He knew his way about the house, of course. I saw him distinctly—at least, with sufficient distinctness. But if you had taken the trouble to keep your eyes open, Joyce, there would have been no doubt. He must

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,479.

have passed within a few yards of you when I followed him from the house—"

"I saw a shadder—"

"If you cannot swear to his identity, Joyce, you may as well hold your tongue! If you had followed in the right direction the rascal would have been in our hands by now!"

"I think—"

"Don't talk nonsense, Joyce! By this time he is half-way across Courtfield common with the Popper Court silver! Do you understand? Can you understand that I am put to a loss of more than £1,000 by your incapacity, Joyce?"

"I'm sure I heard him, sir—"

"Nonsense! If he escapes with his plunder, and cannot be unmistakably identified, he will snap his fingers at us."

"The police, sir—"

"I shall telephone to the police station the moment I return to the house. He shall be found—his lodgings in Courtfield searched—he shall be detained on suspicion, at least! The silver tankards he has purloined are heirlooms in my family; I am responsible for them. If you had not taken the wrong direction, Joyce, I should not have followed you here, and he would not have escaped."

"But, Sir Hilton—"

"You have wasted enough time already, Joyce; do not waste more in idle talk. Call the others and make for the common at once, while I return to the house and ring up the police—"

"But, sir—"

"Are you going to argue with me, Joyce, or carry out my orders?" barked Sir Hilton.

Joyce drew a deep breath.

"Very well, sir."

"Go at once! At once, I say! Why are you wasting time? I tell you that it was Leech—I am practically convinced that it was Leech—and he may yet be caught with the plunder on him."

"Yes, Sir Hilton"

Joyce went back into the wood; Sir Hilton Popper, fuming, stalked after him, and both disappeared from Billy Bunter's eyes.

Every word had reached Bunter's fat ears clearly—and must have reached, also, the ears of the unseen man crouching in the dark. No doubt Leech—if the man was Leech—had been glad to hear the words of the dictatorial old gentleman. Joyce had believed that the fugitive had fled towards the river—and Joyce certainly had been right. But the lord of Popper Court had no use for argument from underlings.

Sir Hilton fancied that the man had broken out in the other direction, towards the open spaces of Courtfield common. And now Joyce was calling the other keepers to search in that direction. They were not likely to have much luck, as every step took them farther and farther away from the drenched man crouching on the island.

"Oh lor'!" breathed Billy Bunter—not aloud.

He understood now that it was not a case of poaching. There had been a burglary at Popper Court, and the thief had had a narrow escape. And he was now crouching within a few yards of Billy Bunter—with his plunder! Bunter knew now the meaning of the clinking sound he had heard; it had been made by the celebrated Popper Court silver, packed in a bag in the grasp of the man who had stolen it.

If Bunter had been cautious before, he was doubly cautious now. Not a sound came from him. He hardly breathed. It was not a rough poacher, which would have been bad enough—but

a midnight thief with a bag of plunder, who was skulking in the dark willows.

Silent, Bunter strained his fat ears to listen.

Surely the man would go, now that the coast was clear! Bunter longed to hear him go. He trembled at the thought of the rascal discovering him there. What would the villain do if he spotted him?

But it was long before the unseen man stirred.

Not till the last sound had died away in the shadowy woods, and it was certain that no one was anywhere near at hand, did the crouching man move.

Was he going?

He could only get off the island by swimming, and Bunter expected to hear a sound of a plunge in the water.

But that sound did not come.

The man was moving—he could hear him move! The willows swayed and rustled and brushed. Why did he not go?

But minute followed minute, and still the unseen man was there. Several times Bunter had an awful impression that the wretch was creeping towards him in the dark—it seemed to his terrified ears that the rustling sound approached. He barely repressed a squeak of terror.

But it was evident that Leech did not know that anyone was on the island with him. His pursuers were gone, and were far distant now, and certainly it was not likely to cross his mind that a fat schoolboy had been stranded on the island in the river. So long as Bunter kept silent in the dark, he was safe—and he kept very silent indeed.

At length, to the fat junior's intense relief, he heard a splashing sound. The man was going at last!

Bunter heard the water ripple from the strokes of a swimmer. Blinking out of the darkness under the branches, he spotted a head on the moonlit water.

Swift strokes carried the man to the bank. Bunter, with his spectacles glued on him, saw him drag himself from the river—a dim, half-seen figure in the moonbeam.

Swiftly that shadowy figure darted across the towpath to the wood. During the next few minutes faint sounds were wafted to Bunter. The man was out of his sight, but still there, and the fat junior guessed that he was wringing the water out of his clothes before he went.

But all sound died away at last.

The man was gone!

Bunter breathed a deep, deep breath of thankfulness. He was solitary again; but, for the first time, he saw the charms that sages have seen in the face of solitude! The loneliness of the Sahara would have been preferable to such company!

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "Thank goodness that beast is gone, but— Oh dear! Oh crikey!"

Faintly, afar across the woods, scudded a distant stroke, followed by another. It was two o'clock!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He sat down again, and leaned on the tree. His fat head nodded over his fat chest. Even hunger was forgotten in overpowering drowsiness. At last Billy Bunter slept, and his deep snore made a more or less musical accompaniment to the ripple of the Sark.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### What Coker Knew!

"**O**UT all night!"

"Great pip!"

In the Remove dormitory, when the rising-bell clanged out in the sunny morning, every fellow stared at Billy Bunter's empty bed.

That bed had not been slept in.

Bunter, evidently, had not returned overnight! The fat Owl of the Remove had had a night out!

It was the first time such a thing had happened, so far as any Remove fellow knew. Where was Bunter?

There were a good many serious faces in the Remove. It seemed impossible that anything but a serious accident could have kept a junior all night out of the school. Something must have happened to Bunter.

Bob Cherry's usually cheery face was deeply worried when he went down with his chums. He blamed himself for what he had done; though really it was only what thoughtless fellows had done dozens of times, with no harm coming of it. Nevertheless, but for that unlucky "adsum" in Hall the evening before, Bunter would have been looked for while the long summer day was still light. Clearly, if he had been looked for after dark, he had not been found.

Mr. Quelch was already out of the House when the Famous Five appeared in the quad. His face was very sombre, and he frowned grimly at the sight of Bob. His look did not invite questioning; but the juniors were anxious about the missing Owl, and they ventured.

"May we ask if Bunter has been found, sir?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He has not been found!" barked Mr. Quelch.

He gave Bob a very grim look.

"No one appears to know where the boy went yesterday afternoon," he said. "There is no trace of him to be found. If he is unharmed, it is inconceivable that he has not returned to the school. Had search been made earlier, doubtless something might have been learned."

Then, as he read the dismal dismay in Bob's unhappy face, the Remove master relented.

"You see now, Cherry, the harm that may be done by a thoughtless infraction of the rules of the school!" he said. "I shall not punish you—I think you realise your fault sufficiently."

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Bob.

"I may add," said Mr. Quelch, "that I can learn nothing of any accident. Nothing is known at the police station or the Courtfield Hospital. Something must have happened to Bunter; but we must hope that it was not an accident of a serious nature."

He walked away to speak to Mr. Prout, who came puffing into the quad. When the bell rang for prayers, all the school knew that Bunter of the Remove was missing.

After prayers, some of the Sixth Form prefects went out, on foot or on bicycles. It seemed that there was going to be a hunt for Bunter, now that a new day had dawned.

Bunter's place was empty at the Remove table at breakfast. Quelch's face was solemn, and most of the fellows looked serious enough. Even Skinner was not flippant on the subject. Fellows were, indeed, so concerned about Bunter that it might have been supposed that the fat Owl was quite a favourite in the Form.

When the Famous Five came out after breakfast, Coker of the Fifth came up to them in the quad. Coker, by that time, had heard, like the rest of the school, that Bunter of the Remove was missing, and had been missing all night.

Coker was frowning.

"What's all this about Bunter?" he demanded gruffly.

"He's missing!" said Harry.

"Well, from what I hear, he was missing all the afternoon yesterday," said Coker. "Why haven't you told your beak where he was?"

The Famous Five stared at Coker.

"Because we don't know, fathead!" said Bob.

"You were the last fellows who saw him—Wharton, at least," said Coker. "You're bound to tell your beak! If you get into a row for trespassing on Popper's Island, that can't be helped."

"What the thump are you talking about?" demanded Wharton. "We haven't been on Popper's Island for weeks!"

"Don't talk rot!" snapped Coker. "You were there yesterday afternoon, or Bunter wouldn't have said so."

"Did Bunter say so?"

"Yes, he did, when he asked me for a lift across to the island!" grunted Coker. "He said his friends were picnicking there, and mentioned your name, Wharton, so you were there."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

He understood now.

"That howling ass!" exclaimed Nugent. "He fancied we were picnicking on Popper's Island!"

"And weren't you?" demanded Coker. "I saw you going up the river!"

"No, ass! We were going there, but old Popper turned up on the bank, and we went somewhere else!" growled Johnny Bull. "If that fat duffer fancied we were on the island—"

"Well, he jolly well did, or he wouldn't have asked for a lift across," said Coker. "I landed him there, I know that!"

"Oh, scissors!" gasped Bob. "Can he have been on the island all night? He would be too funky to swim off, if he was stranded there."

Coker whistled.

As soon as he had heard that Bunter had been missing all night, he had, of course, remembered that lift in the boat. Supposing that the fat junior had picnicked there with Harry Wharton & Co., he took it for granted that they had been the last fellows to see him—and were not mentioning the fact, on their own account.

Now it dawned on Coker's solid brain that he had landed Bunter on the island, with no means of getting off, as no one had been there with a boat.

"Oh, you ass!" said Bob. "Why the thump did you give him a lift across? If we'd known that—"

"Don't be cheeky!" snapped Coker.

"We might have guessed he was after us, only we knew he was too jolly lazy to pull up the river!" said Harry. "I never thought of the fat ass walking it, and getting a lift across. Why the thump didn't you tell Quelch last night?"

"Why the thump should I, when I never knew till ten minutes ago that the young ass was missing?" snapped Coker. "I can't make out why he wasn't missed at calling-over!"

"Oh!" said Bob, reddening. It seemed as if he was never to hear the end of that unlucky "adsum."

"They ought to have missed him then, and inquired after him," said Coker. "I can't make out why they didn't. If I'd heard anything about it before the Fifth went to roost, of course I should have told Quelch."

"Oh dear!" murmured Bob.

"Well, you'd better tell Quelch now," said Harry. "If you planted Bunter on Popper's Island, it's pretty certain that he's there now. He couldn't get off, unless a boat passed, and very likely one didn't."

Coker gave an angry grunt.

"I'm going to tell Quelch! I'll jolly well kick the young ass when he comes back, too! Bother him!"

And Coker stalked away. Mr. Quelch

was in the quad, talking to Prout and Wiggins; the three masters discussing the mystery of the missing Owl.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched Coker of the Fifth, as he stalked up to the group. The mystery of Billy Bunter's absence was clear to them now; and it was going to be made clear to the masters. And as Popper's Island was strictly and severely out of school bounds, it looked as if there was going to be a "row."

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Vials of Wrath!

PROUT boomed.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips; Mr. Wiggins shrugged his shoulders. But Mr. Prout

boomed. All the masters were, of course, relieved to hear that Bunter's whereabouts were known; that the fat junior was probably safe and sound, and no doubt little the worse for a night out in balmy June.

Mr. Quelch hurried away at once to direct the boat-keeper to take a boat up to Popper's Island and bring Bunter off, if he was there. Mr. Wiggins walked back to the House to spread the news. But Coker was not at liberty to depart, after handing out his valuable information. Coker had to stand where he was, and listen to his Form-master.

In telling what he knew, Coker had done what any fellow was bound to do. The solitary castaway of Popper's Island had to be rescued. It had not occurred to Coker that there would be any unpleasant results for himself. So far as he thought at all—which was not very much—Coker rather expected to be praised for letting in light on this troublesome mystery, and getting the missing junior back to the school.

Instead of which, Prout boomed at him in pompous wrath.

"I can scarcely believe," said Mr. Prout, fixing Coker, like the Ancient Mariner, with a glittering eye—"I can scarcely credit, Coker, that you—even you, the most obtuse boy in my Form—could be guilty of this act of thoughtless and disrespectful folly!"

Coker blinked at him.

He did not understand.

He was used, of course, to fault-finding from Prout. Prout always had some fault or other to find with him; even in such simple matters as spelling, as when, for instance, Coker spelt "occiput" with an x instead of a double c—which Coker knew was right if Prout didn't.

But for the life of him, Coker could not see what he had done amiss now. Here was Prout booming at him in the middle of the quad for nothing at all.

"But I had to tell Mr. Quelch, sir," stammered Coker. "He seems to be anxious about the young ass—I mean Bunter—so I thought I'd better tell him where he was."

"I am not alluding to that, Coker! Have you no sense?" boomed Prout. "I am glad, at least, that you have had the frankness to confess to your fault, considering the serious consequences to which it has led."

"My fault, sir?" gasped the bewildered Coker.

"Your most serious dereliction of duty!" boomed Prout. "Your unthinking and reckless disregard of authority, Coker!"

"What have I done, sir?" stammered Coker.

"What have you done?" boomed Prout. "Have you not confessed that

you landed a Remove boy yesterday on the island in the river belonging to Sir Hilton Popper?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Are you aware, or are you not aware, that that island is out of school bounds?" boomed Prout.

Coker started.

He was aware of it, of course. Everybody at Greyfriars was. But certainly he had not called it to mind when he gave Bunter that lift in his boat. His mind had been chiefly occupied at that time with pointing out to Potter and Greene what silly idiots they were.

"Are you aware, or are you not aware, that Sir Hilton Popper has threatened to prosecute any trespasser on that island?" resumed Prout.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Yes."

"Yet, knowing this, you helped a foolish junior boy to defy the prohibition of a landowner who is also a governor of this school!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

Coker had not thought of it in that light. He had not, in fact, thought at all. Thinking was not Coker's long suit.

He had given a kid a lift in his boat. That was all. But put as Prout put it, it was a much more serious matter than that.

"I am amazed," said Prout. "I am astounded. You, a senior boy in the Fifth Form—my Form! You have trespassed, or, at least, been a party to trespassing, on Sir Hilton Popper's property—"

"Tain't his property, sir!" hooted the goaded Coker.

"What—what?"

"Everybody knows that that island's public land!" hooted Coker. "That old hunk—"

"Who—what—"

"Old Popper—has enclosed it, and makes out that it's his, but it jolly well isn't, and I'd jolly well tell him so to his face!" said Coker. "I'd land on that island right under his nose if it wasn't out of bounds!"

Prout gazed at Coker.

So did Harry Wharton & Co. and about thirty other fellows, drawn to the spot by Prout's boom.

"Old Coker's asking for it!" murmured the Bounder.

"The askfulness is terrific."

"He's right!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Everybody agreed with Coker, so far as that went. Everybody knew that it was only for the sake of peace that the headmaster had conceded Sir Hilton's claim, and put the island in the river out of bounds. But it was not judicious to argue the matter with a beak—especially an angry beak! Beaks, like wilful horses, had to be given their heads.

But Coker of the Fifth was seldom, if ever, judicious. He was, on the other hand, born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

Prout, seemingly bereft of speech, gazed at him, his boom quite interrupted. Coker went on:

"Dr. Locke's put the island out of bounds, sir. I know that. But a lot of fellows think it's rotten!"

"What?" breathed Prout.

"I don't believe in giving in to a greedy old hunk!" said Coker. "I'm bound to obey my headmaster, but I wouldn't care a brass button for old Popper! If he talked to me, I'd tell him to go an eat coke fast enough!"

"You are speaking of a governor of the school, Coker!" gurgled Prout.

"I know, sir! I jolly well think—"

"Silence!" Prout recovered his breath and his boom. "Do not attempt

to defend your conduct, Coker, by adding insolence to insolence! You will take five hundred lines!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Look here, ir—"

"Another word, and I will make your imposition a thousand lines, Coker!" roared Mr. Prout.

Coker stood dumb.

Mr. Prout, pink with wrath, rolled away.

Horace Coker stood staring after him.

Potter and Greene, who had joined the crowd of onlookers, exchanged a grin. It was not uncommon for Coker to argue with his Form-master. It did not make him popular with Prout, but it often afforded the Fifth Form a little entertainment.

"Well, you've got the old bean's rag out now, Coker!" remarked Potter—waiting till Prout was out of hearing before he made that remark.

"Five hundred lines!" gasped Coker.

"Lucky that's the lot!" remarked Greene. "Prout looked like making it a whopping."

"Don't be a silly ass, Greene! I'd like to see Prout whop me!" Horace Coker breathed wrath. "Five hundred lines—because that old curmudgeon, Popper, grabs an island that doesn't belong to him, and warns people off! I'll jolly well show him whether he can warn me off! Five hundred lines for giving a kid a lift in a boat—because that old hunk chooses to make out that the island's his, when everybody jolly well knows it isn't! I've a jolly good mind to go straight to that dashed island, after class, and sit there, and wait for old Popper to come along and spot me."

"Don't be an ass!" gasped Potter. "Prout—"

"Blow Prout!"

"But Prout—" gasped Greene.

"Prout likes to be asked to dinner at Popper Court!" hooted Coker. "That's what's the matter with Prout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For goodness' sake, shut up, Coker—if Prout heard you—"

"I don't care if he does! Five hundred lines! I never set foot on the putrid island, did I? But I jolly well will!"

"Coker, old man, for goodness' sake don't be a goat!" pleaded Potter. "Prout would be as mad as a hatter if—"

"Let him!" hooted Coker. "Let him make it a thousand lines if he likes! Let him make it two thousand! Let him make it all the Georgics that that silly ass, Virgil, ever wrote! I don't care! You'll see! I'm going up to the island after class! I'll show old Popper! I'll show old Prout!"

"Coker—"

"Old chap—"

"You'll see!" hooted Coker. "I'm going up to that island after class, and you fellows can come with me—"

"I'll watch it!" gasped Potter.

"I'll go alone if you're funky! I'm going! Who's old Popper?" demanded Coker, in a voice that would certainly have reached Prout's portly ears, had not that majestic gentleman, fortunately, gone into the House. "Who the thump is Sir Hilton Popper, Baronet? Everybody knows it was a dashed City alderman gave James I a thousand pounds for the title! They used to sell 'em like doughnuts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him come popping in when I'm on the island, that's all! I'll tell him what I think of him!" hooted Coker. "He doesn't ask me to dinner—as he does Prout—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,479.

"Coker, old man—"

"You'll see!" roared Coker. "You'll jolly well see! And I can jolly well say out plain— Bother that beastly bell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the bell for class. It cut short the flow of Horace Coker's eloquence. Coker went in with the Fifth, in a state of seething indignation. He did not find Prout pleasant in Form that morning.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter's Burglar!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

"Here's Bunter!"

It was Bunter! The Remove fellows saw him when they came out in break. First and second school had passed, without Bunter. But as Mr. Quelch was called from the Form-room during class, the juniors guessed that Bunter had come back. The fat junior did not appear in the Form-room, however. No doubt he was busy filling up the immense vacant spaces left in his capacious interior, by missing meals on Popper's Island.

Now he was in the quad, when the Remove came out; with a fat and shiny look on his face, which indicated that he had filled up the vacant spaces, and perhaps overdone it a little.

"So you've got back!" said Harry Wharton. "Did they pick you up on Popper's Island?"

"Yes! I say, you fellows, I've had a fearful time!" said Bunter. "I was awake all night—never closed my eyes, you know—not once! I haven't had any sleep! Of course, I can stand it—I'm pretty tough! I don't suppose you fellows could! I think you fellows might have come and got me off, though! That silly ass of a boatman woke me up by poking me with an oar—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter warmly. "If you think it's funny to be stranded out all night, not sleeping a wink—"

"You weren't sleeping a wink when the boatkeeper woke you up?" asked Bob.

"Eh? No—yes—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What I mean is, I never slept a wink till—till I dropped off to sleep in—"

"Fellows often don't!" said Bob gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you can cackle!" said Bunter. "But I can tell you I've been through a fearful time, and it's all your fault! I thought you were on the island having that picnic! That idiot Coker ought to have told them where I was. Lucky I came through it alive—"

"I don't see the luck in that!" remarked Skinner.

"Beast!"

"Were you hungry?" grinned the Bounder.

"Frightfully! I never had any tea, you know, and no supper, and not even any brekker, till I got back here! Fancy that!"

"Lucky you've got enough fat to live on, like a polar bear!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"I fancy Bunter's punished the grub since he got in!" chuckled Peter Todd.

"Well, I've had something to eat!" admitted Bunter. "I can tell you I needed it! Now I want some sleep! Not this moment, you know—but in third school. I think Quelch ought to

let me sleep this morning, as I never had any sleep last night."

"Better not tell him that the boatkeeper woke you out of the sleep you never had, then!" suggested Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter, disdainfully. "I should have expected my pals to be anxious about me, out at night, starving, and in fearful danger. But I suppose you were only thinking of yourselves—as usual!"

As a matter of fact, most of the Remove fellows had been thinking a good deal of the missing Owl, and feeling anxious about him. But now that he had turned up safe and sound, and none the worse for his night out, naturally their concern had evaporated.

"Quelch wasn't sympathetic," went on Bunter. "I thought he would be feeling it, you know. Instead of that, he's given me two hundred lines for going on that putrid island at all. That's his sort of sympathy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall expect you fellows to whack out those lines, as it's all your fault," said Bunter. "If you'd been on the island, it would have been all right. Leaving a fellow stranded all night—"

"How were we to know you were there, fathead?" asked Nugent.

"Now I've got lines for going on the island," said Bunter. "Lot Quelch cares about a fellow going through hunger and danger and—"

"We can guess you were hungry!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But where was the jolly old danger? I suppose you were in a blue funk, in the dark; but darkness doesn't bite."

"Suppose that burglar had spotted me—"

"That what?"

"Burglar!"

The juniors gazed at Bunter! This was the first they had heard of the burglar.

"What is the fat ass blithering about now?" asked Toddy. "Was there a burglary on Popper's Island? What did the burglar burgle?"

"Not on the island, fathead!" said Bunter. "At Popper Court, and the burglar swam off to the island, with old Popper and his keepers after him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I wasn't scared, of course," said Bunter. "But I thought I'd better keep out of sight. I've no doubt he had a revolver! In fact, I saw it! But for that I should have collared him, and called out to old Popper."

"Yes—I can see you collaring burglars!" gasped Bob. "Just in your line! Did anyone get on the island while you were there?"

"Yes—that burglar!"

"Sure it wasn't a pirate landed from a lugger?" asked Bob.

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

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter. "Of course it wasn't! It was a burglar—a big, savage, fierce-looking desperado. I couldn't see him in the dark—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better give his description to the police," gasped Smithy. "Only don't mention that you couldn't see him in the dark."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, I had a glimpse of him—a fierce-looking ruffian," said Bunter. "I'd have tackled him fast enough, though, but for his knife—"

"His knife?"

"Yes, he had a knife—or, rather, a dagger—one of those long, flashing daggers you see on the films—"

"As well as a revolver?"

"Eh! No! Yes! I—I mean, a



"You clear me off this island!" roared Coker to the man from Courtfield. "I'd like to see you do it!" The next moment the two were struggling on the water's edge, till Coker's foot caught in a trailing root, and he stumbled. Still keeping his hold, Coker dragged his adversary with him as he went splashing in the muddy shallows!

revolver! That is, he had a knife as well as a revolver! One in each hand, you know."

"Oh crumbs!"

"But for that, I'd have bagged the scoundrel and got old Popper's silver back," said Bunter. "I knew just where he was—hiding in that bunch of willows—though I couldn't see him."

"Oh! You couldn't see him?"

"Not after he got on the island. I spotted him swimming across from the bank," explained Bunter.

"Some swimmer!" grinned Bob. "Fancy a burglar swimming with a revolver in one hand and a knife in the other, you fellows! He must have had them while he was swimming, as Bunter only saw him in the water."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean—"

"Yes, tell us what you mean," said Bob encouragingly. "I suppose you dreamed this before the boat-keeper woke you up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't dream it!" yelled Bunter.

"Well, if you're making it up now, you ought to be able to make up a better one. You've had a lot of practice."

"If you fellows don't believe me—"

"Believe you!" gasped Bob. "You're not expecting anybody to believe you, are you?"

"It's true!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The believfulness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I tell you the burglar came out swimming to the island in the middle of the night—"

"Go it!"

"He hid in the willows till old Popper was gone, and then swam off again—"

"Pile it on!"

"He had a bag of plunder, and I heard old Popper say it was the Popper

Court silver, worth a thousand pounds—"

"Keep it up!"

"He said it was a man named Lecch, whom he had sacked!" howled Bunter. "Old Popper gave him the sack—"

"And he carried off old Popper's silver in the sack?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not that sack, you silly ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bell for third school called the Remove back to their Form-room. Bunter, much to his annoyance, had to go in with the rest—Quelch apparently seeing no reason why the fat Owl should sleep through third school. The Remove were grinning as they went in.

Not a fellow in the Form believed in Bunter's burglar. Billy Bunter never could tell a plain, unvarnished tale; and the trimmings he added to it made it rather too incredible.

But though the revolver and the knife were figments of Bunter's fertile imagination, reminiscences of the wild and woolly western films he had seen, there really had been a burglar! Bunter knew that! And after third school he hooked Peter Todd by the arm when the Remove came out.

"I say, Toddy, about that burglar I—" he began.

"The one you dreamed of?" asked Peter.

"Fathead! That burglar on the island—"

"That's the one!" said Peter.

"You silly ass! Look here, do you think I'd better tell Quelch about it?"

Peter stared at him.

"Well, yes, if you want to be licked for trying to pull Quelch's leg," he answered. "If you want my advice, you'd better keep your film stunts for the Remove! They won't do for beaks."

"But it's true!" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you sniggering idiot!" hooted Bunter. "Have you ever known me tell a lie?"

Peter almost fell down.

"Have I?" he stuttered. "Have I ever known you tell anything else?"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter decided not to report his thrilling adventure to Mr. Quelch. Nobody in the Remove believed him, and he doubted whether Quelch would. And as William George Bunter was constitutionally incapable of keeping to the facts, it was very probable that Quelch wouldn't!

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Startling News!

"HEARD?" asked Hobson of the Shell.

Hobby of the Shell had been down to Courtfield on his bike after dinner. He came back, put up his jigger, and walked into the quad, full of news.

"Burglars at Popper Court!" announced Hobby.

Which was enough to draw an interested crowd.

"Old Popper's place?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes—all the jolly old silver snaffled!" said Hobby. "Everybody in Courtfield is buzzing with it. They've got Inspector Grimes on the job. No end of excitement in the town."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

He remembered Bunter's burglar—hitherto dismissed as a figment of the fat Owl's imagination.

"Let's hear it, Hobby!" said a dozen voices.

Hobby was only too pleased to let them hear it. He was full of it. He

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,478.

**BILLY BUNTER'S BURGLAR!**

FRANK RICHARDS

(Continued from page 13.)

had gone down to the sports shop at Courtfield about a new bat, but he had almost forgotten his new bat in the thrill of this startling news. Startling things did not happen very often round about Greyfriars.

"It happened last night," he said. "From what I hear, old Popper heard a noise, and went down, and spotted a burglar just jumping from a window, with loot in a bag. He got after him, with some of his keepers, and there was a chase in the woods."

"Did they get him?"

"No fear! He got clear," said Hobby. "But the police detained a man on suspicion, though they've let him go since. Man named Leech."

"Leech!" repeated Harry Wharton. Bunter had mentioned that name.

"This man Leech," went on Hobby, "was a manservant at Popper Court, and old Popper sacked him only yesterday or the day before. I don't know—quite lately, anyhow. He had done something or other—"

"Wanted his wages, perhaps?" suggested Skinner.

Some of the fellows chuckled. Sir Hilton Popper was not, perhaps, aware of it, but all the neighbourhood knew that his estate was covered by mortgages almost as thickly as by his old trees. At the Peal of Bells in Courtfield it was no secret that the wages of some of the household staff at the baronet's mansion were in arrear, and from that centre of local gossip such news trickled in all directions.

Probably it never occurred to the lofty lord of Popper Court that his manservants discussed him and his affairs at the Peal of Bells. But they undoubtedly did!

"Well, I don't know what the man did!" said Hobby, grinning. "Anyhow, old Popper sacked him, and he thinks that the man came back at night and snaffled his silver."

"Best chromium-plated, too!" said Skinner.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Bob. "The Popper silver is jolly well known—some of it is heirlooms, belonged to the family for centuries—"

"Ever since the alderman tipped King James for the title?" asked Skinner.

"Well, it's jolly valuable, from the fuss old Popper is making about it," said Hobby. "Tankards and goblets and things—all sorts of stuff! The man, whoever he was, seems to have made a pretty good clearance. Old Popper thinks it was Leech—"

"He saw him?" asked Harry.

"Well, he saw him, but only for a tick, as he jumped from the window, from what I hear," said Hobby. "He can't swear that it was Leech, but he's convinced that it was, from what I hear."

"That won't do for a judge and jury!" remarked Vernon-Smith.

"Hardly!" grinned Bob.

"You know old Popper!" grinned

Hobby. "He thinks he's the jolly old monarch of all he surveys. Look how he's grabbed that island in the Sark, and everybody jolly well knows it's public land, and always has been—"

"Never mind that island now—stick to the burglar!" said Stewart of the Shell. "What have they done to Leech?"

"Old Popper got Grimey on the phone, so they say," answered Hobby. "He told them it was Leech, and the peelers went straight to the man's lodgings in Bridge Street, at Courtfield. He was out, but they got him when he came in. But he had nothing on him. He was taken to the station, but they had to let him go again—there was nothing to go on."

"If he was out in the middle of the night it looks a bit suspicious," remarked Johnny Bull. "But they couldn't hold a man on that."

"What time was it, Hobby?"

"Between one and two in the morning."

"Not the time a chap generally goes for a walk!" said the Bounder. "Did Leech say where he had been?"

"Oh, yes. It's all over the place," said Hobby. "He had a toothache, and couldn't sleep, and went out to walk it off."

"Bit of a coincidence," said Smithy. "But they can't worry him much without something better than that."

"Any more evidence, Hobby?"

"Not that I've heard of," said Hobson. "They say that Leech has been at the Peal of Bells to-day—after the police let him go—telling everybody that old Popper's put this on him, because he answered him back when he was sacked."

"Old Popper wouldn't do anything of the kind," said Harry. "But he's just the old ass to believe anything against a man who was cheeky. He ought to have made sure before he accused the man."

"Catch old Popper stopping to make sure, once his giddy back was up!" grinned Hobby. "They're saying in Courtfield that he's fearfully shirty about the man being let go, though there's nothing to detain him on. Still, he's a decent old boy, in his way. He won't swear to a burglar's identity, as he can't be positive that it was Leech he saw jumping from the window. He's sure of it, but not enough to swear to it as a positive fact. He thinks that his jolly old lordly will and pleasure is enough to detain the man on—but the police don't seem to agree."

"And, all the while, the man who did it is getting quietly away?" remarked Skinner.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Old Popper's an ass!" said Skinner. "If it was Leech, he couldn't have known the police would have been waiting at his lodgings for him. He would have walked in with the loot, and they'd have had it."

"Of course, they would!" agreed Hobby.

"Cheeky old ass!" said Coker of the Fifth. Coker had joined the crowd listening to Hobby's thrilling news. "He's got nothing against the man. If I were Leech, I'd jolly well bring an action against him."

"Oh, my hat!" said Hobson. "Could he?"

"Well, you can't call a man a thief without evidence," said Coker. "Old Popper would call anybody anything, when his back was up! That's the sort of cheeky old fossil he is. If it turns out that somebody else did it, Leech could bring an action."

"What a lark!" chuckled Skinner.

"Fancy old Popper—had up in court by a sacked manservant!"

"Poor old Popper!"

"I've not the slightest doubt," declared Coker, "that Leech is a perfectly innocent man. Look at the way Popper orders people off that island!"

"I don't quite see the connection," said Potter, with a stare.

"You're an ass, Potter!"

"Well, Leech or not, somebody's got away with the Popper Court silver," said Hobson. "I'm jolly well going to get the evening paper to-night and see if there's any news. We don't often get a burglary round about here."

Harry Wharton & Co. left the group of fellows, discussing the latest excitement, and went to look for Billy Bunter. In the light of Hobby's news, it looked as if Bunter's tale might have, at least, some slight foundation of fact.

They found the fat Owl blinking at the tuckshop window. As it was more than an hour since dinner, Billy Bunter's fat thoughts were, naturally, turning on food. He blinked round hopefully at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, my postal order hasn't come!" said the fat Owl. "I believe I told you fellows I was expecting a postal order."

"I fancy I've heard something of it," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But never mind your postal order now—"

"The fact is, I'm stony!" said Bunter. "Actually short of money. If you fellows could lend me five bob till my postal order comes—"

"Chuck it! Look here, you fat ass, we've just heard that there was a burglary at Popper Court last night," said Harry.

"I told you so!" answered Bunter. "The man dodged them by swimming off to the island—"

"Well, as he seems to have dodged them, I suppose it doesn't matter much whether he did it by swimming to the island or not," said Harry. "But if it's true, the police want to know. Did it really happen?"

"I've told you it did!" howled Bunter.

"Yes, but that looks as if it didn't!"

"Beast!"

"If it really happened, you'd better go and tell Quelch!" said the captain of the Remove. "I don't suppose it's of much consequence which way the man went, as he got away, but you never can tell. If you saw anything at all of the burglar, Quelch ought to be told, and he can decide whether to pass it on to old Grimey."

"Only tell him the truth!" urged Nugent. "Leave out the film bits."

"Chuck the revolvers, and knives, and machine-guns, and things!" suggested Bob Cherry. "Keep to the facts—if any!"

"Yah!"

The chums of the Remove left it at that. What truth there might be—if any—in Bunter's yarn they did not know; but they had no doubt that their Form-master would be able to sift the wheat from the chaff, if the matter came before him. And that there was, at least, some grain of wheat among the chaff, they no longer doubted when they saw Billy Bunter roll away to Quelch's study.

**THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.****A Man of His Word!**

"YOU fellows coming?" asked Coker, after class.

"Cricket?" asked Potter.

Potter of the Fifth knew perfectly well that Coker was not speak-

ing of cricket. But he was desirous of keeping Coker off the subject of which his powerful mind was full.

"Don't be an ass!" said Coker gruffly. "You jolly well know—"

"I know the men are going down to the nets," said Greene. "Let's! You can do with a bit of practice, Coker."

That was true, though it understated the case. At cricket Coker could have done with a bit of practice—a big bit. But it was unusual for his friends to want Coker's company at cricket. Coker's blacksmith style with a bat, and his wild and whirling manners and customs with a ball, did not make him popular at the nets; neither had practice, so far, effected any improvement in Coker's style, but the truth was that Potter and Greene wanted to keep Coker out of mischief. For that noble purpose they were prepared to see Coker brandishing a cricket bat like a battleaxe, and to affect to fancy that Coker was batting! Friendship could go no farther.

But Coker was not to be deluded. At any other time, he might have fallen in the snare, but not this time. Coker was in a mood of deadly earnestness.

Coker had talked out of his hat that day! Like many fellows who talk out of their hats, he felt bound to make his words good.

He had said that he was going to Popper's Island after class. What he had said, he had said!

Dozens of fellows had heard him. If he did not make his words good, what were they going to think?

That Coker funked it!

That idea was intolerable! Even Coker, perhaps, realised that he had been a bit of an ass to blow off steam to such an extent. Still, in the heat of the moment, he had done it, and he was standing by it. That was as fixed and immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

"Look here," said Coker, "don't beat about the bush! You know what I'm going to do. Old Popper—"

"Heard of the burglary at his place?" asked Greene.

It was a superfluous question, as everybody within ten miles of Popper Court had heard of the burglary by that time. Greene was simply trying to head Coker off the perilous topic.

"Never mind that!" said Coker. "I was going to say—"

"But it's a bit serious for old Popper!" remarked Potter. "They say a lot of giddy heirlooms were taken: The old bean is responsible for them! Silver goblets, dating from goodness knows when—"

"That island—"

"Oh, you've heard!" said Potter, deliberately leading Coker off the subject again. "That young ass, Bunter, of the Remove, was there all night—"

"I know that. I—"

"I mean, he makes out that the burglar swam to the island, getting away from old Popper! I hear that he's told his Form-master—"

"Blow his Form-master, and Bunter, too!" roared Coker. "If you'll let a fellow speak—"

"But if he's told Quelch, I dare say there's something in it," remarked Greene. "I believe Quelch has phoned to Grimes, for what it's worth. What do you think, Coker? We wanted to ask your opinion."

This time Coker fell into the snare. He knew that his opinion, on any subject, was very valuable. Nobody else did, but Coker did.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Coker. "If they were hot at his heels it was rather a cute dodge to swim off to the island and lie low till the coast was clear.

Still, I wouldn't believe a word of that young ass Bunter. I dare say he dreamed it."

"He makes out that he heard the things clinking in the burglar's bag," said Potter. "Silver pots and things."

"Gammon, most likely," said Coker. "But I was going to say—"

Coker headed back to the perilous subject. "From what Bunter says, the man hid in that bunch of willows at the landing-place on the island quite near him!" said Potter. "He never saw Bunter, and—"

"Bet you the funky young ass took care he didn't!" sniffed Coker. "But never mind that. I—"

"I gather that he lay very low and waited for the man to clear," said Potter, keeping to the subject.

He was not particularly interested in that subject, but he would have talked on any subject from the League of Nations to the influence of blue in the arts to keep Coker off the subject Coker wanted to get at.

"Bet you he did!" grunted Coker. "If it's true! Most likely it isn't! But I was saying—"

"And he heard old Popper and his man Joyce on the bank, talking," said Greene. "The burglar must have heard them, too. If he was there, I mean, as Bunter says. I shouldn't wonder if Grimes makes something out of that."

"How do you mean?" asked Coker. "Well, suppose it was Leech," said Greene.

"I don't suppose it was!" said Coker. "But suppose it was, and it happened as that young ass Bunter is telling everybody who will listen, then that accounts for his not walking into his lodgings with the loot!" said Greene.

"I don't see that it does!" said Coker. "Well, hearing old Popper gabbling, as Bunter says he did, he would know the peelers would be ready for him when he got home. He would jolly well park his loot in a safe place before he went back to his lodgings."

"Bet you old Grimes jumps on that!" said Potter. "I dare say he will want to see Bunter about it. Think so, Coker?"

But even Coker, by this time, realised that his friends were deliberately keeping up a discussion on an unimportant topic for no other purpose than to waste time—in other words, to keep Coker out of mischief.

"Look here," said Coker, "chuck it! Are you coming with me to Popper's Island or not?"

It was a direct question, and it had to be answered. Potter and Greene answered it unmistakably.

"Not!" they said simultaneously. "All right!" said Coker scornfully.

And he turned away, heading for the gates.

Potter and Greene exchanged a worried look and rushed after him. Coker did not stop, and they walked on either side of him, expostulating.

"Look here, Coker, old man, don't do it!" implored Greene. "Prout's pretty wild with you already—"

"That's nothing new!" sneered Coker.

"I believe Quelch has been talking to him about a man in his Form helping a Remove kid break bounds—"

"Blow Quelch!"

"Well, that makes Prout very wild, and—"

"He can be as wild as he likes, and I don't care a brass button!" said Coker. "I'm fed-up with Prout! Didn't I say before a crowd of fellows that I was going on Popper's Island this afternoon?"

"Yes; but—"

"Think I'm the fellow to back out?"

demanding Coker disdainfully. "The Head ought never to have given in to old Popper to the extent of putting the island out of bounds. If he had asked me I should have advised him to tell old Popper where he got off, I can tell you."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Potter and Greene, almost overcome by the bare idea of the majestic Head of Greyfriars asking Horace Coker for advice.

"Every fellow in the school and every man-jack in the country," said Coker, "has a right on that island! I've a right, and I'm going to exercise it!"

"Yes, but it means a row!" said Greene.

"Let it!" said Coker. "I've been in rows before! I never get justice from Prout, as you know. I don't expect him to be pleased to see me standing up for the rights of the school. He ought to be; but I don't expect it of him."

"Coker, old chap—"

"Help me out with the boat!" said Coker.

"Oh dear!"

They helped Coker out with the boat. He stood in it, bobbing by the school raft, and gave them a last stern look.

"Are you coming?"

"No jolly fear!" said Greene. "Don't do it, Coker! You know how jolly wild Prout is already! If he hears of it he—"

"You can tell him if you like!" retorted Coker.

"Don't be an ass! Old Popper might spot you on the island—"

"I'll be glad if he does! I want him to see that there's one Greyfriars man who isn't afraid of his airs and graces."

"He will report you to the Head—"

"I know that!"

"It might be a whopping—"

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"I've heard some of the fags saying that the old bean was watching the island yesterday. They were going there, but he scared them off."

"He won't scare me off!" said Coker disdainfully.

"For goodness' sake, Coker— I tell you Prout will be hopping mad—"

"Let him hop!" said Coker.

He pushed off.

Potter and Greene stood on the raft, staring after him in dismay. Coker, catching crabs in his usual masterly style, zigzagged away in his boat. Potter and Greene, most certainly, did not intend to join in Horace Coker's adventure—but they hated to think of fathomed old Horace rushing on destruction like this simply because he had "gassed" and was too high and mighty to go back on his gas.

Prout was wrathful already. If he discovered that Coker had gone on the forbidden island, on the very same day that Prout had boomed at him on the subject, Prout, it was certain, would be as mad as a hatter. Beaks, after all, were beaks, and could not be disregarded, though Coker seemed to fancy that they could!

"The utter ass!" said Potter, "Oh, the howling chump! It will very likely be a flogging if he's spotted."

"Might be the sack," said Greene.

"Perhaps he won't get there, though," added Potter, as he watched Coker's wobbly and uncertain course up the river. "It will take him all his time, the way he rows."

"He won't get there if there's anything on the river he can run into," agreed Greene.

And Coker's chums had to leave it at that; it was all they had left to hope for.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

## Two of Them!

"HEM!" murmured Coker. He made that monosyllabic remark thoughtfully. Coker was on Popper's Island.

Perhaps because there had been nothing on the river for him to run into Coker had arrived at his destination. He punted his boat in to the landing-place, stepped ashore, and tied the painter.

Looking out from the island, Coker had a view of the shining river, the towpath backed by the sweeping woods, and the red chimneys of Popper Court in the far distance.

But, with all his bulldog determination and truculence, Coker was rather glad that he had no view of Sir Hilton Popper or any of his keepers.

Thinking did not come easily to Coker of the Fifth. But he was thinking a little now. The outcome of his reflections was that he would prefer not to be spotted on that island.

Coker was a man of his word. He had said that he would jolly well go to that island that afternoon, and jolly well stay there as long as he liked—and he was jolly well doing it! So far, so good. But it penetrated even into Coker's solid intellect that the consequences would be very serious if he were spotted and reported.

He was prepared to defy Sir Hilton Popper to the uttermost lengths. He was even prepared, if sufficiently provoked, to dot the baronet on his aristocratic nose. The mere sight of Sir Hilton, the mere sound of his authoritative bark, would have been sufficient to rouse the warlike blood of the Cokers in his veins.

But there were other considerations. He was breaking bounds. Thoughtless fellows who went out of bounds were given lines or detentions. But after the way Prout had talked of him that day Coker's action could not be regarded as a thoughtless and careless one, it would be regarded as a deliberate act of defiance—as, indeed, it was.

Coker had to keep his word. He was not going to have Greyfriars fellows saying that he had bragged of what he was going to do, and funked it when the pinch came. Not Coker.

Still, Coker rather hoped that he would not be spotted on the forbidden island, and reported at Greyfriars.

He was keeping his word. He was, rather, making his boast good. He had said, for all Greyfriars to hear, that he was going to that island after class, that he was going to sit there, and let old Popper come along and spot him if he liked! He was doing it!

If "old Popper" turned up, Coker was prepared to hurl defiance in his teeth! Nevertheless, he had rather a secret hope that old Popper wouldn't turn up! He hardly admitted it to himself, but there it was.

He sat on the island, leaning against the very tree on which Billy Bunter had propped his fat form the night before.

Close at hand were the willows, in which, according to Bunter's tale, the midnight marauder had taken cover, only a few yards from the fat Owl.

Sitting there, Coker was in full view if a keeper had come out of the wood.

He did not admit to himself that he was rather glad that no keeper did! But he was!

Splash!

Coker gave a little start at the sound of an oar on the river above the island.

A boat was coming down the Sark, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,479.

from the direction of Courtfield Bridge. Coker set his jaw grimly.

If that boat passed on the side of the island where he was sitting, the boatman would see him. If the boat belonged to Popper Court, he would be reported as a trespasser.

Perhaps a temptation assailed the bull-headed Horace to slip out of sight for a few minutes in the willows.

If so, he resisted it.

He was not going to skulk out of sight! He was going to do what he said that he would do!

Coker sat tight.

Truculent and determined as Coker was, perhaps he was relieved to find that the boat did not pass. As it did not come into sight, he concluded that it had gone by on the other side of the island.

But a few minutes later there was a sound of rustling in the trees and thickets near at hand.

Coker stared round.

The boat, after all, had not passed. It had stopped at the island, though not on Coker's side of it.

Whoever was in it had landed, and was coming across the island.

That was rather odd, for anyone who wanted to get to that side of the island could easily have landed there, and saved himself the trouble of pushing his way through the thick underwoods to get across.

But it occurred to Coker that the newcomer, whoever he was, did not want to be spotted from the Popper Court side.

On the other side the river was wider, and the opposite bank was pasture land, stretching away to the downs. No one was likely to be observing the island from that side.

It was some trespasser from the town, as he came from up the river; a Greyfriars man would, of course, have come from the other direction—the way Coker himself had come.

Coker did not care who it was, though he was, in his heart of hearts, glad that it was likely to be nobody from Popper Court. Anyone from that establishment, of course, would not have cared whether he was seen or not—as this newcomer apparently did.

In a few minutes the newcomer emerged from the thickly wooded interior of the island, and Coker saw him.

He was a youngish man, with a smooth, clean-shaven face, dressed quietly in dark clothes. Coker would have taken him for some sort of manservant, on his looks.

The man did not see Coker, for the moment, sitting under the tree. He made straight for the clump of willows growing over the edge of the water.

As he reached them he gave a sharp, stealthy look round, with eyes as wary as a cat's, and that wary glance fell on the staring Coker.

The man gave a startled exclamation. It was clear that he had feared to be observed from the towpath; but had not expected to see anyone on the island itself.

Coker stared at him in blank wonder.

The man had landed on the island, pushed across through the thickets, and made direct for that clump of willows—for what imaginable reason Coker could not even begin to guess. There was nothing in the willows, so far as Coker could see, to interest anybody.

The man stepped towards him quickly. "Who are you?" he exclaimed.

"What are you doing here?"

"Sitting under this tree!" answered Coker coolly. "What the dickens does it matter to you?"

"You are trespassing here!"

"Rot!" answered Coker.

"There is a board up on this island—'Trespassers will be Prosecuted'!"

"That's only old Popper's cheek!" answered Coker. "I'm not taking any notice of that! You don't seem to be taking much notice of it yourself!"

"You had better go!" said the man. "Sir Hilton Popper is very particular about anyone landing on this island. I see you have a boat—you had better go at once!"

Coker simply stared at him.

He would not have cleared off the island if Sir Hilton Popper, Baronet, had ordered him to do so in his own lordly person. So he was not likely to take such orders from this nobody.

"Do you hear me?" snapped the smooth-faced man. His manner was a strange mixture of angered uneasiness.

"I'm not deaf!" answered Coker.

"Well, are you going?"

"No fear!"

The man stood eyeing him. His glance shifted from Coker, and wandered across to the lonely towpath and the woods beyond. Then it returned to Coker. Coker rose to his feet, without, however, the slightest intention of getting into his boat. This fellow's cool cheek in fancying that he could order him off, annoyed Coker.

"You'd better go!" said the man, after a pause.

"I shall please myself about that!" retorted Coker. "Who the dickens are you?"

"Will you go?"

"No, I won't!"

The man breathed hard.

"I don't want to lay hands on you," he said. "But I don't want you here. If you don't go, I shall pitch you into your boat! Now are you going?"

Coker's eyes blazed.

"You try it on!" he roared. "By gum, I'd like to see you try it on!"

The next moment Coker had his wish! The man leaped at him; grasped him, and whirled him towards the boat. Coker, taken by surprise, staggered in his grasp.

But that was only for a moment. The next moment Horace Coker rallied, and gave grasp for grasp, and if the man from Courtfield fancied that he was a schoolboy to be easily handled, he found out his mistake very quickly. They struggled on the water's edge, staggering to and fro, till Coker's foot caught in a trailing willow root, and he rolled over. But he did not let go, and he dragged his adversary with him, and they rolled together, splashing, in the muddy shallows under the willows.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

## The Last Straw!

"I SAY, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "He's gone!"

"Who's gone, fathead, and where?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Coker!" gasped Bunter. "Gone to Popper's Island! He said he would, and he jolly well has!"

Billy Bunter did not see Prout!

Bunter seldom saw anything until it was right under his little fat nose. Mr. Prout, of course, was not under his nose! So the fat Owl of the Remove did not see him.

Prout was walking majestically in the quad after class, with a frown on his plump brow. He was, in point of fact, thinking about Coker. He had been annoyed with Coker all day. Coker had, as usual, given him trouble in the Form-room—added to his already great offence. Mr. Quelch had spoken to Prout, sharply and acidly, on the subject



of Coker, which fanned the flame of Prout's wrath; Prout, like all beaks, hated to have another beak finding fault with his Form.

In those very moments when Billy Bunter yelled out his startling news, Prout was thinking that he had been very lenient with Coker, in letting him off with an impot—too lenient! So Bunter's excited squeal had the effect of making Prout start like a horse stung by a wasp. The portly Prout came to a halt in his stately pacing, spun round, and fixed his eyes on the fat Owl of the Remove.

Bunter, unaware and unheeding, rattled on. The Famous Five—who saw Prout—made him frantic signs to shut up.

"I say, you fellows, he's really gone!" squealed Bunter. "He was bragging that he would; and you know Coker—catch him owning up that he was gassing! He's gone up to Popper's Island!"

Prout stood like a portly statue. If this was true, it was the last straw—the very last!

"Shut up, you blithering owl!" hissed Bob Cherry. "Prout's listening to every word you're saying!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. He blinked round through his big spectacles.

Prout came towards him. "Coker's at the nets, isn't he?" remarked Bob Cherry to his friends—for the benefit of Prout as he approached.

"I saw him with Potter and Greene," said Harry Wharton, catching on to the idea and playing up.

"Coker's pretty keen on getting Blundell to shove him into the Fifth Form eleven," remarked Johnny Bull. "Let's go and see what he's doing at the nets."

"Coker's always worth watching at cricket!" said Nugent.

"The worthfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us proceed to watch the esteemed Coker at his absurd cricket!"

It was a kind attempt to side-track Prout. But it booted not! Prout had heard every word squealed out by the fat Owl of the Remove, and he was not to be side-tracked.

Taking no notice of the Famous Five, he boomed at the fat junior.

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!" said Bunter.

"I heard what you said, Bunter!"

"I—I didn't say anything, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"I heard you state that Coker of my Form has gone to Popper's Island. Are you aware of this as a fact?"

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't mean exactly that he had gone to Popper's Island, sir! I—I meant that—that he hadn't, sir!"

"You meant that he had not when you stated that he had!" gasped Prout.

"Yes, sir! That's it! I say, Toddy's calling me—"

"Stand where you are, Bunter! Answer me! Did you see Coker of my Form going to Popper's Island?"

"No, sir! I wasn't on the raft when he started, and I never heard Potter and Greene trying to stop him! I—I think Coker's gone out on his bike, sir—that stink-bike of his, sir! I—I believe he's gone over to Lantham."

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout.

"Bunter, I gather from your words that Coker of my Form declared his intention of going to that island."

"Oh, no, sir! He never said anything about it—not a word! These fellows can tell you the same, sir. They were here, and heard him—"

Mr. Prout gave Bunter a look, uttered snort, and stalked away. Harry

Wharton & Co. also gave Bunter looks—very expressive looks.

"You gabbling ass!" said Bob Cherry. "You've given that born idiot Coker away to his beak!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Has he really gone up to the island?" asked Harry.

Bunter grinned.

"Yes, rather! He's gone all right! But it's all right about Prout! I've stuffed Prout!"

"You've stuffed him!" gasped Nugent.

"You heard me tell him Coker had gone out on his stink-bike!" said Bunter. "Easy enough to stuff Prout!"

The Famous Five stared at Bunter. Apparently, the fat Owl was under the impression that he had "stuffed" the master of the Fifth. Harry Wharton & Co. did not share that impression.

"You howling ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"This will mean a fearful row for Coker!" said Bob. "Prout's wild with him already for putting Bunter on the island yesterday. Coker's the man to ask for trouble, and no mistake. Likely enough old Popper will spot him there. He was prowling about yesterday on the watch."

"Yesterday was a half-holiday," said Harry. "Besides, old Popper has something else to think about now after a burglary at his house. Coker's a blithering idiot, but that's no reason why Bunter should howl it out to his beak!"

"I never saw Prout!" said Bunter. "Besides, I've stuffed him all right—"

"Oh, bump him!"

(Continued on next page.)

# GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Although **PETER TODD** may be studying for the Bar, there's no law against our clever rhymester giving a "brief" description in verse of **The Schoolboy Lawyer of the Remove.**



(1)  
"When I, good friends, was called to the Bar,"  
Sings the Judge in the opera gaily,  
And shows us what the obstructions are  
In the road to the dear Old Bailey.  
But Peter Todd, with untidy hair  
And his large outsize in noses,  
Will tread that path, though he's quite aware  
That it's not a bed of roses.

(2)  
His great idea is to take a "brief"  
And appear at the Quarter Sessions,  
To bring some criminal rogue to grief  
And force him to make confessions;  
And then he will turn to the Judge on high  
Demanding a proper decision,  
And the Judge, impressed with his tune,  
Will cry,  
"Three years in the Second Division!"

(3)  
They call it a "brief," though I'm bound to say  
I cannot discover the reason;  
These counsel johnnies, they talk all day,  
They're talking all through the season.  
They jaw about Seizin, Malfeasance and Tort,  
Succession, Survival, Demises,  
Until they have stupefied most of the Court,  
And paralysed all the Assizes.

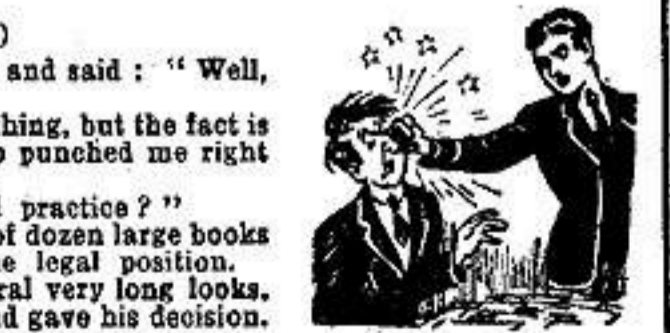
(4)  
"My lord," he will cry, "I have known the accused  
Since we were together at college,  
Dishonesty Bunter has always refused,  
Refused it with scorn, to my knowledge!  
And now he is charged with appearing, you say,  
As a Flabby and Frabjous Defaulter,  
Well, fine him, your lordship; I know he will pay,  
He's expecting a postal order!"



(5)  
"You do not," he said, "explain whose  
was the fault  
That your nose sustained bruising and  
bendage,  
But, nevertheless, it was Common Assault  
With a fist and a nasal appendage!  
Your remedy lies in returning the blow  
With interest, right on the sniffer,  
So take my advice as official, and go  
And damage that nose-knocking feller!"

(6)  
Thus talks Peter Todd; he will fracture his jaw  
With the legal expressions he utters;  
To hear a solicitor talking of law  
Is like hearing a Russian who stutters.  
But still, I've no doubt, in the future long  
hence,  
When Bunter is caught, and then Courtied,  
He'll "brief" Peter Todd to accept his  
defence;  
We'd like the proceedings reported.

(7)  
I found Toddy deep in his volumes of lore,  
He gave me a glare and said, "Travel!"  
"I want some advice," I replied at the door,  
"A problem for you to unravel!"  
To settle law questions he never was loath,  
His judgment was firm when he gave it;  
He cooched and said: "Now state your  
case upon oath,  
And swear a precise affidavit!"



(8)  
So I did right away, and said: "Well,  
I suppose,  
It's quite a small thing, but the fact is  
Last Tuesday a chap punched me right  
on the nose!  
Is that a judicial practice?"  
He opened a couple of dozen large books  
And consulted the legal position.  
And then, after several very long looks,  
He leaned back and gave his decision.

(9)  
"I will," I replied, as I rolled up my sleeve.  
"And I needn't go very much farther  
Than here to discover that chap and achieve  
Revenge for my boko—yes, rather!"  
Then Toddy remembered his action—too  
late!  
Next moment I started the ructions!  
I damaged his nose, but at any old rate,  
I acted on legal instructions!

"I say, you fellows— Yaroooooh!" roared Billy Bunter.

Bump!  
"Yoooo-hooooop!"  
"Give him another!"  
"Yow-ow-woop!"

Again, and then again, Billy Bunter was bumped, and his yells could be heard far and wide.

Bumping Bunter was satisfactory in its way. But the harm was done now; there was no doubt about that. From a distance the Famous Five observed Prout rolling down to the cricket ground, where Potter and Greene were at practice with some of the Fifth. They guessed easily enough that he was going to ask them where Coker was.

"Poor old Coker!" said Bob. "It won't be long this time!"

"A flogging won't do Coker any harm," remarked Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "But—poor old Coker!"

Prout was seen to speak to Potter and Greene. Both of them looked very uncomfortable. Neither was likely to give Coker away if he could help it; but the utmost they could say was that they did not know where Coker was—which was true enough, for they were by no means sure that a fellow who rowed as Coker did would reach his destination in a boat.

Prout's next peregrination took him down to the boathouse. No doubt he learned there, from the boat-keeper, that Coker had taken his boat out, for his plump brow was like thunder as he came back to the House.

A little later the Famous Five, in the quad, glimpsed Prout—through the open window of the Head's study. Prout was in that study with Dr. Locke.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "I shouldn't like to be in Coker's shoes when he comes back from Popper's Island!"

And the Co. agreed that they wouldn't, either. It was plain that a storm awaited Horace Coker when he came back from his trip, and it was not going to be a mere summer gale, but a terrific thunderstorm!

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Coker Makes a Discovery!

"W!" howled Coker.

Splash!  
Crash!

Coker, struggling valiantly in the grasp of the man who was seeking to clear him off Popper's Island, went down heavily, dragging the man after him.

They splashed together, Coker underneath.

There was shallow water under the willows on the edge of Popper's Island. There was more mud than water close up to the willows.

Right into that sea of mud went Coker, crashing and splashing, with the man from Courtfield sprawling over him.

Crashing into thick mud was not nice. But it was not the mud that caused Coker to utter that howl of anguish.

His head banged on something hard in the mud.

Mud, as a rule, though nasty to fall into, was soft. Under the willows it was very soft—wet and clammy and oozy. Coker might reasonably have expected to fall soft in such a spot—instead of which, his bullet head banged on something very hard under the mud, and it hurt.

What it was his head had banged on Coker did not know. It was the back of his head that banged, and he had, of course, no eyes in the back of his head. But though he did not know what the hard object was, he knew that it hurt, and he roared.

And he heaved. Already angry at this fellow's cheek in thinking that he could turn him off the island, Coker was by now fearfully enraged—between splashing in mud and banging his head. He heaved fiercely and furiously, splashing mud and water right and left.

The assailant was pitched off. Panting, the man from Courtfield scrambled out of the mud, and Coker scrambled after him.

Coker was breathless, but he did not pause for breath. He hurled himself on the smooth-faced man.

Hammer-and-tongs, they went at it. The man who had so unexpectedly arrived on Popper's Island undoubtedly took it for granted that it would be easy to turn off a schoolboy. For some mysterious reason of his own, he wanted to be left alone there, and Coker was in the way. So he had started to clear Coker off.

Already he had discovered that it was not easy.

Now he made the further discovery that it was impossible.

Coker, it was true, was only a schoolboy. But he was, so to speak, an outsize in schoolboys.

Nature might have been rather stingy with Coker in the matter of brains, but she had made it up with brawn and muscle.

Coker was a hefty fellow. He was remarkably hefty. He had a punch like a steam-hammer. He had unlimited pluck and unlimited beef. He could have given a good account of himself in a tussle with a bargee. And the smooth-faced man was no athlete. Neither did he seem to be over-endowed with pluck or a capacity to take punishment. He was a man against a boy, but he very soon realised that he had taken too much for granted—much too much.

Coker knocked him right and left.

Coker captured some punishment, for the man from Courtfield hit hard and hit often. But he handed out more than he received. The smooth face was hardly recognisable after a few of Coker's terrific punches had landed thereon.

Who the man was, and what he was after, Coker neither knew nor cared. All he knew was that the cheeky rat had tried to pitch him off the island, smothered him with mud, and banged his head. That was enough for Coker! He was jolly well going to show this cheeky rotter who was who, and what was what!

And he jolly well did! Twice the man from Courtfield went down, and jumped up again, and renewed the strife. His nose was streaming crimson, and crimson ran from a corner of his mouth, and one of his eyes was closed and blackening. A third time he went down, and when he scrambled up, he backed off. It looked as if he had had enough.

Coker hadn't! He followed his enemy up, still punching.

Back and back went the infuriated man, followed by the equally infuriated Coker, hitting out like a hammer.

He fairly took to his heels at last, and scuttled away through the under-wood, across the island, like a rabbit.

After him charged Coker.  
"Stop!" roared Coker. "You rotten funk! You sneaking worm! Stop! I'll smash you! I'll spifficate you! Stop!"

The panting man did not stop. He fled wildly. He crashed through thickets, and reached the other side of the little island.

A boat was tied up there to a branch; the boat in which the man had come down the river. He leaped into it, with Coker only a yard behind him.

He tore the painter loose, and the boat rocked out on the river. Coker made a grab at it, and missed, and barely escaped tumbling over into the Sark.

The man from Courtfield grabbed the oars and rowed. He glared back at Coker as he went, pulling across the river to the distant bank. Coker brandished a fist after him.

"Come back!" he bawled. "You'll turn me off this island, will you, you cheeky snipe? Come back and do it!"

But it was clear that the man from



## SECRET AGENT No. 1

... that's what they call Sergeant Brady! On parade Johnny is the smartest soldier in the Indian Army, but on special duty he can be a dirty native beggar—a wild tribesman—in fact, just anything but what you'd expect!

Johnny is commissioned to ferret out the secrets of the wild Frontier tribesmen, who are continually rising in revolt . . . and it's a job where one slip means a terrible death! But Johnny's a tough guy who thrives on danger, and his adventures will thrill you through and through. Read about them in the sensational new series of complete yarns appearing now in **The PILOT**. Buy a copy to-day!



You can meet him to-day in  
**THE**

# PILOT

Of all Newsagents. Every Friday 2d

Courtfield had had enough of turning the hefty Horace off the island. He pulled hard, and the boat shot away across the Sark, and disappeared under the fringe of trees on the opposite bank.

Coker panted.

He would have been glad if the snipe had come back! He wanted to give him some more. But the man was not coming back—not so long as Coker was there, at all events.

"Cheeky cad!" gasped Coker. "Trespassing himself, by gum, if it's trespassing here—and trying to turn me off! I wish I'd given him a few more."

Coker turned and tramped back across the island.

He reached the landing-place on the Popper Court side, gasping for breath, streaming with perspiration, and reeking with mud. He stopped by the water's edge to bathe his burning face.

Coker had been victorious. He had not been turned off the island—he had driven off the cheeky fellow who had tried to turn him off! That was satisfactory, but the rest was not so satisfactory. He was muddy from head to foot; he was wet nearly all over; his nose was swelling, and one of his eyes blinked painfully.

"Cheeky cad!" gasped Coker, as he rose from bathing his heated face, and rubbed it with his handkerchief.

Then he rubbed the back of his head. There was a bruise there, from the bang he had had when he pitched into the mud under the willows. It was rather painful.

"Great pip!" gasped Coker suddenly.

From the shallows under the drooping willows an object showed up—the hard object on which Coker had banged his head!

Coker stared at it blankly.

He had rather wondered what his head had banged on, in soft mud. Now he saw what it was. It was an attache-case!

That attache-case, evidently, had been sunk in the shallow mud under the willows.

It had lain there unseen, hidden by mud.

Coker had crashed in the mud and banged his head on it. That, and the scramble afterwards, had dislodged it. One end was sticking up.

In sheer amazement, Coker stared at it. It was the very last thing he would have expected to see there.

Coker was not quick on the uptake. But even Coker's brain worked. It dawned on him slowly, but it did dawn on him, that that attache-case was what the man from Courtfield had been after. He had come across the island direct for the willows, for no reason that Coker could guess at the time. But the reason was plain now. It was, in fact, sticking out of the mud under Coker's eyes!

Had not Coker been there, the smooth-faced man would have disinterred that attache-case from the mud, and taken it away in his boat. And he had tried to clear Coker off, because he did not want anyone to see him doing it! Slowly but surely this dawned on Coker.

"By gum!" said Coker.

Some time or other that smooth-faced man had hidden that attache-case in the mud under the willows. Now he had come back for it. When—and why? Back into Coker's mind came Bunter's tale—of the fugitive who had crouched in those willows the night before, with a bag of plunder from Popper Court.

"Oh crikey!" said Coker.

He trod into the mud, grabbed the attache-case, and dragged it out. It was very heavy. A clinking sound came from inside it as Coker dumped it down on the grass.

Another moment, and it was open.

"Great pip!" gurgled Coker.

He blinked dizzily at shining silver! Tankards, goblets, all sorts of silverware were packed in that attache-case.

"The—the—the burglar!" stammered Coker. "I—I've been scrapping with the burglar! Oh crikey!"

In dizzy astonishment Horace Coker blinked at the historic silver plate of Popper Court.

"Oh crikey!" he repeated.

He closed the attache-case, secured it, and lifted it into his boat. Then he pushed off from Popper's Island. Coker had made good his boast—he had landed on the island, and sat there in defiance of all the Poppers in the universe. He had intended to stay longer. But what he chiefly needed now was a wash and a change—also, the loot had to be handed over into safe keeping. So Coker pulled away down the river to the Greyfriars boathouse—happily unaware of what awaited him there!

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Coker Blows In!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Here he comes!"

"Here comes Coker!"

"I say, you fellows, Prout's got his eye on him—"

"Poor old Coker!"

Fifty pairs of eyes, at least, were fixed on Horace Coker, as he pulled down to the Greyfriars raft, catching crabs not a few as he pulled.

Among them gleamed the baleful eyes of Mr. Prout.

On the raft, on the tow-path, fellows had gathered to watch Horace Coker come back. When Prout stalked down to the river after his interview with the Head, it was evidently to catch Coker when he came; and an army of interested fellows followed Prout. So Coker had quite a good audience when he arrived.

Prout stood portly, pompous, dignified—and wrathful. It was a very serious matter from Prout's point of view. From the point of view of others, it was less serious, and some of the fellows were grinning.

Half Greyfriars, if not all, knew of Coker's reckless boast that day. So when the news spread that Coker was playing up to it, and that his beak was on his track, the general interest centred in Horace.

Prout was there to grab him when he came. Everybody else was there to see Prout grab him. Opinions differed as to what was going to happen to Coker. From Prout's expression, it might have been something lingering, with boiling oil in it. Lines or detentions, obviously, would be too mild. Was it going to be a flogging—a flogging in the Fifth? Or even the sack?

Interest was very keen, and the excitement grew as Coker was sighted. Having his back to his audience as he pulled, Coker did not discover them till he was very near.

But as the boat ranged up to the raft, Coker became aware that he was the cynosure of uncounted eyes.

He stared in surprise.

Potter pulled in the boat for him. Greene tied the painter. Coker stepped out, lifting after him a rather heavy attache-case.

Fellows stared at that attache-case. They had not expected Coker to come back with luggage.

"I say, you fellows, he's been on a picnic!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Well, he's got a nerve!" said Bob Cherry.

The attache-case looked as if Coker had carried supplies of some sort. No one, naturally, guessed that he had disinterred that attache-case from the mud under the willows on Popper's Island.

"Coker!" Prout boomed.

Then Horace became aware of the portly figure over-topping the crowd. So far, Coker had not guessed that his exploit was known at the school. He guessed it now.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Yes, sir!"

"You have returned!" boomed Prout.

That question hardly needed an answer. Coker was big enough to be seen! But Coker answered:

"Yes, sir!"

"I do not desire," boomed Prout, "to condemn you unheard, Coker! If you have merely been on the river, Coker, rowing in your boat. I have nothing to say to you, Coker. But I have reason to suspect that you have deliberately and intentionally added to the offence you have already given by trespassing on the property of Sir Hilton Popper. I require to know, Coker, and at once, whether you have done this."

Coker's jaw set square.

"No, sir!" he answered.

Prout looked at him. There was a general gasp. Everybody knew that Coker had been to Popper's Island—Potter and Greene best of all. So Coker's reply caused general amusement. Coker had his faults, but he was the last fellow in the world to lie himself out of a scrape. Coker would have snorted with scorn at the idea.

"You—you have not, Coker?" exclaimed Prout.

"Certainly not, sir! I should refuse to put a foot on Sir Hilton Popper's property if he asked me!" answered Coker firmly.

Then Coker's meaning dawned on the eager listeners-in. It was not always easy to get at Coker's meaning, even when he did mean anything. But they got on to it now. Coker did not regard the island in the Sark as Sir Hilton Popper's property, and wasn't going to pretend that he did.

"Coker!" boomed Prout. "I have good reason—good reason to believe that you have been on Popper's Island. But if you assure me that you have not done so, I am bound to take the word of a boy in my Form."

Fellows waited breathlessly for Coker's answer.

"I didn't say that, sir!" said Coker calmly. "I said I hadn't been on Sir Hilton Popper's property, and I haven't! I've been on the island in the Sark."

"Good old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Good old fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"That island, sir, is public land, as I mentioned when you were speaking about it this morning!" said Coker.

"Jevver hear a man ask for it like this?" murmured the Bounder.

"Never!" sighed Bob.

Prout breathed hard. He breathed deep. His portly face assumed a purple hue. If he had been wrathful before, he was towering now.

"Coker!" he gasped. "Do not bandy words with me, Coker! Do not bandy words with your Form-master, Coker! Have you, or have you not, trespassed on the property of Sir Hilton Popper?"

"No, sir!" said Coker firmly. Coker was the man to stick to his guns.

Prout almost choked.

"Have you, or have you not, landed on the island in the river, called Popper's Island?" he gurgled.

Coker had fairly forced him to put it Coker's way!

"Yes, sir!" answered Coker.

"Enough!" boomed Prout. "After my words to you this morning, after the punishment inflicted upon you, you have ventured to do this. You have trespassed on Sir Hilton's property, and—"

"No sir! I—"

"Silence!" roared Prout. "I will not allow you to argue with me, Coker! I will not permit you to bandy words! You have landed on the island belonging to Sir Hilton Popper—"

"It doesn't belong to him, sir! You see—"

"Silence! Not only have you landed there, but you have, I conclude, picnicked there!" Prout glanced at the attache-case, and drew from it the same conclusion as the other observers. "No doubt you have strewn the island with empty bottles and such things, in the manner often complained of by the owner—"

"Oh, no, sir! Sir Hilton Popper isn't the owner—"

"Shut up, for the love of Mike!" hissed Potter, in Coker's ear.

"Don't be an ass, Potter! I have to answer my Form-master when he speaks to me," said Coker. "What do you mean?"

"Follow me!" boomed Prout. "Follow me, Coker! I shall take you to your headmaster! I have already consulted Dr. Locke on the subject of this flagrant defiance of authority and the laws of property. Your headmaster will deal with you. I wash my hands of you!"

"I'd better tell you, sir—"

Coker picked up the attache-case.

"Follow me!"

"But this, sir—"

"I have ordered you to follow me, Coker, to your headmaster. Will you do so, or will you not?" boomed Prout.

"Oh, certainly, sir, but if you'd look into this—"

"Follow me this instant!" roared Prout.

He turned and stalked away. Coker stared after him, and then followed, the attache-case in his hand.

After Coker marched an army of Greyfriars fellows, greatly excited.

"It's the sack this time!" Potter murmured to Green. "Prout's just boiling over."

Greene nodded gloomily.

"Is Coker absolutely barmy?" asked Bob Cherry. "Why did he want Prout to look into his picnic bag?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton. "Coker's beyond me."

"Couldn't have been going to offer Prout a bun to keep him quiet?" suggested the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout and Coker disappeared into the House. An excited crowd gathered before the Head's study windows. There was a keen desire to hear the verdict, when it was given; and the general impression was that, as Potter feared, it was the sack this time for Coker!

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### All Right for Coker!

**D**R. LOCKE fixed his eyes on Coker of the Fifth, as his Form-master marched him into the study.

His eyes dwelt on Coker with grim disapproval.

He noted his muddy clothes and boots, his swollen nose, and his dark-

ened eye. He glanced at the muddy attache-case in his hand.

Coker's tout ensemble was not pleasing to the view. His best friend would not have said that he looked, at that moment, a credit to any school. In point of fact, he looked absolutely disreputable.

"Here, sir," boomed Prout, "is Coker! You see, sir, the state in which he has returned! A disgraceful state! He has admitted, sir, that he has transgressed school bounds—that he has trespassed on the property of Sir Hilton Popper—"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Coker. "I've only been on the island in the river, sir."

Prout gurgled.

"You hear him, sir! You hear his argumentative impertinence—"

"You may leave this headstrong and rebellious boy to me, Mr. Prout," said the Head, in icy tones. "Coker!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You have landed on the island in the river?"

"Yes, sir! As public land—"

"Silence! You have, from your disgraceful appearance, been fighting?"

"I had a bit of a scrap, sir. A man had the cheek to try to turn me off the island—"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Head. "You have not only trespassed on the island, but you have forcibly resisted Sir Hilton's keepers—"

"He wasn't a keeper, sir!"

"With whom, then, have you been fighting?" demanded the Head sternly.

Perhaps he had an awful misgiving that Coker's victim might have been the lofty lord of Popper Court himself! Really, he would hardly have been surprised had Coker answered "Sir Hilton Popper."

But Coker's answer, when it came, made him jump.

"A burglar, sir!"

"What does this boy mean, Mr. Prout?" asked the Head blankly.

"Do not ask me, sir. I cannot tell you, sir! This boy's stupidity—his astounding obtuseness—it is beyond me, sir!"

"Coker!" gasped the Head. "What do you mean?"

"Only what I say, sir!" answered Coker, in mild surprise. "I didn't know he was the burglar when he tackled me, but I guessed afterwards—"

"What burglar?" almost shrieked the Head.

"The one who burgled Popper Court last night, sir!" explained Coker.

Dr. Locke gazed at him speechless. Mr. Prout made inarticulate noises. Coker glanced from one to the other.

"You see, sir," he explained, "I thought the fellow was just some cheeky rat at first, trying to turn me off the island, and I jolly well whopped him! He was glad to clear off, sir. I'd have copped him, if I'd known he was the burglar at the time; but he was gone—"

Dr. Locke recovered his breath.

"A—a—a man desired to turn you off the island, and you—you fancy that he—he was a burglar?" he stuttered.

"I jolly well knew he was, sir, when I found out that he had come back to the island for the loot!" said Coker.

"The—the loot!" said the Head dazedly.

"Yes, sir. He must have parked it there last night when Bunter was there, and—"

"Is this boy sane, Mr. Prout?" asked the Head.

# They Called Him A COWARD!



Looked upon as yellow, shunned and despised by his Form-fellows! It was an unkind fate that made Harry Manners, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, seem the biggest funk in the school! For his unaccountable action in deserting another in peril needed a more satisfactory explanation than Manners was able to give. Yet . . . . . Well, read the thrilling long yarn of Tom Merry & Co. appearing this week in *The GEM*. It also contains a grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars. Ask now for

# The GEM

Look for this cover on the bookstalls.

Of all Newsagents. Every Wednesday 2d



"Can you state, as a fact, Coker, that the stolen silver from Popper Court is hidden on Popper's Island?" asked the Head, while Mr. Prout stared dumbly. "Not now, sir!" explained Coker. "It was there, sir, but it's here now!" Opening the attache-case, he displayed to view the historic silver of Popper Court. "Bless my soul!" gasped the Head.

"I hardly know, sir," gasped Prout—"I hardly know!"

"Coker, have you any reason—have you the slightest or remotest reason—to suppose that the articles stolen from Popper Court last night were hidden on the island in the Sark?"

"Yes, sir—rather!" said Coker. "I jolly well banged my hand on the bag—I know that. You see, sir, it's pretty clear now that the fellow was on the island just as Bunter said, and, knowing that he would be watched for, he hid the stuff there, and came back for it this afternoon when the coast was clear. If I'd known it at the time, I'd have snaffled him, too. But I never know till after he was gone."

"Coker, can you state, as a fact, that the stolen silver from Popper Court is hidden on Popper's Island?" gasped the Head, while Mr. Prout stared dumbly at that hopeful member of his Form.

"Not now, sir," explained Coker. "It was there, sir, but it's here now."

"Here!" stuttered Dr. Locke.

"Yes, sir. I thought I'd better bring it away, in case that worm dodged back after it when I was gone."

"Bless my soul! Then where—what—how—"

"Here, sir!"

Coker opened the attache-case.

Dr. Locke gave a convulsive start. Mr. Prout almost bounded from the floor. Both of them fixed bulging eyes on the historic silver of Popper Court.

There was deep silence in the Head's study. A pin might have been heard to drop, for a long moment.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head feebly, at last.

Mr. Prout mumbled indistinctly.

"That's the lot, I think, sir," said Coker, cheerfully. "It's just as the burglar parked it, anyhow. And

luckily I was there and knocked him out before he could get his paws on it again. I thought I'd better bring it here, sir, for you to take care of till it can be sent back to Popper Court."

Dr. Locke looked at him. Then he looked at Prout.

Prout gasped.

"Sir, when I spoke to you on this subject, I—I certainly had the impression that this boy had gone to the island in defiance of authority. I had no idea—not the slightest idea—of this—"

"No doubt," assented the Head.

"The boy should have told me, sir—certainly he should have told me. Nevertheless, I think that even Sir Hilton Popper, sir, will be glad to hear of this boy—this boy of my Form, sir—visiting his island, for the purpose of recovering the stolen property."

"I should imagine so," said the Head.

Coker blinked.

"But I never knew—" he began. The Head gave him a look.

"You need say no more, Coker," he said. "You may leave my study."

"Oh, certainly, sir; but I was only going to explain—"

"Leave my study, Coker!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" Coker left it.

"What about fool's luck?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole school chortled over it.

It was not the "sack" for Coker; it was not a whopping; it was not even lines or detentions. It was kudos. It was the spotlight.

Prout had an idea—perhaps he liked to have the idea—that a boy in his Form had spotted the missing loot which the police, so far, had failed to trace. Certainly Coker of the Fifth

had recovered it. On that point there was no shadow of doubt. Prout was satisfied that a boy in his Form had brought credit upon himself, his Form, his Form-master, and his school. That was enough for Prout, which, in the circumstances, was fortunate for Horace Coker.

Even Sir Hilton Popper was satisfied when the missing silver was returned, safe and sound, to Popper Court. Inspector Grimes, calling at Greyfriars to question Billy Bunter on the subject of what the fat junior had seen during his night out, was astonished to be handed the bag of loot—the most astonished inspector in the whole police force.

But he was very satisfied, as well as astonished. Everybody, in fact, was satisfied, except the man Leech.

Leech, revisiting Popper's Island after dark that night, did not find his loot there. He found two men in blue waiting for him. And he found them even more troublesome than Coker, and did not succeed in getting away from them as he had got away from Coker.

So Leech, naturally, perhaps, did not share in the general satisfaction.

Coker was most satisfied of all. What he had said, he had said. What he had said he would do, he had done, and that was that. As for what would have happened to him but for that happy accident, Coker did not think of that. Thinking was not in Coker's line, which was, perhaps, just as well for him.

THE END.

(Be sure to read "THE POPPER COURT TEA-PARTY!" the sequel to this grand yarn in next Saturday's issue of the MAGNET. It's a winner all the way!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1.479.

A TERRIBLE CURSE is laid upon those who dare to disturb the treasures on Pal Yang Island. But who cares—not—

# CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

By JOHN BREDON

## In the Nick of Time!

**H**IS hands lashed behind him, a gag in his mouth, young Roy Drake stared into the periscope mirror of Professor Oskar Vorst's diving-machine with wild and horror-stricken eyes, and waited for the death that he knew to be imminent.

Strange and bewildering as had been the English lad's adventures since he was made prisoner by Von Eimar and his crew of convict-pirates from Nemesis Island, none was more extraordinary, or more fraught with peril, than the situation in which he now found himself.

He was a prisoner in the queer under-sea craft of Oskar Vorst, the half-mad professor hermit of Inaccessible Island; a craft that might have been described either as a gigantic diver's suit or as a small walking submarine.

Infuriated by the intrusion of Von Eimar's pirates into his privacy, the strange old professor had started out on a mission of death and destruction, with Roy Drake as his prisoner and helpless spectator. Now both the professor and the boy were imprisoned in the monstrous diving-suit as it struggled and floundered in the rope nettings that Von Eimar, with his usual cunning and resource, had set up to cover the underwater tunnel that led from Oskar Vorst's secret lair to the subterranean lake on Inaccessible Island.

With long, bony fingers plucking agitatedly at his scruffy grey beard, Professor Oskar Vorst snarled at the vision in the glass and then darted a malignant glare at his prisoner.

"Your friends are artful!" he hissed between his yellow teeth, pointing to the mirror that showed searchlights playing over the surface of the lake, and machine-guns mounted upon peaked rocks that rose above the cavern-pool. "That is Von Eimar, of course! His devil's brain would naturally think of such a trick as this net. But your comrades have not some pin-headed, prehistoric sea-beast to deal with, as they imagine. They are pitted against the brains of Oskar Vorst—Oskar Vorst!" His bloodshot eyes rolled as he spoke, and Roy became more certain than ever that the German inventor and cartographer was well over the verge of insanity. "I will teach them their error. Their puny bullets—ha! They cannot penetrate the steel plates of my machine!"

But Roy Drake wasn't so confident. He knew, though Professor Oskar Vorst did not, that Ronald Westdale and his pirate gunners had mounted a six-pounder quick-firer upon the rocky ledge that was the landing stage to the higher and dry caves, and that at this very moment they were probably aligning the sights, ready to fire.

Swinging his bald, domed head upon a scraggy neck, Oskar Vorst barked out a sharp command to Li, his Chinese mechanic.

The Chinaman, stolid, bare-footed, sat with his yellow hands at the controls, almond eyes half-shut and expressionless. Without a word he jerked at some levers beside him.

THE MAGNIFICENT LIBRARY.—No. 1,479.



Hampered by lack of space, Professor Vorst and the Chinaman rolled to and fro in a deadly grapple, while their boy prisoner stared in wide-eyed dismay at the torrent of water that poured through the ventilator hatch of the queer undersea craft!

"Look!" cried Oskar Vorst, dramatically pointing. With skinny fingers he caught Roy's shoulder in a cruel grip. "Look! Do you see? Ha, ha, ha!"

The long, writhing tentacles of the undersea machine were thrashing, twisting, hopelessly entangled with the stout rope netting. But, as Roy watched, sharp steel shears commenced to spin and whirl from the sides of the great cylindrical hull. They tore at the ropes and slashed them in strips like seaweed.

"That will give your friends something to think about," giped the professor, as the machine fought clear of the tangle net, the long serpentine tentacles flourishing once more, whirling and clawing triumphantly above the surface. "Ah, shoot—shoot, you fools! Play away with your funny little pop-guns! They will not save you from the vengeance of Oskar Vorst!"

Clinging to the handles beside the mirror, Oskar Vorst chuckled loudly and long.

"They have slunk back into their caves," he laughed gutturally, as the machine shambled along on the bed of the underground lake, with only its periscope visible above water. "Let them, the fools! Ha, ha, ha! They cannot escape! I'll follow the rabbits

into their burrows— Ach! Himmel! What is this?"

The amazed ejaculation was wrung from him as the machine rocked wildly, upsetting its occupants in a tumbled heap.

Boo-oo-oom!

The entire cavern seemed to be rocking and shaking with the reverberations of the shell-burst. Lumps of loosened lava dropped from the high domed roof of the cavern, splashing around them into the black surrounding waters.

"The dogs—they have fired a shell at us!" exclaimed the professor, scrambling up and adjusting his glasses as the machine righted itself. "Fortunately it went wide. We must submerge, Li, and attack another time! I had not counted on this!"

Li pointed mutely to a number of bubbles floating upwards past the thick glass of the portlights to the surface.

"Mein Gott!" In horror, Oskar Vorst shifted his gaze to the bank of dials and gauges above. "The air is escaping! They have broken the cylinders. We are lost—lost—"

"Surface!" grunted the Chinaman. With one hand upon the steering-wheel, he directed the machine towards the

shallow water, just by the entrance to the lagoon, his bare yellow feet working the treadles that operated the "legs."

"No, no!" screamed Oskar Vorst. He seemed beside himself. "Not that! I cannot surrender—not I, Oskar Vorst! Back to our cave—through the tunnel, and—"

The Chinese, with a dreadful calm, slowly shook his bald, ivory-yellow head.

"No can do!" he grunted, in the depths of his brawny throat.

A man of few words, he pointed to the air-gauge to illustrate his meaning. With the cylinders of compressed air, bolted to the rear part of the machine, riddled to fragments, the three of them would be suffocated long before they passed the underwater tunnel that communicated with the professor's secret cavern.

"No, I tell you—no!" yelled Oscar Vorst. "Better to die under water than to surrender—surrender to Von Eimar and his pirates—"

Unheeding him, Li piloted the machine towards the rocky shelf where the waters shoaled. The globular head thrust upwards above the surface. With one yellow hand the Chinaman grasped the handle that unscrewed the air-hatch.

Lying huddled in the heat and dimness where he had fallen, Roy Drake waited tensely for a second shell. But none came.

As he watched, he saw the lean hand of Oskar Vorst creep towards the pocket of his jacket. The butt of an automatic showed between his long, twitching fingers.

Seeing, in the mirror, the blaze of those fanatical eyes, the boy divined his intention. Roy Drake's arms were tied and strapped behind him; he could not cry out, but his legs were free.

As Vorst raised the gun to take aim at the unsuspecting Chinaman's back, Roy braced his shoulders against the wall and shot out his feet.

Over toppled the professor, the pistol exploding in his hand.

Snarling, as he perceived that treacherous attempt at assassination, Li spun round, drawing a big, ugly knife from his belt. All his previous habitual deference to his master disappeared on the instant—a not surprising fact, under the circumstances.

Growling and kicking, they rolled to and fro, hampered by lack of space.

Helpless to intervene, Roy stared in wide-eyed dismay at a torrent of water that poured through the half-opened ventilator hatch as the machine tilted over in the shallows.

At last Li staggered to his feet, leaving the professor a crumpled heap, beyond human aid.

Roy, watching, could see that Li had been mortally wounded in that fierce and merciless struggle, and that life was fast ebbing from him.

As the boy floundered, with tied arms, in the pool of rapidly increasing waters, he heard a lusty shout and the splashing of feet around the stranded diving-machine.

"You here, Roy?" Ronald Westdale's face was framed in the circular air-hatch, and his eyes lighted with joy as he recognised his boy chum. "Oh, good—good lad! We caught your morse message through the caves, and that told us this 'monster' was really a walking undersea machine. Gagged and bound, are you, chum? Never mind! I'll have you out of that in a jiffy!"

And that was the last Roy Drake heard before his tensed nerves gave way and he fainted.

### "This Shall be Our Last Coup!"

THE monocle of Von Eimar flashed bright, like a jewel in the sun, as the chief adventurer leaned over the rail of the cruiser's forebridge, flicking the ash from his cigar into the lagoon of Inaccessible Island.

Beneath him, on the iron fore-deck of the Vengeance, were massed his pirate crew in rows, every brutalised, crime-calloused face upturned to his own.

"So now, men, I think you understand me," he said, in conclusion to a speech he had just made to that ruffianly assembly. "We have been on Inaccessible Island for a matter of four weeks. Those weeks have not been wasted."

"From the wireless reports that we have gathered, it is clear that the hunt for us has died down. The war-ships that have been scouring these seas since the sinking of the Sylvia Bay have returned to their harbours, and in the outside world it is generally assumed that we struck some uncharted reef and went down with all hands."

He smiled grimly as he added impressively:

"The seas are now clear. The time has come when we can make the next move in our war against the world!"

Von Eimar smiled contentedly as he indicated with one plump forefinger the sable flag with the skull and crossbones that drooped limply from the masthead in the bright sunlight.

Beside him, leaning upon the rail, were his two lieutenants, Killer Moran and Ronald Westdale.

There was a buzz among the pirate convicts at this, and then a big, broad-shouldered, black-browed scoundrel, who had been a bank-robber before he had been sent to Nemesis Island, spoke up:

"Begging your pard'n, cap'n," he said, peering up from under the broad brim of his hat as he leaned upon his rifle, "but me an' my mates would like to know somethin' more o' your plans—if one might make so bold as to ask."

Von Eimar beamed, as he polished his monocle and screwed it once more into his eye.

"Certainly you may, my man. I was just about to enlighten you all upon that point—"

There was a breathless hush as these rascals and ruffians from all over the world craned their necks and listened.

"I do not know whether any of you have ever heard of the Island of Pai Yang?" said Von Eimar. "On the map, it is only a tiny dot. Very few people have ever heard of it. Actually, it is within thirty-six hours' run of Inaccessible Island."

With a portly finger, he indicated the spot on a chart that he unrolled over the rail.

"The island is governed under the Dutch East Indies," he explained; "but actually, except for a single Dutch resident who acts as adviser, the Sultan of Pai Yang is practically absolute."

"Very few people have heard of the existence of the island, fewer still are aware of the immense treasure of jewels that lies buried within the ancient tombs of its kings—"

Treasure! Jewels! Von Eimar grinned outright as he noticed the sudden flicker of added interest, the pirates licking their lips after the manner of small boys tasting sweetmeats.

"... the treasure buried in these

tombs of long-dead kings is reputed to be beyond computation. Remember that the East Indian islands were once the centre of the world's wealth, in the far-off days of the Roman Empire, and of Kublai Khan. Think of rubies, my friends, ropes of pearls such as no man has ever yet seen; diamonds, sapphires, opals, emeralds! Worth millions of pounds sterling! Jewels are the best currency in the world, my men; they are easy to conceal, and they always fetch their price. The Sultan's army consists only of a few natives armed with spears. They should give us no trouble. The tombs with their treasures are guarded by heathen priests, and a terrible curse is laid upon those who dare to disturb them. Is there any man here who is afraid of the curse? Speak up, whoever is! Come, now, speak out!"

A rattle of coarse ribald laughter came from hundreds of throats. Superstitious many of those rats of the underworld may have been, but in the bright sunlight, and with the prospect of fabulous treasures before them, that was a subject to be treated with mirth and derision. Later, perhaps, some of them were to remember it with a shudder.

"Just one question, Von Eimar." It was Ronald Westdale who spoke, removing the stem of his pipe from his teeth.

"As many as you please, Westdale, my good fellow!" cried Von Eimar, with that bluff heartiness of his that hid his secret and sinister thoughts.

"I take it from your description, Von Eimar," said Westdale, speaking slowly, "that Pai Yang is in a sort of backwater, pretty well remote from the outside world. But however remote it may be, there must be some sort of communication with the outside world. There will be a radio station at the Dutch resident's house, if nowhere else. Then there will be ships in the harbour, perhaps a Dutch cruiser. What will happen when the Vengeance attacks? Why, the alarm will be spread long before we have time to raid the tombs and get the jewels, and it won't die down quite so easily this time, either."

Von Eimar nodded his straight-backed head in appreciation of the points raised in Westdale's remarks.

"Quite so, my dear Westdale," he replied. "The moment the news is flashed out on the radio, all the navies of the world will be on our track again, like sharks after dead meat. Quite so! I had foreseen that. But, Westdale, it is not my intention to blunder headlong into the place. My methods are different. Finesse is the thing, my dear fellow, finesse!"

"Say, cap, an' how?" put in Killer Moran, chewing as he spoke. "Guess it's us as'll be 'finesse,' an' finished mighty quick ef anythin' goes wrong wi' the works o' this racket. Give us the wise-jaw, chief."

Chuckling, Von Eimar rubbed his plump hands.

"Simple, men—simple," he responded. "Perhaps some of you are not aware that the Vengeance, which once was the Varland cruiser Zermac, has a sister ship. Well, she has. It is the Zarka, of the Varland navy. The Zarka was laid down at the same time as the Zermac. Her armament, tonnage, dimensions, everything, is identical. At the Varland naval base they might be able to tell both vessels apart, but assuredly they cannot at Pai Yang. Now do you understand? We sail openly into Pai Yang Harbour, flying the Varland colours, and with the name Zarka embossed on our superstructure.

Who is to tell the difference? We have only to explain that the Zarka is on her way to Nemesis Island, and that we have put in at Pai Yang to effect some repairs. Then, when all suspicions are lulled, we rise, hold the Sultan and his court and the Dutch resident as hostages, ransack the tombs, and then race back to Inaccessible Island before the world is a whit the wiser."

Slowly Westdale nodded his agreement.

"Sounds good," he admitted. "The only chance of discovery, I suppose, is that we run into the real Zarka, and that should be in the Baltic, thousands of miles away. So there seems little prospect of that. If we carry out our plan without a hitch, we should be far away before the alarm's spread. Sounds good to me, Von Eimar."

"Then we set to at once upon our preparations," said Von Eimar. "But, men, listen to me. There is one more thing. This shall be our last coup. Win or lose, we cannot carry out another. Once we have plundered Pai Yang, the pursuit after us will be enormous. Even Inaccessible Island will be no longer safe. Every rock and reef in the Indian Ocean will be searched. With the jewels of Pai Yang aboard, and with the bullion that we took from the Sylvia Bay, we must capture some steamer, tranship ourselves and the treasure, scuttle the Vengeance, and make for some remote and obscure South American port. That will be our only chance of escape. Short and merry is the life of a modern pirate, my friends, as I have told you before—short and merry, and the merrier the shorter, you may be quite sure of that!"

### Nothing Doing!

**R**EACHING the door of the chart-house, as the pirate crew dissolved in groups, discussing the situation, Von Eimar removed his white, gilt-peaked cap and mopped

his damp brow with a handkerchief. Then he let out a deep, jovial laugh as he saw Roy Drake seated by the chart-table.

"Why, lad," he exclaimed heartily, clapping the boy's shoulder in friendly fashion with his podgy hand, "so you heard, eh? What do you think of our proposed expedition? I haven't seen much of you lately."

This was true. During the weeks of waiting on Inaccessible Island, Roy Drake had avoided Von Eimar as much as was possible, keeping to himself in the little hut of bamboo and palm thatch that he had built on the fringe of the forest.

Controlling his features, Roy concealed the white-hot rage that consumed him whenever he encountered Von Eimar's easy, boisterous familiarity, which he knew marked a nature as cold, ruthless, and pitiless as that of any man-eating shark of the Indian Ocean.

"I hear you've been exploring the cave of my late countryman, Oskar Vorst," continued Von Eimar, with the same cheeriness. "Have you found anything of interest? Anything that throws any light upon his activities on Inaccessible Island?"

Roy shook his head.

"Nothing," he said; and familiar as Von Eimar was with worldliness and deceit, he knew the truth when he saw it in Roy Drake's frank and open expression. "If he kept any journal or papers, they must be in some secret hiding-place that is beyond me. What he was doing with that diving-machine of his is a mystery."

Von Eimar shrugged his massive shoulders.

"Well, well, it's of no importance, I suppose. He was studying geology, I take it, or the submarine growths at the bottom of the lagoon. No one can tell what these scientists are up to. They are beyond ordinary mortals—though they are mighty useful at times. But, come, lad, what do you think of our voyage to Pai Yang?"

"To Pai Yang?" A kindling of hope leaped up in Roy Drake's breast. "You mean that I may come?"

Von Eimar read the thoughts in the boy's mind, and grinned.

"Yes, you can come, with pleasure—but not as a prisoner! No, no! I am not taking the chance that you may escape and betray us. Not I. Sign our pirate articles, lad, and there's no recruit I'd welcome more willingly."

The boy's mouth shut like a trap.

"You know my answer to that, Von Eimar," he said, his jaw hardening. "You want to strike at my father—Morgan Drake, who sent you to Nemesis Island—through me. You want to break him by making me one of your pirate crew. Well, I won't join your mob of cutthroats and runaway convicts! And that's final!"

Killer Moran, the American, chewing incessantly as he lounged through the chart-room door, glared ferociously as he heard the boy's defiant words. Ronald Westdale behind him, flashed the boy a look of warning.

Slowly Von Eimar inclined his square, smoothly shaven head.

"Please yourself, boy," was his answer, given with the same pleasant smile. "Only, remember, your name is already on our Book of Articles—forged, certainly, but forged so convincingly that you'd be hard put to it to escape the gallows if a judge at the Admiralty Court were to see it. As your English saying has it, you may as well have the game as the name!"

His little blue eyes narrowed as he continued:

"You remember that Dutch flying-officer that we captured, after the sinking of the Sylvia Bay? He has seen you often enough on this pirate cruiser—and he thinks that you are an officer among us. He knows your name, too! If he were to escape, now—"

A shrug of his broad shoulders showed only too plainly what he meant. Roy Drake compressed his lips.

"You've had my answer, Von Eimar," he retorted, and with that he left the chart-room.

Killer Moran watched his well-knit, disappearing form with a scowling eye.

"Say, cap, that bo' shore gits on my ear!" said the Chicago ex-gangster. "I'd give the sharks hyarabouts a dinner ef he yauped to me like that, an' I were chief. I shore would!"

Von Eimar, bending over the chart-table, looked up at Moran with a glance that made the Killer shuffle uneasily.

"It happens that you are not captain here, Moran," he said icily, and the American subsided.

But Westdale was not so easily silenced.

"What did you mean by that hint about the Dutchman escaping, Von Eimar?" he asked steadily. "Are you taking him with us to Pai Yang?"

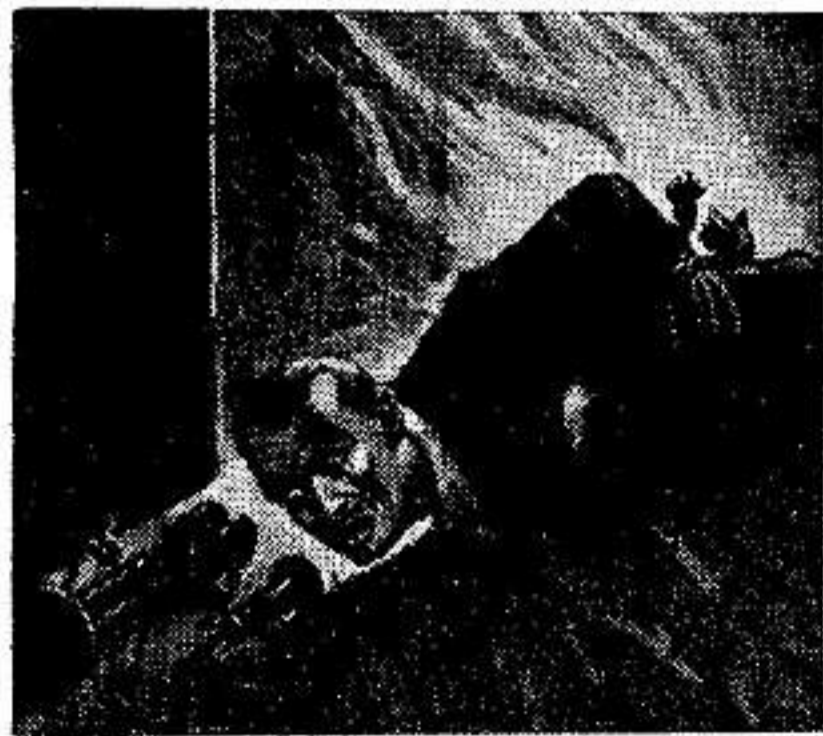
Von Eimar made no answer.

"Don't forget that he knows of our secret base here on Inaccessible Island," Westdale went on. "If ever he gets away and opens his mouth, we'll have a fleet of bombing planes over our heads directly, and cruisers to bottle us up!"

Von Eimar drove the point of his compasses into the chart so hard that he pricked through to the solid mahogany underneath.

"I'm not in the habit of forgetting essential points," he retorted brusquely. "Remember that I have as much attachment for my neck as every man

## THE MAN BEHIND THE SCREEN



**F**IVE men were all at a certain place at a certain time. Years later, widely separated, they died one by one. Why? This swift-moving yarn gives the answer in a series of non-stop thrills when Max Sutro probes the mystery, risking his life every minute he's on the job. If you enjoy a good mystery story, be sure to read this one in

No. 530 of

# BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

On Sale Everywhere.

Price 4d.



of this crew has for his. The Dutchman goes with us to Pai Yang—in irons. Since this brat of a boy, Drake, will not join us, he remains on Inaccessible Island, under strict watch!"

**Roy Breaks Free!**

**S**TARS glimmered in the dark-blue night over Inaccessible Island. Before Roy Drake's hut, the two convicts, who were detailed as his sentries, lolled over a low red fire, as dew dampened the atmosphere of the tropical night. Every now and again a black bottle would pass between them, and the recipient would gurgle noisily in his throat as he gulped down the fiery, potent liquor. Through the doorway the boy watched

them covertly, shunning sleep, his head resting upon his handcuffed wrists.

Gradually the two men, who at first had been singing, drooped off into a nodding slumber, crouching with bowed heads over the rifles laid across their knees.

A few minutes later, a shadow glided across the sands from a mass of sweet-scented tamarisks, and a head was thrust into the doorway of the hut.

"Awl right, matey?" It was Hilarity Hinton, the Cockney, who breathed in a hushed whisper. "Right y'are, then. These blokes is doped. I gave 'em the bottle, an' Mr. Westdale put somethin' in it to put 'em to bye-byes. Sleepin' like fairies, ain't they, sir? Gimmo your 'ands, Mister Drake."

In a trice, Hilarity had inserted a key

into the lock of the handcuffs, and the steel bands slipped off the boy's wrists.

"This way, sir!" he said.

Stealthily Roy Drake followed the tracks of the little Cockney as he hurried through the dusky, dewy night.

Away in the centre of the lagoon, shimmering like molten silver, that was so completely land-locked by the unfolding hills of Inaccessible Island, lay the Vengeance at anchor. Ruddy flickers of light quivered atop of her squat twin funnels. Down in the engine-room Mikhail Lebedoff, the renegade Russian engineer, was overseeing his greasers and stokehold hands, getting up steam.

They were casting off at dawn, for only by the light of day could a ship be steered through the mazes of shoals and

*(Continued on next page.)*



**COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!**

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

**J**ACK ROGERS, of Whetstone, who has omitted to send me his full address, wants to know when Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh first came to Greyfriars, and how the Famous Five came into being. I recommend my chum to make a bee-line for the newsagent's, and get a copy of this week's issue of our grand school-companion paper—the "Gem." If he does, he will find all the information he wants in the magnificent yarn appearing therein, dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton at Greyfriars, and entitled:

**"HARRY WHARTON'S CHALLENGE!"**  
By Frank Richards.

And what's more, I feel certain that Jack will thoroughly enjoy reading this super-story.

There are several more interesting letters from readers this week, so here goes to answer them!

Do you remember my recent paragraph about

**THE DEAD GUARDIAN OF ST. JAMES'**

the city church in Carlick Hill, London? I told you of the strange mummified body which stands guard in the porch of the church. Well, here's a bit of information I didn't know. Do you know that this mummified body was brought to its present place by an ancestor of one of our readers? Ernest Austin, of Kersley Road, Stoke Newington, tells me that it was his great-grandfather, Benjamin Hicks, who brought the body from the vaults to its present place in the church. So far as I know it is the only case of an English mummy being kept in a church. Ernest volunteers to let me have any further information if my readers are interested.

One of the cheeriest letters comes from one of my girl readers. I call her a "girl," despite the fact that she is twenty-nine years of age. But she still retains

**THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH,**

for she confesses that she is just as enthusiastic a reader of The MAGNET as she was years ago. She has been reading it for nearly twenty years now!

I can assure "Molly" (that is her name), that I have very many old readers who resolutely refuse to give up The MAGNET. They are amongst my most loyal readers, and I am always exceedingly pleased when their cheery letters come along in my post-bag. It makes me feel proud to realise that I have such splendid supporters. So hats off to the MAGNET's old boys—and girls—and a special cheer for Molly, of County Donegal!

Once or twice in this little chat of mine I have mentioned

**STRANGE COINCIDENCES.**

Here is an amusing one which is sent to me by J. Shephard, of Bitterne, Southampton. This reader is keen on playing his radiogram, and the other day, he and his friend were enjoying the records. Unfortunately, one of them was inadvertently left on the settee. Down sat my reader's chum—with dire results to the record! As he leaped up with a very guilty look, my reader picked up the pieces of the broken record, and looked sadly at his chum. Guess what the name of the record was? Believe it or not, it was: "Don't Blame Me!"

Here are a few

**ITEMS OF INTEREST**

which I have collected to pass along to you:

**A Boy King's Wonderful Watch!** King Farouk, the sixteen-year-old ruler of Egypt, has just been presented with a new watch. In addition to keeping time most accurately, this watch shows the date, the positions of the sun and moon, the altitude, and the temperature. It needs winding only once a month, and is said to be the most exquisite watch of its kind in the world!

**£890 for a Penny!** Recently, a copy of the first edition of the translation of Omar Khayyan's poetry was sold for £890. This particular edition was a failure when it was first published, and was sold at a penny a copy! It was one of these penny copies which brought such a windfall to its owner!

**There are 108 Ingredients in Milk!** Sounds a lot, doesn't it? But that's the total number which scientists have so far discovered in milk—and they say they haven't finished making discoveries yet! If you're fond of tongue-twisters, here are a few of the names of these ingredients: Hydroxyglutamic acid, duodecansamino acid, tryptophane, arachidic, vanadium, strontium, leucocytes—well, that's enough to be going on with!

**Twelve Hundred Miles to Find Grass!** That is the distance which four thousand inhabitants of Sinkiang Province, China, had to travel in order to find new grazing places for their herds. Former pastures had failed—hence the long trek!

**A Country with Only One Cinema!** The country of Andorra, in the Pyrenees Mountains, between France and Spain, boasts only one cinema. It seats 750 people, and caters for a country that is 175 square miles in area. Monaco, with an area of only 4 square miles, possesses seven cinemas. The only countries in Europe which do not have any cinemas are the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Republic of San Marino.

Gee! If I don't watch out, I shan't have room to tell you what's in store for next week! As usual, Frank Richards starts the ball rolling with another first-quality school yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled:

**"THE POPPER COURT TEA-PARTY!"**

a grand sequel to the yarn you have just read. Under a very great obligation to Horace Coker, for recovering his snaffled silver, Sir Hilton Popper considers that an invitation to Popper Court is a sufficient reward for services rendered. What eventually happens will surprise you, as it did the great Horace himself! Frank Richards seems to be trying to surpass anything he has yet written, and you'll vote next week's rousing story to be one of the finest that have ever come from his pen.

Added to this splendid treat come our other popular features: The "Greyfriars Herald"—tip-top, as usual; another "Interview" in verse by our long-haired poet, and more chapters of John Bredon's fast-moving "thriller": "Captain Vengeance!"

Be sure and come into the office again next week, won't you, chums?

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,479.

coral reefs, laced by swift, treacherous currents and tidal whirlpools, that for centuries had cut off inaccessible Island from all contact with mankind.

Boats were drawn up by the beach. Under the starry silver lights men were wading through the milky fringe of surf, stores packed on their shoulders. Following the Cockney's example, Roy swung a heavy burden on to his back, and, mingling with the files of sweating, half-naked men, splashed through the shallows to the gunwale of the nearest boat.

In the darkness nobody was to recognise him, as presently he pulled an oar at the bow-thwart, the heavily laden boat gliding under the massive steel hull of the Vengeance.

With his cap peak pulled low over his eyes, he passed close to Von Eimar, who divided his attention between studying some papers and watching the men as they hoisted stores aboard and stowed them under hatches.

Watching his opportunity, the boy slipped down a scuttle into the deserted lower deck.

Hilarity Hinton beckoned him along a steel-walled corridor.

"In here, chum!" whispered Hinton, unlocking the door of the cruiser's brig. "You'll find Dutchy inside."

With that he thrust the boy within, hastily locking the heavy steel door upon him.

Roy stood blinking in the darkness.

An exclamation in some foreign tongue came to his ears as his groping fingers encountered an unseen face. Startled, the boy recoiled a pace. The question was repeated, this time in English.

"Who is that?" was asked in a strong foreign accent.

His eyes becoming slowly accustomed to a faint ray of starlight that stole through a heavily grated scuttle above, Roy perceived the shadowy figure of the Dutch flying officer, manacled and secured by a chain that was socketed to the iron deck-plates.

"It is I—the English lad! You have seen me, I think. Roy Drake's my name!"

Squatting on his heels, Roy explained the situation, in as few words as he could, to the bewildered Dutchman.

"This is a strange story indeed," the Dutch officer remarked, in halting English, when Roy finished. "Very strange. You tell me that you are a prisoner here—hostage—not one of this

pirate crew! I had supposed that you were one of their officers. Von Eimar told me so. Well, well, if ever I escape I shall bear witness to what you have said, but"—and he sighed as he glanced at his irons—"it does not seem that I have much chance of escape, my boy."

"I'll get away if I have half a chance when we get to Pai Yang!" Roy promised. "I'll warn the Dutch resident that this is the pirate cruiser Vengeance—and not the Zarka, as Von Eimar will make it out to be. And I'll not forget to tell him that you're a prisoner here. If only I had a file I'd soon work through those irons of yours—"

As Roy spoke there sounded the deep, whistling blast of the ship's siren.

"We're under way," muttered the boy, as he felt the deck under him heave and quiver with the drone of the twin engines below. "The Vengeance has started. Before many hours are past we'll be at Pai Yang, and then the excitement will start!"

It seemed ages, though, in reality, it was no more than a few hours, while Roy Drake and the Dutch prisoner remained in the stifling heat of that narrow, steel-walled cell, as the Vengeance raced through the calm seas towards Pai Yang.

Twice Hilarity Hinton, who acted as gaoler, visited them with food and water. For the rest of the time Roy slept, wisely conserving his energies until the time should come for him to make his bid for freedom. No one else disturbed them, which was as well, for there was no room for Roy to hide in that confined space.

At last the dim light of day that had filtered through the small grating darkened, and an hour or so after the sudden fall of tropic night, a cessation of the drone of engines announced that they had berthed at Pai Yang. With a resounding splash the anchor plunged into the low-lapping tide.

A key rasped in the lock, and Roy stared up in sudden dismay; but it was only Hilarity Hinton again.

"All right an' tight, sir!" whispered Hilarity. "Listen! D'ye 'ear? That's the bo'sun piping Von Eimar hover the side. His Nibs is all rigged up in admiral's uniform, and he's goin' to pay wot he calls an official visit to the hisland. Now's your chance if you wants to make a leg of it."

"What about the Dutchman?" Roy

indicated the burly Hollander as he sat in his fetters.

Hinton lifted his cap to one side and scratched his head.

"Can't do no nuthin' about 'im, sir! Sorry! 'E'll 'ave to take his chance. You see, Von Eimar hisself keeps the key to them irons, an' if he finds as Mynheer's cut away—I wouldn't like to be in my own skin! No, Mister Drake. You do your bolt, an' me an' Mister Westdale will do wot we can to 'elp Dutchy."

"Take your chance, my boy—take your chance and escape!" urged the Dutchman. "At first I thought you were a spy, Roy Drake, but now I know you are honest. Quickly, lad! Only one of us is needed to warn those ashore!"

Reluctantly, after a warm handshake, Roy Drake quitted his fellow in misfortune, and followed Hilarity Hinton along a narrow, steel-walled alleyway, and up an iron, vertical ladder to the cruiser's foredeck.

Above, Roy saw a fine, starry firmament, violet of colour, and with the night soft with the warm, sweet balm of the tropics.

Hilarity nudged his elbow, and he dodged out of sight into the shadow of a heavy steam-capstan as, amidships, he saw Von Eimar descending the accommodation-ladder to a pinnacle alongside, clad in all the magnificent uniform and decorations of an admiral in the Volland Navy. Behind him, a file of convicts, with fixed bayonets, disguised in the stolen uniforms of Navy men.

Ashore twinkled the golden lights of Pai Yang. In the bay, enclosed by curving shores purple in the night, hovered the lighted paper lanterns of Chinese junks, sampans, and Malay proas.

Roy cast a swift glance around. There was no one on the foredeck besides himself and Hilarity. The big forward gun-turret and the cruiser's bridge screened him from the eyes of the convict pirates massed in the gangway.

With a parting hand-clasp, he left the little Cockney, and with Hilarity's whispered "Good-luck!" sounding in his ears, lowered himself down the anchor cable into the warm, lapping waters, and, not unmindful of the sharks that abound in equatorial latitudes, struck out boldly for the shore of Pai Yang.

(Look out for more thrills and exciting situations in next week's chapters of this powerful adventure yarn!)

AT ALL GOOD SWEET SHOPS

ALLY PALLY says

I don't know how

BARRATT'S

can keep it up...They're

marvellous value—

BARRATT & CO'S

ANISEED

BALLS

20 A 1<sup>D</sup>



TRIANGULAR AIRMAIL PKT. FREE. 33 different stamps, including scarce Iran Airmail, Pictorial Balloon, Mozambique, B.W.I., etc. Send 2d. postage, requesting approvals.—Lisburn & Townsend (Dept. A.P.), Liverpool.

BE TALLER! Inches put you miles ahead! Increased my height to 6ft. 3ins. Thousands gratified clients since 1907. Ware worthless imitations. 6d. stamp brings details.—ROSS, Height-Specialist, SCARBOROUGH.

STAMPS 300 DIFFERENT, incl. Airmail, Beautiful Uncommon Sets, Pictorials, Colonials. Price 6d. (Abroad 1/-).—W. A. WHITE, ENGINE LANE, LYE, WORCS.



Complete List Post Free, 2d. 6in. walls. Carriage Paid.

SPUR PROOF TENTS

Made from specially Proofed Canvas, complete with 3-Piece Jointed Poles, Guy Lines, Pegs and Runners. Packed in waterproof holdall with handle. Size 6ft. x 4ft. 3 x 3ft. 6, with

GEORGE GROSE • LUDGATE CIRCUS

NEW BRIDGE ST LONDON E.C.4

AGENTS WANTED

EATONIAN XMAS CLUB

Free Gift every Agent. Highest Comm. No Outlay. Chocs., Fancy Goods, Toys, etc. Send P.C. for Huge Art Catalogue and Particulars.

EATON & CO. (Dept. 40), Eatonian House, LEEDS, 12

STAMMERING!

Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.

JUBILEE PKT. FREE! Incl. Jubilee Horseman, UKRAINE, Guatemala, Airmail, Bohemia, etc. 56 different, ROUMANIAN HORSEMAN, Scarce ANZAC. Postage 2d.; request approvals.—ROBINSON BROS. (A), MORETON, WIRRAL.

