

THE  
MAGNET

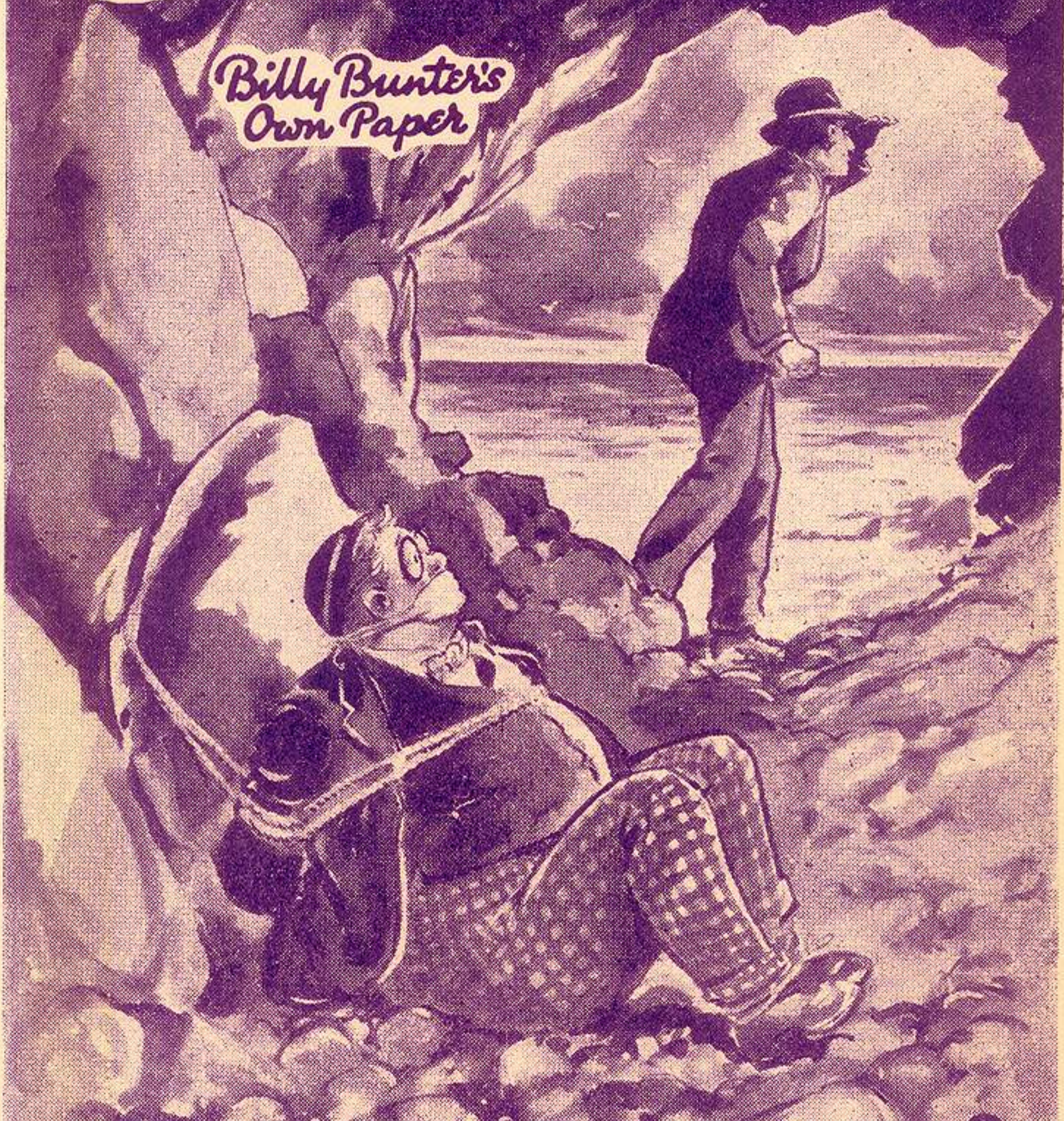
"THE MAN FROM GERMANY!"

EXCITING SCHOOL-  
ADVENTURE YARN  
OF GREYFRIARS.

# The Magnet

2<sup>D</sup>

Billy Bunter's  
Own Paper



## IN DESPERATE HANDS!

## WHY PON. & CO. GAVE BUNTER BEST!

### Sensational Scene Explained

**T**WO Wednesday afternoons running, Ponsonby & Co., of Highcliffe, met Bunter on his way to Cliff House, and ragged him.

They had an excellent reason. On a recent occasion, when Pon. & Co. were fishing, Bunter had helped himself to their tuck-hamper when they were not looking, and the cheery Highcliffe lads had sworn to take the value of the purloined provender out of Bunter's hide. But one ragging would have been sufficient in our view—and, in any case, Highcliffe outsiders are not allowed to rag Greyfriars men ad lib. even if they do deserve it! So something had to be done about it. That was what Bob Cherry and Brown and Wibley decided, when Bunter poured out his tale of woe to them.

The "something" was duly done.

Pon. & Co., having an idea that Bunter would again visit Cliff House to see his sister Bessie, waited for him behind a hedge.

At the usual time a fat figure came rolling down the lane towards Cliff House. Pon. & Co. lounged out of their hiding-place and barred the way.

"Collar the fat slug, you men!" drawled Pon.

"Oh, rather!"

Gadsby and Vavasour reached

## The Greyfriars Herald

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

forth to collar Bunter. Then a surprising thing happened. Something like a battering-ram smote Gadsby on the chest, and something like a sledgehammer hit Vav. on his elegant chin!

Gadsby crumpled up, gasping, and Vav. sat down, roaring.

When Pon. and Monson rushed in to do the collaring, they were surprised to receive a smart biff on the nose and ear respectively!

"The fat freak's showing fight!" gasped Pon. "We'll show him! Grab him, you men!"

Pon's pals did their best. But surprise followed surprise. Gadsby went down for a second time under another pile-driver on the chest, and Monson bit the dust under a smashing whop on the jaw. Vav., receiving a playful tap on the nose, retired hastily, and Pon., left alone on the field, caught a straight left between the eyes and faded right out of the picture!

But how did Bunter do it? you ask.

He didn't! The fat, bespectacled Greyfriars junior who rolled into Pon.'s ambush was not William George Bunter, but another Remove man, disguised by Wibley's expert hands to look like Bunter.

## COKER BELIEVES IN POLITENESS!

**"Y**ES, I'm a strong advocate of better manners at school," said Coker, as he glowered at our interviewer over the big ice-cream he was eating in the tuckshop. He paused to wipe his mouth with the back of his hand, and went on: "The lack of politeness in this school is simply awful—get out of the daylight, Rake, you young idiot, or I'll whop you! I can't dashed well see to eat!"

"Manners maketh man," went on Coker, with a loud hiccup. "Judging by the manners of most of the chaps here, they'll never be men if they live to be a hundred!"

"Of course, a fellow like me is a gentleman by instinct—did I tread on you? Serves you right for having such big feet—but you need a microscope to find anything like a gentleman among the other chaps.

"If I could afford to waste time talking to a fag like you, I'd tell you more about my firm belief in politeness. But I want to finish this ice-cream quickly, and go and tell Wingate what a lop-eared, cross-eyed chump he is—so you'd better buzz off!"

And Coker flattened his hand over my features, then turned to his ice-cream again, leaving me lamenting that I had no more information to pass on to you about Coker's ideas on politeness!

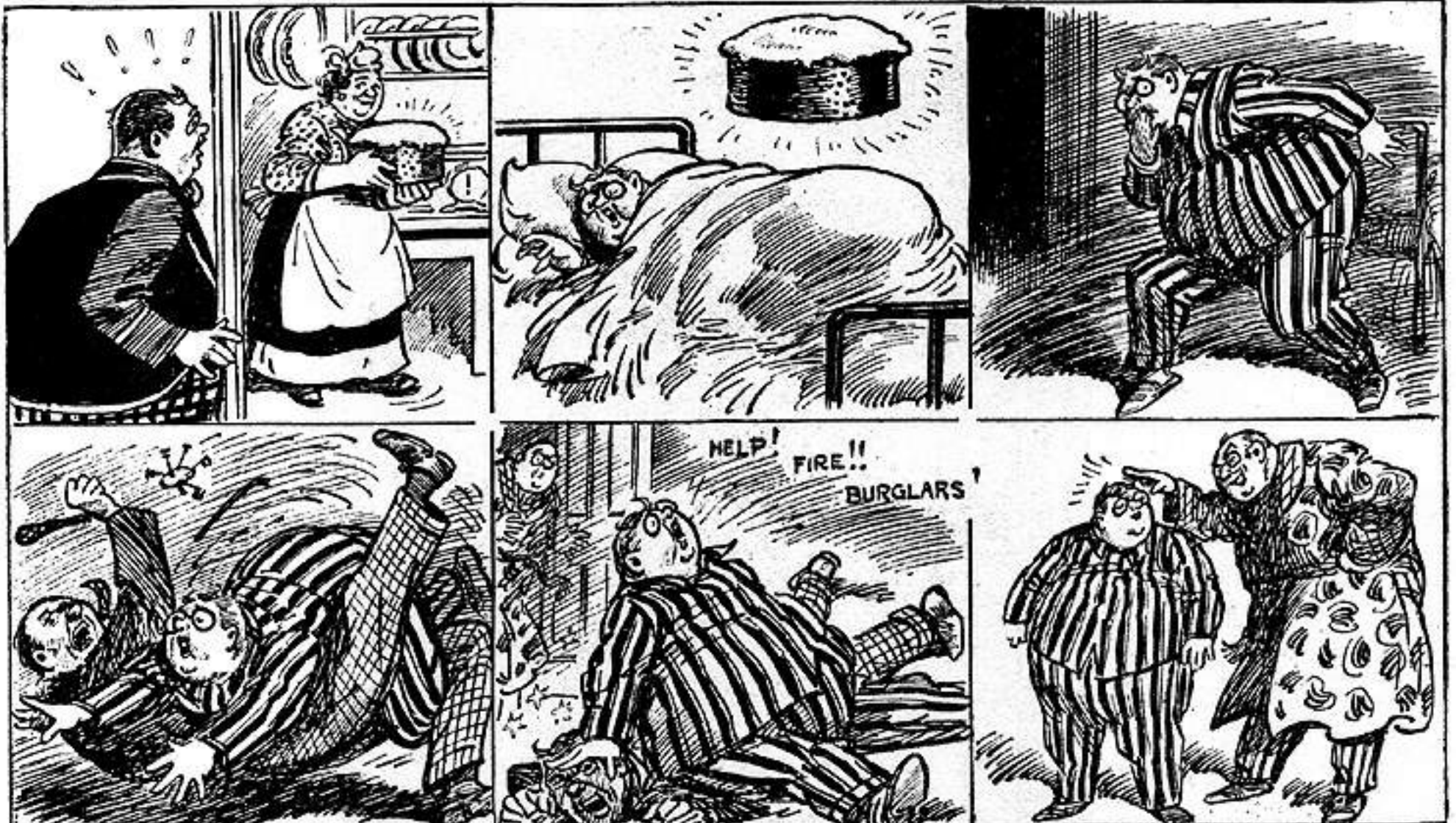
## A "DICKY NUGENT" THRILLER—Pictured By C. H. Chapman

Our talented contributor, Dicky Nugent, sent in his latest "thriller" in picture-story form. As his drawing was hardly up to standard, the MAGNET artist kindly helped him out.—Editor.

"Gee! What a scrumptious cake, cookie!"

Bunter dreams about the cake, and unable to—

—resist the temptation, steals out of bed.



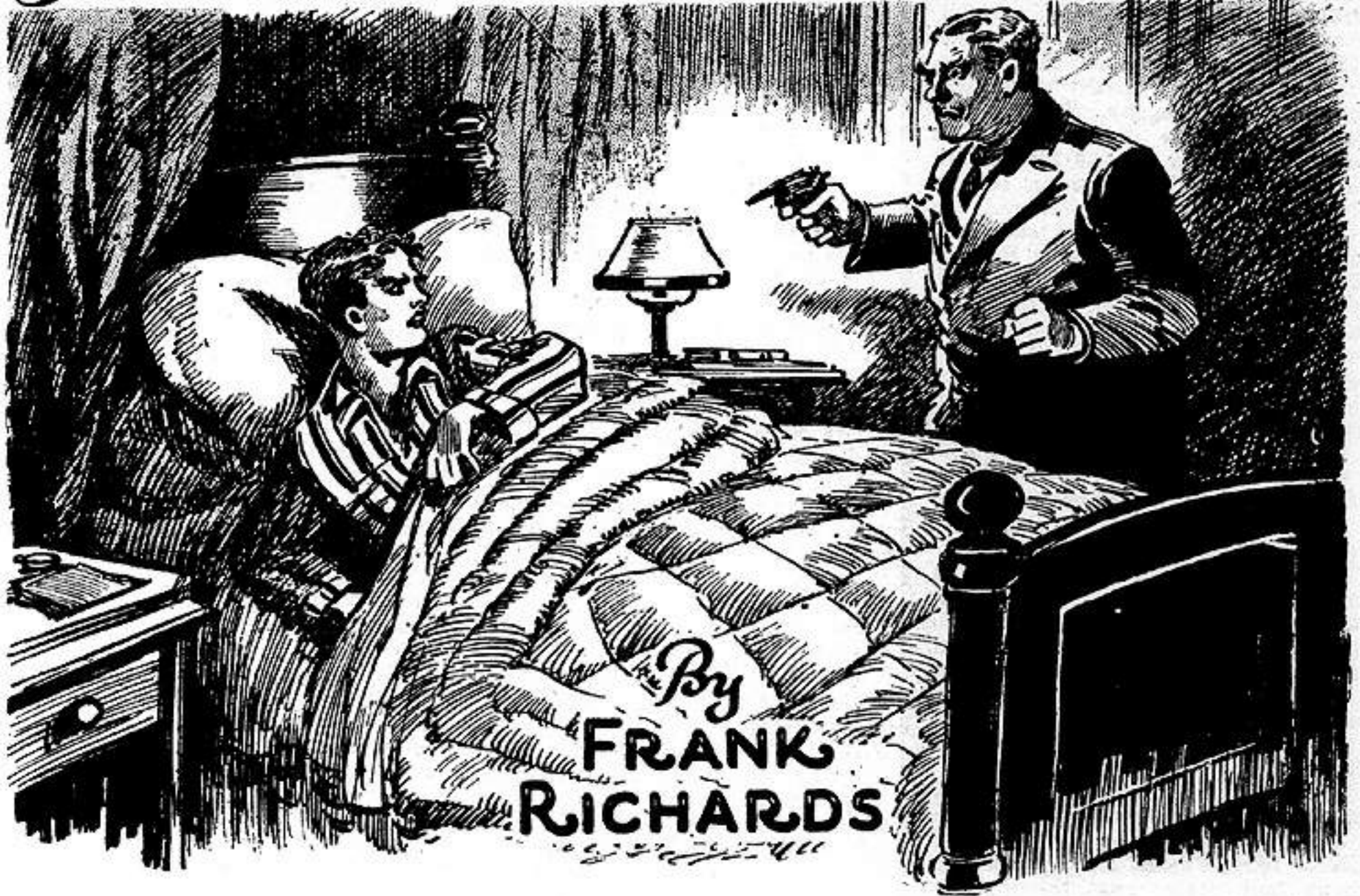
In the darkness, he falls over somebody—a burglar!

He captures the sneak-thief by sheer weight—

—and is praised by Mr. Prout for his gallantry!

WILLIAM WIBLEY, IMPERSONATING SIR WILLIAM BIRD AT EASTCLIFF LODGE, ENJOYS LIFE UNTIL HE FINDS HIMSELF IN THE MERCILESS HANDS OF—

# The MAN from GERMANY!



## FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED!

"WHERE'S the butter?"  
 "Butter!" repeated Billy Bunter. "Ain't it in the butter dish?"

"And the bacon?"

"Bacon! Ain't it under that cover?"

Harry Wharton & Co. were a little late for breakfast that morning. Billy Bunter, for once, was first in the field.

Five members of the Easter party at Eastcliff Lodge had been down to the beach for an early morning bathe. One member hadn't! All the King's horses and all the King's men would not have dragged Billy Bunter out before breakfast.

So it came to pass that when the Famous Five came into the sunny breakfast-room in a cheery bunch, they found the fat Owl of the Remove already installed there.

Blump, the butler, had told them as they came in that breakfast was ready. And the chums of the Remove were quite ready for breakfast. A morning dip in the sea gave fellows an appetite.

Eastcliff Lodge, in the piping times of peace, was a land of plenty. Sir William Bird, the venerable proprietor, was hospitality itself. But in the war days, the ration laws applied as strictly to the mansion as to the humblest cottage on the estate.

The spy switched on the bedside lamp. Next moment, his face was convulsed with rage and disappointment, as he stared at Wibley. "Ach!" he breathed. "It's only a fool of a boy!"

Ration cards were the order of the day, and every fellow was entitled to his fair whack—neither more nor less. In such circumstances it was really hardly safe to let Billy Bunter loose on a breakfast-table before the other fellows arrived.

Bunter had reached the marmalade stage, and was scoffing toast and marmalade at a great rate when the Famous Five came in.

They lifted dish-covers, and found empty space thereunder.

Five accusing glares were turned on William George Bunter.

"That fat villain has scoffed all the butter!" said Bob Cherry.

"That podgy pirate has snooped all the bacon!" said Johnny Bull.

"That bloated barrel's bagged our brekker!" said Frank Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, there's lots of toast!" ventured Billy Bunter.

Amazing New Holiday Adventures of HARRY WHARTON & CO., the Cheery Chums of GREYFRIARS.

"Any butter on it?"

"Dry toast is jolly good for the digestion!" said Bunter. "After all, what's the good of just a smear of butter?"

"You terrific toad!" said Hurroo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky! I say, you fellows, I haven't had it, if that's what you think!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm not a fellow to bag another fellow's rations, I hope! Perhaps Blump had it!"

"Blump!" repeated Harry Wharton. He could not quite see the portly butler of Eastcliff Lodge snooping the rations of Sir William's guests.

"Yes! I thought he had rather a sly look when he put those dishes on the table! I fancy he had it!" said Bunter.

"Slaughter him!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! If it wasn't Blump, I expect it was the cat!" said Billy Bunter. "I noticed a great big cat—"

"Where's the sugar?"

"Sugar!"

"Did the cat scoff the sugar, too?" asked Bob Cherry.

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"I—I—I expect so! I—I believe some—some cats are—are fond of sugar!" stammered Bunter. "Or—or perhaps it was a rat—"

"A rat?" howled Bob.

"Yes; when I came in to brekker, I noticed a great big rat—"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Billy Bunter. They were not disposed to believe that the cat had raided the butter and the bacon. Still less did they credit that a rat had snooped the sugar. They had no doubt whatever that all those comestibles were now parked within the extensive circumference of the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, I shouldn't make a fuss about it!" said Bunter, blinking at them through his big spectacles. "We have to face things in war-time, you know. Grin and bear it, you know! Stiff upper lip, and all that! They're worse off in Germany. They haven't got enough butter to grease Hitler's moustache! I shouldn't grouse about trifles if I were you! After all, there's plenty of margarine! It's quite good."

"I'm going to burst him!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Blump will bring in some more eggs, if you ring! Eggs are much healthier grub than bacon—besides, what's the good of a spot of bacon no bigger than half-a-crown? I shouldn't make a fuss about food—"

"You wouldn't!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Never!" said Bunter. "The fact is, you fellows will have to brace up a bit if you're going through this war. If you're so jolly particular about your grub, what the dickens will you do when you get into the Militia? The sooner you learn to brace up and face things, the better."

Which was, perhaps, good advice in its way; but not gratifying from a fellow who had scoffed all the breakfast.

"In a place like this," continued Bunter, "I'm rather surprised to see the grub so skinny. They might have parked whole sides of bacon and tons of sugar in this sort of show. Lots of people did. I suppose that old donkey Bird never thought of it. I should have!"

"Bank on that!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Not the sort of thing you would overlook."

"Now look at it!" said Bunter. "The whole lot was hardly enough for one fellow. I was still hungry when I had finished the lot—"

"So you finished the lot?"

"Oh! No! Never touched it!" said Bunter hastily. "It was the dog—"

"The dog?"

"Yes; the dog ran in, and—and—"

"Along with the cat and the rat?" asked Bob.

"Oh! I—I mean the cat—that is, the rate! I—I—I—I mean—"

"You didn't see a pig among the other animals?" asked Bob.

"Eh? No!"

"Well, we can see one, and we know that the pig has scoffed our

brekker. And we're going to make the pig sorry for itself!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"The pigfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The bootfulness is the proper caper."

"I say, you fellows, don't you get kicking up a shindy, because the dog—I mean, the cat—that is, the rat—has snooped your rations!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I certainly never touched them. Not the sort of thing I would do! There's lots of margarine. And toast. And you can ring for some more eggs! And there's fish paste—and a lot of things! And—"

"Bunter's had butter for six!" remarked Bob Cherry. "But that's not enough for Bunter! He had better have some margarine, too."

"I don't want any, thanks!" said Bunter. "The butter was just about enough—I mean—not that I had it, you know!"

"You don't want any margarine?" asked Bob.

"No!"

"Well, you are going to have some! But by way of a change, as the butter went down the inside of your neck, I'll shove the margarine down the outside!"

"Good egg!"

"Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter bounded up from the breakfast-table.

When Billy Bunter could not get butter, he was glad to get margarine. But he did not like it outside his fat neck! Even the best fresh butter would have been disagreeable—outside!

"I say, you fellows—" yelled Bunter, in alarm. "I say, you keep off, you beasts! Leggo my collar, Wharton, you swab! Keep that margarine away, Bob Cherry, you beast! Oooogh! Groooogh!"

Billy Bunter shuddered as a pat of margarine slid down his fat back.

It was quite good margarine. But it felt horrid. It was clammy. It was frightfully uncomfortable. But a fellow who scoffed other fellows' rations in war-time needed a lesson, in the opinion of the Famous Five! So they gave Bunter one.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Bunter, wriggling with horror. "Ooogh! I shall have to go and change—groogh—I shall have to wash again—woogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter, shaking a fat fist at the five grinning juniors. "I never had the butter, and there wasn't enough if I did! Oh crikey! I'm all clammy—"

"Next time you pinch the rations, I'll send the marmalade after the margarine!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oogh! Beast! Yah! Swab! Groogh!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the breakfast-room. Really he had not quite finished brekke, yet; he still had space for another spot or two of toast and marmalade. But the fat Owl forgot toast and marmalade in his anxiety to get rid of the margarine. He rolled away, wriggling,

to a bath-room, while the Famous Five sat down to breakfast—such as it was.

### ONE BACK FROM BUNTER!

"READY, Wib?"

"Shut up, ass!"

"Oh, sorry!" grinned

Bob Cherry. "I mean Sir William! Ready, Sir William?"

"If you mean Sir William, say Sir William, fathead!" hooted Wibley of the Remove. "See?"

Bob Cherry had put his head in at the door of Sir William Bird's spacious apartment in the corridor opening off the oak gallery over the hall of Eastcliff Lodge.

In that apartment any member of the household staff would have expected him to find Sir William Bird, and nobody else. So certainly Blump, the butler, or John or Charles or Robert, the footmen, would have been surprised had they heard Bob address the silver-haired lord of the mansion as "Wib."

But the silver-haired little gentleman standing before the pier-glass, gazing at his dapper reflection therein, actually was Wibley of the Greyfriars Remove, though he looked about fifty years older than he looked at Greyfriars.

Wib's nearest and dearest relative, however, would never have guessed who he was, looking at him. Bob Cherry would never have dreamed that this was Wibley, had he not already been aware of the fact.

Harry Wharton & Co., in fact, had been guests at Eastcliff Lodge for quite a time without discovering that the schoolboy actor of Greyfriars was playing the part of the absent baronet. Probably they would never have discovered the secret had not Bunter—who had nosed it out—let it out. Wibley did these things well! It was Sir William Bird's twin that was standing before the pier-glass, giving a final touch to his outfit.

"Well, come on, old man!" said Bob. "We're ready to go down and get the boat out!"

"There you go again!" snapped the schoolboy actor.

"Eh? I didn't say Wib!" protested Bob.

"Idiot!" hissed Wibley.

"Ain't you ready yet, old bean?" asked Bob.

"There you go!" hooted Wibley. "What do you think Blump would think if he heard you addressing a baronet of sixty-five as old man and old bean?"

"Well, at sixty-five you are an old man and an old bean, ain't you?" asked Bob. "No chicken, at any rate."

"You blithering ass! You know why I'm doing this!" said Wibley. "I had to tell you fellows, after that Peeping Tom let it out. The old Bird's in Germany at this very minute—and I've got to keep it up that he's still at home. Do you know that this place is watched, or don't you?"

"Yes, rather!" assented Bob. "It's

no end of a stunt, Wib, and you do it wonderfully."

"If you say Wib again——"

"I mean Sir William, old chap."

"If you say old chap again——"

"Oh, my hat! I'd better be dumb!" said Bob.

"You're dumb enough. Never saw such a dumb-bell!" snorted Wibley. "Dumb as they make 'em!"

"Don't get shirty, old chap—I mean, old fellow—that is, Sir William! I'll be fearfully careful when there's anybody about!" said Bob soothingly. "The fellows are just starting to get the boat out. Coming?"

"I'll follow on," said Wibley. "I'm going to get John to give me an arm down the gully; Sir William used to when he went down to the beach. That blighter who calls himself Brown was seen about here the other day, and if there's a spy on hand I want him to spot that Sir William Bird is the genuine article. He might smell a mouse if he saw Sir William cutting down to the beach like a schoolboy."

"So he might!" agreed Bob. "Once out in the boat, though, you can be a schoolboy again till we come in. We'll get the boat launched and wait for you. Want any help with that outfit?"

"Yes," grunted Wibley. "Jermyn was jolly useful in lending a hand before I had to kick him out—blow him! But don't you help! You'd be about as useful as a hippopotamus. Get out, and wait for me on the beach."

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry left the baronet's room, leaving Wibley giving the finishing artistic touches to his make-up as Sir William Bird.

Wibley was a born actor, and he played his part to the life, and he gave the most meticulous attention to the minutest detail.

It was certain that Mr. Brown, who was known to be watching Eastliff Lodge, had not the slightest suspicion that the genuine Sir William Bird was not at home. Which meant safety for Sir William, who was on a perilous Secret Service mission in the dominions of the Bad Man of Berlin.

Bob Cherry went whistling down the corridor to the gallery. From the gallery he descended into the hall by way of the polished oak banisters, with a whiz and a whirl and a crash as he landed at the end. Bob was in high spirits that morning—as he was most mornings.

The other four members of the Co. had already started. Bob cut down the avenue at a run to overtake them.

It was a bright, sunny morning—a gorgeous day in April. The Famous Five of Greyfriars were enjoying their Easter holidays by the sea—queer as some of the circumstances were.

Up to a few days ago they had supposed that they were guests of Sir William Bird, a venerable baronet. Now they knew that they were guests of a Remove fellow who was far from venerable, save in outward appearance.

"Wibley coming?" asked Frank

Nugent, glancing round as Bob joined the Co. in the avenue that led down to the sea.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Mustn't say Wibley!" he chided. "Wib gets his hair off if you say Wib. He's just been jawing me for it."

"Well, we can't be too careful!" said Harry Wharton. "Walls have ears, you know, in war-time!"

"Right as rain!" agreed Bob. "Sir William's coming! John's going to give him an arm down the gully—rough going for a venerable old bean of three score and a few more, you know. Seen Bunter?"

"Not since you margarined him."

"Jolly morning for a trip on the briny," said Bob. "Bunter's going to make it a ripping trip."

"Eh? Bunter isn't coming!" said Johnny Bull.

"That's how!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From the avenue the juniors crossed the road along the cliffs and descended into the steep, chalky gully that led down to the beach.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob, as he spotted a fat figure ahead. "Talk of pigs, and you hear them grunt!"

Billy Bunter was in the gully. Apparently he had started out while the Famous Five were still at breakfast.

He was leaning against the door of the boathouse.

The boathouse was a small, wooden building, built in a gap between two big chalk rocks, half-way down the gully. At high tide the sea washed high up the gully, almost as far as the spot. The tide was out now, and the juniors had a good distance to trundle the boat across the sand.

The Owl of the Remove blinked round through his big spectacles, as the Famous Five appeared in the offing, and grinned.

Why he grinned they did not know—unless he was amused by the margarine episode—which was improbable. Bunter had had to have an extra wash on account of that margarine—which was not the sort of thing that amused Bunter. Still, he did grin—almost from one fat ear to the other.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coming, after all?" asked Bob. "We'll squeeze you into the boat somehow, old fat man."

"I'll watch it!" grunted Bunter. "Last time I came out in a boat with you that beast Soames came after us——"

"Soames isn't on the warpath now, fathead! Buck up, and come for a blow on the briny!" said Bob encouragingly. Which was really very kind-hearted of Bob, for there was no doubt that Billy Bunter added to the enjoyment of a trip by declining to join therein.

"Yah!" was Bunter's polite and elegant reply.

"Well, roll away from that door, barrel!" said Johnny Bull. "We've got to run the boat out!"

Billy Bunter rolled away from the door. But he did not roll far. He seemed interested in the proceedings of the Famous Five that sunny morning—though he was not joining in

the boating trip and certainly could not be suspected of intending to lend a hand in getting the boat down to the water.

Harry Wharton had the key of the boathouse. He inserted it into the lock, unlocked the door, and pulled it open.

The Famous Five all went inside. The boat required all hands to deal with it.

As soon as they were inside Billy Bunter rolled to the doorway.

There he stood grinning in at the juniors—his grin wider than ever! Indeed, it was so extensive that it almost looked as if it would meet at the back of his head.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter.

"Lend a hand here, old fat man!" said Bob, looking round.

"I say, I've been waiting for you here—guess why!" chuckled the fat Owl, blinking at the juniors in the boathouse. "I'm going to give you one back for sticking margarine down a fellow's neck! He, he, he!"

Slam!

The boathouse door banged shut.

Click!

The key turned in the outside of the lock.

"Why, you fat freak!" roared Bob. He made a jump to the door. A dim twilight reigned within, with the door shut.

Bob stumbled over an oar, tripped, and roared.

"He, he, he!" came from without.

Billy Bunter, outside the locked door, gurgled explosively. Bunter was fearfully amused. The Famous Five could guess why he had been grinning now. Billy Bunter was on the trail of vengeance! And he had pulled it off!

Bob Cherry thumped on the inside of the door.

"You fat chump!" he bawled.

"Unlock this door!"

"He, he, he!"

"I'll scalp you!"

"He, he, he!"

"You terrific fathead——" shouted Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"He, he, he!"

There was a scrape, as the key was jerked out of the keyhole. The chuckling Owl slipped it into his pocket.

"I'll spificate you, if you don't open this door!" roared Bob.

"Are you going to get through the keyhole?" chuckled Bunter.

"I—I—I'll—I'll——"

"I say, you fellows, I'm going down to the beach!" chortled Bunter. "I'll let you out when I come back to lunch! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter rolled away down the gully to the beach. His fat chortle died away in the distance—followed by a roar of voices and a din of thumping from the prisoners in the boathouse.

#### NOT A SUCCESS!

"THE ass!"

"The fathead!"

"The terrific chump!"

"The blithering bloater!"

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Bob Cherry chuckled.

"It's all right!" he said. "That howling bandersnatch doesn't know that Wibley's coming! We've only got to wait for Wibley."

Billy Bunter, rolling away on the beach, was happily unaware that Sir William was going to be a member of the boating party.

He had left the Famous Five—as he supposed—locked in the boathouse till lunch, which, in Bunter's opinion, served them jolly well right! Fellows who had compelled Billy Bunter to have an extra wash deserved that, and more!

But, in point of fact, though the scheming fat Owl was unaware of it, the prisoners of the boathouse only had to wait till Wibley blew along.

"The dithering dummy!" said Harry Wharton. "We were going to have the boat launched ready for Wibley! We shall have to wait."

"Not more than ten minutes!" said Bob cheerfully. "And fancy that fat chump's face when he sees us come down to the beach after all."

And the chums of the Remove chuckled. Undoubtedly it would be a surprise for the fat plotter when he saw the prisoners from the boathouse trundling the boat down to the water.

"I'll boot him all over the beach!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We shall have to wait here while Wibley sends for another key."

"Well, he won't be long."

Bob Cherry peered out through a crack in the door of the little boathouse. He watched the gully for Sir William to appear in sight. It was rather fortunate for the Famous Five that the schoolboy actor was going to join in the trip on the briny. Otherwise, Billy Bunter might have got away with his strategic scheme.

But it was not long before voices were heard in the rocky gully.

"Steady, John!" came the throaty voice of Sir William.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"I am not so young as I once was, John!"

"Oh, no, sir!"

Bob Cherry grinned as he watched the silver-haired little gentleman descending the gully, leaning on the arm of John, the footman. Wibley was playing his part of a venerable old bean to the life.

If the mysterious Mr. Brown was on the watch there could be no doubt that he would suppose that that silver-haired old sportsman was the genuine Sir William Bird. And so long as Mr. Brown and his associates supposed that, the genuine Sir William was safe from suspicion while he carried on with his Secret Service stunts.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob, as Sir William and John reached the level stretch in the gully, where the boathouse was built in a cleft of the cliffs.

Sir William gave rather a jump, and John stared round.

"My only hat and sunshade!" ejaculated Sir William. "What—" He remembered himself as John gave

him a surprised blink. "Hem! Hem! Good gad, what is that?"

"We're here, Sir William!" called out Bob Cherry. He was careful of the "Sir William," with John in the offing. "We're locked in!"

"What the thump—hem! What the dooce—" exclaimed Sir William.

"That ass Bunter banged the door on us and locked us in, and hiked off with the key!" explained Bob. "I suppose you can send for another key?"

"Oh, yes! John, go back to the house and get the other key for the boathouse!" said Sir William.

Leaving the little old gentleman in the gully, John hurried up the rugged path and disappeared.

"What the thump did that blithering cuckoo lock you in for?" asked Wibley, when John was out of hearing.

"Bunter's idea of a jape!" answered Bob. "We were to stick here till lunch! He didn't know you were coming."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wibley. "Lucky for you you're nice, dutiful boys, taking an old gent out for a row on a fine morning."

Sir William sat down on a boulder to wait for John to return with a key. The five fellows in the boathouse waited rather less patiently. They had a strong desire to boot Billy Bunter along the beach as far as Broadstairs and back again.

But there was nothing for it but to wait; and they waited till John, at length, arrived with another key.

Then the boathouse door was unlocked.

Harry Wharton & Co. were glad to get out at last.

They trundled out the boat. It was not a heavy boat, but they had plenty to do to get down the gully to the beach and across a wide stretch of sand to the sea.

Five fellows carried the boat down, and Sir William—venerable once more—followed slowly, leaning on John's arm, and picking his steps with the care suitable to an old bean of three score and odd years.

The Famous Five reached the beach, trundled the boat out on the sand, and stopped for a rest. Then they looked round for Bunter.

They did not want to waste any more time, but if the fat Owl was in the offing it would have been a consolation to boot him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. He pointed to the opening of the chalk cave, at a little distance from the gully.

The April sunshine was streaming down on the sandy beach. Billy Bunter had retired into the shade of the arched rocks over the mouth of the cave.

There he was sitting on the soft sand that had drifted into the cave on the last tide, leaning back against a chalk boulder, with a toffee-packet in his left hand and a chunk of toffee in his right. One of his fat cheeks bulged as if with a bad attack of toothache, but it was probably only a chunk of toffee therein.

Bunter was grinning. No doubt, as he sat in the shade

and blinked out at the sea and devoured toffee he was reflecting happily on the one back he had given the Famous Five for the margarine episode. He was not looking towards the juniors, and they grinned as they stared across at his grinning fat face.

"Bunter!" roared Bob.

The fat Owl gave a quite convulsive jump.

That roar was his first intimation that the juniors were no longer locked in the boathouse. His fat face swung round in their direction, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles as he saw them.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He gave the Famous Five one alarmed blink. Then he bounded up, dodged round the boulder against which he had been leaning, and scuttled up the cave.

In a twinkling, the fat Owl was out of sight. Evidently, Billy Bunter expected reprisals, and, like the guests in "Macbeth," he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

"Come back, you fat villain!" roared Bob. "Come back and be booted! Do you hear?"

If Billy Bunter heard, he followed the example of the ancient gladiator, and heeded not! Bunter had disappeared—and he stayed disappeared! Bunter was going to hug cover till the boating-party were gone.

"Come on!" said Harry; and the Co. grasped the boat again, and trundled it down over the shelving beach to the water's edge.

There they launched their craft and waited for Sir William.

That venerable old gentleman emerged from the gully, leaning on John's arm, and toddled across the sand with the footman's assistance.

He was safely landed in the boat, and John returned to the house.

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned as they pushed out to sea. How Wibley kept it up they hardly knew; but he was Sir William to the very life—except for an occasional inadvertent ejaculation that smacked more of the Lower Fourth than of the baronetage.

With Sir William sitting in the stern, the Greyfriars crew pulled out over the blue calm water.

If they had thought further of Billy Bunter, they would have supposed that the fat Owl emerged from cover as soon as the boat had pulled out to sea. But, as a matter of fact, they forgot Bunter's existence—little dreaming of what was happening to him as they glided away over the water.

#### BUNTER IN A BAD FIX!

**C**RASH!

Bump!

"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter.

He reeled from the shock.

Bunter was in a hurry. A little distance from the mouth of the cave the light was dim. Billy Bunter did not know that anyone else was in the cave till he crashed! The last thing Billy Bunter would have expected was to run into anybody in that chalk cave on the solitary beach.

He was taken quite by surprise. So was the other party! Bunter reeled from the shock and sat down with a heavy bump. The man into whom he had crashed went over backwards with a startled howl.

"Ach!"

"Oooogh!" spluttered Bunter.

He sat up dizzily. His spectacles had slid down his fat little nose, and he grabbed them, and jammed them into place, and blinked. The other party was down on his back, and all Bunter could see of him for the moment was the soles of a pair of boots!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "You silly

a startling man to meet in war-time. The fat Owl clambered to his feet in a hurry.

He had supposed that it was some wandering tripper exploring the cave that he had crashed into. But a tripper who spoke German was not the sort of tripper he expected—and Bunter's one idea was to get back to the beach as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

But he had no time to carry out that idea. The man had one hand to his banged head, where he seemed to have a pain. With the other he grabbed at the fat Owl and grasped him by the collar.

language. "Fool! What are you doing here—rushing about like a madman?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"Are you alone here?" breathed Mr. Brown. His light blue eyes were fixed on the sunny sand outside the mouth of the cave.

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter. Then, as he realised that the spy was in fear of seeing others enter the cave, he added: "I—I mean, no—Oh! No! Not at all! My—my friends are just—just coming! I say, you leggo! They'll be here in a minute!"

The man did not let go. He com-



The Famous Five turned round as they heard the door of the boathouse shut with a slam and the key turn in the lock. "He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I've been waiting to give you one back!"

ass! Running into a fellow! Wow! You've knocked me over! Ow!"

Really, it was Bunter who had done the running into a fellow! But the fat Owl was angry and indignant. He was startled, he was bumped, he was breathless. And he was peevish!

"Wharrer you doing here, I'd like to know?" hooted Bunter. "This is a private beach! Trippers ain't allowed here! Now you've knocked me over!"

There was a gasp from the other man. He was more damaged than Bunter, as the back of his head had banged on hard chalk when he went over. But he was a good deal more active than the fat Owl. While Bunter sat and spluttered, he leaped to his feet.

"Ach! Dummkopf!" he panted.

"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter.

Bunter did not know that a dummkopf was a blockhead. But he knew that it was a German word. A man who exclaimed in German was rather

"I say, leggo!" gasped Bunter. "Oh lor'! I say—"

He wriggled in a grasp that was like that of an iron vice, and blinked at the man's face.

In the dimness of the cave he made out a hard face with a stubby nose and thick blond eyebrows. A shiver ran through the fat junior. He had heard the Famous Five speak often enough of the man with the blond eyebrows—he remembered that they had once spotted him in that cave. He was in the clutch of the mysterious Mr. Brown.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

A pair of light blue eyes, under the thick blond eyebrows, fixed savagely on him. The man, still holding him in a grip of iron, cast a hurried glance towards the mouth of the cave.

"Fool!" he breathed. He was speaking in English now. Only the sudden shock of the collision had surprised him into using his own

pressed his grip so hard that the fat Owl squeaked as the knuckles ground into his neck.

"Silence!" whispered Mr. Brown.

The look that accompanied the injunction was enough for Bunter! He was silent as the man dragged him swiftly behind one of the chalk boulders that were strewn in the cave.

There, for a long minute, Mr. Brown crouched, listened, and watched, his grip on the fat Owl. Clearly, he was in fear of being discovered in the chalk cave if anyone followed Bunter in.

Bunter quaked in silence. He had dodged up the cave to escape, but he would have rejoiced just then to hear footsteps in pursuit. But he heard nothing—save, from a distance, the rattle—save, from a distance, the wind from the sea.

The blond-browed man stirred at last. From his pocket he drew a

cord, and with swift hands knotted it round Bunter's wrists and ankles.

The fat junior did not dream of attempting to resist; he was as wax in those strong, ruthless hands.

Leaving the fat Owl behind the boulder, Mr. Brown stepped away.

Bunter heard him treading lightly towards the mouth of the cave. Evidently he was going to ascertain whether anyone else was on the beach—and he had left Bunter secure while he went.

"Oh crikey!" moaned Bunter.

He twisted round the boulder, to blink after Mr. Brown. The man was standing—at the cave-mouth, looking out. There was nothing to be seen on the beach but the shelving sand, the heaps of seaweed and driftwood, and the lapping tide. But on the water there was a boat—with four schoolboys at the oars, and another sitting beside a silver-haired gentleman in the stern.

Mr. Brown's eyes fixed on that boat.

One long look seemed to satisfy him. He came back up the cave to the spot where Bunter lay wriggling.

"Fool! Fat fool!" he muttered, his light blue eyes glinting down at the unhappy Owl. "Your friends have gone in a boat—the old man has gone with them. Where are they going? Do you know?"

"Oh! No! Yes! Only for a trip on the sea!" stammered Bunter.

"When are they returning?"

"I—I think they're coming back for lunch!" mumbled Bunter.

"Ach! Then there is time—ample time!" muttered Mr. Brown. "But you, fool—you are in the way! You must be silent!"

He stood looking down at Bunter, with knitted brows. Finally, he stooped and loosened the cord at the fat Owl's ankles.

"Come!" he snapped.

He jerked Bunter to his feet. With his hands still tied, the Owl of the Remove stumbled along as Mr. Brown, grasping his collar, marched him farther up the cave.

The twilight in the cavern deepened to darkness. Bunter could hardly see an inch before his fat little nose. But the darkness did not seem to trouble Mr. Brown. He tramped on, like a man who knew every inch of the way.

He halted at last.

There was a sudden glitter of light. Brown had turned on a flashlamp.

Bunter blinked dizzily in the light as the man flashed it round him.

"Stand there, fool!" muttered Brown.

He pushed the fat junior against a boulder. Then he ran the cord round him and the rock, binding the fat Owl to the boulder.

"I—I say——" gasped Bunter.

"Silence!"

The blond-browed man examined the knots carefully in the light. Then he jerked out Bunter's handkerchief, folded it, and jammed it into the fat junior's mouth.

"Urrrigh!" gurgled Bunter, as it went in.

After that, he could not gurgle! With a length of the cord,

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Mr. Brown tied the gag securely in place. Then the light of the flashlamp was suddenly shut off.

Bunter, to his horror, heard receding steps in the darkness. He wriggled in his bonds, and tried to yell, but only the faintest mumble passed the gag. The man was going—leaving him there in the deep darkness. The footsteps died away towards the sea, and the unfortunate Owl of the Remove was left in blackness and tomb-like silence.

#### A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!

**B**OB CHERRY was singing. At all events, if his comrades had asked him what he was doing, he would have said so. But it really sounded as if Bob were trying to hail somebody across in Holland or Belgium.

"A life on the ocean wave,  
A home on the rolling deep,  
When your lunch you cannot save,  
And your dinner seldom keep!"

The Greyfriars boat was well out from the land. The cliffs showed in a distant dim line against the deep blue of the sky. From the shore the boat could have been only a speck, if it was visible at all; and at that distance, safe from observation, Wibley was relaxing.

It was no end of a lark to play the part of a venerable baronet, and boss the show in an establishment like Eastcliff Lodge. Nevertheless, it was a relief to relapse into a schoolboy again when opportunity offered.

So, far from observant eyes, Wibley had taken off his coat and taken an oar, and was pulling with the rowers.

Blump, John, Charles, or Robert would have been surprised to see old Sir William pulling an oar as vigorously as any of the schoolboys. But they could not see him, so that was all right.

Although Wibley had done his best, as he had promised the old Bird, to keep the impersonation a secret from all, he was rather glad that circumstances—and Billy Bunter—had been too strong for him. Now that the Famous Five were in the secret, he was able to relax a good deal—certainly, he could not have sat in his shirtsleeves, pulling that oar, had they still supposed him to be Sir William Bird, and his silvery locks genuine.

Wibley and Harry Wharton were rowing—the boat gliding gently through calm water. Nugent steered—Bob Cherry burst into melody—Johnny Bull sat watching a far-off aeroplane winging in the blue. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a pair of field-glasses to his eyes, and was watching the sea, with an intent look on his dusky face.

"Spotted a Hun submarine, Inky?" asked Bob, at last, breaking off his musical efforts.

Inky lowered the glasses.

"No, my esteemed Bob," he answered. "I have been watching a boat—my interest in that craft is terrific."

The juniors all glanced round. Far away towards the shore another craft bobbed on the blue water—too

far off for its occupants to be distinguished, though they could see that there were two of them. Faintly, like a whisper across the sea, came the chug of a motor.

"Only a motor-boat!" said Bob. "Lots of them about, up and down the coast! What about it, Inky?"

"It is coming out to us—and the most preposterous speed with the oars would not enable us to show a clean pair of toes to a motor-boat!" answered the Nabob of Bhanipur—no doubt meaning a clean pair of heels!

Harry Wharton & Co. sat up and took notice, as it were, at once. Every man in the crew pulled a good oar; but they had no chance, of course, in a race with a motor-boat, if it was after them.

"You think they're after us?" exclaimed Harry.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh nodded his dusky head.

"But we're done with Soames now," said Harry. "Soames got after us when we had a trip before—but that was before he was spotted at Eastcliff Lodge, and kicked out. So long as he was keeping on as Sir William's valet, under the name of Jermyn, he wanted to clear us off—he was afraid of being spotted. But now he's been spotted and turfed out, we're through with Soames."

"That's all right, Inky!" said Wibley. "No more danger from Soames. He's a dashed rascal; but he hasn't any motive for giving any more trouble—and he's not the man to remember grudges for nothing. Why, he lent me his hat the other day, when that fat idiot Bunter grabbed my wig off and left me stranded."

"I don't think we need worry about Soames any more!" agreed Nugent.

"If Soames is in that boat, he's not after us!" said Johnny Bull. "We shouldn't have risked another sea-trip if Soames was still on the war-path, Inky."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh did not reply; he was gazing through the field-glasses again at the distant motor-boat. The chug of the motor was growing more distinct; it was approaching the Greyfriars boat, though still far away.

"Take the glasses, my esteemed Wharton," said the nabob, at last, "and see if you recognise the man sitting in the boat—looking this way."

"Soames?" asked Harry, as he took the glasses.

"No! Look!"

Wharton turned the glasses on the distant motor-boat. Distant as it was, it rushed into clear view in the glasses.

Of the man who was driving it, he could see little; but the other man was sitting in plain view, gazing out across the sea towards the Greyfriars boat.

Harry Wharton gave a sudden start as he discerned a stubby nose, a hard mouth, and thick, blond eyebrows.

"Brown!" he exclaimed.

"Brown!" repeated Bob Cherry. "Lend me the glasses!"

The glasses passed from hand to hand. Then the Greyfriars crew



looked at one another with serious faces.

"It is the esteemed and execrable Brown," said the Nabob of Bhanipur quietly.

"But why?" exclaimed Bob. "It looks as if he's after us! They're heading this way, and that swab's got his eyes on us. But why?"

"Brown can't be going to play Soames' game," said Nugent. "Soames had a secret to keep when he tried to scafe us away from Eastcliff Lodge. But Brown can't care a bean whether we go or stay."

"Why should he?" said Harry, puzzled. "It's not that! I can't guess what the man's after."

"He is not after us, my esteemed chums," said the nabob. "We are nothing to the execrable Brown. But he is after somebody."

"Oh, my only hat and sunshade!" exclaimed Wibley. "Little me!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

The juniors realised it all at once.

Mr. Brown had been keeping watch on Eastcliff Lodge—they knew that—deeply interested in the movements of Sir William Bird. They had no doubt that he was a foreign spy, and that he had means of reporting to the enemy abroad if Sir William left his residence. So far, he had contented himself with spying. Now it looked as if he had other measures in mind—now that the baronet had placed himself at his mercy by going out to sea in company of a party of schoolboys.

Wibley whistled softly.

"By gum—if he's after Sir William!" he breathed. "Oh, my summer bonnet! I was an ass to come out in this boat and give him a chance."

"We can tackle him——" began Johnny Bull.

"If he means business, he's armed!" said Bob. "We couldn't tackle Soames that time when he turned a gun on us, old man."

Johnny was silent.

It was certain that if Mr. Brown meant mischief, he was armed, and that the schoolboy crew had no means of dealing with him. Sir William was at his mercy!

Whatever his intentions were towards Sir William, he had the power to carry them out. And if his object was to seize the old baronet, one thing was certain—Wibley's disguise would be discovered when he was in the spy's hands. That, no doubt, would see Wibley safe personally—but the impersonating game would be up—with consequent peril to the Secret Service man, who had penetrated into the enemy's country.

Wibley breathed hard.

"Oh, what an ass I was to give him a chance!" he muttered. "But I never dreamed of this! I knew he was spying, but——"

"He's after this boat, that's plain enough!" said Harry. "He can only be after Wibley—thinking he's Sir William! If he finds out——"

"He will find out fast enough, if he grabs Wibley!" said Bob. "We've got to stop him, somehow."

"We've got to do something—but what?" said Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed chums, if I may

make a suggestive remark——" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"If you can make a suggestion, fathead, get on with it!" said Bob. "Blessed if I see what's to be done."

"They are not yet near enough to see us with distinctfulness," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "It is terrifically probable that the esteemed Brown saw us start and then hiked off hurryfully to get his pal and the motor-boat. Now they are looking for this absurd craft. Having spotted a boat with six persons in it, they are heading for it."

"They know it's us, all right!" said Bob, staring. "What are you getting at, Inky?"

"This, my worthy fatheaded Bob—owing to my having gazefully scanned the sea with the esteemed glasses, we have spotted them before they have spotted us. If the absurd Sir William ducks below the gunwale, they will not spot him."

"They will when they run us down, fathead!"

"Not if the esteemed Sir William changes back into the idiotic Wibley out of their sight!" said the nabob.

"Oh!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

Wibley gave a jump. He was quick on the uptake! He only needed the suggestion—and he acted on it at once.

"Inky, old man, you're a giddy genius!" he breathed. "I'm on!"

Wibley dropped his oar and ducked low.

The Greyfriars crew played up immediately—two or three of them moving so as to screen Wibley from the sight of the enemy in the approaching motor-boat.

The schoolboy actor lost no time.

Screened by the gunwale and the grouped juniors, he whipped off the silvery mop from his head, disclosing his own close crop; whipped off the beard, the moustache, and the eyebrows. Then, dipping his handkerchief in the sea, he rubbed off the greater part of the pink complexion.

The difference it made in him was startling.

A venerable old bean of sixty-five vanished. A schoolboy of fifteen took his place. Sir William's outfit disappeared into a locker. Wibley sat up again and took an oar—recognisable by anyone who knew him as William Wibley of the Greyfriars Remove.

"By gum!" murmured Bob.

The boat pulled on slowly.

The juniors carefully did not look in the direction of the motor-boat. But their hearts were beating fast as the chug-chug-chug of the motor drew nearer and nearer.

#### BEATING MR. BROWN!

"STOP!"

Mr. Brown, standing up, rapped out the sharp order.

The motor-boat was chugging close at hand now—within a dozen feet of the Greyfriars boat, and turning to keep it company. The man with the blond eyebrows waved his hand and shouted.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked round at him.

Wharton and Wibley, who were rowing, rested on their oars.

"Did you call to us?" called back Harry.

"I did! Stop that boat!"

"What do you want?"

"You will soon learn!" said Mr. Brown sourly. "You know me, I think—you have seen me before!"

"Three times, old bean!" said Bob Cherry genially. "First time, trying to pinch a document from an old gent near our school—second time, in the cave on Eastcliff beach, where we jolly nearly collared you—third time, pinching a telegram from the post office boy—this is the fourth time! What do you want to pinch now? I've only got twopenee."

Mr. Brown's light blue eyes glinted at him.

"That is enough from you!" he snapped. "Keep that boat still—and you can tell Sir William Bird that it is useless to crouch out of sight—I know that he is in the boat!"

He grinned, a sneering grin, as he uttered those words. Evidently his impression was that the old baronet was crouching below the gunwale to escape observation. He did not even look at Wibley. He had never seen Wibley before—in his proper person—but a glance showed that Wibley was a schoolboy like the rest of the crew.

"Sir William Bird!" repeated Harry Wharton. "Sir William Bird is not in this boat, Mr. Brown!"

Mr. Brown gave a sneering laugh.

"It is useless to lie to me!" he snapped. "I saw Sir William Bird in your boat when you started from the shore."

"He is not here."

"Enough!" snarled Mr. Brown. His light blue eyes, keen as a hawk's, scanned the Greyfriars boat.

A rather puzzled look dawned on Mr. Brown's stubby face. He had no doubt that the old baronet was crouching out of sight. Sir William was a little man, and did not take up much space. Still, it was odd that he could not see even a sign of him from the short distance.

"Tell him it is useless to hide!" he snarled. "I am here to take him on this boat! If you attempt resistance, I shall fire on you! If you value your lives, do not make fools of yourselves."

"Sir William Bird is not here——"

"Silence, you!"

Mr. Brown snapped a word to his companion, and the motor-boat closed in. It shut off, and rocked only two or three feet from the Greyfriars craft.

There was no doubt in Mr. Brown's mind that Sir William was on board. He had watched the boat start on its trip, with the silver-haired baronet sitting in the stern. It had taken him hardly more than an hour to get in touch with his associate in the motor-boat.

The schoolboys were far out at sea. It was impossible, or next to impossible, that they could have run in, landed their passenger, and pulled out that distance again, in so short

a time. Sir William Bird was there—he must be there—he had to be there—and Mr. Brown did not, could not, and would not doubt it!

But, standing in his craft only a few feet away, Mr. Brown was able to search the whole interior of the Greyfriars boat with his keen light blue eyes, leaving not an inch of space uninspected.

He had to realise that there was no one concealed in the Greyfriars craft. The expression that came over his stubby blond face as he realised it, was worthy of a wolf seeing his prey escape.

Naturally, he did not think of looking in the locker. The locker was about large enough to accommodate a cat—certainly not the smallest size in baronets! There was no place in the boat where even an infant could have been concealed, as Mr. Brown could see.

He clenched his hands savagely.

"Where is Sir William Bird?" he almost howled. It seemed to the astonished and enraged Mr. Brown that Sir William must have vanished into thin air.

"I don't know where he is!" answered Harry Wharton. Which was the exact truth: he had no knowledge whatever of the movements of the old Secret Service man.

"You lie!" hissed Mr. Brown. "He was in this boat—I watched him from the shore! You have not been back to the land—you could not have covered the distance. Has he gone on another boat, or what? Answer me!"

Mr. Brown cast a swift, searching glance over the curling sea. He was puzzled and intensely enraged.

"Speak!" he snarled. "Is this a trick to elude watching eyes? Ach himmel!" In his angry excitement, Mr. Brown dropped into the language that was familiar to him as Herr Braun. "Ach himmel! This is a trick—a pretended trip to sea—to pass on to another boat out of sight—or a steamer—ach!"

It looked probable enough to Mr. Brown. Sir William had started out in that boat—and he was no longer in that boat! He must have left it while the schoolboys were out at sea! It was a trick to get away from Eastcliff Lodge, unseen and unsuspected by the spies! Mr. Brown saw it all!

"Will you tell me, or do you wish me to shoot?" he roared, his hand going to his hip pocket. "That you have met some other craft is plain to me—as you have another boy here, who did not start with you. Tell me the truth!"

"We've nothing to tell you, except that Sir William Bird is not on this boat, which you can see for yourself," answered Harry Wharton.

"Did he go on another boat or a steamer? The name of the vessel! You will do better to tell me truth!" shrieked Mr. Brown.

"We'd better tell him, you fellows," said Wibley, speaking for the first time. "I don't see that it will do any harm to tell him. I'm sure that Sir William would not object."

"You had better—much better!"

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snarled Mr. Brown. "He was in that boat—where is he now?"

"Sir William Bird left this boat at the same time that I came on board," explained Wibley, and the Famous Five suppressed a desire to smile. "I've taken the old gentleman's place in the boat."

"Fool! I can see that! I warn you not to waste time. Where is he now?" snarled Mr. Brown.

"In a boat belonging to Eastcliff Lodge!" answered Wibley. Which again was perfectly correct: the lost passenger was certainly in a boat belonging to Eastcliff Lodge—the boat Wibley was sitting in.

"Not a steamer?" exclaimed Mr. Brown.

"No; we haven't been near any steamer."

"An open boat—a rowing-boat?" demanded Mr. Brown.

"Yes—a boat just like this one," answered Wibley.

Bob Cherry barely suppressed a gurgle at that answer.

"But he could not—a man of his years—take a boat alone!" snapped Mr. Brown. "Who else was in the boat—a boat's crew?"

"There were five men in the boat," answered Wibley.

Wibley was using the word men in the Greyfriars sense of that word. At school, every Greyfriars fellow was a man—in schoolboy parlance.

Mr. Brown, probably, was unaware that schoolboys were men. Certainly he got a rather misleading impression from Wibley's reply.

"You see, I came out in the boat," explained Wibley innocently. "There were five men from Eastcliff Lodge in it, as well as myself. I took the old gentleman's place here!"

Actually, Wibley was speaking of the boat in which he was sitting as he spoke. That was not likely to occur to Mr. Brown!

"You knew this trick was to be played!" snarled Mr. Brown.

"I hadn't the least idea," answered Wibley—"not the faintest idea when I started. I never knew I was to change places with Sir William till a minute before it happened!"

"When did Sir William leave you?" hissed Mr. Brown.

"Not more than half an hour ago," answered Wibley. Which again was perfectly correct; it had been considerably less than half an hour ago.

Mr. Brown gritted his teeth. Again he shot a searching glance round over the sea. Far out, there was the smoke of a steamer, but it was miles away.

But it was the only vessel in sight. Sir William was not in the Greyfriars boat—and if he had left it in another boat, as Mr. Brown supposed, it seemed clear enough that he must have intended to go on board some vessel.

If that was the case—and it appeared to Mr. Brown that it must be the case—there was a chance, in the swift motor-boat, of overtaking Sir William before his boat could cover the distance! Mr. Brown, it was plain, was very keen and anxious to get his hands on Sir William Bird!

He stood for a long moment staring

at the distant blur of smoke. Then, taking no further heed of the juniors, he snapped a word to his companion. The motor-boat shot away like an arrow—seaward.

Chug, chug, chug, floated back as it raced through the water.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared after it as it vanished amid the crested waves.

"By gum!" said Bob.

Wibley chuckled.

"Pull for the shore, old beans!" he said. "This is my last trip afloat while I'm playing the old Bird's game at Eastcliff Lodge. That blighter's welcome to all the Sir Williams he can pick up on the North Sea. Let's get back."

The motor-boat was gone. The chugging died away in the far distance. The Greyfriars crew sat to the oars, and pulled for the land, while Wibley sorted his disguise out of the locker. By the time the Greyfriars boat was in view from the shore, Sir William was himself again.

## THE MAN IN THE CAVE!

**B**ILLY BUNTER blinked. A flash of light danced in the darkness of the cave.

How long he had sat there, tied to the boulder, unable to stir, unable to utter a sound, Bunter did not know. If it was only hours, the hours seemed very long—it seemed more like days, or weeks—indeed, it seemed like whole centuries.

Brown had left him there—evidently to keep him out of the way, and to secure his silence, while he carried on with some game with which Bunter might have interfered, had he been left at liberty. How long was he going to leave him there?

What the blond-browed man was up to, Bunter did not know and could not guess. But he knew, at least, that it did not suit Mr. Brown to let him roll away with the news that the spy was on the spot.

The police had been looking for Mr. Brown for some time; and it was rather a problem how he succeeded in keeping out of their sight, and yet remaining in the vicinity of Eastcliff Lodge. Certainly it would not have suited Mr. Brown just then to have the officers of the law warned that he was about. He had made very sure that Bunter would carry no news of him.

As the long minutes lengthened into hours, the hapless Owl began to wonder whether Brown intended to come back for him at all.

That was a terrifying and unnerving thought. It made him wriggle and twist wildly in his bonds—but he had not the remotest chance of getting loose. Mr. Brown, probably, had some skill in that kind of work—at all events, he had left Billy Bunter absolutely helpless, with no chance of freeing himself. Neither could the fat Owl utter so much as a squeak—if it had been of any use to call for help. But he knew that it was not.

If Brown did not come back, what was going to happen? Billy Bunter

would have groaned as he thought of it, if he could have got a groan past the gag.

The Greyfriars fellows would miss him when they got back to Eastcliff Lodge after their trip. No doubt they would search for him if he did not turn up.

They might even search the cave, remembering that he had dodged into it. But would they find him?

They could never guess what had happened. They could have no reason to suppose that he had gone up the cave almost to the extremity in the very heart of the chalk cliff—as far back from the sea as Eastcliff Lodge itself. And if they entered the cave at all, he could make no sound to draw their attention. The dismal fat Owl realised that his chances of being found were far from good. If that awful villain did not come back—

From the bottom of his fat heart, Billy Bunter repented him that he had landed himself at Eastcliff Lodge for the Easter hols.

He had barged in on the strength of his knowledge of Wibley's secret, happily assured that a fellow who knew so much could not be turfed out! And this was the result!

Bunter Villa, and Brother Sammy, and Sister Bessie, would have been better than this—ever so much better.

It seemed to the fat Owl that not merely hours, but days and nights, must have passed, when that sudden gleam of light danced in the dark of the cave.

He blinked eagerly through his big spectacles, dreading that fancy had deceived him. If it was a light, it meant that somebody was coming—either that villain Brown or the juniors in search of him.

Bunter dreaded the sight of Mr. Brown; but he would have been glad to see him again, all the same. He would have been glad to see anybody after those hours of darkness and silence.

The light—a mere spot—was coming up the cave. It was shut off, and shone again—then again it was shut off, and then again it gleamed.

Whoever was carrying that light, turned it on from time to time to pick his way; but, for some reason of his own, showed as little light as he could.

There was no sound of footsteps. The approaching man trod too softly for a sound to be heard.

Obviously, it was not the Greyfriars party in search. They would have kept the light on, and they would have been shouting to Bunter, if they were looking for him there. Neither could they have had any reason for treading so lightly and noiselessly. It must be Brown. But even if it was Brown, it was difficult to understand why he was creeping so silently. Whoever it was, Billy Bunter was eager for him to arrive.

At that point the cave, which narrowed as it extended into the cliff, was about twenty feet wide. Bunter was tied to a rock at one side of it. The man carrying the flash-lamp was coming up the middle of the cave. The light flickered again, abreast of the spot where the fat Owl huddled against the rock. It dawned on

Bunter that the newcomer was passing him unseen.

If it was Brown, he had forgotten exactly where he had left the prisoner. Certainly the man was passing the spot, as if he did not know that Bunter was there.

As he realised that, the fat Owl made frantic efforts to make his presence known.

He could emit only a faint mumble, but he wriggled, and struggled, and twisted, making all the noise he could.

The light was gleaming again—a little past the spot. But as the sound

## GREYFRIARS PORTRAIT GALLERY

### No. 1.—DICKY NUGENT



Dicky Nugent is one of the leaders of the grubby, carefree heroes of the Second Form at Greyfriars. He is a source of worry to his conscientious brother Frank, of the Remove. But that does not worry Dicky! In private life a well-known "orther" of thrilling fiction, the enterprising Dicky's latest effort is the lively picture-story which appears in the "Greyfriars Herald" on page 2 of this issue. No one could help liking this cheery, cheeky fag.

made by the fat Owl broke the deep silence of the cavern, it was instantly shut off. The man, whoever he was, had heard something.

Black darkness succeeded—and dead silence. Bunter could see nothing—hear nothing! Yet he had an impression that the unseen man was listening intently. He wriggled and wriggled, and a rustling, brushing sound was the result—all the sound the hapless Owl could make. But the light did not gleam again, and he heard no footstep.

Then, quietly from the darkness, came a voice—a smooth, sleek voice that Bunter knew.

"So you are here, you rascal!"

"Soames!" was the name that would have leaped to Bunter's lips had he been able to speak.

It was the voice of James Soames—

the one-time sea-lawyer of the South Seas—the man who had been Sir William Bird's valet under the name of Jermyn, till Harry Wharton & Co. had spotted him.

Bunter felt a shiver run through his fat limbs. His dread of Soames was deep. But even Soames was better than nobody, in his extremity; and though the sleek voice sent a chill through him, he wriggled again, to draw the sea-lawyer to the spot.

"So you are here!" repeated the unseen Soames. "I fancied that I had found sign of you here, Mr. Brown—or Herr Braun, shall I call you? Keep where you are, you spy and rat! I have an automatic in my hand, and I would put a bullet through your rascally head as soon as I would crush an adder."

If Billy Bunter could have uttered a yell of terror, he would have awakened the echoes of the chalk cave.

Soames was ten or twelve feet away, in the dense darkness, automatic in hand. And he supposed that the sound he had heard proceeded from Mr. Brown—whom he suspected of haunting the chalk cave. Bunter did not wriggle again. He perspired with terror at the thought of drawing the sea-lawyer's fire.

Soames, it seemed, was the enemy of the foreign spy who watched Eastcliff Lodge. What mysterious game Soames had been playing, under the name of Jermyn, at Eastcliff Lodge the juniors did not know; but it dawned on Bunter now that it had some connection with Mr. Brown.

There was a long silence. Bunter would gladly have broken it, with a howl for help, which would have apprised Soames that it was not Herr Braun that he had to deal with. But he could not speak, and he made no other sound now, in dread of hearing the automatic bark. Soames' smooth, quiet voice broke the silence, after what seemed to the wretched Owl an interminable delay.

"Keep where you are, mein herr! If I hear a single sound of your going, I shall fire. Have you got that?"

Bunter had got it, only too clearly. He remained as still as a stone owl!

"I fancy you pack a gun, Mr. Brown!" went on the sleek voice from the blackness. "If you have the courage to use it, here we are—man to man. Take a chance of firing at the sound of my voice."

Mr. Brown, had he been in Bunter's place, would probably have been too wary to accept that challenge.

Even Bunter could guess that Soames wanted the flash of a pistol to guide his own aim.

The fat Owl shuddered. Soames, with a deadly weapon in his hand, was waiting for a guide to shoot. In those days of the South Sea cruise, when the Greyfriars fellows had first made the acquaintance of the man who had been valet, pirate, mutineer, and freebooter, Bunter had seen Soames, automatic in hand, and knew how deadly was his aim with that weapon, and how little he would hesitate to use it if his safety demanded the use. And clearly Soames

expected deadly hostility from Mr. Brown. The fat Owl shuddered in horrid anticipation of hearing a shot ring out.

"You will not take a chance, my Hun friend!" came the sleek voice, with a mocking note in it. "Yet you must have nerve, of sorts, to be playing Herr Hitler's game in this country." Then the note of mockery dropped, and Soames' voice took on a sharp, savage note: "You Prussian hound, where are you?"

Silence.

Long minutes passed—Bunter quaking with dread. Then suddenly the light flashed on again.

It needed an iron nerve on the sea-lawyer's part to flash on the light—for it was clear that he believed that the spy was at hand and ready to shoot. But the sea-lawyer was taking the chance.

The light flashed out, circling the cavern—Soames, behind it, no easy mark for a shot, though he was, as he believed, taking a deadly risk. Had a shot come, Soames was ready to return it on the instant.

But hardly a moment later a yell of amazement burst from Soames—as the light was reflected from a pair of big spectacles, and he stared at the pallid face of Billy Bunter in the light.

He stood as if transfixed, staring blankly at the fat junior as if hardly believing his eyes. But he had to believe them—and to realise that the mysterious lurker in the cave was not Mr. Brown, but Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove—merely that and nothing more!

#### SAVED—BY SOAMES!

"BUNTER!" Soames stuttered the name.

He circled the light again, to make sure that no one else was at hand. Then he stepped towards the fat junior.

He stood with the light on Bunter, staring down at him.

"You! You fat fool! What are you doing here?"

"Mmmmm!" mumbled Bunter. He blinked beseechingly up at Soames.

The black, ugly looking automatic in the sea-lawyer's hand struck terror to his very soul. But even the frightened fat Owl knew that he had nothing to fear from Soames' automatic—now that Soames knew that he was not Mr. Brown.

Soames, surely, would help him out of this. Pirate, mutineer, unscrupulous schemer and plotter as the man was, he was a strange mixture, and Bunter knew that he would not have hurt a fly if no purpose was to be served thereby. Bunter could not speak—but the look he cast up at Soames was very eloquent.

Soames stooped and removed the gag.

"In the name of wonder what are you doing here, you unspeakable fool?" he muttered. "You are alone here?"

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"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"Who tied you up like this?"

"That beast—"

"Fool—who?"

"Brown!" gasped Bunter.

Soames shut off the light. His voice came again from blackness.

"Is he in the cave now?"

"Oh! No!"

"When did he go?"

"Hours and hours ago!"

The light came on again. Soames was taking no chances if the spy was lurking in the chalk cavern, but he realised that Mr. Brown had been long gone.

"I—I say, let me loose, will you,

Soames?" moaned Bunter,

blinking in the light. "I—I

say, I'm all stiff—and I—I

I'm hungry! I've been here

all day—and—and all night,

too, I think. I—I don't

know how long. I don't

know whether it's day or

night!" groaned Bunter.

Soames smiled faintly.

"It is nearly three in the

afternoon," he said.

"Then it can't be the

same day," mumbled

Bunter. "It must be Tues-

day or Wednesday. It was

Monday I came here—"

Soames laughed.

"It is still Monday," he

said. "Was it in the morn-

ing that you came?"

"Yes—about ten—"

"Then you have had four

or five hours of it."

"Sure it's still Monday?

It seems like days and

days—or weeks! I'm fear-

fully hungry! I say—"

Soames stooped again.

The automatic had disap-

peared, and he had a pen-

knife in his hand. In a few

moments he had cut the fat

Owl loose, and Billy Bunter

was rubbing his numbed,

stiffened fat limbs.

"Now tell me what has

happened here," said Soames

curtly.

Bunter mumbled out his

tale of mishap.

The sea-lawyer listened

with deep attention.

"Brown was here, then, when you

came?" he asked.

"Yes, the beast—I ran into him.

I hadn't the faintest idea the beast

was here—I'd been sitting at the

mouth of the cave some time, and

never saw him or heard him—"

"He was coming down the cave

when you ran into him?"

"Eh? Yes! We bumped into one

another in the dark," mumbled

Bunter. "The beast seems to know

his way about here in the dark."

"No doubt!" muttered Soames.

"No doubt! He knows more than

I fancied he knew. You say he went

towards the sea when he left you?"

"Yes—I heard him. Besides, he

couldn't have gone the other way—

we're near the end of the cave here,"

said Bunter. "There ain't any other

way out, of course—only solid rock.

Wharton said that the end of this

cave must be right under Eastcliff

Lodge."

"Did he?" There was a sharp snap in Soames' voice. "What else did Master Wharton say about it?"

"Eh? Nothing!" answered Bunter, in surprise.

Soames' keen eyes searched the fat face in the light.

It seemed, for the moment, that Soames was trying to read Bunter's thoughts; as if he suspected that Bunter knew more than he was telling. But a keen scrutiny of the fatuous fat face seemed to satisfy Soames, and he smiled.

"I—I say, will you show me a light down the cave, Soames?" asked



As Soames crouched ready to spring on the ap  
Bunter: "I say, don't leave

Bunter. "I—I might fall over some-  
thing in the dark."

"I think not, Master Bunter," an-  
swered Soames.

Bunter gave a squeak of alarm.

"I say, you ain't going to keep me  
here! I say—"

"You are at liberty to go as soon

as you please, Master Bunter," an-

swered Soames. "I am very happy

to have released you, and I have no

desire whatever to detain you. I am

not one of the doubtless numerous

persons who enjoy your company,

Master Bunter. At the same time, I

recommend you not to go down the

cave at the moment."

"Eh? Why not?" asked Bunter.

"Because the tide is at the flood,

and is at this moment pouring in,"

answered Soames. "It was almost at

my heels when I entered."

Yell from Bunter!

"Oh crikey! We shall be

drowned—"

"You need not be alarmed, my young friend!" said Soames. "If you had remained where I found you, you would certainly have been in very considerable danger—unless our friend Brown returned to release you. No doubt that was his intention; but if he had been delayed—"

Bunter blinked at him.

Fortunately—very fortunately for his peace of mind—he had not thought of the tide as he squatted bound where Brown had left him. He had never explored the chalk cave, and was happily unaware that the incoming tide penetrated to its extremity—until Soames told him.



ing motor-boat, there came a fat squeak from here, Soames! Oh crikey!"

His fat knees knocked together. "Oh, I—I say, can't—can't we get out?" he gasped.

"At the present moment there is not less than ten feet of water in the cave-mouth," answered Soames. "There will be thirty feet soon."

"But dud-dud-dud—does it come up here?" squeaked the terrified Owl.

"Look!" answered Soames.

He flashed the light in the direction of the sea. The light flashed back from water that was creeping up the cave.

Billy Bunter blinked at the glimmering reflection in utter horror.

"The floor of the cave ascends considerably," said Soames. "Otherwise, we should already be flooded here. But it is coming in fast."

Bunter lurched against the boulder, his fat legs refusing their support. The creeping water almost reached his feet—and it deepened as it advanced. Soon, he could see, it

would be swishing at the walls of the cave, at the solid rock at the end, rising higher, and higher.

Soames' hand dropped on a fat shoulder.

"Keep a stiff upper lip!" he said curtly. "You are a troublesome fool, Master Bunter—you are always where you are least wanted, and where you give the most trouble. I shall see you through."

Bunter could not speak. He could only totter after the sea-lawyer as Soames drew him away from the spot.

Terrified as he was, Bunter realised that Soames must know some way of escaping the tide, or he would not have been there. But the thought of what might have happened had not Soames found him almost paralysed Bunter. His fat knees knocked together and his teeth chattered in his head as he tottered away with the sea-lawyer.

JUST LIKE BUNTER!

"KEEP close!" "Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter.

Without the assistance of the iron-limbed sea-lawyer, Billy Bunter could never have clambered up the rough rock. Even with Soames' aid it was a difficult task for the clumsy fat junior; and a dozen times or more he would have slipped back, but for a sustaining hand.

They clambered in darkness—but Bunter could realise that Soames knew the way—that he must have climbed that way before. Rugged projections in the rock formed a kind of steps—there was foothold and handhold for an active climber. Bunter was far from active; but he did his best, knowing that the tide was now washing at the foot of the cave-wall, deepening and deepening below him. Soames could climb like a

cat—and his sinewy arm supported the clumsy, panting, breathless, fat schoolboy.

In the darkness, Bunter could see nothing—but he felt himself pushed up on a flat ledge and into a cavity in the rock at the back of it. There, it seemed, he was to stop. He crouched in the hollow, gasping. From below came the incessant wash and gurgle of flowing water.

The roof of the cave had been out of Bunter's sight. It was of unequal height—but in this particular spot, clearly, it was very high; they had climbed some distance. The spot was like a funnel penetrating into the mass of earth above the cave.

"Keep close!" repeated Soames' voice from the darkness. "So long as you remain where I have placed you, you are safe till the tide goes down. If you stir you may slip."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, through his chattering teeth. "Oh

lor'! I—I say, you—you ain't going to leave me! Don't you leave me alone in this awful place!"

"I shall not be far away," answered Soames. His voice was reassuring. "I have placed you well out of reach of the tide, Master Bunter. Now I must descend a little again."

"I—I say, d-don't leave me here!" moaned Bunter.

Little had Billy Bunter dreamed that a time would come when he would cling desperately to the company of the sea-lawyer, the mutineer and pirate of the South Seas. Now he clutched at Soames' arm.

"You do not want to see Mr. Brown again, I presume?" asked Soames.

"Is—is—is he coming back?" stut-tered Bunter.

"I have no doubt of it! I cannot believe that, scum as he is, he intended to leave you to drown—neither would it suit him to cause a sensation in this quarter, where he desires to work in secret. He must have been delayed—but I think he will come."

"But he can't get into the cave with the tide in—"

"Only in a boat!" said Soames. "Keep close, and say nothing. I shall return before long."

He jerked his arm away, and was gone.

The fat junior crouched, shivering, in the cavity in the rock. He was not likely to stir before Soames returned. In solitude and darkness, he listened to the wash of the tide below—the tide that was already washing over the spot where Soames had found him. He wondered dizzily at the nerve of the sea-lawyer in clambering about that horrible place in the black darkness.

But James Soames did not lack nerve!

After leaving Bunter, he descended the rugged rock for a little distance, till he was only a foot or so above the washing tide. On the higher level, far up the cave, the water was not yet deep; but there was already a foot or more of it where Bunter had been tied to the boulder. Had the fat junior still been at that spot, the water would have been flowing round him, though not yet deep enough to endanger him. But it was deepening every minute.

Soames, crouching on a rugged spur of rock over the water, watched—in the direction of the sea. The cave-mouth was too far away for him to catch the merest glimpse of daylight.

But his eyes glinted at the sight of a gleam of light, moving on the surface of the dark waters. A sound floated to his ears, echoing eerily up the cave—the chug-chug of a motor-engine.

A motor-boat had run into the chalk cave on the incoming tide.

Soames had expected Brown to return—in some craft, now that the tide was in and it was impossible to come on foot. Now he knew that Brown was coming in a motor-boat.

Spy as he was, the scum of humanity, the man did not think of so dreadful a deed as leaving a helpless prisoner to drown in the tide—

neither, as Soames had said, could he wish to cause a sensation at the place where he worked in secret—which such a deed certainly would have caused. He was coming; though clearly something had happened to delay his return—the elusive pursuit of a non-existent boat containing Sir William Bird, if Soames had only known it!

But he was coming now—in time to pick up Bunter, if Bunter had been still where he had been left.

The light nosed up the dark cave—a glimmering lantern on the bow of the boat. The engine throbbed nearer.

Soames watched.

At the point where he crouched, on the ledge above the water, it was deep, with more than depth enough for Mr. Brown's craft. The boat would pass him, nosing on towards the spot where Bunter had been left bound.

A muttering, grunting voice reached the sea-lawyer's ears. He caught the word "dunkeln," and smiled sourly. In that hidden spot, never dreaming of listening ears, the rascals on the motor-boat were speaking in their own language—one of them was referring to the darkness.

Soames' lips were tight—his eyes glinting like a cat's in the dark.

At that moment the man who had been a valet at Eastcliff Lodge was once more the hardy desperado of the South Seas, ready for desperate actions. He crouched like a wild animal for a spring—to land in the motor-boat as it passed.

That he would have two Germans to deal with, both armed, and both desperate in case of attack, mattered nothing—or less than nothing—to him. Soames had faced heavier odds than that in his wild days in the Pacific.

A minute more—less than a minute more—and he would have made that leap, to close quarters. But, even as he crouched ready for it, there came a fat squeak in the darkness.

"I say! Where are you? I say, don't you leave me here, Soames! Oh crikey!"

"Ach himmel!" came a howl from the motor-boat, as that voice was heard in the silence of the cave—a howl of surprise and alarm.

Soames ground his teeth.

"I say, where are you?" came another yell from Bunter. "Soames! Don't you leave me here alone, you beast!"

There was a snarl in German on board the half-seen craft. It whirled on the washing tide, and fled back towards the cave-mouth, like a frightened bird.

Mr. Brown, no doubt, was quick on the uptake. That howl from the darkness above told him that the prisoner was free, and that he was not alone.

It was only a matter of moments before the motor-boat was racing back to the sea, and Soames' chance was gone.

With gritting teeth, the sea-lawyer threw up his weapon and fired after the fleeing craft. The report of the

firearm rang and roared through the confined space of the cave like thunder, filling every cranny and crevice with echoing sound.

The chug-chug-chug died away down the cave. Soames stood staring after the vanished motor-boat, in the darkness, with a face of fury.

Mr. Brown was gone—and whatever had been Soames' intentions towards the spy, he was defeated. He thrust the automatic back into his pocket, and climbed to the ledge where he had left Bunter.

"I say, is that you, Soames?" came a squeak from the dark. "I—I say, I—I thought you were gone! I say——"

"Fool, idiot, imbecile!" muttered Soames. "Why did I not leave you to drown? You have spoiled everything, dolt that you are!"

"I—I—I say——"

"Be silent, fool! I am tempted to throw you headlong into the water!" snarled the sea-lawyer. "Be silent!"

Billy Bunter was silent. In the long, long wait that followed, he knew, from faint sounds, that Soames was near him in the darkness, but he did not venture to speak again. It seemed like a century to Billy Bunter before, at long last, he felt the touch of a hand on his fat shoulder, and Soames' voice snapped to him that it was time to move.

#### BUNTER FEELS BETTER!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped at the sight of Billy Bunter and the sound of the fat voice that was like unto the squeak of an expiring frog.

The Famous Five were in the hall at Eastcliff Lodge. It was nearly tea-time—and the boating party had long ago returned from their trip.

After the encounter with Mr. Brown they had lost no time in getting back—and Sir William had walked up to the house with the juniors, with a handkerchief held to his face, looking rather as if the venerable gentleman had caught a slight cold on the salt water. In actual fact, however, that handkerchief concealed the circumstance that Sir William's accustomed pink complexion was rather washed-out. In every other respect Wibley was Sir William again—but his complexion needed retouching from his make-up box in his room at the Lodge.

Sir William had come down to join his young friends at tea; and they were all in the hall when Bunter rolled in. And they gazed at Billy Bunter in surprise.

Bunter was never very neat or natty. He was, in fact, rather careless and a bit slovenly. But seldom or never had the Owl of the Remove been seen in so dilapidated a state as now.

He was damp. He was muddy. He was smothered from head to foot with chalk. His face looked as if it had not been washed for weeks. And he looked, also, at the last gasp—tottering in, and sinking into an armchair

with a faint, dismal, expiring squeak.

"Anything happened?" asked Harry Wharton.

Moan, from Bunter.

"Oh dear! I'm hungry! I say, Wibley——"

"Shut up, idiot!" hissed Sir William.

"Beast! Tell the servants to bring me something to eat!" howled Bunter. "I haven't had a thing since breakfast—and I never quite finished my brekker, either, because of those beasts! Oh dear!"

"Just going to have tea!" said Sir William.

"I can't wait!" moaned Bunter.

"You look as if you want a wash first!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Shove this into the tuck-trap, old bean!" said Bob Cherry, producing a packet of toffee. Bob realised that, if Bunter had had nothing since breakfast, matters were serious.

Bunter grabbed the toffee. He crammed it in, and crunched. Really, it looked as if it had come just in time to save his life!

"But what the thump have you been up to?" asked Nugent. "Rolling about in that cave, and collecting mud and chalk?"

"Urrrggh!" Bunter spoke with difficulty through crunching toffee. "I've been drowned——"

"What?"

"I mean nearly drowned," gurgled Bunter. "Not quite, of course."

"The quitefulness could not be terrific, as we have the honorific pleasure of beholding once more your beaming and idiotic countenance!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "And a miss is as good as a bird in the bush, as the English proverb remarks."

"I say, you fellows, hadn't you missed me?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"Never thought of you at all, old fat man!" answered Bob.

"Why, you beast——"

"You surely haven't been in that cave all this time?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "The tide's been in——"

"Oh dear! Got any more toffee?"

"Here you are."

Crunch, crunch, crunch!

"Mean to say that you stuck in that cave when the tide got in!" exclaimed Bob. "You knew all about the tide, you fat ass!"

"And you never missed me!" said Bunter bitterly, between two crunches.

"Why should we miss you, fat-head?" asked Harry. "As you weren't in sight when we came in, we supposed you were somewhere about. How the dickens were we to guess that you'd stuck in that cave?"

"We shouldn't have missed you till dinner-time," said Bob. "If you hadn't come in to dinner, of course, we should have known that something was up."

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! You might never have seen me again," moaned Bunter. "Oh lor'!"

"But why did you stay in the cave?"

"How could I help it, when that

beast tied me up like a turkey?" howled Bunter. "Grooogh!" Some toffee seemed to go down too hurriedly, and the fat Owl gurgled. "Ooogh! I was—grooogh—turked up like a tie—I mean, tied up like a Turk—that is, a tut-tut-turkey—grooogh!"

"What?"

"Which?"

"That villain Brown—grooogh—and if Soames hadn't shaved my wife—I mean, saved my life—I shouldn't have got back to—ooogh! Woogh! Grooogh!"

Something, evidently, had happened to Bunter! But the juniors had to wait till he had bolted the toffee before they heard what it was.

Then the fat Owl gurgled out his tale of woe.

"By gum!" said Bob Cherry, when the hapless Owl had got it out. "Brown must have parked Bunter there to keep him quiet, while he went for the motor-boat to get after us! He must have seen us start from the cave."

"He seems to haunt that cave!" said Harry Wharton slowly. "We caught him there once before. Soames, too—"

"I suppose it's a useful place for skulking out of sight," said Bob. "Poor old Bunter! I'll tell you what, old fat man, we'll let you off the booting you asked for, when you locked us in the boathouse."

"Beast!" was Bunter's grateful reply.

"What the jolly old thump," said Wibley, "is Soames up to? He was up to some game when he was here and called himself Jermyn! Looks as if he's after that spy. Blessed if I make it out."

"Spot of patriotism, perhaps—rooting after a Hun spy!" suggested Bob. Grunt, from Johnny Bull.

"Soames is on the make!" he said.

"Not much doubt about that—though he may throw in a spot of patriotism as a make-weight!" said Nugent. "I can't make him out."

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry."

"You want a wash, old fat man!"

"Idiot!"

Bunter undoubtedly needed a wash—he had never needed one more! But he was not thinking of washes. Bunter was hungry—fearfully, awfully hungry—and first things came first. Washing could wait.

He heaved himself out of the arm-chair and rolled into the dining-room, where tea was being laid.

The juniors followed him in.

Bunter did not speak during tea. He was too busy!

Blump and John, who were in attendance, gave the muddy, chalky, untidy fat Owl rather curious looks. Bunter did not heed them. He ate, and he ate, and he ate!

Sir William and the Famous Five finished tea—long before Bunter had finished. They left him to it.

Blump began to wonder whether Billy Bunter was going to finish. He had an impression that Bunter was laying in supplies for the whole duration of the war.

But even Bunter was finished at last. Dinner was at seven—and

Bunter finished tea, in time to get a much-needed wash before dinner!

He turned up again promptly for dinner. Where he was going to put it was a mystery to Blump. But it seemed that there was still cargo-space available, for Bunter made a very good dinner.

After which, the fat Owl rolled out into the hall, plumped into an arm-chair, and rested after his labours.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter. "I say! I feel better now!"

"If the betterfulness is in proportion to the grubfulness, you must feel terrifically better, my esteemed Bunter!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Billy Bunter's eyes closed behind his big spectacles. His mouth opened. He snored.

Then his eyes re-opened, and he squeaked again.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Go it!" said Bob. "Feeling hungry? Shall I ring for a ton of cake, or an ox roasted whole?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I was going to say wake me up for supper! Mind you don't forget!"

Bunter's eyes closed again, and his mouth re-opened. He snored! This time he went on snoring—and there was an unending melody till supper-time. And after supper, Bunter felt still better!

#### A SPOT OF VENTRILOQUISM!

"WHAT about the cave?"

Harry Wharton asked that question of his chums the following morning.

The Famous Five were discussing what they were going to do with a sunny morning—while Billy Bunter sat in a deck-chair on the terrace, and travelled slowly but surely through a box of chocolate-creams.

"The cave?" repeated Bob. "We've explored the cave once, old man, when we were looking for that man Brown there. Nothing new in that cave."

The captain of the Remove had a very thoughtful expression on his face. He had been thinking over Billy Bunter's strange adventure.

"I'm not so sure!" he answered. "Brown is being looked for, but they don't seem to be able to put salt on his tail. He's been spotted in that cave twice. He must have been there yesterday when Bunter barged in—already there. Bunter ran into him coming down the cave. The place is full of all sorts of odd corners and crannies—"

"Oh!" Bob caught on at once. "You fancy that Brown may hide there?"

"I think it's very likely he uses it for a hideout sometimes, at any rate. If not, why does he go there at all?"

"By gum! That would account for Soames going there, as he seems to be on Brown's trail!" said Bob.

"Just that! If we could pick up sign of Brown, the police would be jolly glad to get a clue to a man known to be a spy."

"Let's!" said Johnny Bull.

"That day we hunted Brown in the cave a couple of weeks ago, he stuck

there after the tide had gone in!" went on Harry. "Just the same as Soames did yesterday with Bunter. We guessed that he had climbed up out of reach of the tide—he must have! From what Bunter's told us, there's a spot where a man can keep safe from the tide—and that may be Brown's spot! Bunter can come with us and point out the place."

There was a general nodding of heads. The possibility that Mr. Brown had a hideout in the chalk cave made the juniors very keen to explore it again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Get a move on, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

"Going to the pictures?" he asked. "If so, I'll come! But we shall have to have the car. After lunch, of course—they ain't open now."

"We want you to come to the cave and show us the place where Soames parked you yesterday."

"No jolly fear!" answered Bunter promptly. "Why, that beast Brown might be there again! I'm not going to the cave!"

"Fathead! If Brown's there, we'll snaffle him," said Bob. "Get a move on!"

"Shan't!"

"Get out of that chair, lazybones!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I'll come if you're going to the pictures this afternoon. If you want my company you can have it—at the flicks!" said Bunter firmly. "Otherwise, you can't! I'm not going near that cave again."

"Let's roll him!" suggested Nugent.

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I couldn't point out the place, anyhow," said Bunter. "It was all in the dark—I couldn't see anything! That beast Soames left me in the dark, and when I called out to him, he came back in a rotten temper. Not a chance of finding it again. Why can't you fellows ever keep still? Lovely morning for sitting down."

"You howling ass! Are you coming?"

"No!" said Bunter emphatically. "I jolly well ain't!"

"Oh, never mind the fat ass!" said Harry. "He wouldn't be of much use—let's get some torches and go!"

The Famous Five went into the house and sorted out flash-lamps. When they came out again, Billy Bunter was still in the deck-chair. But he had finished the chocolate-creams. He blinked rather morosely at the juniors.

"Going out—clearing off and leaving a fellow on his own, as usual?" asked Bunter sarcastically. "That's what you call pally?"

"Hop along with us, fathead!" said Bob.

"Catch me, rooting round that rotten cave! I'll come to the pictures this afternoon, if you like. I'll stand treat all round—if that's what's worrying you," added Bunter scornfully. "I suppose one of you could lend me a ten-shilling note—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. My letters ain't coming on here, and I haven't had a postal order I was expecting!" grunted Bunter. "Look here, if you like to sit down and stop cutting about like a lot of goats, I'll do some of my ventriloquism. What about that?"

The Famous Five chuckled.

Billy Bunter's idea of a happy morning was to sit in a deck-chair. That did not quite appeal to five strenuous youths—even with a spot of Bunter's wonderful ventriloquism thrown in by way of entertainment.

"You can call Blump," said Bunter. "Then I'll make Sir William's voice come out of the window, slanging him. Make him jump, what?"

"You fat villain!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come on!" said Harry.

"I say, you fellows——" Billy Bunter sat up with an indignant frown on his fat brow. "I say, if you're going off and leaving a fellow on his own——"

"Fathead!"

"Beast! I say, there's Blump at the window. I think he wants to speak to you."

The Famous Five paused and looked round.

The hall window was partly open, but they did not spot the portly butler of Eastcliff Lodge there.

But from that half-open window—apparently, at least—came the fruity voice of Blump.

"Young gentlemen—please stop a moment——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Carry on!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"Sir William has sent me to tell you that he does not wish you to go out this morning!" came the fruity voice from the window. "Will you kindly wait till he comes down?"

"Oh! All right, Blump!"

The juniors stood in a group, rather disconcerted. They were keen on exploring the cave, and possibly spotting a hideout of the mysterious Mr. Brown. But if Wibley had any special reason for wanting them, it was up to them to play up. So they waited.

Billy Bunter leaned back in his deck-chair—not frowning now, but grinning.

The chums of the Remove had declined to stay in and be entertained by a spot of the fat ventriloquist's ventriloquism! But they were staying in all the same—owing to that ventriloquism!

Billy Bunter grinned, wondering cheerfully how long they would wait before they discovered that Sir William did not want them!

As it happened, they had not long to wait. For on the avenue appeared a portly figure coming towards the house.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at that portly figure. Blump had spoken to them from the hall window five minutes ago—now he was coming up the avenue from the direction of the road! For a moment or two the ghost of a plump butler could not have startled them more.

"Why there — there — there's

Blump!" ejaculated Bob. "What—how——"

Johnny Bull gave a roar.

"Bunter! That fat owl——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Bunter, you fat scoundrel——"

"Oh crikey!" Bunter gave the butler a startled blink. "I didn't know Blump was out of doors! I—I mean, it wasn't me, you fellows! I wasn't going to keep you standing about—nothing of the kind! Besides, if you clear off and leave a fellow on his own, you can jolly well expect it! Not that I did it, you know! I've quite forgotten how to do ventriloquism, and I couldn't possibly imitate Blump's voice, and—yarooooooh!"

Bump!

Five pairs of hands grasped the fat ventriloquist's deck-chair. That deck-chair suddenly collapsed under Billy Bunter. He landed on the terrace with a loud bump, and a louder roar!

"Yaroo! Ow! I say, you fellows—wow! Can't you take a jog-jog-joke? Yow-ow! If you chuck that deck-chair at me, Bob Cherry, you beast, I'll—yoo-hoop!"

The deck-chair landed on the sprawling Owl! From under it came a frantic roar.

The Famous Five walked away down the avenue. Billy Bunter's voice followed them as they went. It followed them on its top note for quite a considerable distance. For several minutes the Bull of Bashan, who was famed for his roaring, had absolutely nothing on Billy Bunter.

#### NOTHING DOING!

"HERE we are, here we are, here we are again!" chanted Bob Cherry.

His voice rang and echoed through the hollows of the deep chalk cavern.

The tide was far out—a wide stretch of golden sand glistening in the bright sunshine of April. For some distance the sunlight illumined the cave—then the juniors turned on their flashlamps.

Wet, rugged chalk was under their feet. On either side were rugged walls, split in cavities and crevices, with chalk boulders scattered. The rugged arch of chalk was visible over their heads when they turned the flashlamps upward—but not all the way. Here and there it soared high beyond the reach of light, and how high it was they could not guess.

From what Bunter had told them, they knew that he had been taken almost to the end of the cavern. By its length and its direction they knew that extending far beyond the range of cliffs above, it reached at least as far as Eastcliff Lodge, if not farther. But it was deep down below Sir William Bird's mansion.

On the floor of the cave, it was scarcely possible that any hide-out existed. But Bunter's adventure had put a new idea into Harry Wharton's mind. It was quite possible that high up one of the rugged walls, where the roof soared high, there might be some smaller cave where a hunted man might hide. It was certain, at least, that Mr. Brown had some peculiar interest in that cave.

"Nobody at home so far," said Bob, when they reached the extremity of the cave and were confronted by a solid wall of chalk. "By gum! The sea comes right up to the end—look at that seaweed."

"We've got to find the spot where Bunter was left," said Harry. "From what he says, it was near there that Soames hooked him up out of the tide."

"Not easy, since the tide's been in. There won't be much in the way of sign left. But let's look."

The juniors turned back, scanning and examining every one of the rugged boulders by the walls. To one of these, they knew, Bunter had been bound, when Soames had found him and released him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Here's luck!"

He flashed his lamp on a rugged mass of chalk detached from the cavern wall. There was nothing to distinguish it from a score of others but for the fact that a cord was run round it. Soames had left the cord where it was, after cutting it where it was knotted to Bunter—and there it lay, to meet the eyes of the school-boy explorers.

"By Jove, that's the place!" exclaimed Wharton. "We've found it!"

There was no doubt about that—the cord tied round the rock told its own tale. They were standing on the spot where Mr. Brown had made the fat Owl a prisoner the day before.

"That's that!" said Johnny Bull. "It was near here that Soames hooked that fat chump up the side of the cave. We've only got to spot it."

That, however, was not so easy. For quite a long time, the juniors searched along the cavern walls by the light of the flashlamps, seeking a spot where it was possible to climb.

But patience had its reward at last. Harry Wharton clambered on a ledge of rock, and, feeling above him, felt another ledge higher up. He clambered to the upper ledge, and stood flashing his light above him.

"By gum! This looks like it!" he exclaimed. "I believe I can climb higher here! This is over high-water mark already."

Bob Cherry clambered up and joined him. There was little room for more than two, and the other three fellows remained below, directing their lights upward.

"Take care!" called out Frank Nugent, rather anxiously, as a fragment of rock from above fell beside him. "If that chalk gives way——"

"Safe as houses!" called back Bob.

"Well, all these chunks must have fallen from the roof or the walls at some time or other," said Nugent, "and there's tons of them about. A bit just fell past you!"

On the upper ledge Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry stood, casting light upward and examining the rock wall above.

It was rugged and broken, and gave handhold and foothold to a climber with plenty of nerve.

Beyond the radius of the flashlamps they could see nothing but blackness; but they had no doubt that they had hit on the spot where the cavern wall



could be climbed, and there was at least a chance that something was to be discovered above.

"Here goes!" said Bob. "You hold the light, old bean, while I try it on." He handed his flashlamp to Wharton.

He clambered up actively, Wharton casting the light up. The rugged chalk looked solid enough, though, as Nugent had said, there was no doubt that the loose masses below had slipped down at some time or other, and a chalk subsoil was always liable to slides.

"Look out!" exclaimed Harry suddenly.

From the darkness above, a rugged lump of chalk, as big as a football, rolled down, missing Bob by hardly more than inches.

It crashed on the ledge a foot from the captain of the Remove, split into several pieces, and scattered over the three fellows standing below on the cavern floor.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Look out!"

Bob stopped climbing. He was about seven or eight feet above Wharton's head, holding on the rugged chalk. He stared down.

"What was that?" he exclaimed. "Falling chalk?"

"Yes. Better come back!"

"Might be a lot more coming!" called out Nugent. "When chalk begins to slip, you never know where it will stop."

"Oh, one swallow doesn't make a summer!" answered Bob. "I expect that was just a loose bit! I'll chance it!"

He started clambering again.

His friends watched him anxiously. Had that rolling chunk struck him it would have knocked him off his perch—and he was a good fifteen feet from the cavern floor. If it was the beginning of a slide, Bob was in danger, and his comrades had reason to be anxious.

From the upper blackness another chunk came hurtling.

It fell directly down the rugged wall that Bob was climbing, grazing his elbow as it passed. It crashed on the ledge where Wharton stood, so close to him that he had to jump to escape it.

"Come back, Bob!" shouted Nugent.

"Quick!" called out Harry.

"Blow!" snorted Bob.

But even Bob, rather reckless as he was, realised that it was not good enough, with heavy chunks of chalk rolling down from above. Either of the falling chunks would have sent him spinning from his hold had it struck him—and both had gone very close.

He scrambled down, and rejoined Wharton on the ledge. They scrambled down swiftly to the cavern floor and backed away from the wall.

Thud, thud, thud! came lump after lump of chalk from high up the rugged wall, where it was shrouded in darkness.

The lumps crashed heavily, most of them splitting and scattering as they struck the cavern floor.

The Famous Five retreated out of range of the flying fragments.

"That tears it!" grunted Bob.

"No going up there, with the blinking chalk falling. What rotten luck that it should happen just now."

"Might happen any time," said Nugent. "There are chalk slides on this coast every day."

"Might have come down in tons," said Johnny Bull. "That ain't a healthy spot for climbing, old bean."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips.

"Such a thing might happen any time," he said slowly. "But it's a jolly odd coincidence that it should happen just now. I wonder—"

"The wonderfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Perhaps the esteemed and execrable Brown—"

"Brown!" ejaculated Bob. "Oh, my hat! Is he at home in his hide-out, and giving us a tip that visitors aren't wanted?"

"Looks like it to me," said Harry. "By gum! If it's that—"

The juniors stared up into the darkness.

There was no sound from above—nothing to indicate that anyone was there. But there was a strong suspicion in all their minds that someone was there—that the fall of the chalk was not due to natural causes.

If Mr. Brown had a hide-out in that dim recess of the sea-cave, and if he was on the spot, it was obviously his game to keep visitors away, and to give them the impression that it was dangerous to climb there.

"Well, we can't go up," said Bob at last. "Whether the chalk's coming down on its own, or whether that blighter is heaving it down, there's nothing doing, my beloved 'carers."

"No," said Harry, "except get back to the lodge and pass this on by telephone to the police. They want Mr. Brown, and they may think it worth while to come along and root him out if he's here."

"That's all we can do!" agreed Bob.

And, having decided that there was nothing else to be done, the juniors tramped back down the cave to the beach.

### IN THE DARK!

WIBLEY awoke suddenly.

It was past midnight, and Eastcliff Lodge lay buried in silence and slumber.

The schoolboy actor had been sleeping soundly enough. But something had suddenly awakened him—and he gave a faint gasp of amazement and horror as he realised what it was.

Something touched his cheek in the darkness. It was a cold, round metal rim!

As he gasped, there came a whispering voice.

"Be silent, Sir William! Your life will pay for the slightest sound."

Wibley lay very still.

It was the rim of a muzzle—the muzzle of a firearm—that touched his cheek with a cold chill. And the guttural voice that whispered from the darkness was not unfamiliar to him. He was sure that he had heard it before, and he guessed that it came from Mr. Brown.

Wibley's heart beat fast. But he was more amazed than anything else.

Unseen in the darkness, Brown was at his bedside. How he had gained admittance was an amazing mystery to the schoolboy actor. It was not an easy matter to enter the building at all at night; and Wibley's own door was kept carefully locked.

At night the schoolboy actor, of course, discarded his disguise. The silvery mop and the rest of his outfit as Sir William were removed and locked up in a suitcase, which contained his make-up box and other theatrical gadgets. When he went to bed, Wibley turned in as William Wibley, for which reason it was very necessary to guard against anyone entering his room by chance. Not till he had resumed his outfit in the morning was the door unlocked again.

Locks, it seemed, did not stop Mr. Brown, for here he was, hidden in darkness, with the muzzle of a revolver pressed to the face of—as he evidently believed—Sir William Bird.

In the darkness, he could see no more than Wibley; but clearly he knew that this was Sir William's room, and naturally expected to find Sir William there.

The darkness was intense, the black-out curtains shutting out every ray of starlight.

Wibley could see nothing as he blinked from his pillow. But he could feel the cold chill of the metal rim, and he could hear the whispering voice.

That whispering voice went on in a low tone of menace:

"Not a sound, Sir William! You understand? Speak in a whisper, and do not venture to switch on a light! I warn you that life itself is at stake! Do you understand, mein herr?"

"I understand!" breathed Wibley. His heart was beating in great jumps. But he was keeping a cool head. "Who are you? How did you get here?"

"I think you can guess who I am, Sir William. You know me by the name of Brown! As for how I got here, let it suffice that I am here! I am generally able to get where I have work to do."

Obviously, the man had not the faintest suspicion that it was not Sir William Bird who was in the bed.

Wibley was not thinking of switching on the light! He did not want Mr. Brown to make that discovery, if he could help it. What the man's game was, he could not guess.

"Take care that you do not call out!" went on Mr. Brown. "If your valet hears you, and enters, he will be a dead man the next moment—and you will not survive him, Sir William."

Wibley, hard as his heart was beating, grinned in the darkness.

Mr. Brown was a spy by profession, and he seemed able to get where he wanted to get; but he had not learned that Sir William no longer had a valet. In the peculiar circumstances, Sir William had not thought of engaging a new valet, since Jermyn had been turned out.

There was a communicating door from the valet's room—and Mr. Brown did not know that Jermyn was gone. The adjoining room was, as a matter of fact, unoccupied, and the door locked. But Mr. Brown, spy as he was, did not know that.

"I have no doubt," went on Mr. Brown softly, "that your valet has other duties as well as folding your clothes, Sir William. I have encountered him once or twice, and I am no fool. No doubt his duty is to guard you—it is not a usual thing for a valet, who is only a valet, to be armed."

It was a natural mistake for Mr. Brown, who knew nothing of Soames, to make. No doubt he had encountered Soames, whom he knew only as Jermyn.

"No doubt," went on Mr. Brown's voice, in a mocking whisper, "this valet of yours is a member of the Secret Service, like yourself, Sir William."

He could not see the grin on Wibley's face.

"Make no attempt to call him to your aid, I warn you!" added Mr. Brown.

Wibley was not likely to do so—in the circumstances.

"Now give me your ear!" went on Mr. Brown's sibilant whisper. "You need not speak, Sir William—it is for you to listen. A few days ago, when I followed you out to sea in the boat with the schoolboys, you escaped me—how, I do not know. My belief, at the time, was that you had gone on board some vessel, in order to get away secretly, knowing the house to be watched. But I was not long in learning that you were still in residence here."

Wibley was silent.

Brown seemed to prefer to do the talking, and Wibley was more than willing to leave it to him.

"I cannot understand your actions on that day," went on Mr. Brown. "You could not have known that I was in pursuit, yet you changed boats at sea, and escaped me. But no matter—you will not escape me this time! Alive or dead, Sir William, you are now in my hands."

The revolver-muzzle pressed a little harder as if to emphasise Mr. Brown's statement.

"I have taken a somewhat desperate step in coming here!" went on Mr. Brown. "I had to explore your mansion, Sir William, on more than one night, before I could ascertain beyond doubt which was your room. And when I was satisfied on that point, I found that you were accustomed to lock your door at night—and I required certain implements to deal with the lock. But I am here at last, Sir William!"

He paused.

"I had hoped to deal with you in some more remote spot," he went on. "Your excursion with the schoolboys seemed to give me the chance I was waiting for, but it failed! Since then you have not ventured upon any such excursions. So I am here. Do not move. My finger is on the trigger."

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Wibley, who had stirred slightly, remained still again.

"Time begins to press," resumed Mr. Brown. "Your policemen, who have been searching in the chalk cave, are not very dangerous, Sir William, but—"

"Oh!" breathed Wibley. "So you know—"

He heard a faint laugh in the darkness.

"I am very well aware, Sir William, that your schoolboy guests fancied that they were on the track of some discovery in the cave, and that the police have searched it!" he answered. "Do you imagine that men could have carried long ladders to the beach and into the cave without being observed?"

"They found nothing!" murmured Wibley.

He heard the soft laugh again.

"I could have touched one of them by stretching out my hand!" answered Mr. Brown. "But they found nothing! Your police, my dear Sir William, are hardly equal to dealing with agents of the Gestapo."

Wibley blinked in the darkness. He knew that the search of the chalk cave by the officers of the law had been very thorough; after the information given by the juniors. They had explored that funnel-like hollow in the cavern roof to the limit, as far as the rock roof above. And they had discovered nothing. Yet, if Brown was telling the truth, he had been at hand during that search.

"Nevertheless; time presses!" went on Mr. Brown. "It is generally believed, Sir William, that you have long retired from activities in the Secret Service. But your exploits in the last war have not been forgotten, and it is known to us that you have been in communication with the chiefs of the service. There is no doubt that, only a few weeks ago, you were making preparations for a journey abroad. We are not often puzzled, Sir William, but I will admit that your inaction since has puzzled us."

Wibley did not speak.

"Had you left the country, as there is no doubt you planned, every step you made would have been dogged," said Mr. Brown. "You would have been allowed to penetrate within the frontiers of the Reich, but you would never have lived to make your report, Sir William. If there is internal discontent in Germany—if the power of the Fuehrer is breaking like a reed in his hands—you, at least, would never have reported it to your Government."

There was a snarl in Mr. Brown's whispering voice.

Wibley, as he listened, realised, more clearly than before, how much depended on keeping up the impersonation at Eastcliff Lodge.

Long since, he knew, Sir William Bird had entered the enemy's country, while the spies of the Gestapo remained in the belief that he was still at his country house.

"On that day at sea," went on Mr. Brown, "I feared, for some hours, that you had escaped my watch—that I was beaten, and a ruined man—the Gestapo has no use for men who fail

in their task. I run no more risks, Sir William. From this night you are in my hands. I shall allow you to rise from your bed and turn on a light—and, under my revolver, you will hand me all official documents connected with your intended mission—which has been so unaccountably postponed. You will then accompany me to a safe place."

Wibley caught his breath.

"You understand?" breathed Mr. Brown. "I am unwilling to rouse the household with a pistol shot—but a cry, an attempt at resistance—and your doom is sealed! Alive or dead, you are in my hands."

Wibley made up his mind.

When the light was switched on, the agent of the Gestapo would see at once that he was not Sir William Bird. But Wibley still hoped to keep up the secret of the impersonation. His wits were actively at work.

"Will you let me speak?" he murmured.

"Speak, Sir William, if you wish! Not loud, if you value your life."

"I am not Sir William Bird—"

"Ach himmel! What is the use of such a lie, when I have only to turn on the light?"

"Sir William is not here to-night," said Wibley calmly, "and I have his room, that is all!"

He heard a swift, hissing breath in the darkness. Up to that moment Mr. Brown had not dreamed of doubting that he was speaking to the lord of Eastcliff Lodge. Now, it seemed, he doubted.

"What do you mean?" The words came like a snake's hiss. "You are Sir William Bird—this is his room—I have made no mistake—"

"He is not here to-night! I have his room!"

"If that is true, who are you?"

"A schoolboy—"

"Ach Gott! A schoolboy! It is false—it is one lie—" Brown's voice came choking with rage.

"I'm the schoolboy you saw in the boat the other day!" said Wibley coolly. "I'm staying at Eastcliff Lodge now! Turn on the light and see for yourself."

He heard a mutter in German. Then the bedside lamp was switched on, and Mr. Brown, his stubby face convulsed with rage and disappointment, stared at Wibley of the Greyfriars Remove.

#### THE WRONG BIRD!

"ACH!" breathed Mr. Brown. His light blue eyes scintillated under the knitted blond eyebrows. The rage in his face made Wibley's heart beat faster. The revolver was in the spy's hand, and he looked enraged enough to use it, for a moment or two.

It seemed as if Mr. Brown could hardly believe his eyes. His gaze devoured the face of the schoolboy sitting up in bed.

But all he saw was a Greyfriars junior with not the slightest resemblance to Sir William Bird. Every trace of make-up was carefully cleaned off Wibley's face before he turned in at night. Certainly it was



Harry Wharton & Co. jumped at the sight of Billy Bunter, as he staggered into the hall, smothered with mud and chalk. "Urrrgh!" gasped the fat junior. "I've been drowned——" "What?"

not likely to occur to Mr. Brown that the same person who was a schoolboy at night was a venerable-looking baronet by day!

He did not dream of connecting Wibley with Sir William; he was only amazed and enraged to find him in Sir William's place. He knew him as the schoolboy he had seen in the boat; that was all.

"Ach!" he repeated, grinding the word through his teeth. "You—the fool of a boy I saw in the boat—you!"

Wibley's opinion was, that if there were a fool present, the fool's name was not Wibley! At least, he had Mr. Brown fooled! The spy was cunning and wary; but of the trick that was being played at Eastcliff Lodge he had not the remotest suspicion.

"Then"—Mr. Brown breathed the words in a hiss—"then the man I came for is not here. Where is he?"

"I don't know where he is!" answered Wibley. "He wouldn't be likely to tell me! I've got his room, that's all."

"If he has given up his room to a guest, it must mean that he is gone—that he does not intend to come back!" muttered Brown. "Tell me the truth, boy! Do you know when he is to return?"

"I believe Blump expects to see him to-morrow!" answered Wibley. "In fact, I am sure he does."

"Then he is gone only for the night! What accursed fortune that I should strike on the one night when he is not here!" muttered Mr. Brown. His voice ran on in a mutter of German.

Wibley did not understand the words, but they sounded very ex-

pressive. The spy was almost spitting with rage.

But he checked himself.

Sir William was not to fall a victim to Mr. Brown that night! The genuine Sir William, had he been there, undoubtedly would have done so—though how Mr. Brown had planned to get him away, was a mystery to Wibley.

But he did not want to get Wibley away—a junior schoolboy of Greyfriars was of no use to Mr. Brown!

To the agent of the German Gestapo, Wibley was simply a schoolboy visitor to the place, staying at Eastcliff Lodge over the Easter holiday, like the other juniors, and he was not interested in him in the very least.

Mr. Brown had failed in his object; and all he was thinking of now was getting away without an alarm being given—no doubt with the intention of trying again another time.

"Ach! This is the second time I have found you, when I thought to find the man I want!" he muttered.

"But——" He checked himself again.

Wibley watched him silently.

Had he, as he expected, found Sir William Bird in that apartment, Mr. Brown's plans were cut and dried. But finding William Wibley there disarranged all his plans. He had to go—leaving Wibley! But he did not want to risk an alarm being raised the moment he was outside the door. Wibley could see, in his angry face, that he was nonplussed.

But that was only for a few moments. Mr. Brown very soon made up his mind how to deal with the schoolboy he had so unexpectedly

discovered in the place of a Secret Service man—as he had dealt with Billy Bunter in the chalk cave!

"You will get up!" he muttered. "Not a sound—if you value your life! Obey—and be silent!"

Wibley had no idea of arguing with a revolver only a couple of feet from his head! He stepped quietly from the bed.

Mr. Brown pointed to the settee under the window. Wibley sat on it.

Wibley could guess his intention now. But there was no help for it. The spy made a threatening gesture with the revolver; and then stood for a long moment listening. Then he stepped to the communicating door and ascertained that it was locked. In the belief that Jermyn was on the other side of it, Mr. Brown had to be very cautious!

He stepped back to Wibley. With hardly a sound, he cut a sheet into strips, and proceeded to bind the schoolboy to the settee.

Wibley breathed hard.

There was no help for it—he had to submit. But he thought with dismay of the morning. Blump, the butler, would discover him there, if he did not succeed in getting loose before morning. There was likely to be rather a sensation in Eastcliff Lodge when he did so!

"I—I—I say——" breathed Wibley.

"Silence, fool!" "Let me speak! Look here, I'll go back to bed, and not make a sound. I don't care twopence if you get away! I——"

"You think I would trust you?" THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,680.

sneered Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown's, clearly, was not a trustful nature! "Silence—say no more! Not a whisper!"

Wib was unhappily silent.

Mr. Brown bound him very thoroughly—as thoroughly as he had bound Billy Bunter in the cave. Then, with great care, he gagged the junior so effectually that Wibley could not emit a single mumble.

Having thus secured him, Mr. Brown shut off the light.

Faintly in the darkness Wibley heard the sound of an opening and closing door.

Then all was silent.

Mr. Brown was gone!

For the next quarter of an hour Wibley was hard at work—exerting every ounce of his strength to wrench himself loose. What was going to happen if Blump found him, he could hardly imagine—Sir William gone, and an unknown schoolboy in his place! Wibley worked desperately.

But it was of no avail. He had no chance of getting loose. At the end of a quarter of an hour he was aching with his efforts, his strength spent, and he was as tightly bound as ever to the settee.

Long before that, he had no doubt, Mr. Brown was clear away. But he was not bothering about Mr. Brown. He was thinking of Blump's astounded face in the morning! Mr. Brown had been thinking only of securing his own retreat—never dreaming of what he had left in store for Sir William's substitute! Wibley had to think of it!

But there was nothing doing! He desisted at last, exhausted, and half suffocated by his exertions and the gag in his mouth. With deep feelings the schoolboy actor gave it up and waited for morning—and Blump!

### BLUMP IS BEWILDERED!

**T**AP!

Wibley was silent. He could not have spoken if he had wanted to. But he did not want to. He knew that it was Blump at the door.

The longest night Wibley had ever experienced had come to an end at last.

It was still dark in Sir William's room. The black-out blinds shut out the daylight. But a glimmer stealing in, here and there, warned Wibley that the April morn was shining outside.

Tap!

What he was going to do, the unhappy schoolboy actor of Greyfriars did not know.

He had to pull through somehow. But how he was going to pull through was a puzzle, so far.

Now that Harry Wharton & Co. were in the secret, it would not have mattered had one of them found him—indeed, Wibley would have given very much to see one of the Famous Five at his door. But none of the Co., of course, was likely to come to Sir William's room.

It was Blump who would come. As Sir William did not go down, Blump

could only conclude that his master had overslept himself that morning—and sooner or later he would come up. Now he had come!

It was past breakfast-time—all Eastcliff Lodge was up, excepting Billy Bunter—and no doubt Blump was surprised that his master had neither rung nor put in an appearance.

Tap!

For a third time Blump tapped. Aware that Sir William was accustomed to lock his door at night, the butler did not think, so far, of turning the door-handle, supposing the door to be locked, as usual.

Wibley wriggled on the settee. He was helpless and could only wait for what was going to happen.

Blump's fruity voice came through the door at last.

"Hem! Are you awake, sir! It is now past nine o'clock, Sir William—the young gentlemen have breakfasted."

No reply.

"I have to inform you, Sir William, that a window was found open by John this morning! Nothing, so far as I have been able to ascertain, has been taken—but there is every appearance of the house having been entered."

The occupant of Sir William Bird's room did not need telling that.

"Please answer, sir, if you are awake!"

Silence.

Blump plainly was puzzled, and a little uneasy. Unless his master had been taken ill, and could not speak, he could not account for this. If such was the case, the venerable old bean required attention. Blump could not go away without an answer.

Knock!

It was not a tap this time—it was a thump on the door! Certainly it would have awakened Sir William, had Sir William been asleep there. Wibley did not need awakening.

Knock, knock, knock!

"Sir William! Please answer me, if you are able to speak!" urged Blump's voice, in anxious tones, outside. "Are you ill, Sir William?"

The door-handle turned at last. Blump did not, perhaps, expect the door to open—but he tried it. To his great relief and satisfaction, it opened.

The portly butler of Eastcliff Lodge entered. The passage, outside, was light; the room was dark.

Blump blinked, and groped his way in towards the bed.

"Sir William!" he said loudly.

There was no answer from the bed. It was too dark in the room for Blump to see that it was unoccupied.

"Goodness gracious!" Wibley heard a murmur from the butler. "Sir William must be ill—very ill! My dear sir—Sir William—please speak one word—"

Sir William did not speak one word!

The agitated butler turned from the bed and groped across to the window, to draw the blinds and let in the light.

He was quite unaware that two worried eyes watched him from the

settee. He did not observe Wibley in the gloom.

There was a swish of rings, and the heavy, dark hangings were swept aside. Bright April sunshine streamed into the spacious apartment.

It streamed on the schoolboy bound to the settee under the big window. Blump's eyes fell on him.

The butler of Eastcliff Lodge gave a gurgle of utter amazement, and almost staggered. His eyes projected like gooseberries from his plump face, really almost jumping out at Wibley.

The sight of a schoolboy, whom he had never seen before—so far as he knew—made Blump wonder whether he was seeing visions.

He receded two or three paces, and Wibley thought, for a moment, that he was going to fall over backwards. But the portly butler rallied, and stood staring at Wibley with popping eyes.

"Who—who—what—who—" Blump seemed afflicted with a stutter. "Who—how—what— Goodness gracious!"

Wibley gazed at him. He could not stir—he could not speak! He could only hope that the plump Blump would let him loose.

Once loose, there was a chance of getting shut of Blump, and getting at his outfit locked in the suitcase. But Blump made no movement to let him loose. He gazed, and stared, and blinked at Wibley, and stuttered.

Then he revolved on his axis and waddled back to the bed.

"Sir William!" he exclaimed. "Sir William, you—"

Another devastating surprise overwhelmed Blump! Now that it was light in the room, he could see that the bed was empty.

Sir William was not there!

Blump looked as if his head was turning round. He gasped like a fish out of water as he stared round the room in search of his missing master. He pressed a plump hand to a plump brow, as if the problem was too much for him, and quite overtaxed his brain.

Mr. Brown, in the night, had been surprised to find a schoolboy where he had expected to find a venerable baronet. But Brown's surprise, to Blump's, was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine! Blump knew, though Mr. Brown did not, that no schoolboy was staying in the house, except the Famous Five and Billy Bunter. So where Wibley had come from was an astounding mystery to Blump, unless he had dropped out of the sky.

Blump stood staring alternately at the empty bed and the occupied settee. The bewilderment in his fruity face would have made Wibley laugh at any other time. At the moment, however, Wibley was not feeling like laughing.

Blump found his voice at last. "Where—where is Sir William?" he gasped.

Wibley could not tell him. "What can have happened to my master?" gasped Blump. "Here are his clothes—he cannot have gone out without his clothes! Yet he is not here! But you— Dear me! You—"

how did you come here? Who are you? Tell me what has become of Sir William? Speak!"

It dawned on the bewildered butler that Wibley could not speak. He came over to him, and removed the gag from his mouth.

"Who are you?" he gurgled.

"Urrrggh!" mumbled Wibley. His mouth was too numbed, from the gag, for him to find his voice at once.

"Where is Sir William?"

"Wooooogh!"

"Was it you who entered by the window that was found open?" This dawned on Blump as a possibility. Wibley, whoever he was, must have got in somehow. "Did Sir William find you, and secure you like this? Are you a boy burglar? What are you? What does all this mean?"

"Urrrggh!"

Blump passed his hand over his brow. A window had been found open—a stranger found in Sir William's room. Some youthful burglar, perhaps—though Wibley did not look the part. Sir William might have bagged him and made him a prisoner. But that did not account for Sir William's absence.

But Wibley was in pyjamas—and it was unusual, to say the least, for a burglar to go burgling in pyjamas! If ever there was an impenetrable mystery, Blump was faced with it now. He pressed his hand to his plump forehead, as if to keep it from bursting.

"Urrgh! Urrgh! Oh crikey!" Wibley got his voice at last. "I say, get me out of this—cut me loose, will you?"

"Certainly not—until you have given an account of yourself!" said Blump sternly. "You must have entered this mansion in the night. I have never seen you before! But what—what—what—"

"If you'll untie me!" pleaded Wibley.

"I shall do nothing of the kind until the police are here," answered Blump. "I shall telephone for them without delay, and they will question you."

"Oh, my only hat and sunshade!" gasped Wibley.

"Will you tell me at once where Sir William is?" exclaimed Blump. "I demand to know, at once, what has become of my master."

"Look here, let me loose, and I—I'll explain everything!" panted Wibley. "As—as soon as I'm loose, I—I can find Sir William—I mean, he will turn up again—he isn't far away."

"Where is he?"

"Call the Greyfriars fellows here!" exclaimed Wibley. "They know me—"

"Nonsense!"

"Call them, you ass—I—I mean, call them, please. Wharton—Cherry—any of them. They will tell you they know me!" pleaded Wibley. He was thankful, from the bottom of his heart, that the Famous Five were now in the secret. It was now his one hope of pulling through. "Call Wharton—"

"Are you a burglar?"

"No, you idiot—"

"Then what are you?"

"A Greyfriars chap—my name's Wibley—I tell you, they know me—"

Blump regarded him very doubtfully.

"I will call Master Wharton," he said at last. "It is impossible that the Greyfriars boys know anything of a young rascal who must have entered the house surreptitiously in the night, by means of a window. But I will call them, and see what they say."

And Bump waddled out, leaving Wibley still tied to the settee.

"Oh, my suffering Aunt Sempronia!" groaned Wibley.

His last hope was in Harry Wharton & Co. And he waited anxiously for them to return with Blump.

### TO THE RESCUE!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Anything wrong, Blump?"

The Famous Five were in the hall when Blump came down the staircase—with a dazed expression of bewilderment on his plump face, which was a sufficient indication that something was wrong—very wrong indeed.

Harry Wharton & Co. were planning a morning's excursion—quite unaware that anything unusual had occurred to Sir William. Now, however, they concentrated their attention on Blump.

"What's up, Blump?" asked Harry. "The upfulness seems to be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I—I— The master has gone—disappeared. I—I cannot find Sir William!" stuttered Blump. "And—and there is a stranger in his room—"

"Oh!" gasped the juniors all together.

"A—a—a boy!" stuttered Blump. "He states that his name is Wibley, and that you young gentlemen are acquainted with him."

"Oh, my only hat!" murmured Bob.

The Co. exchanged startled glances. What was a bewildering mystery to Blump was no mystery to them. They realised at once that the butler must have happened on Sir William without his disguise on.

"It—it—it is most mysterious!" said Blump. "The boy is tied to the settee in Sir William's room—he was gagged—"

"Great pip!"

"A window was found open this morning," said the agitated Blump. "The boy must have entered by the window. Yet, if Sir William secured him, where is Sir William? I—I am quite bewildered. But the boy says that you are acquainted with him. Will you please come up? I have left him secure—he cannot escape—but perhaps you had better see him before I telephone for the police—"

"Yes, rather!" breathed Bob.

"We'll come at once, Blump!" said Harry Wharton hastily. "We—we certainly know a chap named Wibley, at—at Greyfriars—"

"Don't we?" murmured Johnny Bull.

"The knowfulness is terrific, my esteemed Blump!" said Hurree Singh.

"Please come!" said Blump.

And he reversed, and started up the staircase again.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed him, with startled faces.

Plainly Wibley had been caught without his disguise. But Blump's statement that he was tied up was astonishing. It was clear that there had been some startling happenings during the night.

"That ass Wib!" whispered Bob Cherry, as they followed the butler. "He's got himself spotted—but Blump doesn't guess—"

"How could he?" said Harry. "But now—"

"We've got to see the fathoad through if we can! It will give away the whole bag of tricks if it comes out that Wib was Sir William. That's got to be kept dark, somehow."

"Goodness knows how—now!" said Harry.

They arrived at Sir William's room in the wake of the portly Blump.

Wibley, safely tied to the settee, gave them almost a haggard look, as they entered.

Blump indicated the prisoner on the settee with a plump hand. They gazed at him.

"Come in, you fellows!" gasped Wibley. "Tell that ass—I mean, tell Blump that I'm a Greyfriars man and not a burglar."

"You know this boy?" asked Blump.

"Oh! Yes! That's Wibley!" answered Harry Wharton. "He's a Remove chap at Greyfriars—in our Form—we know him all right."

"Is he honest?"

"Eh? What? Oh! Yes! Quite!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"Then you think that he did not enter this mansion with burglarious or felonious designs?" asked Blump.

"Oh, my hat! I mean, yes. That's all right. Wibley is a pal of ours!" stammered Wharton. "Right as rain!"

"Sir William knows him," added Bob Cherry. "They met at Greyfriars, when Sir William visited the school."

"I must accept your assurance on that point, young gentlemen," said Blump. "But the boy's presence here must be explained—and the absence of my master. Something has happened to Sir William."

"Oh! Yes! No! But—"

"His clothes are here," said Blump, "yet he is gone! I found the door unlocked. It is always locked at night. Sir William has been made away with in some manner—he must be found at once. This boy must know, as he is here."

"Will you let me loose?" roared Wibley.

"I—I think we'd better release him, Blump," said Harry. "I've no doubt he will be able to—to clear up the matter."

Bob Cherry opened his pocket-knife.

Although now assured that Wibley was a Greyfriars man, and that the junior knew him, Blump seemed rather doubtful about releasing him—at least, until he had explained the amazing disappearance of Sir William. But Bob Cherry settled that doubtful point by sawing through Wibley's bonds with his pocket-knife.

The schoolboy actor rolled thankfully off the settee.

Blump immediately placed his ponderous form before the doorway.

"This boy must not be allowed to go!" he announced. "I cannot consent to that. He is here—my master is gone! Until Sir William is found, this boy must be detained."

"He's a pal of ours at school, Blump!" said Nugent.

"No doubt!" said Blump. "But I cannot allow him to go out of this room until I know what has become of Sir William. Unless he can explain and enable me to find my master immediately, I must call in the police."

Blump was doing his duty. The juniors realised that. But it was fearfully awkward for the schoolboy actor.

They looked at Wibley for guidance. They were willing to do anything they could to help him through this extraordinary scrape. But what was going to be done, they had no idea.

Wibley's longing glance rested on the suitcase that contained his disguise. But under Blump's eye he

could not, of course, make any move in that direction. He had to get rid of Blump somehow.

"Tell me what has happened here during the night," said Blump sternly. "If, as these young gentlemen think, you did not come here with felonious motives, explain yourself at once."

"How the thump did you get tied up like that, Wib, old man?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Brown!" yapped Wibley.

"Brown!" repeated the juniors.

"That blighter barged in and got me!" snapped Wibley. "Now do you understand, you duffers?"

The Famous Five began to understand at the mention of Mr. Brown. They realised that Mr. Brown must have come after Sir William and caught the wrong Bird, as it were. But Blump, of course, did not understand.

"What has happened to my master?" demanded Blump, little dreaming that it was his master who was now standing before him, almost at his wits' end. "If you refuse to answer me, you will answer a constable. You will certainly be detained until the police arrive."

Wibley's look at his friends was eloquent. He was beseeching them, silently, to get rid of the butler somehow.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with his back to the butler, closed one eye at Wibley.

"Unless you satisfy the esteemed Blump at once, the police must be

sent for!" he said. He glanced round at the butler at the door. "I suggestfully advise you to go to the telephone at once, my absurd Blump."

"You silly ass!" hissed Wibley. The next moment, however, he caught on to what was in the nabob's mind—it was the only way of getting Blump off the scene. "Oh! All right! I don't care!" he added.

"Have you anything to say before I telephone for the police?" demanded Blump sternly.

"No, fathead!" yapped Wibley.

"Then I shall go to the telephone at once! I shall lock the door after me," said Blump grimly. "If you young gentlemen remain here, I must lock you in as well as that—that person."

"That's all right," said Bob. "We'll keep an eye on him, Blump!"

"Very good, sir!"

Blump changed the key to the outside of the lock, and waddled out. He closed the door, locked it on the outside, and rolled off to the stairs—to telephone for official aid in this strange mystery.

Wibley gave a gasp.

"Shove your hoof against that door, Bob, in case that burbling idiot comes back! Keep it there! Lend me a hand, you other fellows—there's no time to lose—he may be back in five minutes!"

And Wibley pounced on the suitcase.

#### A QUICK CHANGE!

"BUCK up, Wib!"

"Go it!"

"Quick, old man!"

Wibley did not need urging! He flew.

The schoolboy actor of Greyfriars was something of a quick-change artist. But never had he done such a lightning change before.

Bob Cherry jammed a foot against the door, and kept it there—in case Blump returned too soon!

Blump, clearly, could not be re-admitted until Sir William was himself again.

What Blump would think, when he came back and found his missing master present, the juniors could not imagine. But that was the only way out of the scrape—Blump had to be kept off until his missing master was present! Blump's eyes would have opened very wide indeed if he had beheld Wibley in a half-way stage, between a schoolboy and a venerable baronet!

Wibley jumped into his clothes—or rather, into Sir William's clothes. He whipped his disguise from the suitcase.

He set rapidly to work before the pier-glass. While Bob guarded the door, the rest of the Co. gave what help they could.

There was not a moment to lose!

The portly Blump did not descend or ascend staircases rapidly. Still, it was evidently only a matter of minutes before he got through on the telephone, and came back. Wibley, quick worker as he was, required more than minutes! His outward

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appearance as Sir William Bird was a work of art.

Quick as he was, he was still more than half Wibley, and less than half Sir William, when a ponderous tread was heard in the corridor without.

"Oh, my hat! Here comes Blump!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Buck up, Wib!"

"Ain't I bucking up?" hissed Wibley. "Don't jaw! See that that old rhinoceros doesn't get that door open!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Johnny Bull. "Blump will wonder what on earth's up, if we bar him out!"

"Let him wonder! Don't let him in!"

"No fear!"

There was a scrape of a key inserted in the lock outside.

Bob Cherry jammed his boot hard against the door. His comrades joined him. Whatever Blump thought—and there was no doubt that he would be surprised—he had to be kept out till Wibley was finished.

The schoolboy actor, with feverish haste, worked in front of the pier-glass. He was getting on Sir William's pink complexion.

The door-handle turned.

Five fellows braced themselves against the door.

Blump pushed. He pushed in vain. He pushed again, and again. Still the door did not budge. The Famous Five crammed themselves against it as one man.

"Goodness gracious!" the butler's voice came through. "What is the matter with this door? Master Wharton—"

"Yes, Blump!" gasped Harry. "Have—have you phoned?"

"I have telephoned, Master Wharton! A police-inspector and a constable will soon be on their way here."

"Oh crikey!"

"The inspector has warned me not to let the boy escape my observation until he reaches Eastcliff Lodge!" said Blump. "Something appears to be the matter with this door! Can you open it from the inside?"

"Can we?" murmured Bob Cherry.

Blump could not see five grinning faces through solid oak! He remained in ignorance of what was the matter with the door!

"It appears to be jammed!" said Blump, pushing it again. "I have unlocked it—the lock appears in perfect order—yet it will not open! Please try to open it from the inside."

"The jamfulness appears to be terrific, my esteemed Blump!"

Blump exerted his weight on the door outside. Blump had a lot of weight, and the door, for a moment, yielded a fraction of an inch. But it was only a fraction; and it was only for a moment! Then it jammed again!

"Goodness gracious!" Enlightenment seemed to dawn on Blump. "Are you young gentlemen holding the door shut?"

"Are we?" murmured Bob.

"Master Wharton! I insist upon your admitting me to this room at once!" roared Blump. "I must keep that boy under observation! Why

are you holding the door? Is he escaping by the window?"

"Oh, my hat! No—nothing of the kind!" gasped Harry.

"Then why are you holding the door?" Blump was aware now that the door was held from inside, and he could only suppose that thoughtless schoolboys were keeping him out, to give Wibley a chance of escaping.

"Open this door at once! I insist upon entering! If that boy is allowed to escape, you will answer for it to the police authorities! Admit me!"

"How long now, Wib?" whispered Harry Wharton.

"Three or four minutes!" Wibley had finished his complexion, and was getting his silvery beard on.

"Oh crumbs! Stick it out, you fellows!"

Thump, thump! came angrily on the outside of the door. Blump was getting excited and wrathful.

"Admit me at once!" he roared.

He gave another tremendous heave at the door. This time it did not yield even a fraction of an inch as the Famous Five braced themselves against it. They heard a gasp in the corridor, like air escaping from a punctured tyre. Blump was a little short of breath.

The pressure on the door ceased. They heard Blump's footsteps pass up the corridor, and then a sound of a farther door unlocking.

"Look out!" breathed Bob. "The other door!"

The juniors spotted Blump's intention at once. The valet's room, adjoining, had a door on the corridor and a communicating-door into Sir William's room.

Blump was coming in by the valet's room—if he could—and he had already entered it from the corridor.

"O.K.!" whispered Wibley. "The door's locked—key on this side! Let him rip!"

"Buck up!" urged Bob.

"Fathead!" grunted Wibley.

He was bucking up. Silvery beard and moustache and eyebrows adorned his pink face. Now he was adjusting his wig—the silvery mop that completely hid his own close crop.

There was a rattle at the door-handle from the valet's room.

Blump had arrived at the communicating door, to find it locked on Sir William's side.

He thumped on it.

"Let me in!" he shouted.

"All serene now!" breathed Wibley. He gave a last look into the glass. He was Sir William from top to toe—the dapper little baronet who bore no resemblance whatever to Wibley of the Greyfriars Remove. "By gum—what luck! O.K., you men! I'll step out into the passage."

Blump was thumping again on the door from the valet's room.

Harry Wharton opened the door on the corridor. Sir William stepped out into the corridor.

"Now, you can let him in!" he murmured.

"Right-ho!"

Wharton closed the door on the schoolboy actor, and stepped across to the communicating door. He unlocked it, and turned the handle just

as Blump delivered another thump on the other side. It flew open; and Blump, crimson with excitement and wrath, rolled in from the valet's room.

"Where is the boy?" Blump glared round Sir William's room for Wibley. But there was no Wibley to meet his glare. "Where—?"

Blump broke off, as the door from the corridor opened and a silver-haired little gentleman appeared there, with an eyeglass in his eye and a surprised expression on his pink face.

"What is the matter here?" asked the little gentleman, in Sir William's well-known throaty voice. "Blump! Is anything the matter here?"

Blump almost fell down.

"Sis-sis-sis-sis-Sir William!" he stuttered.

O.K.!

SIR WILLIAM glanced round the room through his eyeglass. He appeared mildly surprised at finding a crowd in his room.

The Famous Five gazed at him almost spellbound. Wibley was absolutely cool and self-possessed—living his part, as usual.

It was hard for Harry Wharton & Co. to believe that he was Wibley, and that he had only stepped out of that room into the corridor a minute ago! He was Sir William to the life—they could have believed that the genuine old Bird had come home suddenly!

"What—what?" went on Sir William. "Has anything happened here? Good gad! What—what?"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob.

"Is—is—is that Sir William?" gurgled Blump. He passed a plump hand over a plump forehead. This was getting really too much for Blump. "I—I—is—is— Goodness gracious!"

"I scarcely understand you, Blump!" said Sir William. "I have been out—only a short time—a very short time! Why are you here?"

"The—the boy—" gasped Blump.

"What boy?"

"There was a boy here—" said Blump helplessly.

"There are five boys here!" answered Sir William. "What do you mean, Blump?"

"I—I— Oh—I—" stuttered the bewildered butler.

"Do any of you know what Blump means, my young friends?" asked Sir William Wibley, turning his eyeglass on the Famous Five. "He appears to be talking at random."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob.

"Come, come, Blump, my good fellow—explain what you mean!" said Sir William testily. "I am late for breakfast already. What do you mean, Blump?"

Blump gurgled! He saw his master before him—Wibley had disappeared! Blump was not likely to guess that they were one and the same! So Blump's plump brain was in a spinning state.

"There was a—a—a boy here, Sir William!" he gasped. "A boy who  
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called himself Wibley—I mean, Wibley! He is gone! He—he must have left by one door while I was at the other! Did you see him in the passage, sir?"

Sir William's pink face assumed a genial smile.

"Oh, Wibley!" he said. "Quite! An excellent lad, Blump—I am much attached to him—very much attached indeed! I understand, Blump, that that rascal Brown somehow entered the house last night and—and got hold of young Wibley, and tied him up—a most reprehensible act! He is—hem!—gone now. However, if Wibley should come here again, Blump, please remember that he is to be treated with the utmost consideration—"

"Oh!" gasped Blump. "Yes! But—"

"Please bear that in mind, Blump!" said Sir William. "If that lad Wibley is ever seen here again, you are to treat him in every way as an honoured guest! You would know him again, Blump?"

"Oh! Yes, Sir William."

"You are quite sure you would recognise him if you met him?"

"Oh! Quite, Sir William."

"Very good, then—remember, he is a welcome guest here, and must be allowed to do exactly as he likes, without let or hindrance."

Bob Cherry winked at his chums—who suppressed a chuckle. Wibley was making hay while the sun shone, as it were—taking precautions against being caught again without his disguise!

"Do you understand, Blump?" rapped Sir William.

"Oh! Yes! Quite! But—I—"

"Blump has telephoned for the police, Sir William!" said Harry Wharton. "Had the call better be cancelled?"

"Oh, rather! I mean, good gad, Blump, go and cancel the call at once! Nothing is the matter—nothing! Lose no time, Blump!"

"Yes—no—but—" stammered Blump.

"Lose no time, Blump!"

Blump almost tottered from the room, the most bewildered butler ever.

He tottered away to the telephone to cancel his call for police aid!

When he was gone, Sir William winked at the Famous Five with the eye that did not contain his eyeglass. The juniors chuckled.

"Jolly narrow escape, Wib, old man!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"A miss is as good as a mile!" said Wibley cheerfully. "I'll jolly well have a bolt put on that door—Brown won't catch me napping again! Poor old Blump—he seems sort of fogged."

"Ha-ha, ha!"

Blump remained in a fogged state; he never understood those mysterious happenings in Sir William's room. After breakfast that morning Wibley took a walk in the grounds with the Famous Five; and if Mr. Brown was on the watch—as no doubt he was—Mr. Brown was satisfied that Sir William was still at home! The schoolboy actor of Greyfriars had had a narrow escape—but he was still going strong!

THE END.

## COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

NATURALLY enough, I suppose you are all wondering what further adventures befall Harry Wharton & Co. next week at Easteliff Lodge. Well, you'll be reading about 'em next Saturday in:

### "THE SPY OF THE GESTAPO!"

By Frank Richards.

William Wibley, who has taken the place of Sir William Bird, to outwit the spies who are watching for the baronet, is having none too comfortable a time, and neither are his chums from Greyfriars. A most thrilling moment comes when an enemy agent draws raiding bombers to Sir William's mansion. That the man has a hide-out near at hand is almost certain; but where, is a problem yet to be solved. What's more, the spy is paid well for his services—a fact discovered by Billy Bunter, who suddenly becomes wealthy. With money to squander, the fat Owl's first thought is to turn down Easteliff Lodge and the holiday party there. But it's not very long before he's anxious to turn them up again! You're going to enjoy this yarn, chums, so do the wise thing and order your copy at the earliest opportunity.

George Wingate, the popular captain of Greyfriars, makes No. 2 in our Portrait Gallery.

Meet you all again next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

## "MAGNET" PEN PALS

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