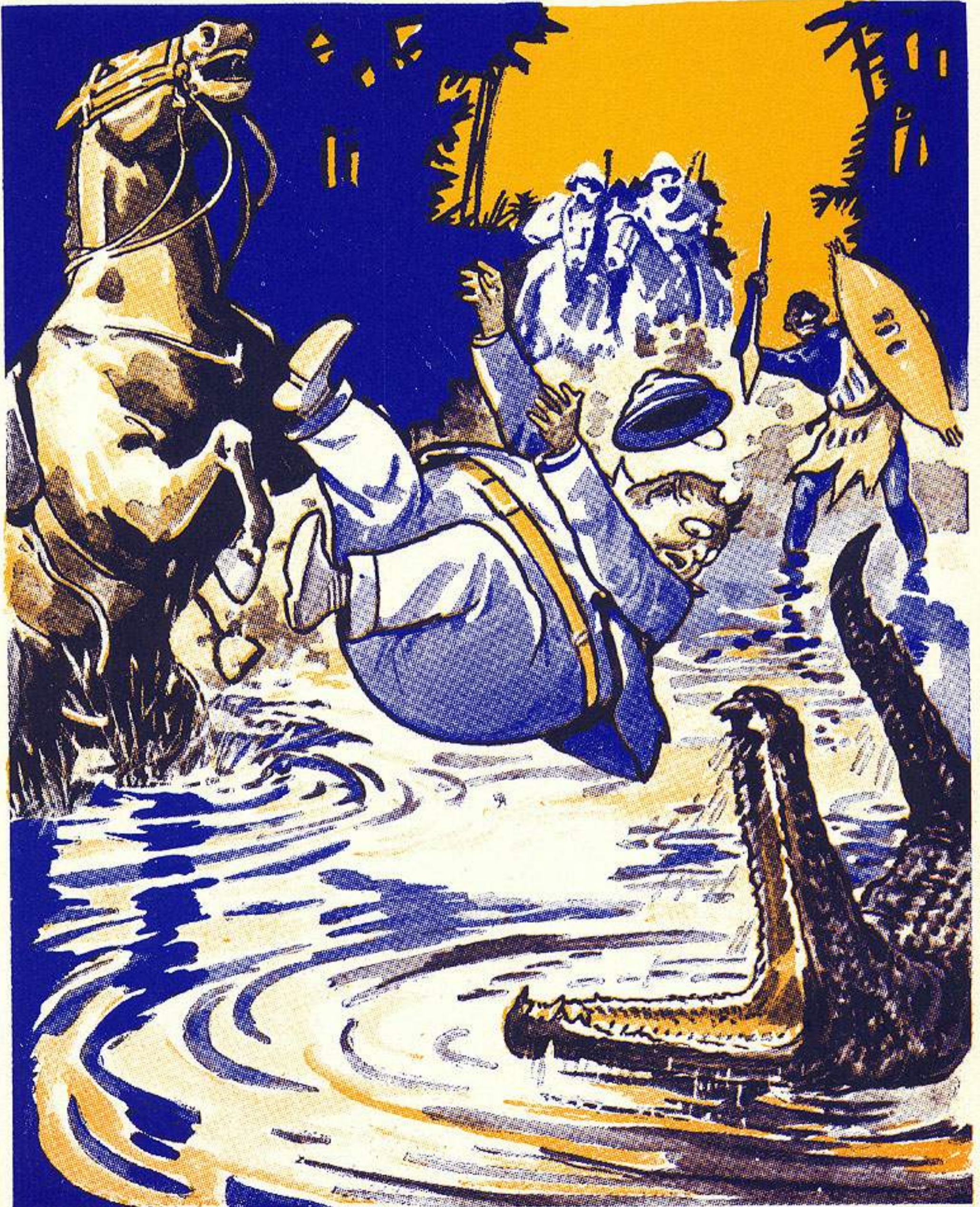


THE JUNGLE HIKERS!

This week's all-thrilling adventure yarn
of Harry Wharton & Co.—inside.

The **MAGNET** 2^D





Come Into the Office, Boys!

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

"DEAR EDITOR," starts off a Clacton reader this week,—
"Can you tell me anything about the steamer Bremen?"
Well, it happens that I can, for I took the opportunity, one day recently, to run down to Southampton and have a walk over that splendid vessel. It was "some" walk, I can tell you, for the Bremen is 899 feet long, and has a beam of 102 feet. So, although she's only the fourth largest ship in the world, she is the broadest. She can, on occasion, touch

A SPEED OF 29 KNOTS,

and her average is 27.91 knots. One of the most interesting things about her is the aeroplane catapult. A sliding carriage runs upon rails which are, roughly, about 30 yards long, and this carriage, which holds the aeroplane, is driven along the rails by compressed air.

About ten yards before the carriage reaches the end of the run the aeroplane has gathered enough speed to remain in the air. The carriage is stopped at the end of the run by automatic brakes, and thus the aeroplane is launched into the air. The whole of this catapult apparatus is mounted on a wheel rim, which allows it to be swung out on either side of the ship.

What a lot of lives would have been saved at sea in the past if ships had formerly carried aeroplanes! The Bremen's aeroplane, of course, is intended to speed up the mail service; but in case of necessity it could also be used as a means of locating sinking ships, carrying breeches buoy apparatus to them, and so on. I foresee a great future for life-saving aeroplanes at sea!

If you are

INTERESTED IN NAVIGATION,

as I am, you will find much to interest you on this steamer. She is fitted with electric telephones from the bridge to every part of the ship. In addition to wireless telephony, she has also a gyroscopic compass, fitted with a device to enable the ship to be steered automatically. Then there are radio-sounders, submarine acoustic signalling plant, electric fog-bells, and every modern scientific instrument.

I remember, many years ago, when I was at sea,

HEAVING THE LEAD

was a long and arduous job. All that is changed nowadays. If a captain wishes to find out the depth of water beneath him, he sends out a signal, which strikes down to the depths of the ocean.

When it reaches the bottom, an echo is sent back, and, by counting the time between the sending of the signal and the receiving of the echo, the navigator can tell exactly how much water is beneath his ship.

What would Columbus have said had anyone told him that this would be possible?

I can tell you fellows that a walk over a mighty liner like this is an experience worth having, and I am glad to see that our British railway companies are now running special trips to big ports, and including a "conducted tour" over a big liner in the price of the trip. Before long I hope to be able to visit some more "ocean greyhounds," including Britain's latest wonder-ship, the Empress of Britain.

HERE'S a query, which comes from Jack Thompson, of Brighouse, CONCERNING THE CAPITAL OF AMERICA.

He wants to know the answer to the following query: "In what state is Washington, the capital of America?" Well, Washington is not in any state at all. It is situated in what is known as the "District of Columbia," which consists of only seventy square miles, and has a population of less than half a million.

There are, all told, forty-eight states in the United States, thirteen of which were the original British colonies. The other thirty-five were admitted to the union later. In addition to that, there are three other "territories"—Hawaii, Alaska, and the District of Columbia. Alaska, although it has not been raised to the dignity of a "State," is the largest territory belonging to the United States. It has an area of 590,884 square miles, and yet has only the small population of 55,036. Thus every inhabitant of Alaska could have ten square miles of land to himself—and there would still be plenty left!

Now we'll have a laugh and at the same time congratulate Sydney Lyall, 16, Archway Road, Highgate, N.9, who wins a prize for sending us the following joke:

Schoolmaster (addressing pupil): "Smith, your essay on 'My Dog' is word for word the same as your brother's. How do you account for it?"

Smith: "Well, you see, sir, it's the same dog!"

Good lad, Sydney! A useful pocket knife is now on the way to you.

in which he asks me to mention some facts about

THE KIEL CANAL

in my chat. As I think this will also interest other Magnetites, here are some details about this canal. Opened on June 19th, 1895, it connects the North Sea and the Baltic, and was cut to save shipping from danger and loss of time incurred in rounding the Jutland peninsula. The passage through the canal occupies eight and a half to nine hours, and navigation is possible continuously as it is electrically lighted. A trip through its sixty-one miles is rather monotonous and uninteresting, as high banks obstruct the view over the flat country through which it passes. But the Kiel Canal saves shipping a good deal of money, for since 1919 it has been an international waterway open to the vessels of the world, and reasonable canal tolls and charges are fixed.

A SPLENDID PROGRAMME.

NEXT week's programme forward. How does this title strike you?

"KIDNAPPED IN KENYA!" By Frank Richards.

Sounds very thrilling, doesn't it? And you'll certainly agree with me that the story is thrilling when you read it next Saturday. It is well up to the very high standard the author has set in this magnificent series of Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in the African jungle.

Although I flatter myself I'm not bad at puzzles, there is one puzzle which I've never yet discovered, and that is: "How on earth does Frank Richards get all his wonderful ideas for stories?" No doubt the same problem has occurred to you, but it's one not likely to give us sleepless nights, for it's a pleasant problem, and I for one don't mind keeping on wondering.

Next on the list of good things we have for next Saturday is another humorous and thrilling adventure of our puncher pals, High, Low, and Nippy. Great lads, aren't they? They come up against a gang of rustlers in their next Wild West adventure, and, I can tell you, the fur flies thick and fast when the chums get moving!

I hardly need mention the "Greyfriars Herald" and the shorter features—except to say that they'll be well up to their usual topping standard.

YOUR EDITOR.

PENKNIVES, POCKET WALLETS and TOPPING BOOKS

offered for Storyettes and Snappy Greyfriars Limericks. All efforts to be sent to: c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

Don't Miss This Opportunity of Winning Something Useful!



THE JUNGLE HIKERS!

Featuring *Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter of Greyfriars.* By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets a Move On!

PLUMP!
Billy Bunter sat down. Bunter was tired. For three hours Bunter had been on his little fat legs. Three minutes would have been enough for Bunter.

Besides, it was hot! Even Billy Bunter, probably, had not expected it to be perfectly cool on the Equator. Still, he seemed to regard the tropical heat as a scurvy trick played by Nature specially for his personal discomfort.

Harry Wharton & Co. were rather tired. The only member of the party who seemed impervious to fatigue was Kikolobo, the tall Kikuyu hunter and guide.

Kicky—as the Greyfriars juniors called him to save time—strode on, tireless, an imposing figure in striped monkey-skins.

After him trailed the Famous Five and the Bounder.

Behind them plugged Billy Bunter. Perspiration streamed down Bunter's fat face. Flies gave him their special attention. Mosquitoes seemed to like him. With the Greyfriars party, Bunter was not exactly popular; but with the winged inhabitants of the jungle in the back-country of Kenya, he seemed very popular indeed. They all seemed to want a little bit of Bunter as a souvenir.

Since starting at dawn, Bunter had told the other fellows, not once, but a hundred times, that he was tired.

The other fellows had turned deaf cars.

There was danger behind, and the Greyfriars "safari" had no time to lose—even if Bunter was tired.

Danger certainly would have spurred Bunter on to unheard-of efforts, had it been close at hand. But out of sight was out of mind. Bunter was as brave as a lion when no danger was nigh. When it drew nigh his courage rather resembled that of a rabbit—a nervous rabbit.

Bunter had stood it for three hours. Now he was fed-up. And so, at last, he

"Do you want to be left behind?" snapped Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"I'm tired!"

The six juniors halted. The Famous Five looked impatient, Vernon-Smith exasperated. They came back towards the Owl of the Remove. Kikolobo, the guide, glanced back, and stopped.

Billy Bunter blinked up at six irritated faces through his big spectacles. He was, as he had stated, tired, and he was not going to stir.

"Now, look here, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton patiently. "We've got to get back to camp—"

"Rot!"

"We've got to get out of this quarter before that villain, Ludwig Krantz, comes hiking along with his gang of sweeps!" said Bob.

"I'm not afraid of him, if you are!" said Bunter. "Don't be so jolly funky!"

"You Bounder."

"You can call a fellow names!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "But who got you away from that beast Krantz when he bagged you, I'd like to know?"

"Will you get a move on, you fat idiot?"

"No, I won't!"

"What about rolling him along like a barrel?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"You've got to stick it for another few miles, Bunter," said Frank Nugent. "There's danger—"

"I'm not afraid of danger. Not like some fellows!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,230.

"Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag," sing Harry Wharton & Co., **"and hike, hike, hike!"** And the African jungle throws back the echo of the schoolboy hikers' song.

sat down, with a heavy plump that almost shook the colony of Kenya.

In the shade of the tall elephant grass he sat and grunted.

"Come on, Bunter!" Harry Wharton looked back. "Buck up, old fat man!"

"Beast!"

"Get a move on, Bunter!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Rotter!"

"Buck up, Bunter!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Shan't!"

"My esteemed and idiotic Bunter—" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Yah!"

"Bunter, you fat ass—" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Beast!"

"Oh, kick him!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Yah!"

The chums of the Remove glared at Bunter. Bunter blinked back defiance. Rolling him along like a barrel was not really practicable. Carrying him was still less practicable. It really seemed as if Smithy's suggestion would have to be adopted, and the fat Owl would have to be kicked into motion again.

And it was necessary to hasten.

The Greyfriars fellows, on safari in Kenya, had left their horses and baggage and porters in the Masalindi forest when they entered the jungle.

They had fallen foul of Ludwig Krantz, the slave-trader, half-Arab and half-German; a villainous outcast who had a "juicy" reputation all over Kenya, Uganda, and the Tanganyika territory.

If Krantz and his gang of slave-hunting ruffians came to close quarters, matters were likely to go hard with the Greyfriars safari.

Even the Bounder, the most reckless member of the party, was anxious to get out of the jungle. Even Kikolobo, the fearless Kikuyu, considered it wise to put on speed. It was left to the fattest and funkiest member of the safari to waste time, and give the slave-trader a chance of getting in touch with the party.

But Bunter was tired!

"The kickfulness is the proper caper!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "As esteemed Shakespeare remarkably observes, we must be cruel only to be kind."

"Go it, Bob—you've got the biggest feet!" said Nugent.

"Look here, Bunter!" urged Harry Wharton.

Bunter waved a fat hand at him.

"Leave me alone! I'm tired! I'm going to rest! As for danger, I don't suppose that beast Krantz is within twenty miles! I don't care if he is! Shut up!"

The Kikuyu came back along the jungle path.

"O Bwana, why do our feet halt by the way, when there is need for haste?" he asked, addressing the Bounder.

"That fat idiot won't move!" growled Vernon-Smith.

The Kikuyu stepped towards Bunter.

"O Small Fat One—" he said.

"You shut up!" hooted Bunter.

He glared at the Kikuyu.

For some reason unknown to Bunter the Kikuyu did not regard him with the same respect as he showed towards the rest of the party. Instead of addressing him as "Bwana," or lord, he called him the "Small Fat One," which really was not complimentary. Bunter, perhaps, could not be expected to like it.

"But listen with your ears, O Small Fat One—" said the Kikuyu.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Kumbe!" exclaimed the Kikuyu suddenly; a startled exclamation. A flash came into his dark eyes, and he grasped his spear and made a swift stride towards the Owl of the Remove.

The sunlight flashed on the broad blade of the spear as it was lifted in the muscular hand of the Kikuyu.

"Here, what the thump—" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Look out! What—"

There was a yell of terror from Bunter.

It seemed to the fat junior that the Kikuyu was about to transfix him with the broad blade of the spear.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,230.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared on, dumbfounded.

Often and often had Bunter been as insolent as he dared to be to the Kikuyu; indeed, he had told the other fellows more than once that he had a jolly good mind to kick the blessed nigger. But the Kikuyu had never seemed to mind Bunter's "cheek."

Now, for a moment, it looked as if the Kikuyu had broken out in wild, savage rage. His dark face was set hard, his eyes flashed, and the long spear in his sinewy hand rose flashing in the air, and darted towards the fat junior as he squatted against the elephant grass.

For a second it seemed to the horrified juniors that Bunter would be transfixed by the spear; but there was no time to raise a hand.

Bunter yelled with terror.

The bright blade of the spear flashed past him, missing him by less than an inch.

From the grass behind the fat junior came a hissing sound. It was heard for only a second as the Kikuyu struck.

"Owl! Keep him off!" shrieked Bunter.

He rolled into the jungle path.

"Kikolobo!" panted Wharton.

"O Bwana, it is the mamba!" said Kikolobo calmly. "If I, Kikolobo, had not struck with my spear, the Small Fat One would have been with the ghosts."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

From the thick stalks of the elephant grass, where Bunter had been sitting, a hideous, black thing writhed.

It was a "mamba," a black snake nearly ten feet long; but the narrow head was gone from the writhing body; the cutting edge of the Kikuyu's spear had sliced it off. The poisonous head lay in the grass; the hideous body writhed and thrashed out into the path before it lay still.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

They understood the swift action of the Kikuyu now.

His keen eyes had detected the head of the mamba peering from the grass behind Bunter, and he had struck in time to save the life of the fat junior.

"I say, you fellows, keep that nigger off!" yelled Bunter. "I told you he was a cannibal! Keep him off! Shoot him!" Bunter, sprawling and yelling with terror, was still under the impression that the Kikuyu had thrust at him with the spear. "Shoot him! Hold him! Oh crikey!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Owl! Help! Rescue!" roared Bunter. "Keep that nigger off! Shoot him!"

"O Small Fat One!" said the Kikuyu.

"Beast, keep off!"

"You howling idiot!" yelled the Bounder. "It was a snake, and Kicky killed it just in time, you silly chump!"

"Wha-a-at!"

Bunter sat up. He set his spectacles straight on his fat, little nose, and blinked round him. At the sight of the headless snake he bounded to his feet as if he were made of indiarubber.

"Oh crumbs! It—it—it's a snake!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, for goodness' sake let's get on! Let's get out of this putrid jungle! I say, what are you hanging about for? Can't you come on?"

Bunter started.

The other fellows grinned and followed.

The black mamba had settled the disputed point. Billy Bunter did not want to sit down any more. Bunter had got a move on.

And in merry mood the juniors

threaded their way through the jungle once more, their voices raised in song: "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, and hike, hike, hike!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Change in the Programme!

"GRATITUDE!"

G

Bunter spoke in sardonic tones.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him as if they could have eaten him. Herbert Vernon-Smith compressed his lips.

The Greyfriars safari were back in the camp in the Masalindi forest. Bunter, at least, was glad to see horses and porters and baggage again. The fat junior had had more than enough of trekking afoot in the jungle. And he had had quite enough of the safari, and he said so, not once but many times.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was head of the party. The Famous Five were the Bounder's honoured guests. Billy Bunter had hooked on. But to judge by Billy Bunter's remarks he was the principal person concerned, and the rest were scarcely "also rans."

It seemed unlikely to the juniors that the slave-trader, Krantz, would follow them so far, or venture to attack a numerous safari if he did. At all events they were prepared to take the risk, and continue the trip. But Billy Bunter took a different view.

Bunter's view was that the trip should come to an end at once, and that the fellows should seek civilisation again—such civilisation as Kenya had to offer.

In ordinary circumstances the Bounder and his companions would have passed Bunter's opinion by like the idle wind which they regarded not.

But the circumstances, unfortunately, were not quite ordinary.

Bunter had a claim.

Bunter was the fellow to enforce a claim to the bitter end.

Amazing as it was it could not be denied that Bunter, the fattest and funkiest fellow at Greyfriars or anywhere else, had been chiefly instrumental in rescuing Vernon-Smith when he was captured by Krantz, the slave-trader.

If the Bounder had been disposed to forget that service, Bunter was not the fellow to let him forget. Bunter was the fellow to keep him constantly in mind of it.

It was irksome to be under an obligation to a fellow like Bunter. It made it awkward to kick him as he deserved.

Now the chums of Greyfriars were discussing their plans, and Bunter weighed in with a very decided opinion. And in the circumstances Bunter could hardly be kicked.

"Gratitude," repeated Bunter. "Of course, I don't expect it. I never did. Still, when a fellow runs frightful risks to save a fellow's life—"

"You fat porker," said Bob Cherry. "You blundered on Smithy by sheer accident, after losing yourself like a silly idiot, and all you did was to cut him loose."

"Oh, really, Cherry—" Bunter blinked at him contemptuously. "Of course, it's like you to run a fellow down."

"You fat frump—"

"I found him!" said Bunter. "I saved him! You and your blessed Kikuyu were hunting for him, and I did the trick! Didn't I, Smithy?"

The Bounder breathed hard.

There was no doubt that, by a sort of miracle, Bunter had come in useful. Smithy had no doubt that the Kikuyu

and his friends would have found him when he was a prisoner. But they might not have found him before Krantz returned with his crew of ruffians from the interior, in which case the whole party might have fallen victims to the ruffian. Bunter, by sheer blundering chance, had been, for once, the right man in the right place.

"You can make out that it was an accident, if you like," said Bunter. "I must say it's like you. As a matter of fact, I tracked Smithy down——"

"Gammon!"

"Anyhow, I found him, and got him loose, and—here he is," said Bunter. "And I'm bound to say that

"Glad to!" growled Johnny Bull. "The gladfulness would be preposterous!"

"That villain, Krantz, will be after us," said Bunter. "He's going to cut our throats all round, and sell us as slaves in some awful place in the interior, and——"

"He would hardly do both," suggested Frank Nugent mildly.

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt me, Nugent. Not that I'm afraid of that brute, Krantz, you know. I'm really thinking of you fellows. You will be in danger, and the question is—should I be able to protect you?"

"Oh, my hat!"

out of it that that fat blighter helped me when I was bagged——"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"And if he makes a point of it——"

"I do!" said Bunter promptly.

"If he makes a point of it, I feel bound to play up—if you fellows agree," grunted the Bounder. "I can't kick him as he deserves, in the circus. I feel bound to consider him. But you fellows——"

"My dear chap, that's all right!" said Harry Wharton. "After all, we'd like to see the timber concession; it won't be quite so exciting as safari, but it will be worth seeing."

"You'll have a roof over your heads, anyhow," said Bunter; "and no beastly lions or leopards prowling about at night."



Frantically the Bounder dragged the splashing and spluttering Bunter away from the gaping jaws of the advancing crocodile. "Ow! Ooooh! Help!" gurgled Bunter in terror. "Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

there's such a thing as gratitude, though you fellows don't seem to have heard of it."

"Oh, cheese it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "As Shakespeare says," went on Bunter, "How sharper than a thankless tooth it is, to have a toothless serpent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Now, look here, you fellows," said Bunter. "Old Smith—I—I mean Mr. Vernon-Smith, has given us the choice of keeping on this safari, or going with him to Thingummy's what's-its-name."

"Caminho's concession," grunted the Bounder.

"Yes, and my idea is to chuck this safari, which is all rot, anyhow, and get back to civilisation. Not that it's very civilised—a putrid place, I've no doubt. Going back to Nairobi would be much better. There's shops there, and restaurants, and——"

"Rats!"

"Well," said Bunter, "if you keep on this safari, you keep on without me!"

"Bunter could be sent back on his own," suggested Bob. "After all, he's only a nuisance."

"Hear, hear!"

Sniff from Bunter.

"If you fellows think I'm going to hang about on my own, you're jolly well mistaken," he said. "Your company isn't much—not the sort of thing I'm accustomed to at Bunter Court in the holidays. But it's better than nothing."

The Famous Five looked at Herbert Vernon-Smith. It was for Smithy to decide, and they were prepared to accept his decision.

The Bounder gave an angry grunt.

"Look here, you men, you know how it stands," he said. "My father's through with his business at Milsom's plantation. His next call is at a timber concession up in Masalindi. If we like to go with him, we meet him at a place called Malimwe on his way. I'd rather keep on safari, and I've no doubt you fellows would; but there's no getting

"It's a go!" said Bob Cherry; and the other fellows nodded assent.

"Then it's settled," said the Bounder rather moodily, and he rose from the log where he had been seated and walked away to speak to Kikolobo.

Billy Bunter grinned cheerfully.

The Famous Five gave him expressive looks. But expressive looks had no effect on William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I'm doing this for your sakes, you know," said Bunter. "The fact is, you're no use for roughing it in the jungle. Too soft, you know. I can take care of myself, as I've shown; but you fellows——"

"I'm going to kick him!" said Johnny Bull. "Smithy can't very well kick him, in the giddy circumstances, but there's no reason why I shouldn't kick him."

"Yaroooooh!"

"Goal!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow! If you kick me again, you beast— Yooooo!"

Billy Bunter retired hastily from the spot.

Kicking Bunter was some solace, but the fat junior had his way. When the party got into motion again they were heading for Malimwe, where they were to meet Mr. Vernon-Smith. So much the Bounder felt that he had to concede, in acknowledgment of what Bunter had done for him. And though the Famous Five certainly would have preferred to keep on safari, they were not the fellows to grouse. And, after all, a visit to a timber concession in a remote region of Kenya was interesting enough, though not so exciting as trekking in the jungle. So they took the change in the programme cheerfully; and, at all events, that change in the programme took them far from any further possible contact with the slave-trader.

Certainly they did not guess, or dream of guessing, that that change in the programme was destined to have unexpected and startling results, and that strange adventures awaited them on the Masalindi plateau. Still less did they guess that it was to turn out the most fortunate thing that could have happened. The future was on the knees of the gods.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wet!

KIKOLOBO, striding ahead, conspicuous in his dress of striped monkey-skins, spear in hand, halted on the margin of the broad, shallow river. Behind the Kikuyu came the Greyfriars juniors on horseback, and behind them the long

string of native porters carrying the baggage.

It was afternoon, and the sun was reddening the west. That night the party were to reach Malimwe, where they were to wait for Mr. Vernon-Smith. The Malimwe river lay across their path, but it was shallow, and Kikolobo knew the ford. As he reached the margin of the Malimwe the Kikuyu stopped and cast a stone down on the edge of the water. It clinked on a little heap of stones already gathered on the same spot.

The juniors watched him rather curiously. More than once they had seen the Kikuyu perform that strange ceremony when a stream had to be crossed.

"What's that silly nigger up to, you fellows?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking at the Kikuyu through his big spectacles.

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The politeness is the proper caper, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Snort—from Bunter.

The fat Owl had no politeness to waste on "niggers." He had, in fact, very little to waste on anybody.

"Oh, really, Inky! I suppose you feel like that because you're a nigger yourself!" remarked Bunter agreeably.

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—"

The Kikuyu glanced round at Billy Bunter gravely.

"O Small Fat One," he said, "it is written that when a Kikuyu is about to cross running water he shall cast a stone on the bank in honour of N'gai, who sees all things from the summit of the Great Mountain, and so N'gai shall grant him a safe crossing."

The Greyfriars fellows were careful not to smile.

The native superstition was, after all, no more absurd than some that survived in their own country, where they knew plenty of people who would not sit down thirteen to a table, or begin a journey on a Friday, or walk under a ladder.

But from Billy Bunter there came a fat chuckle.

Bunter was amused.

Bunter was not the fellow to respect any opinion that differed from his own.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"Will you shut up, you fat fool?" hissed the Bounder.

"He, he, he!"

A dark look came over the Kikuyu's face. His black eyes dwelt very expressively on Bunter's fat, grinning countenance. Many times had Bunter roused the resentment of the proud Kikuyu—who was a great chief and a great hunter, though in Bunter's lofty eyes only a "nigger."

"Why does the Small Fat One laugh at the words of Kikolobo?" asked the Kikuyu very quietly.

"He, he, he! Of all the silly idiots I—" chuckled Bunter.

"O Kikuyu," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "the Small Fat One laughs because he is a fool, and he is not a pukka sahib."

"Why, you cheeky beast, Inky—"

The Kikuyu bowed his head, turned away, and strode on. He entered the water, which rose over his knees at the ford.

Billy Bunter blinked along the muddy banks uneasily.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, come on, Bunter!"

"Look here, are there any crocodiles about?" demanded Bunter. "If you fellows think I'm going to be eaten by crocodiles to please you, you're jolly well mistaken! See?"

"Tons of them!" said Bob. "But the ford's safe enough so long as you keep to it, fathead! So come on, ass!"

"Well, you fellows go first," said Bunter. "I—I'll keep an eye on you and—and protect you if there's any danger."

"Fathead!"

The Famous Five and the Bounder rode into the water after the tall Kikuyu.

Undoubtedly there were crocodiles in the Malimwe river; in fact, there were a dozen in sight at a distance from the ford, had Bunter observed them. But to Bunter's eyes they were floating logs. Still, Bunter did not believe in taking risks.

The Kikuyu halted in the centre of the stream for the horsemen to pass him. He stood there, spear in hand, watching for an enterprising "croc" who might come near enough to snap at the legs of the horses. The six juniors rode past him towards the low, sloping, muddy bank on the other side.

Kikolobo looked back at Bunter hesitating on the margin.

"O Small Fat One," he called out, "enter the stream, for I cannot wait now that the Bwana has passed."

Bunter snorted.

"You can jolly well wait—and be blowed to you!" he retorted. "Don't you be a cheeky nigger!"

Kikolobo looked at him, swung round, and splashed after the riders. Bunter gave his broad back a glare.

"Wait for me, you beast!" he howled.

The Kikuyu strode on regardless. Probably he was fed-up with Bunter—which really was not surprising.

"Beast!" growled Bunter.

The Kikuyu did not heed.

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter,



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"come back for me! I say, you fellows, come back, you beasts! I say!"

The horsemen kept on, the Kikuyu following them. Bunter gave a snort of wrath. The string of native porters were close behind him now. He made up his fat mind at last, and gave his horse a touch of the whip and rode into the river.

One of the floating logs he had noticed had floated quite near to the ford. And suddenly, as Bunter splashed in, that floating log opened a wide mouth that was armed with fearful rows of teeth.

Bunter gave the fearful apparition one blink, and uttered a howl of terror.

As a matter of fact, the crocodile was a dozen yards off, and Bunter could easily have ridden across in safety. But the sight of those frightful jaws was too much for the Owl of the Remove.

He gave his horse a terrific lash with the whip to urge him into a gallop to reach the farther side, which the other fellows had now reached.

The horse started, and plunged wildly.

It was quite a quiet horse, specially selected for Bunter. But that sudden, terrific lash startled him, and he reared and plunged. A rider's hand on the rein would have been enough; but Bunter was no rider. As the horse reared, the terrified Owl dropped the reins and clutched at his neck.

"Ow! Help!" yelled Bunter. The horse plunged on wildly, splashing up the water, and Billy Bunter shot from his back before he knew what was happening. The riderless horse dashed on, and Bunter sprawled in water and yellow mud, and roared.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

"GROOOOGH!"
 Splash!
 "Oooch! Help! Oooogh!"
 Harry Wharton & Co., reining in on the muddy bank of the Malimwe, looked back. Bunter's riderless horse dashed past them, snorting, with dangling reins and jingling stirrups.

"That fat ass—"
 "The silly chump!"
 "Help! Yooop! Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. His fat face and glimmering spectacles emerged from shallow, muddy water, and he blinked round him wildly. "Whooooop! Help! I say, you fellows— Yaroooooh!"

The water was nearly up to Bunter's shoulders. His feet were sticking in disturbed mud. He splashed about frantically.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry, his face suddenly white. "Look!"

The crocodile was heading for Bunter. The hideous, scaly snout showed over the water as the terrible creature started for the hapless Owl, who was splashing blindly in the river.

Harry Wharton leaped from his horse. His rifle was in his hands in a moment. The Bounder grasped Kikolobo's arm.

The tall Kikuyu stood staring at the splashing Owl, making no movement.

"Save him!" panted the Bounder.

"O Bwana," said the Kikuyu, "it is written that one who mocks at N'gai shall die and not live, and your eyes will see the jaws of Ngwena devour the Small Fat One!"

Releasing the Kikuyu's arm, the Bounder rushed back into the water. Harry Wharton was already firing, but the bullets glanced from the scales of the crocodile.

With a desperate rush the Bounder

reached Bunter, and grasped him by a fat arm.

"O Bwana—Bwana-wangu!" shouted the Kikuyu. He woke to sudden activity.

With a spring as swift as that of a leopard, the Kikuyu followed Vernon-Smith.

He was only in time.

The Bounder was dragging Bunter frantically along, splashing and spluttering and howling; but the crocodile was close at hand, and they could never have reached the bank safely.

The Kikuyu, spear in hand, rushed between Ngwena and his prey.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry, watching with starting eyes from the bank.

The juniors plunged knee-deep into the water. It was futile to shoot, and

A CHUCKLE FOR YOU!
 And a useful Sheffield steel penknife for Jack Taylor, of 57, Enfield Road, Fishponds, Bristol, who has sent in the following rousing ribtickler:



"I want some peppah, please," said a somewhat elegant young man, entering a grocer's shop.
 "Yes, sir," said the grocer.
 "White, black, or Cayenne?"
 "No, no," exclaimed the young man, "I mean peppah—writin' peppah!"

It may be
YOUR TURN NEXT, CHUM.
 Pile in with your efforts right away!

the Kikuyu now would have been in danger from the bullets.

They rushed to help Smithy and Bunter; but all depended on the Kikuyu, facing the crocodile, spear in hand.

The native porters had halted on the bank, watching the scene with startled cries.

The Kikuyu's broad-bladed spear flashed in the sun as he struck. To the juniors it seemed that he must be torn down by the shearing jaws of the crocodile. But the Kikuyu had hunted Ngwena many a time in rivers and swamps, and Ngwena had no terrors for him.

The long spear was driven deep in the yawning throat of the crocodile, and snatched back, and driven again with a speed almost of lightning.

The great brute floundered, its tail thrashing the water like a flail, and the Kikuyu, leaping back, escaped the snap of the shutting jaws. The water, tossed into muddy foam, was crimsoned with blood.

"Ow, ow, ow, wow!" Bunter was yelling.

"Quick!" panted the Bounder.

"Ow! You're pulling my arm out, you beast!"

"Fool! Quick!"

The Famous Five reached them, grasped Bunter on all sides, and dragged him to the bank. Bunter yelled and roared and howled, as he splashed and floundered through water and mud.

But he was dragged out, and tossed on the bank in a dripping, spluttering heap.

The Kikuyu followed.

The crocodile, sorely wounded, was splashing in the shallow water of the ford, stirring up thick mud; but the Kikuyu was out of his reach. And by the time Kikolobo stepped on the bank the huge saurian slid away into deeper water.

The juniors, looking from the bank, could see the red wash on the water as it went, and they were glad enough to see it go.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, mopping the perspiration from his face. "Kicky, old bean, I thought you were a goner!"

The Kikuyu smiled.

"O Bwana," he said, "the spear of Kikolobo is as terrible to Ngwena as to Simba of the forest and T'iu of the jungle. It is known throughout the country, from the Big Water to the Great Lakes, that I, Kikolobo, am a mighty hunter, and a slayer of the most terrible beasts."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Good man!" chuckled Nugent.

Self-praise is said to be no recommendation, but it is not the way of the African warrior to hide his light under a bushel. Kikolobo had done a brave deed, and he was not the man to deny it. What would have been absurd boasting in a white man, came natural to the simple, untutored Kikuyu.

"Yet even I, who am well known to be brave and terrible in war with man or beast, would not have fought with Ngwena for the sake of the Small Fat One," said the Kikuyu. "It was only at the command of Bwana-wangu that my terrible spear was lifted."

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Is that how you thank a man for saving your life, you fat villain?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yah! I'm all wet!"

"Do you know that croc nearly had you, fathead, and he would have had me, too, but for Kicky?" exclaimed the Bounder.

"I know you nearly dragged my arm out, you beast! I'm all wet!" hooted Bunter. "Wet to the skin, you beast! And muddy!"

The Kikuyu stared at him.

"Kumbe!" he ejaculated. "The Small Fat One is but a fool!" And he stalked on, giving the Owl of the Remove no further heed.

Bunter glared after him.

"I've a jolly good mind to kick that cheeky nigger!" he gasped. "Look here, Bob Cherry, you kick him for me."

"I'll kick you instead, old bean!"

"Yooop!"

"No, get on your horse, you silly fat-head!" said the Bounder. "Here it is, you clumsy ass. Do you want to be lifted on like a sack of potatoes?"

"Beast! I'm all wet!"

"You'll get dry. It doesn't matter, anyhow. Get on, and shut up!"

Bunter scrambled on his horse. The native porters, with wary eyes open for the crocodile, were treading across the ford with the baggage. The juniors rode on again after Kikolobo. Billy Bunter spluttering with wrath and indignation as he went. Probably Bunter hardly

realised how narrow his escape had been. At all events, he was not deeply troubled with sentiments of gratitude towards the Kikuyu. His only feeling towards that mighty hunter was a desire to kick him.

In the hot sun the fat Owl was soon dry again. But his podgy brow wore a frown as he lumbered on. He did not take comfort till the native village of Malimwe appeared in sight, in the setting sun; a collection of huts surrounded by a "boma," and wide fields of Indian corn.

The head man of Malimwe came out to meet the travellers, and to bid them welcome, which he did in flowing Swahili, incomprehensible to the juniors. Kikolobo answered him in the same musical, courteous, and rather long-winded language. Then the safari entered the village, where the largest hut was placed at the disposal of the "white lords."

At supper, Billy Bunter smiled again. "Thank goodness that rotten safari is over, you fellows!" he remarked. "I'm jolly glad to be out of that. When is your pater getting here, Smithy?"

"To-morrow!" grunted the Bounder. "Thank goodness we shall be able to travel in a car again, instead of sticking on a beastly horse!" said Bunter.

"And look here, Smithy, now the safari's over, you can sack that nigger. I don't like him about. Ho's cheeky."

"He comes in rather useful when a fat idiot tries to tumble into the jaws of a crocodile," remarked the Bounder.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled away to bed. "Isn't he nice?" murmured Bob Cherry. "Isn't his mere presence enough to make any party a success? How they must love him at home—and how I wish they had him there!"

And the juniors turned in, lulled to slumber by the deep and echoing snore of William George Bunter.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Kicky, Too!

HONK! Honk!
It was a welcome sound to the ears of William George Bunter, though it woke him from balmy slumber at the early hour of ten in the morning.

It was, at least, a sound of civilisation; and Bunter sat up and took notice, as the motor-horn hooted through the village of Malimwe.

Harry Wharton & Co. had long been up.

They had been rambling round the village when the hoot of the motor-horn warned them that Mr. Vernon-Smith was coming.

The millionaire's magnificent car rolled up, with the portly gentleman sitting in it, followed by the baggage-car.

Crowds of interested natives gathered round to stare at the cars, unusual enough in that remote district of Kenya.

In those regions, in fact, it was much more customary to travel by horseback or mule-back, or on foot; or in trek-wagons, introduced into Kenya from South Africa. Plenty of motor-cars might be seen whizzing on the roads round Nairobi, but up-country they were rare.

But Mr. Vernon-Smith was a business gentleman whose time was of tremendous value, and he had no time for the slow and cumbrous progress of a span of oxen drawing a huge wagon;

neither was he comfortable in the saddle. His portly form was more used to a padded swivel-chair in an office than to the saddle; and expense was no object to the millionaire. So the biggest and most expensive motor-car in Kenya Colony came rolling into Malimwe, much to the admiration of the natives.

"Here we are, dad!" called out the Bounder.

Mr. Vernon-Smith gave his son an affectionate grin.

"So you're here, Herbert!" He shook hands with the Bounder, and gave the Famous Five a cheery nod. "Enjoyed yourselves in the jungle, what, what?"

"Oh, no end!" said Smithy.

"The enjoyfulness was terrific and tremendous, esteemed sahib," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"You've not been running into danger, I hope?" asked the millionaire.

"Nothing to speak of," said the Bounder, with a grin. "Are you stopping here, father, or going on?"

"Going on, if you boys are ready to start," answered Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"It's a long way up to Caminho, and I've no time to lose."

"We're ready."

"Better call Bunter," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Ready, Bunter?"

"I haven't had my brekker yet, fat-head."

Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced at him.

"Come, come," he said. "You haven't breakfasted at ten in the morning! I have done thirty miles this morning. Come, come! You had better have a snack in the car."

"Oh, really, sir—"

Mr. Vernon-Smith turned away, to speak to his son. Billy Bunter gave his portly back an indignant glare.

But he did not venture to argue with the millionaire. He proceeded to make hurried preparations for departure. He did not want to be left behind at Malimwe; and so business-like a gentleman as Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was not likely to wait long.

The native porters who had been employed in the safari had already been dismissed. But Kikolobo remained.

Now that the safari was over, the Kikuyu's engagement was at an end; his services as guide and hunter were not required in travelling with Mr. Vernon-Smith on his business trips.

But the Kikuyu seemed reluctant to go. He had formed an attachment for the Bounder, and seemed disinclined to part with "Bwana-wangu."

"You've sent the porters home, Herbert?" asked the millionaire, as his eyes fell on the tall figure of the Kikuyu.

"Yes, father."

"But this man—what is his name? Kicky—Kooky—what—what?"

"Kikolobo," said Smithy. "He's got a present for you."

"A—a—a present for me!" ejaculated the millionaire, in astonishment.

"A lion's skin," explained the Bounder. "But for Kicky, I should most likely be inside that skin at the present moment, as well as the lion."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The Kikuyu came forward. He laid a magnificent lion's skin at the feet of the millionaire, who stared at it blankly.

"O Bwana-m'kubwa!" said the Kikuyu gravely. "This is the skin of Simba, from whose jaws the Bwana saved this Kikuyu, when Usiku was dark on the forests of Masalindi. With my terrible spear I slew Simba; yet but

for the Bwana I should have fallen to his jaws, even I, a mighty hunter."

"Good gad!" repeated Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Herbert, you young rascal, what have you been up to? I told you distinctly that you were not to go into any danger."

The Bounder chuckled. "You see, dad, I didn't ask the lion to call," he explained. "He sort of butted in uninvited. I think he wanted his supper."

"Good gad!" gasped Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"O Bwana m'kubwa, I pray you to accept the skin of Simba, in remembrance of the noble courage of the young Bwana!" said the Kikuyu.

"Certainly—certainly," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. His plump face expanded in a smile. Praise of his son was a passport to Mr. Vernon-Smith's esteem. He beamed on the Kikuyu. "Let it be placed in the baggage-car—I shall certainly take that skin home to England! You are a good fellow, Kicky—Kooky—what is your name? A very good fellow indeed!"

"And if it is pleasing in the eyes of the Bwana-m'kubwa, this Kikuyu desires to remain with the young Bwana," said Kikolobo. "For though I am a great chief and a mighty hunter, famed all through this land from the Big Water to the Great Nyanza, I am proud to serve the Bwana as his servant."

"Let him come, dad," said the Bounder, with a grin. "Kicky is no end of a knut, and we all like him."

"The likefulness is terrific."

"By all means," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, smiling. "Let him have a seat in the baggage-car, by all means."

"The feet of this Kikuyu will follow the fire-wagon of the Bwana-m'kubwa," said Kikolobo.

Mr. Vernon-Smith laughed. "You will soon lose sight of us on foot, Kooky—Kicky—"

"The feet of Kikolobo are as swift as the wind in the forest," answered the Kikuyu. "O Bwana, my eyes will see you again at Caminho."

And when Mr. Vernon-Smith's car rolled out of Malimwe, with the baggage-car following, the tall Kikuyu was seen striding in the rear. The massive figure in monkey-skins soon vanished from sight, however, though the juniors had no doubt that they would see Kikolobo again, at the Caminho Concession, for which they were bound.

The big car jolted and jerked on a rough track. Billy Bunter, sitting in a corner with a basket of provisions on his fat knees, was occupied in taking a snack—a snack which lasted a considerable time, and was extensive enough to furnish several square meals for any other fellow.

While Bunter packed away the food-stuffs the juniors gave Mr. Vernon-Smith an account of their adventures on safari, and the millionaire's face became very grave when they told of the encounter with Krantz, the slave-trader.

"You have been in very grave danger," he said. "Fortunately, you are done with the scoundrel now; he will not venture within reach of the askaris. You were right to give up the safari, Herbert."

The Bounder grinned.

"Give the credit to Bunter," he said. "Bunter was the only fellow in the party with cold feet."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Well, well, I am glad you are safe out of the jungle, at all events," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, "and I am very glad to have you with me. You will see



From the trees that bordered the narrow jungle track a lion leaped into the path of the oncoming car containing the Greyfriars party.

some interesting sights where we are going."

"What sort of a show is it?" asked the Bounder.

"A timber concession of immense extent," said the millionaire. "It is probable that I shall take over the concession, if I can come to terms with Mr. Caminho. It is a very solitary place—sixty miles at least from any other white man's residence—and I understand that Senhor Caminho is the only white man there. I have been negotiating with the agent in Nairobi; but it is necessary to see Mr. Caminho personally, and to survey the concession. A Portuguese gentleman—Manoel Caminho—"

"He speaks English, I suppose?" asked Smithy.

"Yes; I am told that he speaks excellent English," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Otherwise, it would be useless for me to see him, as I do not speak Portuguese. We shall stay at his bungalow for a week or so, and you boys will find plenty to entertain you."

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Bob.

"The entertainfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Honk, honk, honk!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Something on the road!" said Bob. "What— Why, my hat! Look!"

Honk, honk, honk!

"A lion!" gasped Nugent.

"Great gad!"

From the trees that bordered the track a black-maned lion leaped. He stood staring at the approaching car, lashing his flanks with his tail. In answer to the honking of the horn a loud roar reverberated.

Honk, honk, honk!

The Eurasian chauffeur honked on the horn and accelerated. The car swept down on the lion, and the beast, with a howl, leaped back into the trees and disappeared.

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The cars rushed on. The roar of Simba followed from the forest, and died away in the distance behind.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Strange Reception I

"LIKE a jolly old cathedral!" said Bob Cherry.

It was strangely like.

The road, or, rather, track, wound through an immense forest, which, Mr. Vernon-Smith informed the juniors, was a part of the great Caminho Concession.

Huge trees spread their branches, interlaced, at a height of from fifty to sixty feet. High above them, a second roof of branches jutted from trunks seventy or eighty feet high.

It was late afternoon, the sun, a red ball in the western sky, the sky a study in purple and crimson and gold. But under the great branches of the timber forest a perpetual twilight reigned.

Here and there a brilliant beam of sunlight came through an opening in the foliage, almost like the beam of a torch. But, for the most part, all was dim and shady, reminding the juniors irresistibly of a vast cathedral, with "storied windows richly dight, casting a dim religious light."

The track was rough enough, and the car jolted and bumped and rocked, and Mr. Vernon-Smith had to be content with a moderate speed. Billy Bunter, seeking to nap in his corner, was awakened every other minute by the jolting of the big car, much to his annoyance and indignation.

The party had lunched en route, halting for an hour or so in the shade of mighty cedars. After lunch the cars ran on again, following the winding track through the forest that led to the house of the Portuguese concessionaire, Senhor Manoel Caminho.

They were to reach the house early in the evening, according to schedule. But the ground was not covered so quickly as Mr. Vernon-Smith was wont to cover ground. The rough road was

one cause, and the uncertainty of the route another. Tracks branched off through the forest, and several times they had to halt and inquire of native wood-cutters which was the main route.

Harry Wharton & Co., while on safari, had seen some big forests; but the timber concession of Caminho was on a greater scale. Some of the huge trees must have been many centuries old. Many of them were draped with greybeard moss in massive festoons. Here and there was a clearing, where timber had been felled; and again, in other places, they saw new plantations of young trees.

Timber, they learned from Mr. Vernon-Smith, was already an industry in the young colony of Kenya, and was going to be a bigger one. And Mr. Vernon-Smith was going to have something to do with it, and he ran a business-like eye over the vast tracks of forest as the car jolted on.

While the silence and shady dimness of the forest reminded the juniors of a cathedral, Mr. Vernon-Smith's thoughts were following less poetical lines. He was thinking of the price of timber, cost of cutting, native wages, methods of transport, the likelihood of the Kenya railways continuing to burn wood fuel, and so forth.

As for the glorious sunset that glowed here and there through openings in the thick foliage, Mr. Vernon-Smith hardly noticed it at all. Sunsets had absolutely no commercial value.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's some of the jolly old wood-cutters!" remarked Bob Cherry, as the car ran into a wide clearing, where a number of natives, in red blankets, were at work.

Three or four tracks branched off from the big clearing, and the Eurasian chauffeur slowed down to inquire the way once more.

A man in dingy white drill and a Terai hat, evidently a foreman, was in

charge of the natives, and he looked round at the car in surprise.

He was a white man, or partly white; a Portuguese half-caste, apparently. His black eyes, gleaming from a dark, olive face, were fixed on the car, and he came towards it as it halted.

Mr. Vernon-Smith leaned out.

The half-caste touched his hat, with a sort of surly politeness, staring at the millionaire. It was evident that he was surprised to see the arrival of the party.

"Speak English?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith briskly.

"Sim, senhor! Yes," said the half-caste. "What do you want here, senhor? This road leads only to Caminho."

"I am going to Caminho," answered the millionaire.

"O que!" ejaculated the half-caste.

"I am going to see Mr. Caminho," explained the millionaire. "Will you point out the right road?"

The half-caste foreman stared at him instead of replying. The juniors looked at him curiously.

Why he hesitated to answer was a mystery to them, neither was it clear why he was surprised at their arrival.

"Sim, sim, senhor," said the man at last. "But, tell me, is Senhor Caminho expecting you at Boa Vista?"

"Certainly!"

The man raised his arm slowly, and pointed to a track that led away into the dim forest.

"That is your way, senhor," he said, and, turning, went back to the group of natives, who had stopped work to stare at the car.

"Drive on!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The car glided on again, with the baggage-car in the rear. The Bouncer looked back from the window.

The half-caste had been busily occupied directing the native wood-cutters when the car arrived. Now he left them, and, with every appearance of haste, disappeared into the wood.

He vanished from sight in a few moments.

"What's up with that johnny, I wonder!" said Vernon-Smith, staring after the man as he vanished. "He didn't seem jolly pleased to see us. What the thump has he cut off like that for?"

"Gone to tell the boss we're coming, perhaps," said Bob.

"We should get there first in the car."

"May be a short cut through the forest."

The Bouncer nodded.

The car glided on, bumping and jolting more than ever. The track grew rougher and rougher, and narrower and narrower, and here and there the trees and undergrowths encroached on it. Branches brushed by the windows and scratched along the sides.

The pace grew slower and slower.

The chauffeur halted at last and looked round at his master for instructions.

The track, already narrow, had dwindled to a mere footpath, where there was no room for a car to pass among the trees.

Obviously, they were not on the right road for Boa Vista, which was the name of the Portuguese gentleman's dwelling.

Mr. Vernon-Smith gave a snort.

"Extraordinary!" he ejaculated.

He stared from the car, puzzled and angry.

Evidently the half-caste foreman had given a wrong direction. The car had reached the end of a track that led nowhere.

"Is the man mad?" snapped Mr.

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Vernon-Smith. "He must know every track in the place, as he is employed here. He has sent us in the wrong direction. By gad! I will speak to Mr. Caminho about this. The man must be mad!"

There was nothing for it but to back the cars, the track being too thickly closed in with trees for turning.

Slowly and laboriously the two cars backed the way they had come—a slow and weary business.

Mr. Vernon-Smith almost fumed.

It was a waste of time; and after a day's travelling Mr. Vernon-Smith was in need of a rest. The foreman's action in misdirecting the travellers was simply inexplicable. Certainly, he did not look like a man to play a foolish, practical joke on strangers; moreover, he was to be called to account for playing such a trick. It was really amazing.

The Bouncer set his lips.

"I don't get on to this," he said. "That fellow deliberately sent us on the wrong track to waste time, while he cut off another way. What on earth was his game?"

"I give that one up!" said Bob. "Beats me hollow!"

"The hollowfulness is terrific!"

"By gad! If I take over this concession, there's a man who will be sacked, short and sharp!" growled Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The cars backed and backed and backed, till they reached at last the clearing where the foreman had met the party. The natives in red blankets were still at work there; but there was no sign of the man in dingy drill and the Terai hat.

From the clearing a much broader track ran in another direction, and Mr. Vernon-Smith directed the chauffeur to take it.

This, evidently, was the right road, for, after a few miles had been covered, a house came in sight.

It was a long, low, wooden building, built in the bungalow style, with green-painted verandas along the front, on which innumerable shuttered windows opened. The door, in a creeper-covered porch, was wide open; and as the car ran up a drive towards the house, a dark-faced man in a Terai hat came out and disappeared round the building.

"That's the man!" said Bob Cherry.

It was the half-caste foreman; and there could be little doubt now that he had misdirected the travellers in order to arrive at the house before them. Why, was a mystery. Senhor Caminho might have desired to know that his visitors were coming; but he could scarcely have approved of the foreman's methods. The man was out of sight in a moment, evidently not desiring an interview with the travellers he had deluded.

"Well, here we are, anyhow!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully.

The cars halted and the party alighted. Mr. Vernon-Smith was looking perturbed and irritated, as was natural in the circumstances.

In a house of such dimensions, belonging to a wealthy man, the juniors had expected to see a swarm of native servants. But the great rambling building seemed deserted. A single black man came out of the porch; a burly Dinka, in a dingy cotton kanzu, with bare feet and fuzzy head. He approached the party, staring at them. Mr. Vernon-Smith gave him a glare.

"Is Mr. Caminho at home?" he demanded.

The Dinka, apparently, did not speak English. But he nodded and grinned at the name of Caminho, and signed

to the millionaire to follow him into the house.

The portly gentleman walked ponderously in and the juniors followed. They exchanged curious looks as they went.

"Blessed if I make this out!" granted the Bouncer. "This isn't the sort of reception the pater expected here!"

"I say, you fellows, I hope there's some supper," said Billy Bunter anxiously. "I say, I'm hungry!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Well, I'm jolly hungry——"

"Fathead!"

The Dinka pulled aside a curtain and showed the visitors into a long, low, shady room, opening off the hall-way. A scent of strong tobacco-smoke smote them as they entered.

It proceeded from a thick, black cheroot, in the mouth of a slight, wizened, dark-skinned Portuguese, who rose from a Madeira chair and stared at them without removing the cheroot.

"Entre, senhores!" he said politely. "You are welcome to my poor house. But who are you and what do you want?"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Queer!

"SENHOR CAMINHO?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Sim, senhor!"

"I am Mr. Vernon-Smith."

"De veras?" The little Portuguese bowed, his black eyes, like pin-points of jet, fixed on the millionaire's puzzled, perturbed face. "It is an honour to meet you, senhor! You travel in this region, yes?"

The millionaire stared.

"Did you not expect me?" he asked.

"There are so few travellers in this region, senhor. So very few. You are not of the Government?"

"What? No! Certainly not."

The juniors, in a silent group, were watching the Portuguese curiously. Mr. Vernon-Smith was amazed and disturbed by his strange reception at Boa Vista and the schoolboys shared his astonishment.

So far as they could see, Senhor Caminho was not expecting the millionaire; and indeed had supposed that he might be some Government forestry inspector.

It was amazing.

"The hospitality of my poor house," went on the Portuguese, "is unfortunately limited at the present moment. Owing to trouble with my native servants, I have discharged them all, excepting for one Dinka, who is very faithful. I am not, therefore, in a position to extend a welcome to chance travellers. I am desolated, senhor, but such is the case."

Mr. Vernon-Smith snorted.

He was puzzled, and he was getting angry.

Apparently the concessionaire took the party for a touring party who had dropped in to ask for hospitality for the night. Seemingly he had totally forgotten the arrangements made with Mr. Vernon-Smith, even to the extent of having forgotten that important gentleman himself.

"I don't understand this, Mr. Caminho!" snapped the millionaire. "I am Mr. Vernon-Smith—Samuel Vernon-Smith."

"Muito bem! Very good!" assented the senhor, with another bow.

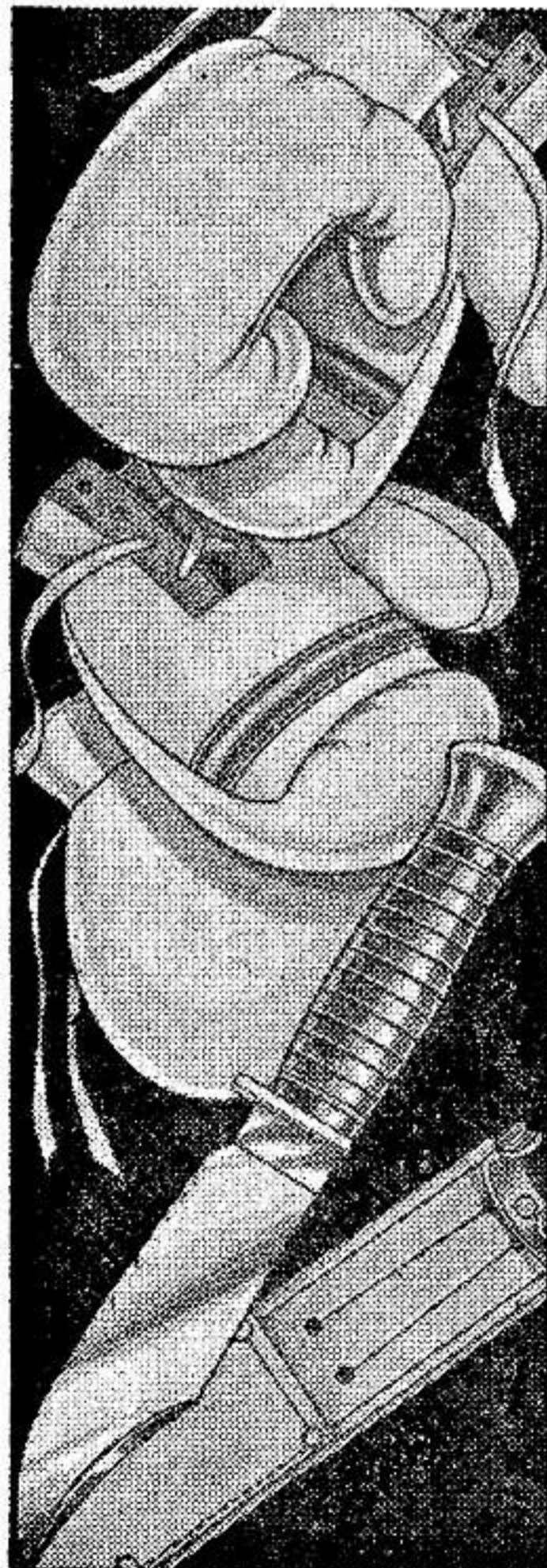
"You know my name, I suppose?" snorted the millionaire.

"I am desolated to say that I do not.

(Continued on page 12.)

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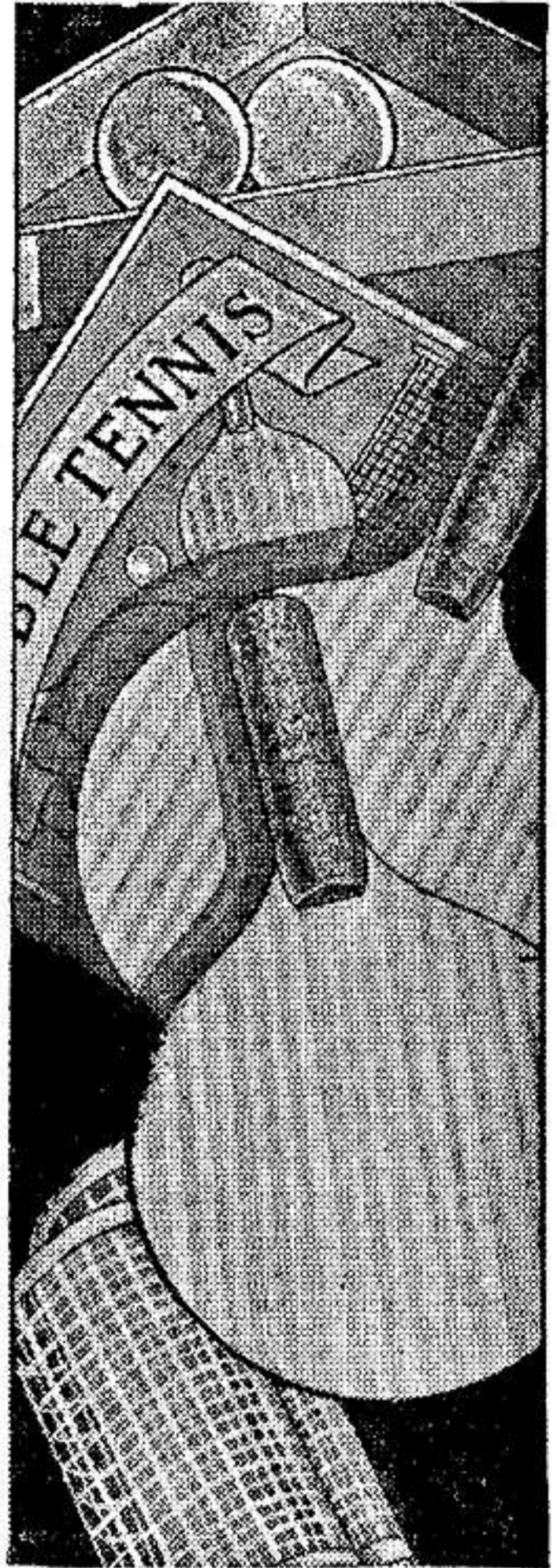


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THE JUNGLE HIKERS!

(Continued from page 10.)

senhor! So far, I have not had the distinction of meeting you."

"I know that. I've never met you before; but I've dealt with your agents at Nairobi."

"My agents?" repeated the Portuguese.

"Jacobs & Jacobs, of Government Road, Nairobi."

The little black eyes of the Portuguese narrowed.

"Bon! It is true that Jacobs & Jacobs are my agents, senhor," he said. "This timber concession is in the market, and it is in the hands of Jacobs & Jacobs. I begin to see, senhor. Jacobs have recommended you to see me with a view to buy, yes?"

"I presume, sir, that you cannot have forgotten that we have already been in negotiation!" hooted the irritated millionaire. "I have been staying, as you must know, at the Milsom coffee plantation in Naivasha, which I have recently purchased. From that address I have been in communication with you, and many letters have been exchanged."

The juniors, watching the Portuguese with curious eyes, saw him breathe quickly.

He seemed to them like a man who found himself suddenly in strange circumstances, and was warily on his guard.

But what it all meant was a mystery, unless Senhor Caminho suffered from loss of memory.

"You have my letters—I have yours!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith gruffly. "Negotiations have advanced to a certain point. I am here to survey the concession with my own eyes, and, at your invitation, to remain in your house while I do so. And I should like to know, Mr. Caminho, what the dooce you mean by this?"

There was a moment's silence.

"Senhor," said the Portuguese, at length, "I demand your pardon! I have been in negotiation with many, and my poor memory is not good. A touch of malaria, senhor. It affects me severely, and in strange ways. Please be seated, senhor, and let us talk."

"I don't understand this!" grunted Mr. Vernon-Smith. "If you mean that you do not want the negotiations to go on, say so frankly, and I will leave in my car at once, and not trouble you further."

"Nao, senhor, nao! No, sir! Not at all! I desire very much for the negotiations to proceed," said the Portuguese quickly. "I stand by every word I have written to you, senhor. You will offend me seriously, senhor, if you leave my house. I have lately discharged all my servants except one, but what hospitality I can offer, senhor, I offer with a whole heart. It is an honour to welcome you under my poor roof, senhor."

"I have my own servants with me, and, in any case, I am here on business, and can dispense with comforts," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "But I am bound to say that I am surprised—"

"I understand you, senhor! But—I have explained—malaria is a strange thing, and it affects me the memory. I can only beg you to excuse me, and to forgive my seeming want of courtesy," said the Portuguese earnestly. "I am entirely at your service, senhor. I beg you to be seated!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith, a little mollified, sat down.

He was, as a matter of fact, very keen on securing the timber concession, and disinclined to take offence if he could help it.

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Senhor Caminho glanced at the juniors.

"Your sons, senhor?" he asked. "I congratulate you on so large and fine a family!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry involuntarily.

Mr. Vernon-Smith grinned.

"One of the boys is my son," he said. "This lad, Herbert. The others are his school friends, who are on a holiday with him. It was mentioned in our correspondence, Mr. Caminho, that the boys might come here with me, and it was settled that—"

"True—true!" The Portuguese touched his dusky forehead apologetically. "Pardon, senhor, one thousand times! To-morrow I shall be better; but to-day is one of my worst attacks, and I am not myself. When the fever is on me, senhor, I am nothing; I think of nothing; I forget all things, even the name of my Dinka servant. Indeed, it is for reasons of health, senhor, that I desire to sell this so valuable timber area at small price, to return to my native Portugal."

Neither Mr. Vernon-Smith nor the juniors knew much of malaria and its effects; but certainly they would not have supposed that the wizened little Portuguese, who looked as hard as wire and as tough as hickory, was suffering from that or any other complaint.

Still, as he had no conceivable motive for lying, his explanation had to be taken at its face value. It was obvious, at least, that Mr. Vernon-Smith's arrival and his very name, had come as a surprise to him, and, in view of their previous correspondence, that could only be explained by a strange lapse of memory.

"Such hospitality as I can offer, sir, in the absence of my servants, will be given from my heart," said the senhor. "The Dinka is a good cook, and if you have your own servants, all is well. Rooms shall be prepared—all shall be done. Senhor, I beg you to believe that I am delighted, enchanted, to welcome you and these handsome lads to my poor house."

He clapped his hands, and the brawny Dinka entered, with a lurking grin on his black face.

The Portuguese spoke to him in a language totally unknown to the visitors, and the Dinka hurried out, apparently to make arrangements for the accommodation of the party.

Senhor Caminho spoke a few agreeable words to the juniors, evidently with the desire to make a friendly impression, and then suggested that they might like to look about the place before dark while he conversed with the Senhor Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton & Co. were not sorry to get out of the fumes of the thick, black cheroot, and they were quite willing to be dismissed.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was left alone with the Portuguese, and the juniors walked out of the porch.

The Bounder was frowning.

"This is rather rotten, you men," he said. "I didn't know I was letting you in for this sort of thing."

"What's the odds, so long as you're 'appy?" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We shall be all right here. I can't quite make out that Portuguese, but he seems to want to be civil."

"Greasy blighter!" grunted the Bounder.

"Seems a bit of a queer fish," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "It beats me how he can have forgotten that your father was coming, and even his name. But—"

"The queerfulness is terrific!"

"But it's all serene, Smithy," said Harry. "We shall have a ripping time here, old bean!"

"Might have been on safari, but for that fat fool, Bunter!" growled the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Oh, we'll dig up lots of things here," said Nugent. "Kicky will be along to-morrow, too."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here, what about supper?" demanded Billy Bunter warmly.

"Better ask that Dinka!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "Come and let's have a walk round, you fellows."

"Let's!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"But I say, you fellows, I'm hungry!" wailed Bunter.

"Go and eat coke!" suggested the Bounder.

"Beast!"

The juniors walked out, leaving Billy Bunter taking a rest in a cane chair on the veranda. The Owl of the Remove glared after them, but his indignant glare had no effect on the backs of their heads. With the selfishness Bunter had learned to expect of them, they did not seem to care two straws whether he was hungry or not.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Island in the Lake I

HARRY WHARTON & Co. slept soundly enough their first night at Boa Vista.

The timber country was nearly eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, and it was cool and keen and invigorating. The night, in fact, was cold—very cold, though they were hardly a day's march from the Equator. The difference from the jungle where they had gone on safari was great, and, so far as comfort was concerned, it was a change very much for the better.

But the juniors could not help realising that they were in strange quarters.

A host who suffered from such lapses of memory as to have forgotten an expected guest, and even his name, was queer enough to begin with—extremely queer.

Then it was odd enough that Senhor Caminho should have sacked all his servants before their arrival, remaining alone in a great rambling place with only one attendant.

It would have been very awkward for the visitors, but for the fact that Mr. Vernon-Smith had brought servants and supplies in his big baggage-car, having had to stop at all sorts of places on his journey up to the timber country.

He had not expected to need them at Boa Vista; but they came in very useful in the peculiar circumstances.

So far as hospitality went, the Portuguese left little to be desired; indeed, he seemed almost to ooze with effusive welcome.

The rooms assigned to the juniors were large and airy, and comfortably furnished, and even clean, which looked as if Mr. Caminho's servants had attended carefully to their work before he had sacked them in such a wholesale fashion.

Supper had been late, and Bunter had awaited it with many groans; but when it was ready it was good and ample, and even the Owl of the Remove had been satisfied.

In every way the Portuguese had tried to make his guests feel at home, and to a considerable extent he had succeeded

in removing the first bad impression they had received.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had seemed in a good humour, and he had spent most of the evening in a long business talk. They were still going strong, and smoking cheroots, when the juniors went to bed.

Senhor Caminho had listened, with gesticulations of indignation, to the account of his foreman's conduct in misdirecting the visitors, and had declared that the man should be severely reprimanded.

Strango as had been his reception of the millionaire, there seemed no doubt that Mr. Caminho was glad he had come. Neither was there any doubt that he had succeeded in getting on the right side of Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The juniors, perhaps, guessed why Mr. Vernon-Smith was so good-humoured, but if they had not guessed the Bounder would have enlightened them.

"The pater's on to a good thing," Smithy told them, with a grin. "That Portugee is anxious to sell and get out of the country. Health, I suppose, though I fancy this is as healthy a place as you'll find anywhere in Africa. I shouldn't wonder if the pater is bagging this show about five thousand pounds cheaper than he expected. I know that look in the pater's jolly old eye."

If that was the case, no doubt Mr. Vernon-Smith had cause for satisfaction; and certainly he seemed to have got on the very best of terms with Senhor Caminho.

Possibly the prospect of an excessively good bargain blinded the millionaire to circumstances that might otherwise have puzzled him, as they puzzled the juniors.

Anyhow, he seemed quite pleased and satisfied, and prepared to take things at Boa Vista as he found them.

Except for the foreman, Joaz Vino, there was no other white man about the place, and he was only half a white man, or rather less. The nearest residence of a white man was sixty miles away.

In strolling about the place the juniors had come across several of the men employed in cutting timber, who had saluted them civilly; but the language they spoke was incomprehensible. They were Baganda, from Uganda. One of them had a few words of English, and Smithy had been speaking to him when the foreman, Vino, came up and ordered the man away. And the juniors noticed, though without specially heeding, that after that incident none of the woodmen came anywhere near the house; not one of them was seen again.

There was no doubt that the Greyfriars party were in rather strange quarters, though as yet they little dreamed how strange.

They slept soundly after their long journey, and turned out in the bright dawn.

The Famous Five and Smithy were down early, leaving William George Bunter fast asleep and snoring.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had brought three Kikuyu servants, who seemed to be pulling well with the grinning Dinka, and the guests at Boa Vista found their wants looked after.

Bunter was still snoring when they finished breakfast and went out of the house. Mr. Vernon-Smith and Senhor Caminho were left talking in the shady veranda, apparently hard at business matters again.

"Jolly place!" said Bob Cherry.

"Some scenery!"

"Yes, rather!"

"You fellows will be bored here!"

grunted the Bounder.

The Famous Five smiled. They were not in the least bored, but probably the Bounder himself was getting into

little clearings where the woodcutters had been at work, but none of the Baganda were to be seen.

Some of the work was quite recent, and, in fact, unfinished; but it seemed to have been left in that state for some reason.

Not a soul was to be seen in the shady forest; not a sound of an axe reached their ears.

At a distance of a half-mile from Boa Vista the stream broadened out into a shallow pool of great extent, shadowed all round by trees.

In the pool, or rather lake, there was a small, wooded island, and rather to their surprise the juniors discerned a wooden building among the trees on the island.



Bunter crept close behind the Bounder's chair, then suddenly jammed the juicy mango down his neck. There was a yell of fury from Smithy, and Bunter made a swift jump back.

that state. But the chums of the Remove had not come to Kenya to be bored.

"My dear chap, it's ripping here," said Wharton. "It would be a bit more exciting on safari, perhaps; but a safari might be too jolly exciting, you know. We don't want to meet Mr. Krantz again."

"I do!" growled the Bounder.

"Not much chance," said Bob, laughing. "Your pater said that the askaris are going after him, and I fancy he will clear right out of Kenya."

"This looks jolly!" remarked Frank Nugent.

The juniors had walked into the forest and reached the bank of a glimmering stream. It glimmered and sang and gurgled among huge ferns and tall nettles with pink blooms, barred by the shadows of cedar branches.

The juniors followed the stream. In two or three places they came on

It was a wooden hut, with corrugated iron roof, and only one window that they could see, and that was covered by a closed shutter.

Halting on the bank of the lake, the juniors looked across the water at the hut on the island. Shallow water about thirty yards in width separated them from it.

"Queer place for a hut!" remarked Bob. "How the dickens do they get to it? Can't see any boat or canoe."

"Wading, I suppose," said Harry Wharton. "The water's not more than two feet deep. Some native's hut, I suppose."

"Nobody seems to be there," said Bob. "Anybody feel inclined to wade in two feet of water and have a look round the island?"

"Looks a jolly place for a swim," said Harry. "Mr. Caminho has told us to



(Continued from page 13.)

make ourselves at home here, so I suppose we can swim if we like. No crocs here, either."

"Let's!" said Nugent.

"Might as well," grunted the Bounder.

Smithy seemed in rather a discontented mood, and was, perhaps, already regretting that he had allowed Bunter to have his way and "chuck" the safari.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes somebody in a hurry!" ejaculated Bob Cherry; and the juniors turned their heads and looked back at the sound of rapid pattering feet.

It was the half-caste foreman who was approaching, and he came up at a breathless run. The Greyfriars fellows watched him in astonishment. He was signing to them as he came on, though they did not catch the meaning of the signs.

He came up, panting.

"What is this?" he exclaimed angrily. "What are you doing here?"

"We were going to swim in the lake and land on the island," said Harry Wharton, speaking civilly, though the man's manner was irritating enough.

"You must not—you shall not!" snapped Joaz Vino. "Go back at once; go back and do not meddle with what does not concern you. Go back to the house, and go at once!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Finds Trouble!

JOAZ VINO had placed himself between the Greyfriars fellows and the margin of the lake. He faced them, still panting after his rapid run, his black eyes glittering. There was anger in his swarthy face, and, it seemed to the schoolboys, something of alarm, though why he should be either angry or alarmed was strange enough.

The Famous Five exchanged glances.

Their faces were rather grim.

They were not in the least inclined to take orders from Mr. Vino, and his manner was as unpleasant as it could possibly have been. At the same time, as they were Mr. Caminho's guests, and the man was his foreman, they were dubious about entering into a dispute with him.

But the Bounder, already in an irritated mood, was not thinking of such considerations.

He made a step towards the half-caste, his eyes gleaming under his knitted brows.

"Confound your impudence!" he exclaimed. "What the thump do you mean?"

"You will go back!" said Joaz Vino. "You must not swim in this lake—it is forbidden."

"Mind your own business!" snapped the Bounder. "For two pins I'd up-end

you into the water, you coffee-coloured sweep, for sending us on the wrong road yesterday!"

The half-caste's eyes glittered fiercely. But he made an effort to control his temper.

"Senhor, I am sorry!" he said, more civilly. "If you desire to swim, I will show you to a place where it is safe, and where you may swim all you wish. Here there are water-snakes, and they are dangerous."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"Well, if that's the case, we certainly don't want to swim in the pool," said Harry. "But you might have said so civilly at first, Mr. Vino."

"Desculpe me—excuse me!" said the half-caste. "I am sorry! I regret! But there are water-snakes. I was alarmed for your safety."

"Oh, all serene! Let's get back, Smithy," said Harry.

The Bounder did not move.

"I don't believe a word of it!" he said deliberately. "I can't see any water-snakes, anyhow."

"They are at the bottom till they are disturbed," said Joaz Vino.

"And doesn't it disturb them when a man wades across to the island?" asked the Bounder.

"No one ever goes there now, senhor. When the hut on the island was used a canoe was kept here."

"That hut isn't used now?"

"Nao, senhor."

"And nobody goes to the island?"

"No one."

"You can tell that to somebody else!" said the Bounder coolly. "If you use your eyes, Mr. Vino, you will see tracks on the earth here, which shows that somebody walks down to the water—and I suppose he doesn't do that just to look at the lake and walk back again."

The juniors grinned.

The muddy earth on the margin of the lake, as a matter of fact, showed sign of boots as well as their own.

The half-caste breathed quickly.

"Some of the Baganda, perhaps," he muttered.

"Do the Baganda wear boots?" asked Smithy sarcastically. "Boofs have trodden here—either yours or Mr. Caminho's, as there's nobody else about the place wears boots." Smithy glanced at the tracks in the mud, and then at the new tracks made by the foreman's mosquito-boots. "They're your tracks, Mr. Vino. You come here yourself sometimes, and you've been across to the island, as you didn't come here for nothing. Did the water-snakes give you a lot of trouble?"

Harry Wharton & Co. watched the man's dark, angry face curiously. It was evident that he had been lying, and that his reason for wishing to keep them off the island in the lake was certainly not for the reason he had given.

He seemed for the moment at a loss for a reply, but it was clear that he intended to keep the schoolboys away from the lake. He remained where he was, barring them from the water.

"Anyhow, let's cut, Smithy," said Frank Nugent pacifically. "We don't want a row with Mr. Caminho's foreman."

"We're not goin' to cut!" said the Bounder. "We're goin' to do exactly as we dashed well like! And that coffee-coloured sweep can go and eat coke, and be hanged to him!"

Joaz Vino showed his teeth in a snarl. "You will go!" he said. "You must go!"

"We shall not go!" answered the Bounder coolly. "I don't know what your game is, Mr. Vino, but you want a lesson in manners! You sent us on

the wrong road yesterday, telling us dashed lies, while you cut off to the house through the wood! Now you're taking it on yourself to order us off here! We're Mr. Caminho's guests, and we don't give a rap for you! Stand aside!"

Joaz Vino breathed hard.

"Senhor, if you walk back to the house and speak to the master, he will tell you that you must not go on the island," he said.

"I don't mean to take the trouble! I'm going to swim in that lake, and I'm going on the island!" retorted the Bounder.

"Smithy, old man—" murmured Bob.

"You fellows can cut, if you like, if you choose to be hectorated by a coffee-faced, cheeky rat!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm going to do as I say! And if that fellow doesn't stand aside, I'm going to shift him!"

The Famous Five looked, as they felt, extremely uncomfortable. They certainly did not want a row with the half-caste; but, at the same time, his attempt to order them off was irritating, and they were fully prepared to back up Smithy.

"Are you getting out of the way, Mr. Joaz Vino?" asked the Bounder, taking a step nearer the scowling half-caste.

"Nao, nao, senhor! I tell you I speak by the authority of the master. And if you will ask him—"

"Rats!"

"I say, Smithy, that's square enough," said Bob. "We can ask Senhor Caminho. And if the man's telling the truth—"

"He's told us too many lies already!" sneered the Bounder. "He lied to us yesterday, and now he's pitched a tale about water-snakes. I don't know what his game is, unless he's just trying to throw his weight about. But I'm not standing his dashed impudence! Get aside, you sweep!"

"I tell you—"

"I'll shift you if you don't!"

"Fool!" snapped Joaz Vino. "You shall not swim in the lake! You shall go back to the house!"

The Bounder, wasting no more time in words, advanced on the man and gave him a shove aside.

Joaz Vino's black eyes blazed, and he laid hands on the Bounder and flung him back.

"By gad!" panted Vernon-Smith.

His eyes blazed as he leaped at the half-caste. His fist, clenched and hard, crashed full into the swarthy face, and Joaz Vino went backwards as if he had been shot, and landed on his back in the water with a tremendous splash.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Knife in Hand!

SPLASH!

"Oh crumbs!"

"My esteemed Smithy—"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the half-caste, sprawling and splashing in the shallow lake.

The water had closed over him; but he was up in a moment, spluttering and spitting like a cat with fury.

The Bounder stood on the bank, his fists still clenched, his eyes gleaming. He was ready for more trouble if the half-caste wanted more.

Judging by his looks, the half-caste did.

With the water washing round his waist, he clutched at his Terai hat which was floating away, and caught it and jammed it back on his greasy, black

nair. Then he came wading and splashing ashore, with a deadly glitter in his eyes.

"Look out, Smithy, old bean!" muttered Nugent.

The Bounder laughed contemptuously.

Joaz Vno came splashing out of the lake. The juniors gathered close to Smithy, watchful for trouble. The deadly rage in the face of the half-caste was a little alarming, and his hand was fumbling behind his belt, where the handle of a knife was seen sticking out.

He came towards the Bounder with a crouching step, looking strangely like a wild beast about to spring.

Herbert Vernon-Smith did not recede an inch.

"If you want more, you coffee-coloured blighter, there's some more ready for you!" he said.

The half-caste sprang at him.

Smithy bit out, standing his ground. He was a boy against a man, but he was strong and sturdy, and he was savagely determined.

"You fellows stand back!" he called over his shoulder. "I can handle the rotter!"

It looked as if Smithy could, for the half-caste was driven back under his blows, and splashed knee-deep in the water to escape them.

But he came on again with a spring like a leopard, and, receiving without heeding a crashing jolt in his dark face, he grasped the Bounder and dragged him over.

They went to the earth with a crash together, and the half-caste, with leopard-like agility, came on top and clutched at the Bounder's throat with both dusky hands.

It seemed as if the man's temper was utterly beyond control; he was snarling like an animal with rage, and he grasped the Bounder's throat as if intending to throttle him.

Five Greyfriars fellows jumped at him as if moved by the same spring. They grasped the half-caste, tore him off the Bounder, and sent him to the ground with a stunning crash.

Vernon-Smith staggered to his feet, gasping, with a helping hand from Bob Cherry.

The half-caste lay panting, most of the wind knocked out of him by the crash on the earth. His eyes glittered up at the juniors like a snake's.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "What a giddy wild animal! Come on, Smithy! We'd better get out of this!"

"I'm not going!" The Bounder rubbed his bruised throat. "My hat! The savage brute! I'm not going!"

"My dear chap—" urged Wharton.

"Do you think that seum is goin' to bully me? I'm staying here, and I'm goin' to swim in the lake!" snapped the Bounder. The obstinacy in Smithy's nature was fully roused now.

The half-caste staggered up. His dusky hand fumbled behind him, and a long, thin knife flashed out into the sunshine.

"Here, look out!" yelled Bob.

Even the Bounder jumped back at the sight of the deadly weapon. The black eyes glittered over it with fierce rage.

"Go! De pressa! De pressa!" hissed Joaz, and the gleaming knife circled in the air as he came towards the juniors.

Vernon-Smith eyed him, a good deal like a bulldog. The juniors were unarmed, even if they could have thought of using weapons in an affray with Senhor Caminho's foreman. Retreating from the threatening half-caste went sorely against the grain, but there was no arguing with a long knife at close quarters.

"Look here! Collar him," breathed the Bounder, "and—"

Wharton grasped the Bounder's arm and dragged him forcibly back.

"Don't be an ass, Smithy! Let's get out."

"I tell you—"

"Come on, you fathead!"

The Bounder unwillingly allowed himself to be dragged away. The half-caste followed the juniors a dozen paces, scowling and snarling. That he would

use the knife, rather than allow them to carry out their intention of landing on the island as the lake was obvious, amazing as it seemed. That he would use it if a hand was laid on him again was equally clear. There was nothing for it but to go, if bloodshed was to be avoided. But the Bounder gritted his teeth with rage as he went.

"If I'd brought out my rifle—" he muttered.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Have we come here to pot Mr. Caminho's foreman? Keep the peace, you ass."

"Oh, go and eat coko!" snarled the Bounder.

The Famous Five walked away, Wharton keeping hold of the Bounder's arm till they were out of sight of the black, watching eyes of the half-caste.

Then he released Smithy, who was scowling savagely.

"Let's take a trot in another direction," said Bob uncomfortably. "After all, what does it matter?"

"I'm not standin' that fellow's check!"

"Oh, give him a miss!" said Nugent. "I dare say there's some reason why we shouldn't go on the island, as he's so jolly particular about it. He said that Mr. Caminho would back him up."

"Hang Mr. Caminho!"

The chums of the Remove made no reply to that. The Bounder was in one of his bitter tempers, and at such times he was prepared to quarrel with friend or foe. The juniors certainly did not want to quarrel with the fellow whose guests they were, having more regard for the fitness of things than Herbert Vernon-Smith had.

They walked on in discomfited silence. The Bounder was evidently feeling his defeat sorely, and more than half-inclined to go back and handle the half-caste, in spite of the knife.

They came in sight of the house again. In the distance, Mr. Vernon-Smith and Senhor Caminho could be seen walking together; the Portuguese talking and gesticulating, the millionaire listening.

"There's Mr. Caminho, if you'd like to ask him about it, Smithy," said Nugent.

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I think we ought to let him know about his foreman drawing a knife on us!" said Harry.

"Rubbish!"

Wharton compressed his lips a little. "What about going along and seeing the jolly old wood-cutters at work?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Go, if you like!" said the Bounder, and he walked away towards the house by himself.

The Famous Five exchanged glances.

"Smithy's in one of his jolly old tantrums," remarked Bob. "Let's leave him alone for a bit; he will get over it."

"The leavfulness alone is the proper caper!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton nodded, and the Famous Five sauntered away by a track that led to a clearing where the Baganda were at work on the timber. Smithy was in the mood for a row, and a "row" with Smithy would have been altogether too uncomfortable for all parties. So they judiciously left him to his own devices.

COLONIAL READER WINS A LEATHER POCKET WALLET.

For the jaunty limerick illustrated by our artist below, Charles E. Burbidge, 2613a, Dandurand Avenue, Montreal, Canada, has been awarded one of our useful prizes.



Billy Bunter's renowned for his thirst,



But his appetite's really the worst.



Quite enough for a score



He will eat, and want more.



It's a wonder, it is, he don't burst!

Have YOU sent in your limerick yet? Have you won a pocket wallet?

TRY YOUR SKILL TO-DAY!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tit for Tat!

"I SAY, Smithy!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"If that's how you talk to a guest, Smithy——"

"Hold your silly tongue!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the millionaire's son through his big spectacles in great wrath.

Bunter had come down late, and he had breakfasted, and rolled out into the veranda to look for the other fellows.

He was feeling indignant. Instead of waiting for Bunter to get up and join them, the juniors had gone out, and they would only have had to wait a couple of hours or so!

As the juniors were gone, Billy Bunter would have bestowed his fascinating society upon Mr. Vernon-Smith and the senior; but they had no use for it. They walked away together, deep in business talk, ignoring the existence of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter was quite pleased when he saw the Bounder coming back to the house. He was a gregarious fellow, and his own company, fascinating as it was, did not suffice for him. Possibly owing to his short sight, he did not observe the danger-signals in Smithy's face as he came tramping into the veranda. But the Bounder's words left no doubt that he was in one of his "tantrums."

"Look here, you cheeky beast——" began Bunter.

Smithy gave him a black look.

"I've told you to shut up, you fat fool!" he snapped. "If you know when you're well off, you'll do it."

He lounged to a madeira chair, and threw himself into it, with a sullen face. Billy Bunter eyed him with indignant scorn.

"If you think a fellow's going to stand that sort of thing, Smithy——" he recommenced.

The Bounder eyed him savagely.

In the safari in the jungle Bunter had helped Smithy to escape from the slave-trader, and being under an obligation to a fellow like Bunter was irksome enough. In acknowledgment of that service Smithy had given up the safari, and consented to return to the settlements, and that, he considered, was enough to make matters even.

Giving up his own wishes was irritating to the Bounder, and he had been feeling sore ever since. He was not prepared to stand any more nonsense from Bunter, and the fat Owl would have been well advised to leave him alone in his present mood. But fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and there was no doubt that Bunter was a fool.

"Will you shut up, Bunter?" said the Bounder, in a low, concentrated voice.

"No; I jolly well won't!" retorted Bunter. "And I can jolly well tell you, Smithy, that I don't want any of your airs and graces. After saving a fellow's life at fearful risk——"

"You fat fool!"

"That's your brand of gratitude, I suppose!" said Bunter sarcastically. "I'd like to know where you'd be but for me! I'm afraid I made rather a mistake in consenting to come with you for the vac, Smithy. I might have known that I couldn't stand your manners—if you call them manners! Scowling at a fellow like a demon in a pantomime."

Vernon-Smith made no answer.

"I've got a bone to pick with you," went on Bunter. "I hear that that

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nigger, Kikolobo, is coming on here later. Well, I don't want him here. I've told you I don't like that nigger about. Got that?"

The Bounder rose from the chair.

He did not speak; but he stepped towards Bunter, grasped him by the collar, and slewed him round.

"Oh!" roared Bunter, guessing what was coming. "I say, you beast, if you kick me—— Yaroooooooh!"

There was a crash of a boot on a pair of tight trousers.

Bunter flew.

He went headlong into the house by the door from the veranda, and landed with a bump.

A wild yell floated back.

"Whooooop!"

The Bounder flung himself into the chair again. He lighted a cigarette, and sat staring before him as he smoked. Boa Vista was well named, for there was a beautiful view from the veranda, over long miles of primeval forest, backed by blue hills in the distance. But magnificent scenery did not appeal much to the Bounder, especially in his present discontented and angry mood, and he sat scowling at the forest and the hills.

In the house Billy Bunter picked himself up.

He was hurt, and he was wrathful.

Often as Bunter had been kicked, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, he had never grown to like it.

And in the present circumstances, perhaps, Bunter was justified in thinking that it was altogether too "thick." He was the Bounder's guest, though an unwanted one, and kicking a guest was certainly not a thing that was done in the best circles.

The fat Owl glared out into the veranda, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath.

He was powerfully tempted to rush out, up-end the Bounder out of the cane chair, and mop up the place with him.

But he resisted that temptation. The result would certainly have been more painful to Bunter than to Smithy.

The Bounder did not even look round at him. He seemed to have forgotten Bunter's existence.

The fat junior glared at the back of his head, without producing any effect on it.

Then he rolled away.

But he did not go far. Bunter had a distinct ache where the Bounder had kicked him. He was wrathful, and he was indignant. Mopping Smithy up was not practical politics. But there were other ways.

Bunter had finished a large breakfast with delicious, juicy mangoes. The supply of mangoes was unlimited, and even Bunter had had to leave some. He rolled away to the dining-room, and secured the juiciest fruit he could find on the dish.

Then he crept back on tiptoe to the veranda.

His little, round eyes gleamed through his spectacles at the back of the Bounder's indifferent head.

If Smithy had had the cheek to forget the existence of so important a person as William George Bunter, he was about to be reminded of it.

Bunter crept out on the veranda behind the Bounder's chair.

He crept along very stealthily; but Bunter, when he was stealthy, was about as stealthy as a hippopotamus. The boards creaked under his weight, and the Bounder certainly heard him.

But he did not trouble to turn his head. He was supremely indifferent to the Owl of Greyfriars.

Bunter crept closer.

Close behind the Bounder's chair he stopped. Suddenly, the juicy mango was crammed down Smithy's neck from behind.

Bunter made a swift jump back.

"He, he, he!" he gasped.

There was a yell of fury from the Bounder. He was in a bad temper already. Thick, rich juice from a mango running down his back was not likely to improve it.

He leaped to his feet, his face ablaze.

Bunter, perhaps, had expected the Bounder to be annoyed. But that blaze of fury in Vernon-Smith's face alarmed him. One look was enough for Bunter. With a squeak of alarm he jumped back into the house, and as the Bounder rushed at him, he slammed the door.

Crash!

The slamming door met Vernon-Smith in full career, and hurled him back headlong. He crashed down on the planks.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

What would happen next if the infuriated Bounder got hold of him, Bunter did not dare to think. He fled wildly, seeking a safe hiding-place. Billy Bunter was not generally rapid in his movements, but now he fairly flew.

The door was torn open, and Vernon-Smith came rushing in. His nose was red and raw, where the slamming door had hit it, and had Bunter remained, his fat, little nose would very soon have been redder and rawer. But the Owl of the Remove was gone.

The Bounder snatched up a stick from the hall, and started to search for him. He shouted to the Dinka and to the Kikuyu servants, but they had not seen Bunter.

"You fat rotter!" roared the Bounder. "Where are you skulking, you fat fool? I'll smash you!"

If Bunter heard he understudied the ancient gladiator, and heeded not. Up and down and round about the house went the infuriated Bounder, seeking Bunter. Then he tramped out at the door and met the Portuguese coming in. Senhor Caminho glanced at him curiously, but the Bounder, without heeding him, tramped out. He concluded that Bunter had fled out of doors, and he went in search of him, stick in hand. Mr. Vernon-Smith's portly figure was to be seen at a distance, in talk with Joaz Viro. Bue the still more portly figure of William George Bunter was not to be seen. Evidently, the fat Owl was in hiding somewhere, and with a black brow and glinting eyes the enraged Bounder hunted through the gardens for him. And it was exceedingly fortunate for the fat Owl that the Bounder did not find him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Saw!

"O H lor'!" breathed Billy Bunter. The fat junior fairly quaked.

Bunter was in hiding—deep hiding!

With great astuteness the fat junior had darted into Senhor Caminho's office—the room where the concessionaire transacted his business, and which the guests at Boa Vista, of course, were not supposed to enter. There, Bunter, considered, the Bounder would not think of looking for him, and he was right.

But to make assurance doubly sure the fat Owl crept behind the slatted curtain at the window.

In that safe place of concealment the fat Owl remained, trying to still his

breathing, in case the Bounder should open the door and look in.

Bunter had only given Smithy tit for tat, a mango in return for a kick, which was more than justifiable. But he realised that he had better keep away from Smithy till he had had time to cool down. The sound of the Bounder's shouting voice reached him, and warned him what he had to expect, if found.

Smithy's voice died away, but Bunter had no doubt that the search was still going on. If Smithy thought of looking in the Portuguese gentleman's office—

Bunter quaked behind the curtain.

There was a sound of an opening door.

Bunter hardly breathed. He heard the door shut and a key turn. Then there were footsteps in the room.

Bunter listened in agony. The beast knew he was there, and he had come in and locked the door after him. Bunter was "for it" now.

Then, to his surprise, he heard a sound of rustling papers at the big roll-top desk near the window. There was a sound of someone sitting down in the chair before the desk.

Papers rustled again, and he heard a scratch of a pen.

Surely the Bounder had not come into the Portuguese gentleman's private office to write a letter. It dawned on Bunter that the newcomer was not the Bounder, after all.

A muttering voice reached his ears.

"Bom, bom!" It was the voice of the senhor. Bunter realised that it was the little Portuguese who was seated at the desk, writing.

Obviously, he was in complete ignorance that Bunter was there. And the fat junior sagely decided to leave him in ignorance. Certainly Mr. Caminho was not likely to be pleased at finding him in the private room. And still more certainly he would turn him out at once—into the clutches of the enraged Bounder. Bunter remained where he was, quiet and still.

Scratch, scratch, scratch! The pen scratched on.

Apparently it was not merely a letter that Mr. Caminho was writing. He seemed to have settled down to work of some sort.

Bunter did not mind, so long as he was not discovered. Not for an hour, at least, did he intend to emerge from his hiding-place, if he could help it.

Several times, as the Portuguese industriously wrote and wrote, he murmured to himself, and, to Bunter's amazement, he murmured over and over again the name "Manoel Caminho."

Every now and then he ejaculated "Bom!"—which Bunter was aware meant "Good!"—like a man satisfied with his progress. Not that Bunter knew any Portuguese; but "bom" was pronounced nasally, a good deal like the French "bon." And the tones, as Mr. Caminho spoke, told of satisfaction.

Partly because he was tired of doing nothing, and partly because he was as inquisitive as a jackdaw, Bunter peered



Harry Wharton & Co. were amazed to see an elderly man, his arms tied down to his sides, and a gag in his mouth, standing inside the hut. The prisoner regarded the juniors in wonder, as they stared at him.

at last through a slit in the slats of the curtain that concealed him from view.

The Portuguese, sitting at the desk, had his back to Bunter, but he was not far away; and even the Owl's limited vision enabled him to see the papers—over Mr. Caminho's shoulder—at which the little man was at work.

Bunter's eyes opened wide behind his big spectacles.

He was utterly astounded by what he saw.

Senhor Caminho was not writing letters or writing up a business book. His occupation was much more singular than that.

Pinned up before him was a letter, written in a flowing Latin hand, in a language which Bunter did not understand, but which he easily guessed to be Portuguese. The letter was signed "Manoel Caminho."

It was set up, obviously, as a copy, and on a sheet of paper before the Portuguese the name "Manoel Caminho" was written over and over again.

Bunter blinked.

Unless the man was mad, there was no accounting for his occupation, so far as the Owl of Greyfriars could see.

Why a man should set up a specimen of his own signature as a copy, and copy it down again and again, was a deep mystery to Bunter.

But that was what the Portuguese was doing.

He covered the sheet with writing, and Bunter could see that there was nothing written but an endless succession of "Manoel Caminho."

The sheet filled, the Portuguese tossed

it aside. The name had been written two hundred times at least.

But the mysterious occupation was not finished yet. The Portuguese dipped his pen in the ink again and started on a fresh sheet.

With untiring patience, he wrote "Manoel Caminho" again and again, with constant glances at the copy before him.

Bunter watched, in a state of dazed amazement.

Had any name but Manoel Caminho been set up as a copy, Bunter would have understood that it was a forger at practice. But a man could not be supposed to be practising to forgo his own name!

It was beyond Bunter! He could only watch, with his eyes distended in amazement behind his spectacles.

The Portuguese wrote and wrote, tirelessly. But he wrote nothing but that one name. Another sheet was filled, tossed aside, and a third started on.

But now Bunter observed a little circumstance that had not struck him at first. "Manoel Caminho," as written by the little Portuguese, did not look exactly the same as it looked in the letter set up as a copy. There was a resemblance, but that was all.

It was a different hand!

That discovery fairly staggered Bunter!

The man seated before him was Manoel Caminho. Yet his signature was not that of Manoel Caminho, and he was sedulously practising to make it more and more like! He was making progress, too, for on the third sheet the

signature was more like the copy than on the first.

What could it mean?

The Portuguese suffered from lapses of memory—at least, he had said so. Had he forgotten how to write his own name, and was he learning over again from a signature on one of his own letters?

That explanation was rather too steep. But if that was not it, what did it mean?

The third sheet was finished at last. The Portuguese had been sitting at the desk for a good deal more than an hour.

He rose from the chair, and taking all the sheets he had written, he examined them carefully, and then stepped to a stove, thrust the papers inside, and set a match to them.

Then he slipped the original letter into a drawer, closed down the top of the desk and locked it.

"Bom!" Bunter heard him ejaculate, and a low chuckle followed.

Then he yawned deeply, like a man tired from an irksome task, and lighted one of his black cheroots. And then, to Bunter's great relief, he crossed to the door, unlocked it, and went out of the room.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Bunter.

The man was mad! That was the only explanation. For nearly an hour and a half he had sat copying his own signature over and over again, and then had burned all that he had written! If that was not lunacy, Bunter did not know what it was!

It was a great relief when the Portuguese went. Being locked up in a room with a lunatic was neither grateful nor comforting.

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Bunter. "Absolutely potty! Oh dear! If he'd found me here—"

The fat junior shivered at the idea.

From the window he had a glimpse of Senhor Caminho walking in the garden, smoking a cheroot. The coast was clear, and Bunter lost no time in getting out of Senhor Caminho's office. Even the angry Bouncer was better than a lunatic at close quarters!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Thinks it Out!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in to lunch at Boa Vista in a cheery bunch. The Bouncer came in looking less cheery; but he seemed to have got over his tantrums to some extent.

Billy Bunter, who was first at table, eyed him uneasily; but Smithy took no notice of the fat Owl. He had had plenty of time to cool down; and in any case he could hardly have "whopped" the fat junior in the presence of his father and the Portuguese.

Bunter realised that he was safe, for the present at least, so far as Smithy was concerned. But he was uneasy on another score. Many times he blinked along the table at Senhor Caminho, who lunched with his guests; and his blinks were very uneasy indeed. In fact, he looked positively alarmed when the senhor, talking to Mr. Vernon-Smith, gesticulated with his knife to give point to his remarks.

Senhor Caminho did not observe the fat Owl; but the other fellows did, and they wondered what was the matter with Bunter now. His fat face was quite terrified, till the Portuguese put down the knife.

After lunch Mr. Vernon-Smith

retired to a long chair on the veranda for a rest in the shade, and Senhor Caminho went to his office.

Bunter was careful to keep with the Famous Five when they went out. Smithy walked out with the Co., and Bunter promptly manœuvred Wharton between him and the Bouncer.

"Look here, you keep off, you beast!" he exclaimed.

"You fat fool!"

Apparently Smithy was no longer thinking of vengeance for the mango. He loafed with his hands in his pockets and a discontented expression on his hard face, a contrast to the cheery Five. But Bunter, at least, did not care if the Bouncer scowled, so long as he did not kick.

"Heading anywhere special, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton, as the Bouncer started along the road by which the car had come the previous day.

"Yes. Why not meet Kikolobo on the road?" asked the Bouncer.

"Good egg!" agreed the Famous Five at once.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You shut up, Bunter!" said the Bouncer, with a dark look at the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"We can get some camping trips, with Kikolobo here," said Smithy, as the juniors walked on. "Blessed if I like hanging about the place while the pater jaws business jaw with that greasy Portuguese. But for that fat brute Bunter we should be on safari now."

"I say, you fellows, I rather wish we'd kept on safari," said Billy Bunter. "It was beastly; but it was better than being shut up in a house with a lunatic."

The Famous Five all looked round at Bunter. Generally his remarks were passed by like the idle wind which they regarded not. But this remark was really startling.

"You frabjous ass!" said Bob Cherry. "What are you burbling about now? Who's a lunatic?"

"That Portuguese chap," said Bunter. "Mad as a hatter!"

"Old Caminho?" asked Nugent blankly.

"Yes, rather! I can tell you I was jolly nervous when he got hold of that knife at tiffin," said Bunter. "Lunatics ain't safe with knives."

"Is the fat fool wandering in his mind?" asked Vernon-Smith, staring at Bunter.

"Has he any to wander in?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I say, you fellows, let's take a rest under these trees. I don't want to see that nigger!"

"Go back to the house, then!" growled the Bouncer.

"I'm not going near that lunatic." "You silly owl!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "What the thump have you got in your silly head about the old Portuguese?"

"He's mad!"

"What has he done, you owl?"

"Well, what do you think of a man who sits down for hours in the morning, writing his own name over and over again?" demanded Bunter.

"Eh?"

"And that's not all! Setting up his own signature as a copy, and copying it for hours, over and over again?"

"Wha-a-at?"

If Billy Bunter had desired to astonish the chums of the Remove, he succeeded. They stared at him blankly.

"Shows he's potty, doesn't it?" said

Bunter. "He wouldn't do it if he wasn't potty, I suppose. What?"

"How do you know he did anything of the sort?" demanded Johnny Bull. "Spying again, same as at Greyfriars?"

"Why, you beast—"

"I suppose the fat idiot has been dreaming," said Bob.

"I tell you I saw him!" hooted Bunter.

"Oh, rats!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Hold on!" said the Bouncer quietly.

"Bunter disappeared somewhere for hours this morning. Where were you, Bunter?"

"In that Portuguese's office," answered Bunter, with a snort. "I wasn't going to enter into a vulgar scuffle with you, Smithy! That may be your idea of manners, staying in people's houses. It isn't mine."

"You had the neck to butt into Mr. Caminho's office?" exclaimed Wharton. "I hope he kicked you out."

"He jolly well didn't see me. I was behind the curtain. And I can jolly well tell you I kept jolly quiet, when I found that he was mad—"

"You spied on him?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I couldn't help seeing what he did, looking through the hole in the curtain," snapped Bunter, "and seeing a man writing his own name over and over again from a copy—"

"What utter rot!"

"I tell you he did!" howled Bunter. "He had a letter stuck up as a copy, signed Manoel Caminho, and he was copying the signature over and over again. And as it's his own name, he must be potty to do it."

"Certainly a man would be potty, if he did that!" said Harry. "But old Caminho isn't potty—so he didn't!"

"I saw him—"

"Rubbish!"

"Hold on!" said the Bouncer again. "Let's have it out! Tell us exactly what you saw, Bunter."

And Billy Bunter, rather flattered by the interest the Bouncer seemed to take in the matter, gave a long and detailed account of his extraordinary experience in Senhor Caminho's office that morning.

The Bouncer listened with deep attention. Harry Wharton & Co. listened in surprise, surprised also by the Bouncer's keen interest in the matter.

Vernon-Smith drew a deep breath when the Owl of Greyfriars had finished. But he made no remark, walking on in silence, with a wrinkled brow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's jolly old Joaz!" remarked Bob Cherry, who had glanced back.

The juniors looked round.

Joaz Vino had appeared from among the trees, and was standing looking after them. Several times during the morning the juniors had seen him hanging about, and they wondered whether he was keeping an eye on them, to see that they did not approach the island in the lake again.

He stood looking after them for a few minutes, and then stepped back into the trees and disappeared.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"That jolly old hut on the island is a sort of Bluebeard's chamber," he remarked. "That coffee-bean has been watching us on and off ever since we rowed with him this morning. But I suppose he's satisfied now, as we've got our backs to it."

"I say, you fellows, don't walk so fast—"

"Keep an eye open for lions, you men," said the Bouncer.

"Lions!" repeated Wharton.

Yelp, from Bunter.

"I—I say, you fellows, look here, let's go back! I'm not going to be torn to pieces by lions to please you!"

"You can go back if you like, ass!"

"Well, there's that blessed mad Portugee—"

"Is that something moving behind that tree?" asked Vernon-Smith.

There was a gasp from Billy Bunter. Without stopping to ascertain whether there was anything moving behind the tree, the fat junior turned and started back towards Boa Vista. Even a lunatic was preferable to a lion, and Billy Bunter stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

The juniors stared after him. Bunter vanished up the winding road towards the house, going strong.

"Look here, Smithy, what's this game?" asked Wharton. "You know jolly well there are no lions within miles."

"I know that," nodded the Bounder.

"Oh! You were pulling that fat duffer's leg?"

"Exactly. Now he's gone, we can speak," said Vernon-Smith.

"Blessed if I catch on! What is there to say that Bunter mustn't hear?"

"Lots!"

"Well, cough it up!" said Harry, in wonder.

Vernon-Smith came to a halt, under the wide-spreading branches of a cedar. There was a dark, almost grim, expression on his face, and the Famous Five regarded him with surprise and some uneasiness. They waited for him to speak; but it was some minutes before the Bounder broke silence.

"I think I see light!" was his first remark.

"Not unusual, in the daytime," assented Bob Cherry.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Well, what are you driving at, then?"

"We're in queer quarters here," said the Bounder quietly. "My pater's in high feather—he's doing good business with that Portugee. I've been thinking over it a lot; I'm not letting him be taken in. You fellows noticed, of course, how odd it was that Caminho received my father as a stranger—never heard his name before and explained it by a yarn about lapse of memory—"

"Well, that must have been the truth," said Harry. "It was odd enough, but it was pretty clear—"

"And he had sacked all the servants—and there must have been a good many in such a place as Boa Vista—"

"What about it?"

"Lots! And his foreman, who was, as surprised by our arrival as his boss, misdirected us, to gain time to cut ahead and warn the Portugee that we were coming—"

"But—"

"And this place is sixty miles from any white man's house; and a lot of things could happen here without getting out—"

"Very likely. But—"

"And Joaz Vino drew a knife to keep us from getting a look at the hut on the island in the lake—"

"Well?" said Wharton blankly.

"I've been puzzled—worried; but I couldn't get the hang of it," said the Bounder quietly. "But now—I see light! What Bunter saw this morning puts the lid on."

"I don't see—"

"A man doesn't sit down to copy his

own signature. A forger sits down to copy another man's signature."

"But it was his own name—"

"Was it?" said the Bounder.

"Eh? Yes—he's Manoel Caminho—"

"Is he?" said Vernon-Smith.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Startling!

SILENCE followed the Bounder's startling question. Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at him blankly. Herbert Vernon-Smith had rather taken their breath away.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton at last. "Smithy! You don't think—you can't think—"

"I can—and do!" answered the Bounder coolly. "Everything fits together—now! That man isn't Manoel Caminho, the Portuguese concessionaire!"

"Great pip!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"My esteemed Smithy—"

"Look at it," said the Bounder. "He's a Portugee right enough; but he's not the man who corresponded with my father about selling the timber concession. The pater's never seen Caminho, of course; he came up here to see him. They'd got the negotiations as far as fixing a personal interview—and then this sportsman makes out that he's forgotten the whole thing. Lapse of memory be blowed! I had to swallow that; but it was too steep all the same, and now I know better. The man's not Caminho."

"Then who—what—" stuttered Nugent.

"This man," said the Bounder deliberately, "had forgotten nothing. He never knew anything about my father or the negotiations, until we arrived here yesterday. He was afraid at first that the pater was some Government inspector who might have spotted his game. The real Caminho may not have kept my pater's letters, or he may have kept them in some place where this rogue hasn't laid hands on them. Anyhow, he knew nothing of the business, till he got it from my pater yesterday. He's keen enough to sell the concession, and he's practising Manoel Caminho's signature for the necessary documents."

"Smithy!"

"Oh, Smithy!"

"Look at it!" snapped the Bounder irritably. "If a man practises a signature from a copy, is it likely to be his own?"

"Well, no! But—"

"That's why all the servants were sacked. They'd know. I fancy the foreman, Joaz Vino, is the genuine goods. He was Caminho's foreman, and he's

working hand-in-glove with this impostor. You can see he's well acquainted with the place; he's not suffering from lapses of memory. Most likely Joaz got rid of the household, and then—then Mr. Caminho was nobbled, and this man took his place and his name.

"Phew!"

"In a lonely place like this such a game could be played," said the Bounder. "Who's

to know? No white man comes up here once in a blue moon. The servants who knew Mr. Caminho were got rid of. The Baganda who work in the forests don't go to the house; and, anyhow, they'd be satisfied with a tale that Caminho had sold the place, or gone on a trip, and left the other man in charge—if they thought about it at all. They're under Joaz, and he can handle them."

"But—but," stammered Wharton, "the man couldn't hope to keep it up for ever, even in a lonely place like this."

"Of course he couldn't, ass! His game is to keep it up till he can sell the concession at a give-away price that will make it go quick."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"He's got my pater on toast!" said the Bounder, gritting his teeth. "I could see yesterday that my father thinks he's on to a good thing—he's getting the place thousands of pounds under its value. The man can afford to take twenty thousand instead of twenty-five thousand, if the place cost him nothing. A quick sale is his game."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's got all the deeds in Mr. Caminho's safe in the office; he's got everything in his hands, so long as he's not suspected. All he's got to do is to learn to sign Caminho's name, and Bunter saw him practising it."

"But—but—" gasped Nugent.

"Look at it, and you'll see it all fits together," said the Bounder. "His only weak point is that he hasn't seen the correspondence between the real Caminho and my father. He may not have found out yet where the chap kept all his papers—if he kept the letters. He hasn't been long in possession; only a fortnight ago the correspondence was going on."

The juniors looked at Smithy.

"But if—if you're right, where is the real Caminho?" exclaimed Bob. "You don't mean that—that—that they're—"

"I don't think they'd take the risk," said the Bounder; "neither was it necessary. They had only to keep the man out of sight till they'd played out their game."

"But how—where—"

"What have they got hidden on that island in the lake?"

"Oh!"

There was a long silence. The Bounder's earnestness impressed the Co., and, in fact, looking at the matter from Smithy's point of view, all the strange circumstances that had puzzled them were explained; but it was staggering, all the same.

"Well, what do you think?" demanded the Bounder irritably.

"Blessed if I know what to think," said Wharton. "It sounds reasonable, the way you put it, but it's frightfully steep!"

(Continued on next page.)

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"The steepfulness is terrific!"
 "Well, we're going to know," said Vernon-Smith. "Come on! We've got to meet Kikolobo."

"But what are you going to do?" asked Bob.

"I'm going to search that hut on the island in the lake."

"That means a tussle with Joaz."

"Joaz won't put up a very big tussle against the Kikuyu, I fancy."

"Oh!" said Bob.

The Bounder strode on. His mind was evidently made up. Whether he was right in his amazing suspicion, or whether he was wrong, the Famous Five could not decide; but one thing at least was certain, that the mysterious matter had to be looked into.

"What about putting it up to your father, Smithy?" asked Wharton.

"No need to bother him, if there's nothing in it," answered the Bounder, "and we can handle the matter ourselves, with Kicky's help. And I'd rather handle it myself."

After which there was nothing more to be said. It was, after all, the Bounder's own business, and they know from of old that it was futile to argue with the obstinate Bounder. The chums of the Remove had plenty of food for thought as they walked along the road under the shade of the mighty trees. And the more they thought over the matter, the more it was borne in upon their minds that Smithy was right, amazing as it was.

They had covered five or six miles from Boa Vista, when a tall figure, resplendent in striped monkey-skins, came in sight on the road.

"There's Kicky!" said Bob Cherry.

The tall Kikuyu sighted the juniors, and saluted with his spear. He came striding on, and the juniors hurried to meet him.

"O Bwana-wangu!" said the Kikuyu. "My eyes are glad to see you!"

"O Kikolobo," said the Bounder, with a grin, "your voice is as welcome to my ears as the sweet sounds of running water, and the whispering of wind in the trees."

"This Kikuyu, your servant, is glad to hear the gracious words from your

handsome mouth!" said Kikolobo. "For, indeed, the sight of the Bwana's face is to my eyes like the rising sun driving away the dark shadows of Usiku, the night."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "When we get back to Greyfriars, Smithy, I'll tell the fellows that there was a man in Kenya who thought you good-looking. It will make them jump!"

"Fathead!"

There was no doubt that the Kikuyu was glad to see the "Bwana-wangu" again. He saluted the other white lords with respect; but it was evident that the Bounder was the "goods" in the Kikuyu's eyes.

"You've had a long tramp, Kicky," said Bob Cherry.

"It is true, O Bwana; but the feet of this Kikuyu are as tireless as the wind," answered Kikolobo.

"Come on, Kicky," said Vernon-Smith; "I want your help, old bean!"

"This Kikuyu is your servant, Bwana."

The juniors turned back towards Boa Vista, the tireless Kikuyu striding along with them, and he listened in grave silence to what the Bounder had to say. And, keeping clear of the house, the party took a path through the woods that led towards the lake. The Bounder's theory was about to be put to the test, and Harry Wharton & Co. felt their hearts beat faster as they came in sight of the lake glimmering under the branches of the tall cedars.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Hut!

"**P**ARE! Stop!"
 Joaz Vino came suddenly from the trees, when the juniors had almost reached the margin of the lake in the forest.

With a black, scowling brow, the half-caste planted himself in their way, and rapped out the order to stop.

He stared at the tall Kikuyu in surprise that was a little mingled with alarm. The Kikuyu was in his fighting

outfit—his rhinoceros-hide shield on his left arm, two stabbing-spears in his left hand, and a long fighting-spear in his right. He looked a formidable figure, and the grim expression on his face, the glint in his dark eyes, boded trouble for any enemy of the "Bwana-wangu."

But the half-caste evidently intended to dispute the way. His hand was on his knife as he faced the juniors and the Kikuyu.

The Bounder grinned sourly.

"Get out of the way, Joaz Vino!" he said. "You'll be shifted fast enough if you don't."

"Va se embora! Go away! Get out!" snarled the half-caste. "I have said that you are forbidden to go on the island."

"You can sing it over again if you like!" jeered the Bounder. "But we're going on the island, all the same, old bean!"

The knife flashed in the half-caste's dusky hand.

"Senhor, if you will ask the Senhor Caminho, he will tell you that you must not go on the island."

"We'll ask him when we see him!" grinned the Bounder.

"Go to the house—to Boa Vista—and ask—"

"I've an idea that we needn't go so far as the house," said the Bounder, watching the dusky face keenly as he spoke. "I've a fancy that we may find Senhor Caminho on the island in the lake."

Joaz started violently.

"What? What do you say? What——" he panted.

His black eyes gleamed from face to face in startled questioning. The Bounder's words had obviously given him a shock.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Smithy's right!"

"The rightfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurreo Jamsset Ram Singh.

The juniors could hardly have a doubt now. The look on the dusky face of the half-caste was enough.

"Are you mad, boy?" panted Joaz. "Senhor Caminho is at the house!"

"Not on the island?" jeered the Bounder.

"Nao, nao! There is no one on the island!"

"We'll see for ourselves, my pippin! Kicky, if that man tries to stop us, you will handle him!"

"O Bwana, this man will be no more to me than a jackal to a leopard!" said the Kikuyu. "And if you give the word, lord, I will slay him where he stands!"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bob. "Smithy, for goodness' sake——"

"Do not kill him, Kikolobo," said the Bounder—"not if you can help it, at any rate. But make him a prisoner."

"As my lord wishes!" said the Kikuyu.

With his spear lifted, he advanced on the half-caste.

Joaz panted.

He was a desperate man and no coward, but his knife had little chance against the spear and shield of the Kikuyu.

"Chuck it, you fool!" said the Bounder coolly.

The half-caste stood his ground.

That he had a powerful reason for keeping investigation off the island in the lake was apparent, and the Greyfriars fellows no longer doubted what that reason was.

But they watched the contest anxiously. The man was bent on resistance, even with the Kikuyu's spear flashing over him, and the light of battle was in the native hunter's eyes.

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Kikoloba closed in on the half-caste, and Joaz, springing like a leopard, came at him with flashing knife.

There was a crash as Kikoloba caught the savage stroke on his shield. The next moment the haft of his spear struck Joaz on the head, and the half-caste reeled and fell.

The foot of the Kikuyu was planted on him as he sprawled, and the glittering point of the spear touched his throat.

"O Bwana, if it is your wish that this dog should die—"

said Kikoloba.

"No, no! Hold on!"

"It is for the Bwana to command."

And Kikoloba,

with obvious reluctance, held back the thrust of the spear.

The half-caste lay helpless, his eyes gleaming up like a snake's. The juniors lost no time in securing him. His own belt was buckled round his arms, and then he was allowed to rise to his feet.

"Come on!" said the Bounder. "Bring that scoundrel along, Kicky!"

He tramped into the shallow lake, and Kikoloba followed, with a sinewy grasp on the half-caste. Harry Wharton & Co. followed on, wading waist-deep in the water.

In a few minutes they tramped out of the lake on the island.

Harry Wharton & Co. felt their hearts beating fast as they approached the hut on the island. If a secret of crime was hidden there, they were about to bring it to light.

The half-caste, scowling like a demon, was sullenly silent. He watched them with burning eyes, but he was helpless to intervene.

They stopped at the door of the hut, half-hidden by trees. There was a lock on the door, and it was fast.

The Bounder knocked.

"Who's here?" he called out.

There was a sound within the hut. Evidently it had an occupant. But there was no reply.

"Let us in!" called out the Bounder.

The movement was repeated, but still no voice answered. The door remained fast.

"Pretty clear that it's locked on the outside—what?" smiled the Bounder. "And I fancy we shan't have to look far for the key."

He turned to the scowling half-caste.

"You've got the key, Joaz?"

A curse in Portuguese was the only answer.

"Get the key from him, Kicky! Wring his yellow neck if he gives you any trouble!" said Vernon-Smith.

The half-caste gave no trouble. Kikoloba drew a key from one of his pockets and handed it to Bwana-wangu. Smithy inserted it in the lock and turned it.

The door was flung open.

Clash! As the treacherous Dinka made a stride towards Mr. Vernon-Smith, his upraised knife was knocked from his hand by Kikoloba's spear.



Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into the hut.

The building had only one room. It was barely furnished, with a rough bed and few other things. The shutter at the window barred off the sun, and a dim twilight reigned within. But they could see the interior clearly enough, and their eyes fixed on the occupant.

A rather tall and handsome elderly man, evidently a Portuguese, with silvery hair, stood there. His face was lined and worn, almost haggard. Why he had not answered the knock at the door was plain when the juniors saw him. A gag was in his mouth, fastened by a cord wound about his head. His hands were tied down at his sides.

"Good heavens!" breathed Wharton.

The gagged man was gazing at them, with wonder and joy in his haggard eyes. A faint mumbling sound came from behind the gag.

"The scoundrels!" muttered Bob Cherry.

Vernon-Smith stepped quickly to the prisoner. He removed the gag, and cut through the bonds with his knife.

"You are Senhor Caminho?" he asked.

"Sim, senhor!" the elderly man mumbled, his lips numbed by the gag. "Sim, sim! But you are English. You are perhaps one of the boys whom Senhor Vernon-Smith mentioned in his letters? Yes? You have come to save me? But the villain Perez—where is he? Oh, senhor, for days, many days, I have been a prisoner here—many weary days! It is the holy saints who have sent you to save me!"

The tears trickled down the worn face. Then, as he caught sight of the scowling face of the half-caste through the open doorway, the old Portuguese gave a cry of alarm.

"That villain! Take care!"

"All serene, sir!" said the Bounder.

"That villain's a prisoner—and the

other villain will jolly soon be a prisoner, too! Kicky, keep an eye on that blighter!"

"This Kikuyu will keep him safe, Bwana."

The old Portuguese sank on the edge of the bed. He seemed overcome with emotion. The juniors could imagine his feelings. Rescue had come suddenly when he had given up hope.

"But Perez!" he exclaimed. "Where is Perez?"

"I fancy Perez is the name of the sportsman at Boa Vista who is calling himself Manoel Caminho!" said the Bounder.

"He calls himself—by my name?"

"Yes. And if we hadn't found you, sir, he would have sold Boa Vista in your name, and my father would have bought it!" grinned the Bounder. "That was the game."

"Deos!" murmured the old Portuguese. "Deos! Now I understand! They told me nothing! Perez came to Boa Vista as a friend of my foreman—I did not suspect—and I was seized in the night and brought here. I have been a prisoner since, visited once a day with food, and left bound and gagged, as you have seen. And you have saved me, little senhores!" He rose from the edge of the bed, with a glitter in his dark eyes. "Now I am free! Now I will deal with that villain! Let us go!"

The Bounder gave the old man a helping hand from the hut. He spoke to the Kikuyu, and Joaz Vino was bundled into the hut and the door locked on him. Senhor Caminho was tottering, and, at a word from the Bounder, the Kikuyu lifted him in his brawny arms and carried him across the shallow water.

"And now for that scoundrel!" said Harry Wharton.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mr. Vernon-Smith!

MR. VERNON-SMITH sat in a Madeira chair on the veranda and smiled a genial smile. The little, dark, wizened Portuguese sat facing him, a greasy smile on his face. Between them was a table, on which were many documents.

In the shady veranda the two were deep in business.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was not only smiling, but he was feeling disposed to rub his hands.

Business was progressing well.

The value of the Caminho timber concession was well known to Mr. Vernon-Smith. With the capital and business knowledge he could put into it, its value would be immensely increased. He was anxious to secure it, and he found the "owner" more than keen to come to terms.

On grounds of health, according to the little dark man, he desired to get the matter through and leave Africa. Whatever his motive, he was keen to get it through. This suited Mr. Vernon-Smith admirably. He was securing that valuable concession five thousand pounds cheaper than he had hoped. And he looked like expending much less of his valuable time on the transaction than he had supposed would be needed.

So he was in high good-humour, and he went through documents that would have made most heads ache to look at, with a cheery and genial smile on his plump visage.

Billy Bunter, at the other end of the veranda, was eating mangoes. He was not wholly at ease with regard to the senhor, and he gave him a suspicious blink at times. But he was juicy, and sticky, and happy.

Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced round as his son came towards the veranda steps with Harry Wharton & Co., followed by the Kikuyu.

They had left the rescued Portuguese gentleman out of sight, in order not to give the alarm to the impostor.

Perez—to give the pretended concessionaire his real name—glanced up carelessly, and then looked down at the documents again.

He was quite unaware that danger was approaching—though certainly he would have guessed it had the real Senhor Caminho come in sight.

The Bounder came up the steps, followed by his companions. His father gave him a nod.

"You must not interrupt now, Herbert," he said. "Business, my boy!"

"Getting on with it, dad?" asked Smithy, with a rather sardonic grin.

"Quite. I hope to be through in a few days now; and then there will be a change of scene for you and your friends, Herbert. You will enjoy a trip into Uganda, where I have more business to attend to."

"What-ho!" agreed Smithy. "But—I've got to interrupt you, father! It's rather important."

Mr. Vernon-Smith frowned a little. "What is it, Herbert? I am very busy now. What has happened?"

"It's not so much what has happened as what's going to happen," explained the Bounder.

"I don't quite follow you. What is it—"

"I'll make it clear in a minute. You've got that rope, Bob?"

"Here!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

He held up a length of cord.

"Good! Get going."

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The little, wizened Portuguese was sitting, looking on, with an expression of more or less polite impatience on his face. But the Bounder's next move made him jump. It made Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith start to his feet with a yell of angry amazement.

For the Bounder, suddenly grasping the Portuguese by the shoulders from behind, hooked him off his chair, sprawling on the boards.

Perez went down with a crash and a howl.

Before he could realise what was happening the juniors had grasped him, his hands were dragged together, and Bob Cherry was knotting the cord round his dusky wrists.

"Got him!" grinned the Bounder.

"The gotfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Perez sprawled, his hands bound, gibbering with fury.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, for the moment, was almost as furious as the "owner" of Boa Vista.

"What does this mean?" he roared. "Herbert! Are you mad? How dare you lay hands on Senhor Caminho? What—"

"All serene, father!" said the Bounder. "That scoundrel is not Senhor Caminho. His name is Perez, and he is an impostor and a thief."

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered the millionaire.

He stared at the juniors and stared at the sprawling Portuguese. A wave of pallor came over the dusky face of the prisoner.

"Senhor! It is false!" he panted. "Release me! It is false. I am Manoel Caminho. I—"

"Then who was the man in the hut on the island?" grinned the Bounder.

The shrieking Portuguese broke off, staring at him in terror and amazement.

"Deos! You have found—" he stuttered.

"Just that!"

"But—but what—" stammered the amazed millionaire.

A sudden yell burst from Perez.

"Joaz! Ahmed!"

"Joaz is safe enough," said the Bounder, "and if the Dinka gives trouble we can look after him. Kicky—"

"This Kikuyu watches with his eyes, Bwana," said the Kikuyu calmly.

There was a patter of feet and the Dinka came running into the veranda from the house, at his master's call. There was a knife in his hand and a blaze of ferocity in his eyes. The Kikuyu leaped to meet him with flashing spear.

Mr. Vernon-Smith stared on, dumb-founded.

Clash! Clash! The Dinka's knife clashed on the Kikuyu's spear; but the next moment it was dashed from his hand. The broad blade of the spear touched the Dinka's breast and he was driven back to the wall of the house.

"O Bwana-wangu, is it your will that this black man should go to the ghosts?" asked Kikolobo.

"No fear!" chuckled the Bounder. "Keep him safe while he's tied up, Kicky!"

"As the Bwana wills!"

With the spear at his breast the Dinka made no further resistance. His hands were bound, and he was a prisoner.

"This," said Bob Cherry, "looks like a Greyfriars win!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Nugent.

"Herbert!" Mr. Vernon-Smith

found his voice. "What—what—what does this mean? What—what—"

"Bring Senhor Caminho here," said Smithy.

Harry Wharton ran down the steps again and disappeared through a grove of trees. In a few minutes he came back, assisting an elderly Portuguese gentleman, who leaned heavily on his arm.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, silent, amazed, stared at the lined, worn face of Manoel Caminho as Wharton led him into the veranda.

"Who—who—who is this?" he gasped at last.

"Senhor Caminho, owner of this show!" answered the Bounder. "That rascal Perez, with Joaz and the Dinka, made him a prisoner, and he has been locked up in a hut on an island in the lake. And if you'd bought this concession, dad, you'd have had a bad bargain on your hands, as that squirming polcat had no more right to sell it than I have!"

"Good gad!" gasped Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Senhor," said Mr. Caminho, in a faint voice. "You are the senhor Vernon-Smith. I am enchanted to meet you, senhor! Your noble son and his friends have saved me from a terrible imprisonment; they have saved me, senhor, and they have saved you from robbery. I am Manoel Caminho."

"Good gad!"

"The old gentleman's eyes glittered down at Perez.

"This villain's name is Perez; he is a relative of my foreman, Joaz Vino, who betrayed me into his hands. Senhor, I thank the holy saints who brought you to my house."

Mr. Vernon-Smith fairly gasped.

"You—you—you are Manoel Caminho! Good gad! And—and he would have sold the concession in your name. I should have lost twenty thousand pounds—good gad! Herbert, you are a better business man than your father! I had no suspicion—good gad! Upon my word!"

"Senhor, the concession shall be yours, and you shall name your own terms, after what your noble son has done!" said Senhor Caminho, with a polite bow. "How he discovered the truth, I do not know; but it was by the interposition of the holy saints that he came here to Boa Vista."

"Thank goodness you gave up the safari, Herbert, and came here," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Otherwise—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The jolly old saint who caused that was named Bunter."

"But how—how—" ejaculated Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Herbert, how did you know—how could you possibly—"

The Bounder explained concisely; his father and Senhor Caminho listening with deep attention. Perez listened, too, his wizened face wrinkled in a black scowl, his jetty eyes glittering at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"E possivel?" said Mr. Caminho, when Smithy had finished. "Corpo de Deos! How much I owe your son, senhor!"

"And I," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Good gad!" He glanced at the scowling Perez. "We'll send a message for the askaris to come up and take charge of this scoundrel and his confederate! Have you anything to say, you rascal?"

A curse in Portuguese was the only reply.

That, apparently, was all the unmasked impostor had to say. But he

(Continued on page 28.)

SAY IT WITH SAWDUST!



Another Amazing Adventure of the Puncher Pals, High, Low, and Nippy.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Pal in Trouble!

HIGH "Jinks, "Doc." Low, and "Nippy" Nolan, riders of the old Leanin' L Ranch, galloped like a troop of mad Arabs down the high trail towards the ranch in a cloud of dust.

There was no particular reason why they should hurry, but they were just feeling good, and, anyway, it was close on dinner-time, and Stinky, the cook, had promised something extra special in celebration of Colonel Lu Luttrell's, the owner's, birthday.

They had reached the highest point of the trail, the mesa stretching out beneath them with a wide horizon, giving a view of the surrounding country for miles, the hills in the distance forming a sort of rim to the rich basin in which the Leanin' L stood.

They halted their horses for a moment's breather. High cocked his long leg round the horn of his saddle and narrowed his eyes in the way he had when looking at distant objects.

"Thar's Sol Goodwin ridin' away from th' ranch looking kind o' mizerble," he observed. "Wonder what's bitin' him?"

Nippy stared out in the direction indicated, but the heat shimmer, and the dust arising from a big troop of driven cattle, made the ranch buildings at eight miles distance but a vague blur to his eyes.

"Coo, 'as 'e got a fly on 'is sniffer?" he queried sarcastically, believing that his long pal was pulling their legs about being able to see so far in that glare. "What's th' time by 'is watch, long 'un?"

But Low had unslung his battered old field-glasses and focused the moving horseman, who looked a mere dot in the distance with the naked eye.

"High's right; it's Sol, an' he is lookin' mighty gloomy. High, ol' feller, yer eyesight's as good as ever. I'd give somethin' to be able to see as far as thet without glasses!"

"Mebbe yer can see funder thro' a brick wall!" grinned Nippy. "High's eyesight's good, but the rest of 'is 'ead's 'oller, except where it's solid bone!"

High smiled in a superior manner, squiggling up his long nose contemptuously at the little Cockney, as he deftly poured some Bull Durham tobacco into a brown cigarette-paper, and rolled it with one hand. Nippy had taken out a packet, and was lighting up a "fag," as he called them.

"Whitechapel!" High sneered.

Joe Leery wanted some high explosive for a dirty deed, so he bought dynamite. But when the dynamite turned out to be sawdust Joe saw red and exploded!

"Gutter brat, cain't even make his own smokes!"

"'Twasn't Whitechapel — it was 'Oxton, see?" retorted Nippy. "Though a pore, iggerant cow-minder from Texass couldn't be expected to know the diff. 'Allo, what's 'appenin'?"

He pointed out to the distant hills, whence had come a quick flash, followed by a cloud of smoke; then, as they watched, the sullen bo-o-om of a big explosion came to their ears.

"Ain't started th' fireworks for th' ol' man's birfday yet awhile, 'ave they?"

"Thet's from over at Three Crosses, Joe Leery's place; he's blastin' out rock

for th' improvements to his ranch," Low informed. "Ho's under contrao' to get 'em finished by th' end o' th' month. Th' old man's his landlord, and he wishes he c'ud get rid o' th' blamed skunk!"

"Wish he'd blast hisself as well as th' rocks. I'd give a month's wages to see Leery goin' skywards!" growled High. "It's 'bout th' on'y chanct he has o' gettin' thar!"

"Naughty, naughty!" admonished Nippy. "'Ark at the venom, jest becoss 'e give yer a black heye an' dahned yer afore yer donah! 'Oo went courtin' a widder an' got caught hisself?"

"Yuh're a liar!" retorted the lengthy one hotly. "Likely I'd go courtin' th' Widder Crowe! Why, she weighs all of two hunderd pounds if an ounce!"

"That's fourteen stun four," calculated Nippy, winking at Low. "Coo, ain't 'e got it accurate? She must 'ave been sittin' on 'is knee—no wonder 'e's bow-legged!"

"C'mon, boyees, stop janglin' an' let's be moseyin'. I wanter have a word wi' Sol; we can cut him off at th' ford. I like thet guy. He's had such durn bad luck, an' keeps his end up in spite of it all."

"Yeah, Sol Goodwin's a ra'al good feller; do anythin' for a feller in distress. Lost his missus an' two o' his kids when his ranch burned down, an' now he's adopted his brother's three, an' is bringin' 'em up like his own. A white man is Sol, but a bit o' a fool to himself."

"Yep. I didn't like to see him runnin' with thet pizen snake, Leery Joe. They wuz thick as thieves a while ago; but he ain't been to th' Three Crosses o' late, I notice."

"Mighty good name for a ranch belongin' to thet twistin' double-
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crosser!" grunted High, gripping his knees as his bronc leapt aside from a patch of sunburnt rock. There was a quick rattle from amongst the sand, and a wriggling form made for the shelter of the rocks; but too late, for High's six-gun was out and a bullet had smashed the rattler's head almost before the other two had noticed the venomous snake. "That's what I'd like to do to Leery Joe, for he's jest as pizen!"

"Shootin'!" approved Low. "I'd hate to have yuh git arter me wi' a six-gun, High!"

"Aw, it's jest knack an' a good eye," the pleased sharpshooter said modestly. "As this yer sawed off leetle runt re-marked—yer've got a start o' us w'en it comes to a question o' brains, Doc; yuh've got it in th' place whar it's wanted, in th' inside o' yer dome!"

"Coo, 'ark at th' compliments flyin'!" chuckled Nippy. "Why don'tcher kiss 'im, 'Igh?"

He ducked low in the saddle as the long 'un made a cut at him with his quirt, and the pony caught the slash on his rump. The fiery little bronc bucked high in the air, and set off down the trail at breakneck speed, with Nippy crouched low in the saddle like a jockey. He leant right over the horse's neck, holding the reins close up near the bit, and urged the animal on instead of checking him, riding a "finish" across the plain as if finishing a gruelling race.

"That's 'ow I won the Derby!" he grinned, as the others galloped up; "passin' th' post w'en t'others was at Tattenham Corner—or was it the Hoaks?"

"Hoax, I guess!" punned Low. "Hyar's Sol jest acrossin' the Jordan!"

They waited by the side of the ford as the downcast-looking ranchman splashed slowly across.

"Wotcheer, Sol! Wot time's the fun'ral?" yelled the irrepressible Nippy.

The rancher gave a slow, brief smile.

"Mighty soon, I'm thinkin', boyee!" he responded. "Fellers, I've been stung by a snake!"

"Gee! Whar's th' whisky, Low?" cried High, in alarm.

"A snake wi' two laigs!" went on Sol Goodwin. "A man as called hisself my friend, who I've done kindnesses to galore—an' then he turns an' bites me!"

"'Oo is th' blinkin' cannibal?" demanded the Cockney.

"Joo Leery, for a dollar!" snarled High.

The rancher nodded.

"That's th' feller," he assented; "tho' how yuh knows I cain't tell, seein' as it on'y happened yesterday, an' I ain't mentioned it to a soul but th' cunnel."

"It don't take no second sight to tell that, seein' as he's been squattin' in yer pocket th' last coupla months!" growled High. "Spill it, Sol. What's th' trouble? We're all yer friends, eh, boys?"

"Yuh bet!" said Low emphatically. "'One for All—'"

"'All for One!'" Nippy finished the trio's slogan. "And there must be—"

"No secrets between us three!" supplied High.

Sol looked at the three curiously assorted chums, with a broad grin.

"Say that sounds ra'al good! Yer a funny lot o' bozos, but I guess yer good to tie to, an' mebbe it'll ree-lieve my mind some to kinder con-fide in someone. Th' cunnel's a tip-top feller, but he cain't see no way out'n my tangle."

He produced a legal-looking document from his worn pocket book and handed it to Low. As he did so the cowpuncher caught a glimpse of a faded photograph of a pretty little woman, with a bonny little boy and girl, all poor Sol had to remind him of his lost ones.

Low gulped and read the document through aloud. He whistled through his teeth after reading it, and then scratched his head.

"Whar's th' snag?" he asked. "'Pears all right an' above-board to me. Yuh buy th' Pinon Spring an' ten acres adjoinin' from Joo Leery for five thousand bucks. Seein' that it means waterin' your grazin' land an' makin' it fertile an' more vallyable it 'ud be cheap at double th' money, hey?"

They all knew the country like a map, and agreed that all Sol's ranch had needed was just that extra bit of land with the water from the Pinon Spring to fertilise it, to make it a most valuable holding, and they could not understand the rancher's dejection.

Sol pointed a stubby forefinger at a clause which had been underlined in pencil—an obscure clause in the body of the document, lost in a forest of words.

"Said ground containing a spring, known as Pinon Spring, title to which is taken if, and as it is."

"Thar's the snag!"

The other two looked puzzled, but Low repeated the words, muttering them over to himself two or three times.

"If—and as it is." By gosh! I see—if it is thar! Is that it, Sol? Yuh meanter say—"

Just then there came another thundering boom from across the basin, and they all turned to look in the direction where a plume of smoke showed, where another big blast of dynamite was removing the obstructing rocks on Leery Joe's property.

"Yeah, that's it. He's been playin' me for a sucker these weeks past, leadin' me on to thinkin' he wuz my friend an' kinder sorry for muh. He knoo that I'd jump at th' chanct o' buyin' that spring an' th' ten acres so cheap! Why, that spring 'ud be wuth I dunno what to my ranch; make it th' best grazin' ground on this yer range! But th' cunnin' snake had had one o' these gee-ologist sharps along, surveyed th' ground, an' found that th' ree-moval o' those big rocks 'ud deflect th' stream—an', accordin', that spring 'ud dry up!"

"Yuh mean th' Pinon Spring has run dry?" asked Low.

"Drier than yer boot, boy!" said the rancher bitterly. "Not a drop o' water is flowin' on to th' ground he's sold me; an' thar ain't no legal remedy!"

Low thought for a moment, then pulled a small jewel-case out of his pocket. He opened it, and the sun's rays were reflected from a flashing stone within. High's eyes glittered, and he gave a yearning glance towards the little case.

Low snapped it shut and held it in his hand without moving.

"High," he said softly, "yuh have often enough offered me twenty bucks for that yaller topaz? Will yer still gimme that offer?"

"Yep, every time; I don't go back on me word!" yelped High, hastily fumbling in his notecase and bringing out the necessary bill. "Hyar's yer dough!"

"Wait half a minute," said the Doc.

"Yuh take this case an' contents if, and as it is? Is that right?"

"O' course! It's th' topaz I want. I seen it with my own eyes. Hand it over, Doc!"

Low handed over the case which he had held in plain view in his hand all the time. High opened it—to find one small, ordinary pebble inside. He let out a howl of wrath which was quelled by Low's upraised hand.

"It's just as simple as that, children!" said the brains of the trio. "Thar's a sucker born every minute—High's jest shown he is one; Sol's proved he's another. Now it's up to th' Threco Must-Get-Theirs to show that double-twistin' son-of-a-gun, Mister Leery Joe, whar he gits off—"

High's hand dived for his six-gun. Nippy's fingers twitched and he crouched. Low's hand again went up.

"Peaceful—quiet an' peaceful!" he ruled. "Brains must tell; no rough stuff!"

Leery's Loss!

THAT night the sleeping boys in the bunkhouse at the old Leanin' L were rudely awakened by a dull, booming sound coming from across the basin. They leapt from their bunks and rushed outside to see a lurid flame from the hills where Leery Joe's ranch was situated.

Half an hour later High, Low, and Nippy galloped into the ranch-yard on sweating horses and calmly told their mates that they had been night-herding. There was something in the aspect of the three that forbade questioning, and the hands of the Leanin' L took the explanation as read.

A little while later they heard that Leery Joe's dynamite dump had been accidentally exploded during the night, and that that wily gentleman was at his wits' end to get hold of the necessary high explosive to finish his rock-blasting—to comply with the improvement clause in his lease.

The wires from Merrivale were almost red-hot with the messages sent north, south, east, and west by the harassed rancher. His cowboys scurried in all directions, until at last relief seemed to loom up for Leery.

A rather stout little man, very quietly dressed, registered at the First and Last, that famous little saloon-hotel which supplied the cowpunchers of the surrounding district with most of their holiday fun. The name he gave was Holden Havern, and he gave his business as a mine-owner.

It leaked out that he had bought a mining property away back in the hills above the Leanin' L, Leery Joe's Threco Crosses Ranch, and Sol Goodwin's place. He did not brag, but he quietly gave it to be understood that he had got hold of the goods and that soon Merrivale would be a humming little mining centre, as well as being a cow-town.

One of the first to get wind of the new arrival was Leery Joe. The boys watched his methods; saw him get into casual conversation with the mining magnate; gradually worm his way into the stranger's confidence, until at last they were hob-nobbing together like bosom pals.

Leery hung on the mining man's words, as he casually mentioned names which had up to then been just

wonderful names to Leery Joe. Millionaires were just plain folk to Mister Havem. He produced letters beginning "My dear Holden," and signed by big magnates back East.

He never thrust them forward; just let them be seen as a matter of course. In fact, his whole manner was so quiet that Leery Joe would almost have believed he must be a mug if he did not possess these awe-inspiring credentials.

Mister Holden Havem spent quite a lot of time at the telephone, and at last Leery Joe managed to listen in to one of his conversations.

He recognised the number as being that of a big transport agent, who sent teams of horses drawing the great freighter wagons across the hills, loaded with merchandise or whatever was needed in the way of big loads that could not be brought over by ordinary means.

"Of course, you fool, I know it's high explosive!" snapped Holden Havem

newly opened diggings, should be sent through by the end of the month.

"Ten thousand dollars I've guaranteed the fool, and even at that stiff price he quibbles. Afraid of something, Tchah!"

Artfully Leery questioned him until he found out full details of the proposed shipment. It was to take place next day, and he knew that the wagon was bound to pass within a few miles of his own place.

He made his arrangements accordingly.

His foreman was a sullen, black-browed individual known as Black Jake Barley. The fact that he was unfavourably known by other names to the sheriffs of other States did not matter to Joe. He found Black Jake's quickness with the trigger finger, and very elastic ideas of honesty, useful at times.

Next day he and Jake rode out towards the trail over which the freighter

nificent Percheron horses. Riding the leader was a lazy-looking man, whom Leery knew well by sight as Ben Nixon.

"Couldn't be better!" he exclaimed. "Ben ain't anxious to make a journey right up into th' hills, I'll wager, an' he'll do 'most anythin' for dollars. I guess we kin persuade him, eh, Jake?"

"Sure!" replied Black Jake, loosening his guns in the scabbards that swung low at his hips.

Ben Nixon, nothing loath for an excuse for a wayside chat, whoa-ed his team to a standstill at sight of the two horsemen.

Leery's eyes glittered at sight of the huge cases plainly marked "DYNAMITE—HIGH EXPLOSIVE," but his jaw dropped as the sun glinted on steel and he saw that three heavily armed men sat on the tailboard behind the cases.

"My sakes, Jake, th' fool's got an armed guard!"



Too late the rattlesnake made for the shelter of the rocks. High's gun was out, and a bullet smashed the reptile's head.

over the phone. "What d'you think I wanted—babies' bottles? Yes, dynamite—d-y-n-a-m-i-t-e, you blithering ass! No! I will not accept it as such. Mark this—this is an ORDER! You send the cases by ordinary freighter—I only accept them at the end of the route, namely at Havem Gulch—without question, as they—yes, you ass—of course, cash on delivery. Send a bill of sale with the consignment—I pay cash—and then you can go to— Oh, ring off!"

He slammed the receiver on to its hook and ramped into the saloon fuming. Leery Joe had got back just in time to be sitting waiting his arrival.

"Upon my Sam, these Western commercial men are the stupidest—pardon, Mister Leery, I except you. You are a level-headed man of the world, but—"

It seemed that he had but a very few days to stay in Colorado, and that he was most anxious that a consignment of dynamite for use up in his

must pass, both armed to the teeth. In case of accidents Joe also carried a good-sized wad of bills of high dimensions, though with Black Jake's persuasive methods he did not expect to have to part with them.

"O' course, I don't want all thet dynamite; 'bout haff will do for what I want, but I've gotter have some to finish up blastin' them blamed rocks. Ol' Lou Luttrell has got a hard an' fast clause in th' lease that I have to get th' work finished by th' end o' th' month or he kin clear me off'n th' ranch. He'd be on'y too glad to; but this is whar he gits sucked in, eh, Jake?"

Black Jake was a man of few words. He tapped his six-gun with a grim smile.

"Sure!" he replied.

After waiting for a couple of hours they heard a tinkling sound in the distance, and slowly approaching they saw a great freighter wagon loaded high with cases, and drawn by twelve mag-

Jake looked, shrugged his shoulders, and shoved his half-drawn sixes back into their holsters.

"Sure!" he drawled. "Thet licks us, bawss. Me—I'm good wi' a six-gun, but a guy wi' sixes cain't stack up ag'inst three guys wi' rifles. Me—I pass!"

He wheeled his horse and galloped rapidly back towards the Three Crosses Ranch. Leery cursed him under his breath; but strong in the knowledge that money talks, and particularly loudly to lazy Ben Nixon, he rode forward.

"Hello, Ben; who owns this yer shipment o' H. E.?" he called.

"Me—right now," drawled the freighter. "I'm takin' it to th' head o' Simpson's Pass whar a guy named Holden Havem buys it from muh. Funny sorter feller, but purty slick, I take it. He won't take th' li'bility o' transportin' it hisself over th' road, so

he makes me buy th' stuff meself, an' then jest give him a bill o' sale for one wagon load o' boxed goods at th' head o' th' trail. Guess he's waitin' thar now an' it's a tidy stretch from hyar."

"Say, Ben, it's hot, an' that's a long way. Kin I take a look at that bill o' sale?"

"Sure. Hyar it is. Th' one to me when I bought th' stuff an' th' one he signs when I gits thar."

Leery glanced hurriedly through the documents, then glanced at the armed men.

"What's th' idee o' th' guard, Ben?" The freighter laughed.

"Search me. Them's his orders, an' he's payin', so it's all one to me. Guess he thought we might be held up on th' road, though what anyone 'ud want wi' a load like this—dear knows!"

"Listen, Ben; I kin do wi' some o' this! Lemme have say ten or a dozen cases an' name yer own price? Yer kin tell this Holden Havem th' consignment was short."

"Nop!" said the man decisively. "He'd skm me alive—he's a short-tempered guy; but, secin' it's a durned hot journey, an' if yer that set on havin' it, I MIGHT sell yer th' hull caboodle as it stands, go back an' git another load, an' toll him that it was late arrivin'. He'd go off th' deep end; but he couldn't prove nothin'. Ten thousand dollars, cold, an' it's yours. Yer kin send yer own wagons to collect, an' I'll dump it right hyar an' now. Other-wise—I must be moseyin'."

"Too much—I couldn't use th' hull load—"

"Please yerself. Yer c'ud sell th' rest at market prices an' make a profit. Don't forgit that yer axin' me to double-cross a mighty good customer, an' a guy that won't take it lyn' down."

There was nothing for it. Leery had to have that dynamite or break his contract with Lou Luttrell, and he knew that the colonel would be only too pleased to take advantage of the chance to oust him from the ranch.

Ten minutes later boxes were being dumped at the side of the trail to wait for Leery's men to take them to the Three Crosses. Then the empty wagon returned to its home with Ben sitting on the leader with a peculiar smile on his face, and ten thousand in "yellow backs" tucked away in his pocket.

The team halted at a bend in the road, and the armed guard jumped off the tailboard. Ben handed over the "yellow backs" with a grin to one of the guard, a stockily built, somewhat stout man with a bushy black beard.

"Thar yo are, doc, ten thousand bucks. All O. K.?"

"Fine, Ben, thanks. Hyar, take one for yer trouble—"

"Nix. I'm allus ready to 'blige yuh boys; yuh make me laff. Come hup, thar, Flossie, git goin'!"

Doc Low took off his disguising black beard and wiped his streaming face.

"All hunky, boys; let's git to town an' see what happens. I wouldn't wonder but what Leery Joe comes in some time to-day huntin' trouble!"

Sure enough that evening Leery Joe, accompanied by his gunman, Black Jake, burst into the First and Last with blood in his eye.

It needed but a glance to show him Mr. Holden Havem seated in solitary glory at a table smoking a big cigar.

"I want ten thousand dollars, yuh durned crook, or I'll have th' law on yuh or shoot it out!" Leery stormed, slapping down a bill of sale on the table. "Yuh planted a wagon load o' boxes o' sawdust, so I'd buy 'em for dynamite—yuh double twister!"

"I didn't ask you to buy 'em; they weren't mine, and, anyway, I guess you'll find if you look at that bill of sale closely, that there is a little clause in it which let's out the owner."

Leery read closely with his eyes bulging from his head at where Holden's finger pointed.

"Dynamite—title to which is taken IF, and as it is!"

There came a loud laugh from behind him, and he turned to see Sol Goodwin with a broad smile on his face, and the boys of the Leanin' L gathered round.

"Jake!" he bellowed, but Black Jake stood stolidly still, chewing meditatively and gazing up at the ceiling. He had seen a certain long, lank cow-puncher known as High Jinks suggestively shift his holstered guns to the front, and Jake was taking no chances.

"Run away now, little one," said Holden Havem, with a wave of his hand at the fuming man. "Sol, five thousand bucks this yer guy twisted yuh out of, huh? Thar it is! High, Nippy, thar's one thousand dollars each for yuh, one for me. T'other two goes to Cunnel Luttrell as dee-posit on th' vacant Three Crosses Ranch for Sol. It'll be vacant to-morrow—an' I guess he'll change the name an' call it th' Weary Leery. Goo'-night, Joe!"

(Our puncher pals, High, Low, and Nippy, find themselves up against a gang of rustlers in next week's thrilling story of the Wild West. Don't on any account miss reading "BULL BARON'S BLACKBEARDS!" It's great!)

THE JUNGLE HIKERS!

(Continued from page 24.)

said it with considerable emphasis.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Ring off, Bunter!"

"I say—"

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully through his big spectacles.

It was a couple of days later, and during those two days the chums of Greyfriars had heard much from Bunter. From Bunter's point of view, the whole credit of the rescue of Senhor Caminho and the exposure of the plot of Perez and Joaz Viro was due to one person and one person only, and the name of that person was William George Bunter.

"I'd like to know where you'd be without me!" said Bunter. "I've saved that old gent—though you fellows happen to be the fellows who actually hooked him out. I've got those rascals sent to chokey, though it happened to be you fellows who actually collared them. It was me all along the line—me first, and the rest nowhere. After this—"

"Is he wound up?" asked the Bounder.

"Beast! I hear that when we leave here we're going on to Uganda," said Bunter. "Well, I don't like the idea! I've had enough of the wilds, and my idea is to spend the rest of the holiday in Nairobi, where there's shops and hotels and restaurants, and where a fellow can get a feed and go to the pictures and have a good time. After what I've done for you, I expect you to agree. What about it?"

"Nothing about it, old fat man! If you're finished, shut up!"

"Well, look here!" roared Bunter. "If you jolly well go on to Uganda you'll jolly well go without me! That's final."

"That settles it," said the Bounder. "Uganda's a rather attractive place, anyhow, but that makes it irresistible."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only," added the Bounder regretfully, "I'm afraid Bunter will change his mind when we start for Uganda."

And the Bounder was right.

Bunter did!

THE END.

(Thrilling adventure and lively fun in Kenya. That's what you get in next Saturday's magnificent book-length complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "KIDNAPPED IN KENYA!" Order your MAGNET early to make sure of reading it.)

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