

**"OOM, THE TERRIBLE!"** *Super Story of Thrilling Adventure* **Starts Inside!**

# The **MAGNET** 2<sup>D</sup>





# SAVED FROM THE CANNIBALS!

Told by

FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Too Much of a Good Thing!

"O H lor'!"

It was a sound of woe.

"Ow! Oh! Oooh!"

Billy Bunter groaned.

He groaned deeply.

Like Job of old, Billy Bunter lamented his fate; but the lamentations of ancient Job were a mere jest to the lamentations of William George Bunter, the fattest fellow at Greyfriars School or anywhere else.

The groans of Billy Bunter were both loud and deep, and seemed to come from the very depths of his podgy person.

As Hurree Jamset Ram Singh justly remarked, the groanfulness was terrific! "Oh crikey! Ow! Oooogh!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were sympathetic. But they smiled. They could not help smiling.

The circumstances in which the chums of the Greyfriars Remove found themselves, at present, were not really a smiling matter.

Prisoners in a native city in the heart of Africa, slaves of a despotic black king, never knowing from hour to hour how long their heads would remain on their shoulders, the Famous Five found it unusually hard to pack up their troubles and smile.

But they smiled now. Billy Bunter was giving them a little sorely-needed comic relief.

Bunter, sitting under a shady tree outside his hut in the city of Tofoloko, leaned back against the trunk and groaned.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,236.

Not a man at Greyfriars School, in far-off England, would have believed it, had he heard Bunter's cause of complaint.

Bunter had too much to eat!

In all his fat career, hitherto, Bunter had seldom—very seldom—had what he regarded as enough to eat. Any number of helpings at a meal never seemed enough for Bunter; he could always do with one more.

At Greyfriars, a fellow who left a cake or a bag of tarts in his study was never likely to see it again, if Bunter was about. All through Billy Bunter's career there had been a shortage of foodstuffs—and, undoubtedly, wherever Bunter went he was liable to create a shortage.

And now—marvellous to relate—he had too much to eat!

Never would Bunter have believed such a state of things possible! The Israelites of old did not gaze on the fleshpots so longingly as Billy Bunter, as a rule. He had felt immense relief when he found that there was plenty of good grub in the city of Tofoloko and that he could have as much as he wanted. It had reconciled him to his captivity. It had made him feel that a Central African city might have advantages over a Public school in England. No work, and unlimited grub, suited Bunter down to the ground.

But they made him eat too much!

It was an excess of hospitality! No doubt it was a fault on the right side! But it was too much of a good thing.

They stuffed Bunter!

They made him stuff!

Eating, which had hitherto been Billy Bunter's chief delight, was growing to be a nightmare to him.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter, leaning back on the tree, blinked pathetically at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "I say, it's getting awful."

"Fancy Bunter having too much to eat!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The jolly old age of miracles isn't past, after all!" remarked Johnny Bull, with a shake of the head.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

"Well, old chap, you were afraid they weren't going to give you enough to eat!" said Frank Nugent comfortingly. "It's not so bad as that, is it?"

"Yes, think of that, old fat man!" said Harry Wharton.

Bunter seemed to consider for a moment.

Certainly, he had feared that there would be short commons, when Ludwig Krantz, the slave-trader, had brought him to Tofoloko's city with the other juniors, to sell into slavery.

Those fears had not been realised—quite the reverse, in fact.

But he shook his head.

"I'd rather be short of grub!" he declared.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I mean it!" moaned Bunter. "I'd actually rather be short of grub than stuffing all day like this!"

"Phew!"

"But the stuff-fulness was always a boonful blessing to the ridiculous Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Think how you used to raid the tuck

at Greyfriars!" said Bob. "No fellow's cake was safe within a mile of you."

"Think how often I've kicked you out of my study for pinching tuck!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Groan!

"D-d-don't talk of tuck!" murmured Bunter. "Don't mention food! It makes me feel ill!"

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they come!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Bunter gave a sort of yelp.

A fat Moteli black, in a lincloth and a necklace of large beads, came towards Bunter's hut, followed by three Dinka slaves bearing dishes.

The fat man was Bubu, who was a prime minister of sorts to King Tofoloko of the Moteli. He waved the juniors aside, and stood before Bunter with a cheery grin on his good-humoured face.

"Lib for eat!" he said.

Bubu was the only native in the city, so far as the juniors knew, who could speak English. He had picked it up on the Gold Coast in earlier days, when he had been a servant to a white man; and he had also picked up queer seagoing expressions on a ship in the Gulf of Guinea, on which he had served. It was a new kind of English to the ears of the Greyfriars fellows.

"You lib for eat one-time!" said Bubu, as Bunter made no motion to touch the dishes the Dinka slaves placed on the ground before him.

Groan!

The Dinkas were grinning. Some of the soldiers of the king's guards, loafing before the royal huts, looked across and grinned, too. The black men seemed to find the thing amusing.

But it did not amuse Bunter.

The food was good. It was well-cooked. But Billy Bunter turned his face away from it in loathing.

"Take it away!" he gasped.

"You lib for eat!"

"I don't want to!" moaned Bunter.

The good-humoured grin faded from Bubu's fat black face. It was replaced by a threatening scowl.

"You no lib for eat one-time, you dead!" he said. "Shiver topsails! Douse my deadlights! You lib for eat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced at one another.

"Look here, Bubu," said Harry, "why should he eat if he is not hungry?"

"Tofoloko order."

"But why?"

"Tofoloko order!" repeated Bubu.

"They mean it as a distinction, of course!" moaned Bunter. "They're trying to make much of me in their ignorant way. But they're overdoing it! A fellow can't keep on eating."

"Lib for eat, you Small Fat One!" snapped Bubu.

"I—I can't!"

Bubu turned, and beckoned to one of the black soldiers. The man came up grinning, a long spear in his hand.

The point of the spear was presented to Bunter's podgy chest, pricking the skin.

There was a yelp of terror from the fat junior.

"Ow! I—I—I'll eat, if you like!"

The spear was withdrawn, and Bunter ate. He ate slowly, but he ate. Slowly, but surely, the contents of the three dishes disappeared.

Harry Wharton & Co. moved away, and left him to it.

"Well," remarked Bob Cherry, "when we first got here I thought Bunter was

in luck—nothing to do but loaf and eat while they made slaves of the rest of us! But, on the whole, I think I'd rather prefer what we've got to what Bunter's got."

"The preferfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But why, fully, my esteemed chums, are the absurd blacks stuffing the esteemed Bunter like a preposterous turkey?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry.

"Well, it's what he's always wanted!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "He's got it, and he ought to be happy now."

But Bunter was not happy.

His happiest dreams had always been of unlimited grub. Now his dreams had been realised; and, so far from being happy, Bunter was more dismal and doleful than he would have been in a state of famine!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Smithy Loses His Temper!

"KEEP cool, Smithy!" whispered Harry Wharton.

The Bounder grunted.

His eyes were burning.

King Tofoloko, of the Moteli, had come forth from the royal huts.

A burly figure in leopard-skin dress, clinking necklaces and anklets, the African king carried himself with the insolent assurance of a savage who was well aware that on his nod depended the life or death of everyone in his sight.

His numerous guards clashed shield

**Death at the hands of the cannibals is the fate that threatens the Schoolboy Hikers; and then, when all seems lost, the way of freedom opens up to them suddenly and unexpectedly!**

and spear in salute. His attendants cringed before him. The fat Bubu almost grovelled. Harry Wharton & Co. were not the fellows to cringe or grovel, even if their lives were in the balance; but they kept their eyes on the ground, affecting a humility they were very far from feeling.

King Tofoloko was in an ill-humour—as was frequently the case with his majesty in the morning.

The royal savage was given to imbibing deep draughts of palm wine overnight, and trade gin and rum, when those liquors were to be obtained in his remote kingdom in the heart of the Congo wilderness.

Naturally, he turned off his sleeping-mat with a "next-dayish" feeling, and seldom regained an equable temper till midday, after he had seen a few slaves beaten with the rhinoceros-hide whip, or a head or two taken off hapless offenders by his soldiers.

If King Tofoloko laid his own royal hands on his attendants, it was rather an honour than otherwise. Anyhow, royal kicks and cuffs were better than whippings and beheadings. Even Bubu, who was grand vizier, prime minister, and all sorts of things, was often kicked and often cuffed, and did his best to look grateful for those favours.

Kicking and cuffing fell to the lot of the Greyfriars fellows—and did not please them at all.

But hitherto King Tofoloko had treated the white slaves in a manner which, for his sooty majesty, was quite

kind. He kicked them, or smacked their heads, or sent them spinning out of his way; but they had not yet been whipped or beheaded. It was hard enough to bear; but torture and death were worse, and the juniors bore it as well as they could.

They were slaves to the black king, and there was no help.

As they were in personal attendance upon the savage monarch, they could not keep at a safe distance, and sometimes they were disposed rather to envy Billy Bunter, who certainly had a very easy time in comparison.

Now they were gathered round his black majesty, Wharton and Nugent fanning the sooty face with ostrich feather fans to keep off the heat and the flies, both of which were troublesome enough in the African city.

Harry Wharton, as he fanned the black ruffian, with the swarm of black men round him, was thinking of Greyfriars School in far-off England.

Greyfriars and home seemed like a dream now.

The new term had begun at Greyfriars; fellows would be in the Form-room with Mr. Quelch; the old school would be going on in the old way. It seemed to Wharton that he was in a different world; hard to realise that the same world held Greyfriars School and the kingdom of Tofoloko.

Cheerfully enough had the chums of the Remove accompanied Mr. Vernon-Smith on his journey to East Africa, looking on it as a glorious chance for the holidays. Little had they dreamed how those "hols" would turn out!

The enmity of Ludwig Krantz, the half-German, half-Arab slave-trader, had landed them in hopeless slavery in Central Africa.

It was bitter enough to the Famous Five; but they had learned to be patient, while dreaming incessantly of escape.

It was harder for the Bounder to be patient. Smithy's own temper was rather dictatorial, and he was not accustomed to controlling it.

Many times the Famous Five had feared some outbreak on the part of the Bounder, which could only have fatal results.

The black king had paid high in ivory for his white slaves, and was probably unwilling to net a loss by cutting off their heads. But a Central African king's temper was very unreliable.

Perhaps he detected a surly look on the Bounder's face that morning, or perhaps it was merely ill-humour; anyhow, he gave Smithy the back of a large black hand across his face, and Smithy spun over and fell.

He sprang up with burning eyes.

Wharton whispered to him anxiously.

With difficulty the Bounder restrained his rage.

Perhaps the sight of M'toko, the witch-doctor, helped to restrain him.

That fearsome personage had come into the city to interview King Tofoloko. It was to speak to M'toko that his majesty had come out of the royal huts.

Taking no further notice of the Bounder, possibly not even guessing that a slave would dare to resent a swipe from his royal paw, King Tofoloko turned his attention to the witch-doctor.

Of all the numerous crowd round the king, M'toko was the only one who did not cringe.

M'toko, in his own way, was a powerful man; he was master of magic, chief torturer, and in possession of supernatural knowledge—according to the belief of the savages.

He could foretell the phases of the moon, and information which, in Europe, could be obtained from any penny calendar, was wise and wonderful to the simple Moteli.

He could bring rain when the crops needed it, by his incantations and strange ceremonies. If the rain did not come when M'toko called it, the explanation was simple—ghosts and devils were preventing it. And those ghosts and devils M'toko was the man to deal with. In extreme cases, the ghosts and devils would be propitiated by cutting off the heads of persons obnoxious to them—or to M'toko!

The witch-doctor was a burly man, with an animal-like, cruel face, and gleaming, keen eyes. He wore a grass girdle and necklaces of human bones, which rattled as he moved.

Even Tofoloko had some respect and fear for the witch-doctor, who had the power—or so Tofoloko believed—to bring blight on the crops of Indian corn, to dry up the rivers, to send plagues of white ants, and to infect anyone with sickness and disease. The last, undoubtedly, was in M'toko's power, for he was skilled, like all witch-doctors, in the use of poisons.

The sight of the witch-doctor, with his horrible decorations of the bones of his victims, sent a chill to the hearts of the Greyfriars juniors.

They understood nothing of the talk between the black king and the fetish-man; but they saw that King Tofoloko's good-humour was returning.

Followed by his attendants, King Tofoloko crossed over towards Billy Bunter's hut, the witch-doctor grinning by his side.

Bunter was sleeping under the shady tree, after his last Gargantuan meal. A kick in his fat ribs awakened him, and he started up with a gasp.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He scrambled to his feet, his eyes bulging behind his spectacles at the sight of the witch-doctor.

M'toko approached him and pinched his fat arms and neck, a good deal like a trader examining a fat beast in a market.

Bunter, always podgy, had fattened since his arrival in the African city. For some reason, unknown to the juniors, the natives desired to fatten Bunter—and there was no doubt that they had succeeded.

So far, the true reason had not occurred to them, least of all to Billy Bunter, who had no doubt that Tofoloko had recognised him as a superior sort of fellow, and desired to treat him with greater distinction than the rest of the party.

But the touch of the witch doctor sent a chill of terror through the Owl of the Remove, and he blinked at M'toko, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a serpent.

M'toko seemed satisfied with his examination. He grinned a hideous grin, and spoke to Tofoloko in the native tongue, and the king grinned also. Then they turned and left Bunter, much to the fat junior's relief.

As Tofoloko turned, his attendants crowded back out of his way. Herbert Vernon-Smith did not move so quickly as the rest.

Smack!

Simply because it was his royal will, Tofoloko gave the back of his heavy hand to the Bounder again.

Smithy staggered over and fell.

It was the second time that morning that Tofoloko had knocked him down, and the Bounder's fierce temper, always hard to control, boiled over.

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He leaped to his feet, his hands clenched, and his eyes blazing.

"Smithy!" shouted Wharton, in alarm.

"My esteemed Smithy—" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Stop, you ass!" panted Bob Cherry.

The Bounder did not heed, even if he heard. He sprang like a tiger at the black king, and his clenched fist crashed into the black face, with a blow that had all the Bounder's strength and fury behind it.

Crash!

King Tofoloko, taken by surprise, was felled like an ox. He went over backwards, and crashed to the ground.

The Bounder stood panting.

Round him the crowd of natives stood silent, in the silence of utter horror and dread.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Doomed to the Torture!

DEAD silence reigned in the square before the king's huts.

Even the soldiers of the guard stood petrified.

King Tofoloko, sprawling on his royal back, grunted and gasped. For some moments, probably, he did not realise what had happened.

Never, in all the history of Tofoloko's kingdom, had a hand been raised against the black monarch before.

A rebellious look was a warrant for death. But a blow was unheard of, unthinkable, unimaginable.

Hundreds of horrified black faces stared on in consternation, as the King of the Moteli sprawled.

Bubu was the first to recover his senses. He rushed to the fallen monarch to help him to rise.

Tofoloko staggered to his feet.

Amazement was depicted in his black face. But it gave place to savage rage and vengeance.

The soldiers, petrified, like the rest, were still staring. At a sign from the enraged king they closed round the Bounder.

His arms were grasped by sinewy hands.

Harry Wharton & Co., in horror, had expected to see Vernon-Smith cut to pieces on the spot. But he was only secured by the black soldiers.

The juniors instinctively made a move forward. They could not help the Bounder, and could not even approach him. Some of the soldiers drove them back with the butts of their spears.

Between two brawny men of the Moteli, Herbert Vernon-Smith stood, his arms gripped in black hands, a helpless prisoner.

King Tofoloko was speaking in a husky voice of rage, his words incomprehensible to the juniors, but his fury unmistakable.

The Famous Five, with pale faces, waited for the inevitable. But no weapon was raised to take the Bounder's life.

M'toko came forward at a sign from Tofoloko. With a finger dipped in some vegetable stain, the witch-doctor made a mark on Vernon-Smith's chest, where his tattered shirt was open at the neck.

The juniors knew enough of the customs of the Moteli to understand what that meant. They had seen a similar mark made on Kikolobo, the Kikuyu hunter, when he had been a prisoner in the city. It was the mark that was placed on a victim doomed to torture and death.

Then the Bounder was taken away, walking between the two brawny blacks

who gripped his arms, followed by M'toko, grinning and chuckling.

His face was haggard as he went. Well enough he knew what he had drawn upon himself by that outbreak of ungovernable temper. But he held his head high as he walked between the soldiers. He knew that it was the finish. But the Bounder of Greyfriars was game to the last.

He disappeared from the sight of the juniors.

King Tofoloko returned into the royal huts. Bubu went in with him; but he emerged, after a time, with a scared expression on his face.

Harry Wharton approached him. The juniors had found Bubu a good-tempered savage, almost friendly at times. He liked talking with them in his peculiar Gold Coast English, of which he was very proud. The years that he had passed among white men on the West African coast had opened Bubu's mind a little, and he rather prided himself on being more civilised than the Moteli who had never left the borders of their remote land.

In fact, the juniors had learned that Bubu, at the bottom of his heart, had a very low opinion of that mighty monarch, King Tofoloko, whom he served in fear and trembling.

That opinion Bubu sagely kept locked up in his own black breast, so far as the rest of the Moteli were concerned. But no doubt it was a relief to him to express it in a safe quarter. As he was the only man in the city who could speak English, and as the juniors did not understand a word of the Moteli dialect, he could say what he liked to them without fear.

"O Bubu, what will happen to our friend who is taken away by M'toko?" asked Wharton.

"Plenty torture," said Bubu. "Plenty long torture till him kill. Blow my topsail! Tofoloko him very angry! No like bang in him ugly face!"

Bubu grinned.

"Me—Bubu—like see Tofoloko bang in him ugly face," he said cheerfully. "Him uncivilised, dirty, old nigger, douse my dead-lights! Me no tell Tofoloko what me tink! Make chop one-time! Dirty ole nigger! Plenty glad see um bang in black, ugly face!"

"But Smithy—" muttered Nugent.

The juniors' hearts were sick within them. Only too clearly they realised that they had looked on the Bounder of Greyfriars for the last time in life. It seemed too fearful to be true, yet they knew that it must be so.

Bubu shrugged his bare black shoulders.

"What him want?" he asked. "He bang Tofoloko in him ugly face! What he tink he get?"

"What will they do?" asked Johnny Bull, in a low voice.

"M'toko take him to him hut," said Bubu, "tie um very tight in cord. Take off eyelids, nose, lips, ears. To-morrow bring um to Tofoloko for him see! No kill quick! Long time kill—many days, many nights."

"Oh!" breathed Wharton.

Bubu gave the juniors a shrewd look.

"You lib for say nothing, do nothing!" he said warningly. "S'pose you kick, you get same! Blow my topsails! Tofoloko he very angry! Ugly old nigger!" added Bubu derisively. "Him tink him great king—him ugly ole black man! No tell Tofoloko—him make chop! Plenty bad palaver, Tofoloko sabbey what me tink! Make chop one-time!"

Bubu turned away from the juniors.

The Famous Five gathered in a group,



"Ow! I—I—I'll eat, if you like!" yelled Billy Bunter, as the black soldier held the spear, threateningly, over him. And, unaware of the fact that he was being fattened for a cannibal feast, Bunter tucked away all the food that was put before him.

speaking in low tones. For the moment they were not wanted by their royal master. There were desperate thoughts in their minds, as the shrewd Bubu had guessed.

The Bounder had been taken away to the witch-doctor's hut, for the unspeakable tortures of Central Africa. His comrades could not help him. At the best they could only share his terrible fate. Yet to leave him to it without lifting a finger seemed impossible.

"Better get hold of something, and die fighting!" muttered Bob Cherry. "We can't stand this!"

"Smithy was a fool to break out like that!" growled Johnny Bull. "If we can stand it, he could stand it! But he—"

"What can we do?" muttered Nugent. Wharton set his teeth.

"We can't do anything; but—we've got to try! Better be killed than stand this!"

There was nothing to be done. They knew it. But they moved away across the square, in the direction of the street along which M'toko and the Bounder had gone.

A score of black soldiers surrounded them at once. With blows from the butts of their spears, they drove the juniors back to the royal huts. Bubu was with the soldiers, and evidently he had warned them to be on the watch.

"You lib for stop!" said Bubu sternly. "You want torture same other slave? You lib for stop!"

In his own way the black man was

being kind. He was saving the juniors from the fate that was now inevitable for the Bounder.

When he left them, he left a number of the soldiers watching them. There was nothing to be done. Herbert Vernon-Smith had passed from their sight, and they had no hope of seeing him again until he was brought, tortured and disfigured, to delight the savage eyes of Tofoloko on the morrow. Black and bitter were the thoughts of the juniors. Never before, in all the days they had passed in the city of Tofoloko, had the yoke of slavery pressed so heavily upon them.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### In the Hour of Despair!

**H**ERBERT VERNON-SMITH walked with his head erect.

Pride of race, as well as the fierce pride of his own arrogant nature, kept him steady as he marched away by the blacks. He would not show a sign of funk under the eyes of the Moteli. He walked steadily, with grim face and defiant eyes.

But his heart was as heavy as lead in his breast. The last hope was gone now, and black despair was his portion.

Ever since they had been slaves in the city of Tofoloko there had been some grain of hope left in the juniors' hearts.

They knew that Mr. Vernon-Smith, in far-off Uganda, would be moving heaven and earth to find them. They believed that Captain McCann, the man-

tracker of East Africa, was hunting for them with his askaris. They knew that Kikolobo, the brave Kikuyu hunter, had followed them into the remote kingdom of Central Africa, and that he was lurking somewhere in the forests and jungles of the Moteli valley, waiting and watching for a chance to help them. In the midst of savages, under the yoke of slavery, hope had never left them. While there was life there was hope.

But for the Bounder, at least, the end had come—his fierce temper had brought it. The other fellows might endure, and their patience might, at long last, be rewarded by rescue. But the Bounder had thrown away his last hope, and he knew that it was the finish.

With his hands free, he would have seized a spear or a club and struck his hardest, provoking the savages to kill him. For he knew what awaited him in the den of horror and death, where M'toko dwelt amid bones and blood. But his arms were held by brawny hands, he was as helpless as an infant.

Behind him walked M'toko, grinning and chuckling.

Crowds of idle blacks followed them as far as the gateway in the "boma," or thorn wall that surrounded the city.

But when they walked out of the city the crowds remained behind. The Moteli dreaded to approach the den of M'toko, where countless victims had been done to death by the cruel witch-

doctor. Neither were they permitted to do so. It pleased the cunning magician to surround his den with mystery as well as horror and fear.

From the gateway in the boma the road ran through the maize fields towards a walled enclosure on the bank of the Moteli river. This river, an affluent of the great Congo, flowed down from the hills and crossed the fertile valley, and the cultivated lands extended for many miles on either side of the stream.

But there was no cultivation near the home of M'toko. For a quarter of a mile round there was wild, untrodden jungle, left in its natural state, screening his den from all eyes.

High over the jungle towered a gigantic tree, a huge cedar with magnificent branches, from which it was possible to survey the whole of the Moteli valley from end to end, from side to side.

Under those spreading branches many a scene of horror and cruelty had been enacted by the witch-doctor and his myrmidons.

Vernon-Smith had seen the tall cedar from the town many times, and had learned from Bubu that it shadowed the jungle-circled home of the "wise one." He knew that the natives avoided the spot with superstitious terror. Had he doubted for what purpose Tofoloko had handed him over to the witch-doctor, he would have known when his conductors headed directly for the towering trees on the bank of the Moteli river.

Women working in the maize fields glanced at him as he passed, and in some of their faces he read compassion, in spite of their fear of the grinning demon who walked behind him.

But the maize fields were left behind, and silence and gloom surrounded him as he was taken into a path through the jungle that circled the tall cedar.

There the soldiers of Tofoloko left him.

But he was received by two black servants of the witch-doctor, who bound him hand and foot with strong cords of vegetable fibre.

The soldiers, openly relieved to be able to go, hurried back to the city. The witch-doctor's servants lifted the Bounder on their shoulders and carried him through the jungle to the open space in the centre under the tall cedar.

Under the wide branches were two huts, one belonging to the magician, the other to his two slaves. Several stakes were planted in the ground, and some of these showed traces of charring, telling the Bounder that fires had been lighted round them.

Bones lay on the earth, and Smithy did not need telling what kind of bones they were. Scores, if not hundreds, of victims had perished on that terrible spot under the cruelties of M'toko.

The two slaves carried him to one of the stakes, and he was placed upright against it and more cords run round him and knotted.

So securely was he bound that he could move scarcely a finger, let alone a limb. M'toko took no chances with his victims.

The Bounder's face was white as chalk.

He knew what was coming, and he knew that there was to be no respite. The nature of the torture he did not yet know, but he knew that it was to be terrible and merciless.

The two slaves retired to their hut, but remained in the doorway watching, with cruel, grinning faces.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,236.

M'toko approached the bound school-boy.

Probably the magician of the Moteli was, to some extent, the slave of the superstitious delusions he imposed on the natives. For he proceeded to carry out the hideous rites of his business, though there was no audience, save the Bounder and the two watching slaves.

With his stubby finger dipped in some native stain, he dabbed a mark in turn on each of the prisoner's eyelids, on his nose, his ears, and his lips. He spoke in his own tongue, of which Vernon-Smith understood nothing, but the wretch's actions, if not his words, enlightened the Bounder. He knew that where he was marked the torture was to fall.

Taking a knife from his girdle, the witch-doctor whetted the edge on a stone.

A shudder ran through Vernon-Smith's bound limbs.

From the hut where the two black slaves stared on came a low, dull droning sound; one of the blacks was tapping a drum.

M'toko began to dance round the stake to which the prisoner was tied.

With the human bones that formed his necklaces clinking and rattling, he circled round the prisoner, chanting to the tapping of the drum.

Vernon-Smith, still as a statue in the cords that bound him to the stake, watched the hideous figure that danced and circled and bounded, like a fellow in the grip of a nightmare.

When the death-dance ended the torture would begin; the savage mutilation that was to avenge the blow given to Tofoloko.

Was there no hope?

Smithy's eyes wandered wildly to and fro. The two slaves at the hut stared on with glinting eyes and animal faces, one of them monotonously tapping the drum. Overhead extended the great branches and thick foliage of the cedar, shutting off the sky and the burning sun. Round the fatal spot, at a distance, the jungle grew high and thick, screening the dreadful scene from all eyes outside the witch-doctor's domain.

No hope!

The thought of his father was in his mind—the father who would never see him again. Then came the thought of Kikolobo, the faithful Kikuyu, who would have died to save him, the Kikuyu whom he had rescued from the lion in far-off Kenya, and who could never consider his debt of gratitude fully repaid. Kikolobo had been his chief hope all through the dreary days of slavery, but Kikolobo could not save him now.

It was like a mockery to think of Greyfriars—of the old green quad, of fellows going into the form-rooms, of Mr. Quelch whisking in his gown, of old Prout stopping masters in the passages to chat, of football on Little Side, and rags in the Remove passage.

Smithy set his teeth to keep back a groan.

He would not flinch if he could help it. Yet he knew that he must flinch when the demon dancing round him began with the knife that glittered in his foul, black hand.

Something like a dark shadow dropped from the thick foliage above. It crashed on the witch-doctor as he danced, and M'toko, his dance suddenly ended, crunched on the ground under the heavy object that had fallen.

His chant suddenly ceased.

The Bounder's eyes started from his head.

Was he losing his senses from sheer horror, and dreaming, seeing visions?

Was it a tall, muscular figure clad in a garb of striped monkey-skins that had dropped from the boughs of the cedar and crushed the devil-doctor under its weight?

Was it Kikolobo of the Kikuyu who leaped up from the fallen man and drove the broad blade of a spear deep into the breast of the witch-doctor as he sprawled and howled!

Was it Kikolobo, or was he going mad?

"Kicky!" panted the Bounder. "Oh, Kicky!"

It was Kikolobo!

It was the brave and faithful Kikuyu who had come to his aid in that fearful extremity.

Amazed, half believing, half doubting, the Bounder watched him.

M'toko lay almost at the prisoner's feet, dead—slain by that single, terrible thrust that had driven the broad-bladed spear through and through his carcase.

Kikolobo was leaping towards the two slaves in the hut.

The tapping of the drum stopped; the two wretches seized spears as the Kikuyu rushed upon them.

They were two to one; but five or six to one would not have daunted the hunter of Kenya.

The Kikuyu's spear found a throat, and a man dropped at his feet as the other struck; the Kikuyu receiving the blow on his rhinoceros-hide shield. A second more and he had struck again, and the other Moteli wretch sprawled dead at his feet.

Leaving them where they had fallen, the Kikuyu cast one swift, searching glance round him, to ascertain that no other foes were at hand.

Then he raced back to the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith stared at him, still unable to believe. Still it seemed to him that this must be a vision from which he would wake. But the soft voice of the Kikuyu was in his ears, calming, reassuring.

"O Bwana-wangu," said the Kikuyu, "my eyes are glad to see you!"

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Smithy's Escape!

"KICKY!" murmured the Bounder. There were tears in his eyes. "Kicky, you've saved me! You've saved me from—from—"

His voice faltered. He hardly dared to think of what it was from which the Kikuyu had saved him.

The cutting edge of the spear was gliding over the fibre cords, and they fell in fragments round him.

He was free.

Free!

He tottered, and the strong arm of the Kikuyu supported him.

"O Bwana-wangu," said Kikolobo, "it was written that my lord should live and not die! O Bwana, the heart of this Kikuyu is light, and his heart is as glad as the sunrise over the Great Mountain where N'gai dwells!"

"You've saved me!" muttered Smithy.

Even yet he could hardly believe it.

The Kikuyu smiled.

"Even as my lord saved this Kikuyu from the jaws of Simba, the lion, so have I, Kikolobo, saved my lord from the tortures of the Moteli!"

"God bless you, Kicky!" said the Bounder brokenly.

He pulled himself together. His nerve had been strong, while he was bound to the torture-stake; but the reaction when he was saved had almost overcome him. It was not like the Bounder of Greyfriars to give way to

emotion; but the tears stood in his eyes now, and gratitude and affection welled up in his heart.

"If I could reward you for this, Kicky, I would give my life a dozen times over!" he said huskily.

"My lord has already rewarded me with these words, which are sweeter to my ears than the singing of birds in the forests of Masalindi!" said the Kikuyu gravely.

The Bounder smiled faintly.

He glanced up at the thick, wide-spreading branches of the great cedar. He was calmer now; but he could not yet understand how his friend and saviour had appeared so opportunely.

"You were in the cedar?" he asked.

"Yes, lord," said the Kikuyu. "This place, which is full of terror for the Moteli, has no terrors for me, for I, Kikolobo, laugh at the sorceries of the witch-doctors of the Moteli, and snap my fingers at their magic. Many times, on many days, have I climbed this great tree to watch the city of Tofoloko, and seek to gladden my eyes with a sight of the handsome face of Bwana-wangu. For it has always been in my thoughts that the time would come when I should be able to help my lord to escape."

The Bounder nodded.

He understood that the towering tree gave the Kikuyu a coign of vantage, whence he could watch his enemies with little danger of discovery—except from M'toko and his myrmidons.

"But M'toko—he never saw you?" he asked.

"I came in the night, when the wicked one slept amid his bones," said Kikolobo. "Many times have I watched him, and it was in my mind to slay him, and also his slaves; and this would I have done but for giving the alarm to the Moteli. Many times I have stayed unseen in the high branches of this great tree, watching the city, while M'toko and his slaves passed below and saw nothing. And so it was, lord, that I saw the wicked ones bring Bwana-wangu to this terrible place."

"You were watching as I came?"

"My eyes saw you, Bwana," said the Kikuyu, "and from the branches I watched M'toko; and if he had drawn near you with his knife, he would have died with great swiftness. But so long as he did not harm you, lord, I held my hand, for I waited for the soldiers to be out of hearing of his death-cry. For if the soldiers of Tofoloko carried back to the city the news that M'toko was slain, then great numbers of the Moteli would come, and it would be the finish of this palaver."

The Kikuyu's words reminded the Bounder of his danger. As Kikolobo ceased to speak Smithy listened intently and anxiously.

If the soldiers who had brought him there had heard or seen anything of the slaying of M'toko and his servants, it was only a matter of minutes before a swarm of the enemy would be on the spot.

For that reason the Kikuyu had waited and watched with patience before he had dropped from the tree and slain the witch-doctor.

"Get into the tree again, Kicky, and see that the coast is clear," said Vernon-Smith.

The Kikuyu clambered swiftly and actively up the great cedar.

From the highest branches he scanned the surrounding country in the bright, burning sunlight.

But there was no sign of alarm or danger. Women were working in the maize-fields as usual, with infants slung on their backs, and at a distance the two soldiers who had brought the

Bounder to M'toko's domain were entering a gateway of the boma surrounding the city.

They went without a backward glance, evidently in complete ignorance of any unusual happening at M'toko's den.

Kikolobo slithered down the tree again.

"My eyes see no danger, Bwana," he said. "Not till some message may come for M'toko will Tofoloko learn that his maker of magic has been slain. Yet this may happen at any time; and it is in my thoughts that we should go."

"Go?" repeated the Bounder. "Yes, go from here and get into safety, Kicky, but not from this valley. Without my friends I cannot go."

"As my lord wills," said the Kikuyu. "But to stay in this place is to receive death from the spears of the Moteli. In the forest there is a safe place, where the Bwana and this Kikuyu may hide like T'ui, the leopard, when the hunters are beating the jungle for him. Let

SEND IN THAT FUNNY  
STORY YOU'VE JUST HEARD!



**A BURNING QUESTION!**

George: "Do you find your sketches profitable?"

Artist: "Oh, well, they—er—just keep the pot boiling, you know."

George: "I see! You light the fire with 'em, eh?"

A useful penknife has been forwarded to, R. J. Loveday, Bilden End, Chrishall, Royston, Herts, who sent in this winning joke.

my lord's handsome feet follow in the footsteps of Kikolobo."

The Bounder smiled and nodded.

"Let us go," he assented.

Vernon-Smith was himself again now. He had escaped the torture; he had escaped from captivity and slavery. Under the guidance of the Kenya hunter he could have quitted the valley of the Moteli, and found his way back to his father, in Uganda. But he was not thinking of that for one moment. His comrades were still slaves in the huts of Tofoloko, and he did not dream of deserting them.

It was necessary first to seek safety from pursuit, which might come any hour or any moment; after that the future was on the knees of the gods. But without his friends the Bounder had no thought of turning his back on the country of the Moteli.

He picked up a spear, and followed the Kikuyu.

From the jungle-circled den of the witch-doctor, Kikolobo led him to the bank of the river, creeping on hands

and knees, taking advantage of every atom of cover.

They reached the margin of the river, and the Bounder followed the Kikuyu into the water.

The cunning hunter gathered boughs thick with leaves, and fastened them over the junior's head and shoulders, and over his own.

Thus screened, they moved along the margin of the stream, with the water up to their necks.

"The Moteli will see with their eyes, O Bwana," said the Kikuyu, "but they will know nothing."

"What-ho!" chuckled Smithy.

There was plenty of driftwood on the stream, and they waded among it, under the screen of leafy boughs, undistinguishable from the rest.

For a mile or more they followed the stream, and then, at a spot where thick forest grew down to the water's edge, they left the river.

The deep shades of the forest received them; and they vanished from the bright sunlight and from the pursuit of the Moteli.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**

**Great News!**

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO. hardly knew how that terrible day passed.

It seemed endless, dragging its weary length through the long, long, hot hours.

For many hours they were in attendance on Tofoloko; and even when his black majesty slept, in the heat of the day, one of the juniors were stationed beside the royal sleeping-tent to brush away the flies.

Their feelings towards Tofoloko were of horror and hatred; and it was not easy to conceal them. But a reckless word or look might have caused them to be sent to the den of M'toko, to share the Bounder's fearful fate; and they were on their guard.

But Harry Wharton, as he sat beside the sleeping savage and fanned him with a fan of ostrich feathers, gave him grim looks.

While Tofoloko slept, all was still and silent round him. The royal sleeping-hut was deserted by all, save the snoring black man and his white attendant. Even Bubu would not have dared to wake Tofoloko. All the numerous attendants kept at a distance, and walked on tiptoe, and spoke in whispers if they spoke at all. It was death to disturb the Central African monarch when he was taking his royal nap.

Standing against the wall of the hut, near the king's head, was the royal spear; and Wharton was debating in his mind whether to grasp it and run it through the wretch who had condemned Vernon-Smith to the torture.

But it was not only himself that he had to think of; the lives of his friends were at stake, as well as his own.

And there was still hope for the Famous Five; though with each passing day it grew fainter.

It was futile to throw away their lives; at least, so long as a glimmer of hope remained.

The weary day ended at last; and in the cool of the evening the schoolboy slaves gathered outside their hut and ate their evening meal.

Billy Bunter was sprawling under his tree, dismal and doleful.

While the Famous Five ate a frugal supper, Billy Bunter was stuffing an

enormous meal, under the watchful eye of Bubu and the grinning looks of the Dinka slaves.

Possibly the juniors might have guessed with what intention Bunter was being fattened; but their thoughts were all with the Bounder. Hardly for a moment that weary day had their thoughts left him.

Bunter's meal finished, the fat junior sank back against the tree, grunting and gasping.

Bubu gave him a grin.

"Small Fat One lib for grow very fat!" said Bubu.

"Ow!" mumbled Bunter.

"Plenty fat! Tofoloko him pleased!" said Bubu.

"Oh dear!"

The Dinkas carried the empty dishes away; and Bubu, grinning, turned from the grunting fat junior.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Something's up!"

Up the tree-shaded street, from one of the gateways of the boma, a black man came running in the soft African moonlight.

He panted and streamed with perspiration as he ran, evidently in frantic haste.

The juniors fixed their eyes on him curiously.

He looked like the bearer of startling news; and they wondered whether it portended an attack from some of the neighbouring tribes with whom King Tofoloko was at war.

Bubu stood still, his eyes on the runner. A crowd of soldiers gathered round, babbling excitedly.

The running man stopped before Bubu and panted out his news, whatever it was, in the native tongue.

The juniors heard what he said without understanding a word; but they saw that it produced an electrical effect on Bubu and the soldiers.

Amazement, horror, incredulity, were depicted in every black face.

"My hat!" murmured Nugent. "It's something jolly startling that nigger has brought in."

"Might be an attack!" said Harry Wharton. "These brutes are at war with a lot of other savages outside the valley."

"Might be white men coming!" said Nugent hopefully. "This kingdom will be mopped up some day by the Belgian Congo government."

"Oh, my hat! That would be ripping!" sighed Bob. "Too jolly good to be true, I'm afraid."

Bubu passed the juniors, hurrying towards the royal huts with consternation in his face.

Evidently he was going to inform Tofoloko of the news, whatever it was, that the messenger had brought.

In a few minutes Tofoloko came striding out.

His black face was furious, his eyes gleaming. He carried spear and shield, as if equipped for warfare. He shouted in savage tones to the soldiers, and strode away, followed by a swarm of armed men.

They tramped down the street to the gateway in the boma, and disappeared from the eyes of the juniors.

Bubu remained, looking after them till they were gone. Then the juniors saw him shrug his plump black shoulders.

There was a lurking grin on the face of the black prime minister, as he caught the eyes of the schoolboys fixed on him. He came over to them.

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"What's happened, Bubu?" asked Wharton eagerly.

"No sabbeey!" answered Bubu. "Nobody sabbeey! M'toko him kill—"

"M'toko killed!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Him kill, him servants kill!" said Bubu. "Shiver topsails! No sabbeey who kill."

"My hat!"

The juniors could understand how such news had electrified the Moteli.

The witch-doctor, the magician, the lord of ghosts and devils, had been killed. In all the country there was no man bold enough to dream of lifting his spear against the "Wise One." Even Tofoloko would have paused long before he had thought of such a deed.

That the bloodstained wretch had been wiped out could only be good news to the schoolboy slaves. They knew that it must be the work of a stranger in the land. The thought of Kikolobo rushed into their minds at once.

Had the witch-doctor fallen under the spear of the Kikuyu? It seemed a certainty to Harry Wharton & Co.

"And Smithy?" gasped Nugent.

"Bubu, what—" began Wharton, his voice faltering.

"No sabbeey!" said Bubu. "Him gone! Him no torture—him no kill! Him gone! M'toko dead, him servants dead—white boy gone! No sabbeey!"

Bubu was evidently puzzled and perplexed. But the lurking grin on his fat black face showed that the fate of the witch-doctor rather entertained him than otherwise; though he certainly would not have dared to reveal it to any but the juniors.

"Smithy—gone!" said Wharton, with a deep breath.

His eyes danced. The Bounder had escaped.

He could not have escaped unaided. The Kikuyu was at hand. The juniors could have no doubt of it.

The Famous Five felt their hearts suddenly light. The long horror that had hung over the day was lifted now.

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"Smithy—escaped!" breathed Bob Cherry. "Oh, good luck! Good luck!"

"The goodfulness of the luck is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Him no escape!" said Bubu. "Plenty soldiers hunt, find um! Douse my dead-lights! Find um one-time! Moteli man plenty surprised, M'toko kill! 'Tink no can kill wise one, plenty strong magic! Me Bubu no tink um strong magic! Bally rot! What?"

The juniors chuckled. Bubu's English, picked up on the Gold Coast, was comic enough; and they were in a cheery mood. The news of Smithy's escape from the torture was like the turning of darkness to light.

"Me glad!" went on Bubu. "No tell Tofoloko!" He grinned. "He plenty please! No like M'toko! Me see um, eye on me, sometime; him like kill; p'raps him kill Bubu some day. Me glad him snuff out, blow my topsails."

By this time the whole city of Tofoloko was in a wild cackle of excitement, as the startling news spread.

To the simple minds of the savages it seemed impossible that any human hand could have been lifted against the powerful magician. Ghosts and devils must have done the deed, in the opinion of most of the Moteli.

That opinion, however, was not shared by the king, for he and his soldiers were hunting for the slayer of the witch-doctor, and for the prisoner who had escaped.

It was at a very late hour that Tofoloko returned to his city; and he came weary and scowling and disappointed.

The juniors, peering from their hut, saw him pass into the palace, and his looks were enough to tell them that he had failed.

"Kicky's safe—if it was Kicky!" whispered Wharton. "You can see that that black brute hasn't made a catch."

"It was Kicky, that's a cert, and he's safe so far," said Bob. "And the Bounder's safe, too."

"Thank goodness!"

"The thankfulness is terrific." And the schoolboy slaves slept more soundly and peacefully that night than on any night since they had been sold into slavery.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Trapping the Slave-Hunters!

CAPTAIN McCANN, the man-tracker of Uganda, lowered the field-glasses with a grim smile on his bronzed face.

Standing with his feet on a branch, his left hand holding to a higher branch thirty feet from the ground, McCann had been scanning the arid plain that lay beyond the edge of the forest.

What the field-glasses had told him seemed to afford the little bronzed man-tracker a grim satisfaction.

"Holy mackerel!" murmured the captain.

He glanced down from the tree.

Below was the camp of his men—thirty stalwart askaris in khaki shorts, armed with rifles.

Leaning on the tree-trunk was a portly gentleman, whose plump face showed lines of care and deep trouble.

Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith's friends in London town would hardly have known the portly millionaire had they seen him then.

Portly as he still was, hard travel in the wilds of Central Africa had worn him down, and he had grown perceptibly leaner since he had turned his back on Lake Albert and Uganda.





A dark shadow dropped from the thick foliage and crashed on the witch-doctor as he danced. Vernon-Smith's eyes started from his head as he recognised that it was the brave and faithful Kikuyu who had come to his aid!

His face was still plump, but not so plump as of old, and it was burned by the sun and the hot winds of Africa.

His attitude as he leaned on the tree was one of dejection, almost of despair.

Many days had passed since the "safari" had set out from Lake Albert, on the Belgian-Congo side of the border.

Greatly to the surprise of Captain McCann, the millionaire had borne the hardships and toils of the journey with uncomplaining fortitude and with amazing endurance, considering that he was a city man, accustomed to a life of ease and comfort.

In point of fact, Mr. Vernon-Smith cared nothing for fatigue and hardship, and gave no thought to danger. All his thoughts were concentrated on his son, carried off into the heart of Africa by Ludwig Krantz, to be sold into slavery in an unknown land.

But he had little hope of seeing the Bounder of Greyfriars again. And Captain McCann had discerned that the millionaire, hard man as he was, cared little if he perished in the trackless wilds if he did not succeed in rescuing his son.

Captain McCann came slithering lightly down from the tree. The millionaire glanced at him dully.

But something in the man-tracker's face caused him to start and eye the captain with keener interest.

"You've seen something?"

"I have!" answered McCann. He turned and spoke to the askaris in Swahili, and the cooking-fire was stamped out immediately.

"Danger?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith indifferently. Many times he had seen the cooking-fire stamped out when the safari had been travelling in perilous country, haunted by savage tribes.

"Not to us!" said McCann.

"To whom?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith, puzzled.

"Ludwig Krantz."

The millionaire started.

"You've seen that scoundrel?"

Captain McCann made a gesture towards the plain that extended beyond the forest, on the edge of which the safari had halted.

The millionaire clenched his hands.

There was some satisfaction, if little, in seeing justice meted out to the slave-trader who had robbed him of his son.

"We are now within sixty miles of the land of Tofoloko," said Captain McCann quietly, "and according to the message that Kikolobo, the Kikuyu, sent us by a native, it is to Tofoloko that Krantz carried his prisoners—your son and his friends."

"You think that that information was correct?"

"I believe so—enough to make me undertake this journey," said the captain, "and what I have seen looks like proof. With my glasses from the treetop I have picked up five men travelling across the plain in this direction, and they are Ludwig Krantz and four Arabs."

"My son—"

"They are coming from the direction of Tofoloko's country," said the man-tracker. "Your son must have been left there—sold into slavery with his friends if Krantz carried out his intention."

The millionaire nodded.

"This is proof, at least, that the

Kikuyu was right, and that it was in this direction that Krantz fled!" he said.

"Exactly! I have no doubt that Kikolobo was well-informed, and that the boys are now sold to the Moteli."

"Let us get on!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The man-tracker smiled.

"More haste, less speed!" he answered. "I camped here, not wholly to rest my men, though they needed rest, but to survey the open country before we left the cover of the forest. We have taken our lives in our hands, Mr. Vernon-Smith, and we cannot be too cautious."

"Yes, yes, but—"

"I have thirty men," said McCann. "Tofoloko could throw a thousand men against us if he took the alarm. We are here to save the schoolboys if we can, sir, and throwing away our lives will not save them."

"I am under your orders, McCann," said the millionaire, with a humility that was a new thing in Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith. "Do as you think best."

"Believe me, sir, I feel almost as keenly as you do every minute of delay," said the man-tracker earnestly. "But in this wilderness we walk in the shadow of death. Five men are coming across the plain, heading for this forest. If only one of them escaped after seeing us, and carried the alarm to Tofoloko, we fail."

"I see that!" assented Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"We could easily elude them, and

leave them to go on their way," went on Captain McCann. "But we shall not do that for two reasons. One is that this is the opportunity I have longed for, to lay hands on that scoundrel Krantz; the other that we may get information from him or his followers."

"True!"

"We may lose a few hours, but the rest will be useful to my men, who have been hard pressed—and to you, sir!" added the captain, with a faint smile. "And from the prisoners we may learn what has happened to your son since he was carried off from Uganda."

"You are right!"

No more was said, but Captain McCann proceeded to lay his plans. From the tree-top, through the powerful glasses, he had watched Krantz and his men for some time, and ascertained beyond doubt the precise route they were following.

It was evident that the slave-trader had finished his business with King Tofoloko of the Moteli, and left the savage kingdom in the heart of the Congo country, though it was likely that he had spent a good many days in resting after his hard journey to that remote land.

He was not likely to venture again into Uganda or Kenya; more likely to continue to carry on his nefarious trade in the Congo country and the French Sahara. But for this chance meeting the man-tracker might never have set eyes on him again.

McCann had no intention of losing such an opportunity of laying by the heels the desperate outcast who had been wanted for years by the authorities in every province of East Africa.

The camp was soon broken, and the askaris followed McCann, threading the winding paths of the forest. Mr. Vernon-Smith followed, realising that the man-tracker was planning to ambush the slave-hunters as they entered the forest from the plain.

Captain McCann was a past-master of bush fighting, and the millionaire had no doubt that he would be successful.

From the tangled jungle the "safari" emerged into an open, beaten path that ran winding under the great trees. It was a path used by the wild beasts, and by the natives of the vicinity. In many places the bush had been cut away with axes to clear the way.

On either side of the track McCann stationed his askaris, in deep cover. Mr. Vernon-Smith and the man-tracker stood together, behind a screen of bush, watching the path.

"They will come this way?" muttered the millionaire.

"Unless I am mistaken."

"You are not mistaken. But how long?"

"An hour at least—perhaps two hours. They were far away when I watched them, and they travel slow. Ludwig Krantz is in no hurry. He cannot have the faintest idea that his destination in the Congo country became known to us, and even if he suspected it, he would hardly look for us at this distance from the British border. Except for possible hostile natives of the country, he does not look for enemies here."

The millionaire's plump hand closed on his revolver-butt.

"Let him come!" he said.

They waited.

A long, hot hour wore away.

The askaris lay silent, almost motionless, in their cover. Captain McCann stood like a statue. Mr. Vernon-Smith shifted restlessly from moment to moment, but he made no sound.

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There was a soft padding of feet on the forest track. A leopard, with watchful eyes, crept past; but even the keen senses of the leopard did not detect the ambush. The sinuous, spotted creature vanished, and all was still again.

The minutes dragged by.

There was a sound at last of foot-steps, and a murmur of voices. A figure appeared on the forest path. It was that of a burly man, with a dark, coppery face, from which gleamed and glistened light blue eyes—Ludwig Krantz, the half-Arab, half-German slave-trader.

Following him came four villainous-looking Arabs in dingy burnouse.

All the party were on the alert, rifle under arm, watching the forest as they threaded the shadowy path under hanging branches.

McCann's bronzed face set hard.

He still waited.

Suddenly a shrill whistle broke from him—a signal to his men. The askaris leaped from cover, behind and before the gang of slave-hunters, barring advance and retreat.

McCann's voice rapped out:

"Halt! Surrender, Ludwig Krantz!"

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

The slave-hunters were lifting their rifles, and the askaris fired fast. Right and left the dusky ruffians reeled under the fire before they had time to pull a trigger. And Ludwig Krantz, in the grasp of the man-tracker, went to the ground, fighting like a wildcat, while his men fell round him under the bullets of the askaris.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Upper Hand I

"ACH! Ach!" panted Ludwig Krantz, as he struggled in the grasp of the man-tracker.

McCann had leaped on him like a leopard, bearing him backwards to the earth before he could use a weapon. They rolled over and over in the grassy path, fighting fiercely.

The firing was over in a few moments. The askaris gathered round McCann and the slave-trader. Krantz's escape was out off, even had he succeeded in breaking loose; there was no chance for him, but he still struggled savagely.

Three or four of the askaris gripped him in their sinewy black hands, and his fierce resistance ceased at last.

As soon as he was safe in the hands of the askaris, McCann released him, and rose, panting, to his feet.

He rapped an order to his men, and Krantz's hands were dragged behind him and bound.

The slave-trader stood gasping with rage, his light blue eyes burning from his coppery face.

"Ach! You have me, McCann!" he panted. "That I should have met you here—here in the jungle—" He spat out oaths.

"I have you—at last!" said McCann. "You will not escape me again!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith came forward. His eyes glistened at the slave-trader.

"Scoundrel!" he said, in a trembling voice. "Where is my son?"

Krantz stared at him.

"Your son! Ach! You are the Herr Vernon-Smith!" He grinned savagely. "You will never see your son again, mein herr—never!"

"Where is he?"

"Where you will never find him!" snarled Krantz. "Search for him, if you like, five hundred miles from here!"

"That is false!" said Captain McCann quietly. "The land of Tofoloko is not so far away as that."

Krantz started.

"What do you know of Tofoloko?" he muttered.

"That is where you have left the schoolboys!" said the man-tracker sternly.

The slave-trader made no answer.

"Listen to me," said McCann. "Kikolobo the Kikuyu, who followed you from Lake Albert, sent us word by a native that you were heading for Tofoloko's country. That is why we are here."

Krantz gritted his teeth.

"Now that you are in our hands, you will give us information," went on the man-tracker of Uganda. "I have to take chances in leading my men into the land of the Moteli; but I shall not take more chances than I can help. If the boys are not there, I have no concern with Tofoloko; if they are there, I shall save them or lose my life, and the lives of my command. You will speak, Ludwig Krantz, and tell me all I want to know."

"I shall tell you nothing."

"He must speak!" muttered Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Make him speak, and tell us where to look for my son."

"I shall make him speak!" said the man-tracker composedly.

He spoke to the askaris in Swahili.

Ludwig Krantz was led to the nearest tree and tied with his face to it. One of the askaris cut a thick, flexible bamboo from the jungle.

"Will you speak, Krantz?" asked McCann.

"Nein!" hissed Krantz. "Nein, nein!"

The captain made a sign, the askari's muscular arm rose and fell, and there was a fearful yell from Krantz as the bamboo came lashing across his back.

Lash after lash fell, the slave-trader writhing under the blows, McCann looking on with an unmoved face.

It was such treatment as Ludwig Krantz had meted out, often enough, to the wretched slaves whom he kidnapped and sold in the African wilderness. His own turn had come now.

Twenty heavy strokes had fallen when the slave-trader yelled for mercy. McCann made a sign, and the askari ceased to lash the writhing back.

"Will you speak now, Krantz?"

"Ach! Yes! Ja, ja!" groaned the slave-trader.

"Speak, then—and at the first falsehood you will receive twenty more strokes before another word is said!" snapped the man-tracker.

Ludwig Krantz ground his teeth with rage.

Gladly enough he would have deluded the man-tracker, had it been possible; gladly enough he would have dispelled the millionaire's last hope of seeing his son again. But he dared not. He was dealing with a man as ruthless as himself, and he dared not risk another flogging from the bamboo.

In husky tones of fury, he stuttered out what he had to say.

McCann rapped out question after question, and the slave-trader answered, not only telling the truth, but taking care to tell it with exactness. Twenty lashes were ready for him at the first trip, and he was taking no risks.

Mr. Vernon-Smith listened, with a set face. He learned now that his son was at least still living—at all events, had been living, when Krantz had left the kingdom of Tofoloko. The schoolboys were slaves in the royal huts in the African

(Continued on page 12.)

INTERESTING NEW FOOTER FEATURE STARTS THIS WEEK!

# FOOTBALL FAVOURITES!

No. 1.—  
**EDWARD HARPER,**  
of  
**Tottenham Hotspur F.C.**



The young footballer who jumped from twenty-five shillings to four pounds a week!

By "OLD REF."

## "Pain"-ful!

I THINK it was about fifteen years ago that I was passing along a road on the outskirts of Sheerness, when half a dozen boys ran at a fast pace past me. Farther along, at the front gate of a small villa, stood a youngster, whose left ear was held tightly between the finger and thumb of an elderly gentleman with wrathful countenance. I stopped, because any sign of bullying generally gets my back up, and, no matter how just a cause may be, I loathe to see children punished, so it struck me that I might intercede on the boy's behalf.

"Look at that window, you young scoundrel!" roared the man. "You shall pay for it, or I'll have you in gaol!" And he gave the boy's ear a twist which evoked a sharp yell from the victim and some sharp words of remonstrance from me. Then the truth came out. The youngsters whom I had seen running away, together with the one who was having his ear held, had been kicking a football on the open space adjoining the house, when—crash!—the ball flew through the dining-room window, and found a resting-place on the table.

The upshot of my intercession was freedom for the boy, who gave his name and address and a promise to pay the cost of a new sheet of glass. The occupier of the villa, however, refused to give up the football.

Some years later it was returned, after the old gentleman had witnessed a professional match, and had ascertained that the young centre-forward, who scored five goals in the game, was the boy whose ear he had twisted. That boy was "Eddie" Harper.

## Trebling his Salary!

I DID not lose sight of young Harper after I had saved him from the wrath of the infuriated householder. About a year later he was apprenticed to a shipwright, and it was my privilege to make things a bit easier for him, for I had some influence. But although the "freemasonry" of football had attracted me to him, I was disappointed to find he hadn't the faintest knowledge of the game, and, apart from kicking a ball through a window on that fateful afternoon, had never in his whole young life kicked a ball!

It was not a difficult matter to persuade him to take up the game, but he was sixteen years when he donned, for the first time, a pair of football boots, and started "kicking about" with a club called the Junior Athletic, at Sheerness. After four seasons with the "lads of the village," he was induced to join Sheppey United, a professional side which was engaged in the Kent League.

I remember going with him and his side to Tunbridge Wells, where a league match was to be played. We started off in a charabanc, and did very well until we were about five miles from our destination, when engine trouble set in. Those five miles were tramped, and we arrived in a somewhat weary and very muddy state upon our opponent's ground. The side put up a poor exhibition, but Harper was magnificent, and won the game for Sheppey. Later, when playing against Woolwich, I remember his scoring five out of seven goals with an ease and brilliance which stamped him as a coming International. But I forgot to mention his salary as a professional. It was twenty-five shillings a week.

Eddie Harper remained with Sheppey United for two seasons, always doing brilliant work, and behaving in that gentlemanly manner which has since



Pain for a Pane!

made him so popular with officials, players, and the public.

It was towards the end of that season—1922-3—that I got in touch with Jack Carr, the Blackburn Rovers' manager, and advised him to snap up this young forward before anybody else could get at him. Carr came down, witnessed one match, and then left a note for Harper, asking him to call round at his hotel.

Yes, the whole thing happened according to "story-book." Harper jumped from twenty-five shillings to four pounds a week, and from Kent League into First Division football. There were no stepping-stones. It was a clear jump! And we'll go farther! He went right through his first season in Blackburn Rovers' first team, and the initial match in which he played was the first first-class match he'd ever seen!

## Capped for England!

HARPER'S opponents can treat him as they like. He has learned much in the way of evading fouls, and is generally known as one of the most fearless

players of to-day. Scrupulously fair in every action, he is the type of professional who can be held up as an example to players of the younger generation.

Eddie Harper remained with Blackburn Rovers for four and a half seasons, the authorities awarding him the highest honour which can be bestowed in the world of football—viz., his "cap" against Scotland, in 1926. To represent England in any fixture is something to have achieved and to be proud of, but of all the International matches, those with Scotland are considered to be the greatest.

The game was played at Old Trafford, Manchester, and Eddie pulled every ounce of his weight.

## A Capture for the Spurs!

JUST over three years ago, Sheffield Wednesday were fighting hard in order to keep in the First Division of the League, and were willing to pay for good men. Somebody suggested Harper, with the result that the managers of the Wednesday and Blackburn Rovers got into touch with one another, a sum of money in the neighbourhood of £5,000 was transferred from Sheffield to Blackburn, and Eddie Harper found himself travelling alone from Lancashire to Yorkshire.

I asked Harper what stood out in his memory in connection with his leaving Blackburn, and his reply was:

"First of all, I didn't like leaving Lancashire because I had made many good friends there," he replied. "But two very great things stand out in my mind in connection with my departure. First, I was asked by a clergyman to read the lessons at his church on the following Sunday morning. And next, somebody sent me a pair of slippers as a parting gift. These nearly fit me, being only three sizes out."

I did not see much of Harper while he was at Sheffield, but he remained there only a matter of about eighteen months, after which he was transferred to the Spurs at Tottenham, where he is one of a very happy and contented family of big and high-spirited "boys."

Loss of form has never caused Eddie Harper to stand down from a team. He has had one or two accidents, unfortunately, and, last season, sustained an injury to a cartilage of his knee, which looked as if he might be absent from the side for some considerable period. However, to-day he is as fit as ever, and when I asked him how he'd like to spend his next Christmas, his reply was: "Why, at Sheerness, to be sure! And what's more, I'd just love to go and kick the ball through that old chap's window again!"

(Another interesting article by "Old Ref" next week!)

**SAVED from the CANNIBALS!***(Continued from page 10.)*

city. Krantz had sold them to the black king for ivory. But it was many days since Krantz had seen them; he had rested long, after his toilsome journey to the heart of Africa, before starting on his way to the French Sahara, which had been his destination when he fell in with the man-tracker.

"He lives!" muttered the millionaire. "He lives—and we shall save him! We shall save him!"

"They live!" said McCann quietly. "And we shall save them if we can! We go forward at once!"

"And that scoundrel?" asked the millionaire, with a glance of loathing at the slave-trader. "What will you do with him?"

"I cannot spare men to take him back to Uganda—and I cannot shoot him out of hand. He must march with us."

And when the safari resumed their way, Ludwig Krantz marched with them, with his hands bound.

The askaris had orders to shoot him at once if he attempted to escape; and the slave-trader made no attempt, as the march wound on across the arid plain, and by forest, and jungle and swamp, towards the land of the Moteli.

But there was hope in his heart.

He was a prisoner now; but his captors were heading for Tofoloko's kingdom, where thousands of enemies awaited them.

That McCann could succeed in rescuing the schoolboy slaves, either by force or by strategy, did not seem possible to Krantz—to the man-tracker himself it must have seemed a doubtful proposition. Prisoner as he was, it seemed to Krantz that he was in less danger than his captors, as they drew nearer and nearer to the land of Tofoloko.

**THE NINTH CHAPTER.***Light at Last!*

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter groaned.

It was early morning in the city of Tofoloko.

His black majesty was not yet awake,

and not likely to awaken for some time. The schoolboy slaves were not yet called on for service in the royal huts.

Harry Wharton & Co. sat outside their hut, at breakfast, in the cool of the morning as the sun rose in a cloudless blue sky.

Billy Bunter rolled over and joined them.

His fat face was dismal.

"Hungry, old bean?" asked Bob Cherry.

Bunter shuddered.

Amazing was the change that had come over the fat Owl of the Remové.

He had not broken his fast yet, but the mention of food made him shudder! Food—once the beginning and end of all things to William George Bunter—had lost all its attractions. Bunter yearned, from the bottom of his fat heart, for some land of famine where food was unknown!

"Nunno! I—I'm never hungry now!" groaned Bunter. "Those black beasts don't give a fellow a chance to get hungry! Stuff—stuff—stuff all day long! Oh dear!"

"That's what you always liked, old chap!" said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, I—I'd give anything not to eat anything at all to-day!" mumbled Bunter.

The juniors grinned.

They could not help it. Such a change in the fat Owl had its comic side.

"That beast Babu will be along in a minute, with those beastly Dinkas," went on Bunter. "They'll make me stuff again! I—I say, you fellows, what's their game? What are they doing it for?"

"Can't make it out," said Harry.

"I—I thought at first that it was over-doing the hospitality," said Bunter. "I—I thought that Tofoloko had seen that I was not a common sort of chap, like you fellows, you know—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's what a fellow naturally would think, isn't it?" said Bunter.

"What you would think, no doubt," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "And don't you still think so?"

"Well, if they mean it as a compliment, because they understand that I'm

a distinguished sort of chap, what are they over-doing it like this for?" asked Bunter. "I've told that beast Babu a hundred times that I can't keep on stuffing at this rate—and they shove a spear at a chap to make him eat! I—I can't understand it, you know. But—but if they don't mean it as a compliment, what the thump do they mean?"

Bunter blinked uneasily at the Famous Five through his big spectacles.

The juniors shook their heads.

Why Bunter had been selected for this peculiar treatment, while the other fellows were enslaved, was a mystery to all of them.

"Anyhow, you get out of doing any work!" said Johnny Bull. "You laze and loaf around doing nothing, except grow fat, while we're waiting on that black scoundrel Tofoloko."

"That's all very well, of course," said Bunter. "But they keep on making me eat! I'm growing fat."

"Eh?"

"I'm losing my figure," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"I never was a skinny fellow, like you chaps," said Bunter. "You remember how you used to envy my figure at Greyfriars."

"Great pip!"

"But at this rate I shall grow fat—really fat!" said Bunter. "I should hate to be fat!"

"Oh!"

"Poor old Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "What a new and awful experience for him to be fat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mean that I should like to be a man-pole like you, Cherry—"

"Eh?"

"Or a lath like you, Wharton—"

"Thanks!"

"Better be fat than that," said Bunter, shaking his head. "Still, a fellow doesn't want to be fat. I always had a good figure—fairly plump, you know, but graceful—"

"The gracefulness was terrific!" gasped Hurreo Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Agile, and lissom, and all that," said Bunter. "Well, I'm losing it."

"What a loss!" sighed Nugent.

"If Bunter's losing his figure, it's a heavy loss. No doubt about that!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! But, apart from a fellow losing his good looks—"

"His whatter?"

"His good looks," said Bunter. "Apart from that, it's jolly uncomfortable. I feel like a turkey at Christmas-time. It's awful! I—I hate the sight of food, you know! It's sickening to see you fellows stuffing like this! I wish you wouldn't do it."

"Roll away, then, old barrel," said Bob. "We want our brekker!"

"I never was one to eat much, as you fellows know—"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"I—I say, you fellows, what's to be done?" groaned Bunter. "I can't go on stuffing! I just can't! I—I won't! And—and what do they mean by it? I—I can't help thinking that the beasts are up to something, though I can't imagine what their game is."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hero comes Babu!"

Bunter gave a yelp.

"Oh dear! I—I won't be stuffed again! I—I won't!"

Babu came over to the juniors. But for once he was not followed by the Dinka slaves with loaded dishes.

Bunter blinked at him.

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"Look here! I'm not going to eat anything!" he declared. "I don't want any brekker this morning, see?"

"You no want lib for eat?" asked Bubu.

"No!" said Bunter emphatically.

Bubu grinned. "You no lib for eat to-day, you no like!" he announced.

Billy Bunter gave a gasp of relief.

"Oh, good!" "Gratters, old bean!" chuckled Bob.

The clouds rolled away from the fat face of William George Bunter.

The announcement that he was to eat nothing gave him more joy than the announcement of a study spread at Greyfriars had ever given him.

"Well, that's all right," he said. "The fact is, I've lost my appetite, Bubu. I'll go easy on the grub to-day. To-morrow, if you like!"

"To-morrow you want lib for eat?" asked Bubu, with so peculiar an expression on his black face that the chums of the Remove started, and stared at him, vaguely uneasy.

"Yes, that will be all right," said Bunter cheerily. The fat Owl did not notice Bubu's peculiar look. His face was quite bright. "I say, you fellows, I fancy I can sleep now. I hardly closed my eyes last night, you know."

Bunter rolled back to his own hut.

Bubu glanced after him as he went, still with that peculiar expression on his face, mingled now with a faint compassion.

"Him lib for sleep!" said Bubu. "S'pose him sabbey, him no lib for sleep." He shrugged his black shoulders.

Harry Wharton looked intently at the prime minister of the kingdom of Tofoloko.

The fattening of Billy Bunter had puzzled him, as it had puzzled the other fellows, but the schoolboy slaves had had plenty of other matters to think of, and they had not given it much thought.

Now a fearful suspicion was coming into Wharton's mind—partly caused, no doubt, by the strange look that Bubu had given the Owl of the Remove.

It was so fearful a suspicion that it drove the colour from his face, and made his heart sicken within him.

"Tell me, Bubu," he said, his voice shaking in spite of himself. "Why have you been stuffing Bunter with food?"

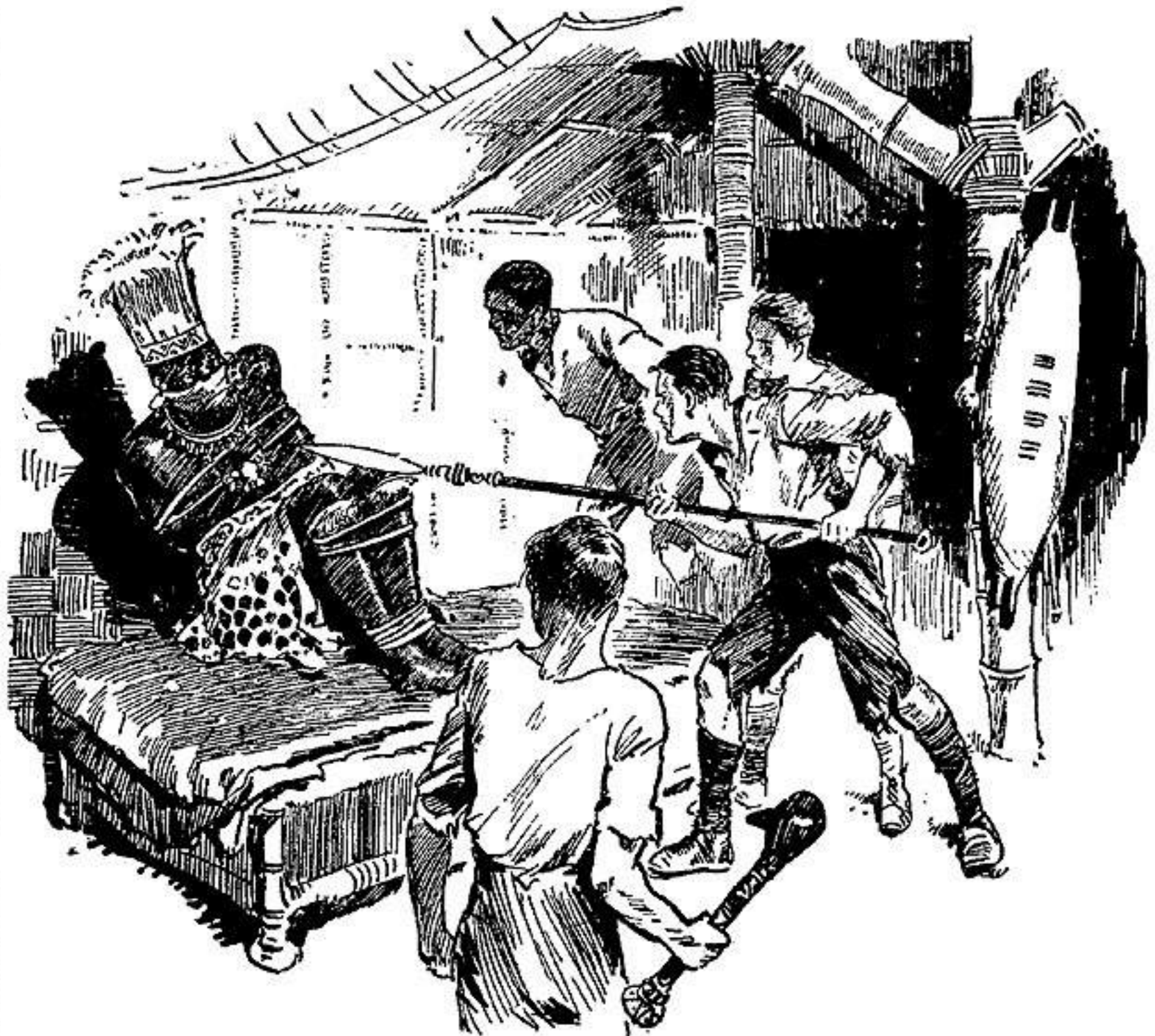
"Tofoloko order."

"I know that—but why? Why have you been fattening him like a pig for market?"

"You no sabbey?"

"Not till now," said Wharton, with a shudder.

Since they had been in the African city, the juniors had seen nothing of cannibalism. But they knew that the



Harry Wharton took the royal spear from the wall and directed the keen point at Tofoloko's black chest. "Stick the brute if he makes a row!" muttered Nugent. "Leave that to me!" said Wharton grimly.

Moteli were cannibals on their feast days, like most Central African blacks.

"And why have you left off feeding him to-day?" asked Harry, in a low voice.

"To-night him full moon, blow my topsails," said Bubu. "Big feast come same time full moon."

All the juniors understood now. They looked at one another with ghastly faces.

"To-night!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Big feast," said Bubu, "Tofoloko and him big chiefs make big feast. Eat Small Fat One."

"Good heavens!"

"You no tell Small Fat One," said Bubu. "No good tell um. Him plenty frighten, you sabbey. No fit!"

Bubu made a gesture towards the royal sleeping-hut.

"Him Tofoloko filthy ole cannibal!" he said. "Me Bubu no cannibal! Me lib for civilise, with white man. Shiver timbers! No tell Tofoloko. Head come off one-time. Him ole cannibal nigger."

Bubu grinned and walked away.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"So—that's it!" said Bob Cherry, in a whisper.

"We might have guessed," muttered Nugent.

"The brutes!" breathed Wharton.

"The beasts! The rotten brutes! Only one day more—and then—" He broke off, shuddering.

From Billy Bunter's hut came the sound of a deep snore. The Owl of the Remove was sleeping.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

**K**ING TOFOLOKO laid his royal black limbs on the royal sleeping-mat, in the burning heat of the afternoon, and closed his royal eyes.

Beside the sleeping-mat, Harry Wharton, at his usual duty, fanned his sleeping majesty with the fan of ostrich-feathers.

Tofoloko snored.

Probably he would neither have slept nor snored, had he had the faintest inkling of what was passing in the mind of the slave who was dutifully fanning the flies from his majestic black countenance.

But his black majesty had no inkling of that.

If he dreamed in his royal slumbers, he certainly did not dream of the desperate resolution taken by his white slaves.

During the morning the schoolboy slaves had consulted, in whispers, many times.

Their resolution was taken.

Hitherto, they had endured slavery and blows and weary captivity, in the hope that rescue might yet come. They had a faint hope in Captain McCann; a stronger hope in Kikolobo of the Kikuyu, lurking in the neighbouring forests with Bwana-wangu, whom he had rescued.

But the finish had come now.

A few more hours and the chiefs of the Moteli would be gathered for the

(Continued on page 16.)



## SAVED FROM THE CANNIBALS!

(Continued from page 13.)

cannibal feast, at which the Small Fat One was to be sacrificed.

The matter hardly needed discussion. So long as they lived, and could lift a hand in resistance, that fearful deed should never take place. The juniors were resolved on that. Better death, better a hundred deaths, than standing idly by while such a thing was done.

To flee from the swarming city was impossible. They would have been stopped before they had taken a dozen steps. And the plan they had formed was so wild and desperate, that they could hardly hope for success. But it was neck or nothing now; and on one point they were savagely resolved — if they failed, the cannibal king of the Moteli should not live to put them to the torture.

By the time Tofoloko settled down to sleep on his mat in the royal sleeping-hut, the plan was cut and dried.

The black king slept; Wharton fanning him as usual. But the other schoolboy slaves had not, as usual, retired to their hut.

At a short distance from the open doorway of the king's hut, a crowd of soldiers loafed.

They were on guard; but they took no notice of Bob Cherry as he stepped to the doorway. The schoolboy slaves were the personal attendants of the black king, and free to move about the palace as they chose.

Bob looked in, and his eyes fell on Wharton, kneeling beside the sleeping savage, fanning him.

Wharton glanced round, met his eyes, and made a sign.

Bob gave him a nod, and turned away.

A few minutes later Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Frank Nugent, and Johnny Bull, entered the royal hut, and one of them placed the palm-leaf screen across the doorway, as if to shut out the sunlight.

King Tofoloko still slept.

Within twenty feet of the hut were the soldiers, with shield and spear; but the flimsy screen of palm-leaf shut off the view of the interior of the hut from their eyes.

One cry from Tofoloko would have brought the crowd of savage blacks rushing into the hut.

But King Tofoloko's slaves did not intend to give him a chance to utter a single cry.

His life was at their mercy; it would have been easy to seize the royal spear, leaning against the wall, and run it through his savage heart as he slept. But desperate as they were, the schoolboy slaves were not yet prepared for such measures as that.

Johnny Bull quietly picked up a heavy club. Wharton, with a set face, continued to fan the black king. A cessation of the accustomed fanning might have awakened him.

Grasping the heavy club in both

hands, Johnny Bull stepped towards the sprawling form of the African monarch. For a second he hesitated.

It went against the grain; even in dealing with a ferocious savage and a cannibal. But the thought of what was to happen that night; of the wretched Bunter sacrificed at a cannibal feast, nerved the schoolboy's arm.

The war-club came down with a crash on the head of the black man, and King Tofoloko, without a sound, without a movement, passed from sleep to insensibility. That crashing blow had stunned him.

For a long moment the juniors stood quite still, fearing that the thud of the club on the king's hard head might have reached the soldiers.

But there was no sound of alarm.

There was nothing unusual in the slaves being in the royal hut with his black majesty, neither were the fuzzy wits of the Moteli quick on the uptake. The soldiers lounged and loafed in the heat of the day, in blissful ignorance of what was happening within twenty feet of them.

Harry Wharton drew a quick, deep breath.

"That's that!" he muttered. "Quick now!"

The black king was stunned; but African heads are hard, and it was not likely that he would remain unconscious many minutes. The schoolboy slaves lost no time.

The royal paws were dragged together, the wrists securely bound. Then the royal ankles were similarly treated. Then a gag, formed of a corner torn from the sleeping-mat, was jammed hard into the royal mouth, and tied in place.

It was done only in time. Tofoloko's eyes opened dizzily, and stared about him.

They fell on the four juniors, looking down at him.

For some moments, the black king was dazedly amazed.

Then understanding came into his savage brain. He made a tremendous effort to loosen himself from his bonds, and to eject the gag from his mouth, his eyes burning at the slaves with a madness of fury that was blood-curdling to see.

But he was helpless. With their lives at stake, the schoolboy slaves had taken care of that.

For several minutes the black king wrestled with his bonds, but in vain. He chewed and chattered in his frantic efforts to get rid of the gag, and call to his soldiers.

Harry Wharton took the royal spear from the wall.

He did not speak; it was useless to speak to Tofoloko in a language of which he did not understand one word. But he placed the keen cutting edge of the spear to the muscular black throat. The razor-like edge pricked the black skin.

Tofoloko's struggles ceased.

Had he succeeded in getting loose, or in loosening the gag to give a cry, Wharton would have driven the spear home, without compunction, and the king of the Moteli would have died where he lay. King Tofoloko did not understand English; but he understood that.

He ceased to struggle, only glaring up at the juniors with rage and hatred of a wild beast in his bulging eyes.

"Stick the brute if he makes a row, old chap!" muttered Nugent.

"Leave that to me!" said Wharton grimly.

But Tofoloko was still enough now. Life was dear to him, and he knew

that his life hung on a thread. In the midst of his swarming city, within easy call of his soldiers, he lay at the mercy of the slaves he had bought for ivory from Ludwig Krantz.

"Give Bob the tip, Franky!" said Wharton.

Frank Nugent went to the door of the hut and moved the palm-leaf screen a little, and looked out into the sunshine.

At a little distance, Bob Cherry was standing, and the sight of Frank Nugent looking out of the royal hut was a signal to him that all had gone well, so far.

Nugent dropped the screen into place again. Bob Cherry, with as careless an air as he could muster, lounged over to the hut occupied by Bubbu.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Surprise for Bubbu!

**B**UBBU was stretched on a sleeping-mat in his hut, asleep in the heat of the tropical day, like his royal master, and the greater part of the population of the African city.

Like his master, also, he was fanned by a slave as he slept, flies being thick in the native city. One of the black Dinkas squatted, wearily fanning the sleeping prime minister of Tofoloko's kingdom, and Bubbu, with his eyes shut and his mouth open, snored.

Bob Cherry stepped in and shook him by a bare, black shoulder.

The Dinka stared at Bob indifferently. He supposed that it was some message from Tofoloko, on no other account could a slave have ventured to disturb the slumbers of so powerful a man as Bubbu.

Bubbu opened his eyes, and grunted. He snapped out something in the native tongue, and then, as he saw Bob, changed into Gold Coast English.

"You wake me?" he snapped. "You lib for wake me, blow your topsails! Why you come here wake me?"

"You're to go to Tofoloko!" said Bob.

Bubbu snorted. "Shiver that old nigger's timbers!" he growled. "Wake up Bubbu for dat old cannibal nigger! Douse my dead-lights! Me like tell ole Tofoloko what me tink! Me come!"

The fat black man rose and stretched himself.

He was extremely annoyed at having been awakened in the drowsy heat of the tropical afternoon, but a word from Tofoloko was more than enough for him.

He found solace in gibing at his black majesty, but not for his life did he dare hesitate a moment when Tofoloko called. And not a suspicion crossed his mind that his black leg was being pulled.

The Bounder, who had struck Tofoloko, was still being hunted by a hundred soldiers, whose heads were likely to fall if they did not succeed in tracking him down. An unspeakable fate awaited him in the event of recapture. That the other schoolboys had ventured on an action still more desperate and reckless than Smithy's, was not likely to occur to Bubbu.

"Blow ole Tofoloko!" he grumbled. "Dashed old nigger!"

But he left his hut at once, much to the relief of the Dinka, who was weary of fanning him, and who promptly curled up and went to sleep.

Bubbu hurried across to the royal sleeping-hut.

Bob Cherry followed him.

The sprawling soldiers, at a little distance, watched them idly.

Had the guards had any suspicion, it would have been dispelled by the sight of Bubu entering the royal hut. Bubu was the confidential minister of Tofoloko, though like all the black monarch's courtiers, he held his post and his life by a very uncertain tenure.

The black man entered the hut, pushing aside the hanging screen at the doorway, and Bob followed him in.

Bubu blinked for a moment at the change from the sunlight into the dusky interior of the hut. As he blinked his arms were seized on either side by Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent, and Harry Wharton pressed the point of the spear to his chest.

"Not a word, Bubu!" said Wharton quietly and steadily. "You lib for call soldier, you die!"

Bob Cherry, behind the black man, grasped him by his fuzzy hair, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh lifted the war-club over his head.

Bubu stood transfixed.

He was dumb.

That unexpected and startling reception in the royal hut seemed to have taken his breath away.

His eyes almost started from his head.

He stared blankly, almost stupidly at Wharton, whose firm hand held the spear to his chest, and whose eyes, gleaming at him over the weapon, warned him only too clearly that a cry would cost him his life.

Bubu gasped.

"Not a word!" repeated Wharton. "We don't want to hurt you, Bubu! But if you call out, you're a dead man!"

"The deadfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Bubu!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a significant gesture with the heavy club.

"Blow my topsails!" gurgled Bubu.

That ejaculation from the startled black man might have made the juniors smile at any other time. But they were not in a smiling mood now. Every face was set and tense.

Bubu's eyes passed Wharton in their glance, and he saw Tofoloko bound and gagged on the royal sleeping-mat.

It seemed for a moment that his eyes would pop out of their sockets at that amazing and terrifying sight.

"You lib for touch Tofoloko!" he gasped.

"We've got the rotten brute safe," said Harry quietly, "and we're taking care that he stays safe!"

"You mad!" said Bubu hoarsely. "Tofoloko kill, torture, he very bad temper. You look, you see um very bad temper!"

"Never mind his temper now," said Harry. "We're not bothering about him or his temper!"

"All you slave kill!" gurgled Bubu.

"We shall see! Fasten his arms, you fellows. You're not going to be hurt, Bubu, if you keep quiet. But I shall drive this spear through you if you open your mouth to call out!"

"No call!" said Bubu. "You no kill! Me good friend!"

"You've been decent to us in your own way," said Harry. "We should be sorry to hurt you. But our lives are at stake now!"

The black man's arms were tied down to his sides.

Tofoloko was glaring at him like a wild beast. He could not speak, but his glaring eyes urged Bubu to call to the soldiers.

Bubu did not heed.

Life was dear to him, though it was not likely to be worth much later if he saved it at the expense of Tofoloko. But, at the moment, the present was all Bubu could think of, with the sharp point of the spear pressed to his black skin.

He stood silent while his arms were tied.

His black limbs were trembling.

The glare from Tofoloko's furious eyes made his blood run cold with fear, but fear could not drive him to face instant death.

"You do foolish thing, douse my dead-lights!" mumbled Bubu. "You all torture and kill! Why you do this foolish thing?"

"It's sink or swim together, with us," said Harry. "We're going to save Bunter, or die trying!"

Bubu's eyes rolled in amazement.

"No can save Small Fat One! You all die!"

"Perhaps! But if we die, Tofoloko will not live!" said Wharton grimly. "The Moteli will want a new king. We shall not leave that scoundrel alive for his cannibal feast!"

"You big fool!" said Bubu, shaking his head. "Small Fat One no matter!"

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Never mind that! Now we've got to get Bunter here—we must all be together. You go and fetch him, Bob—I don't think the niggers will interfere, but if they do, Bubu will call out to them to let you pass!"

"No can!" gasped Bubu.

"I think you will, and without letting them see that you are a prisoner," said Harry. "Unless you are tired of life, Bubu."

"Blow my topsails!" murmured the dismayed prime minister.

Bob Cherry passed out of the royal hut.

Wharton watched him from the doorway.

But the soldiers took no heed. The comings and goings of the king's slaves were no affair of theirs.

Bob's heart was beating fast as he passed them, but they hardly looked at him as they lolled in the heat.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

All was safe, so far.

But the juniors knew, only too well, that their lives hung on the thinnest of threads; and their faces were tense as they waited for Bob to return with the "Small Fat One."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Objects!

"B E A S T! Lem me alone!"

Billy Bunter made that remark as he was shaken out of his slumber.

The fat Owl was sprawling under the shady tree before his hut, fast asleep in the tropical heat.

For some time past Bunter had not slept well. Generally he was a champion in that line—Rip Van Winkle had nothing on Bunter when it came to snoozing.

But the stuffing process had worried Bunter and troubled his sleep.

Now his fat mind was more at ease.

The stuffing process was over; though certainly Bunter would not have slept had he guessed the reason.

He was enjoying a prolonged nap; and he was exceedingly annoyed when Bob Cherry shook him out of it.

He opened his eyes and blinked up at Bob, and frowned.

"Let a fellow alone!" he grunted.

"You're wanted, old bean!"

"Rot! I'm going to sleep."

Bunter closed his eyes again.

He opened them very suddenly, however, as he received a vigorous kick in his fat ribs.

"Ow! Wow! Beast!" Bunter sat up, adjusted his big spectacles on his fat nose, and gave Bob a devastating glare. "Look here, you rotter, you let me alone! I'll have you whipped."

"What?" gasped Bob.

"You're a blinking slave, and I'm a favourite of that black beast Tofoloko," said Bunter. "You'd better mind your p's and q's, Bob Cherry. You're not ragging in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now, you silly chump! I'll tell Bubu to ask old Tofoloko to have you whipped if you don't jolly well mind!"

"You fat fool—"

"Beast!"

"You're wanted!" hissed Bob. "Come with me at once, you benighted bandersnatch. You're wanted in Tofoloko's hut."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "If that beast's sent for me—"

"Come at once, idiot!"

"Nice state of affairs for a Public school man to be obeying the orders of a putrid blackamoor!" growled Bunter.

But he detached himself from his mat and followed Bob.

They passed the soldiers, who grinned at the sight of the Small Fat One.

Bunter's intended fate was known to everyone but Bunter himself.

No doubt the soldiers, as they saw him taken to Tofoloko's hut, concluded that the black king desired to have a look at the principal article in the menu for the feast that was fixed for that evening. Many times had Tofoloko visited the hapless Owl to look at him and see how the fattening process was going on.

Billy Bunter rolled into the royal hut, followed by Bob, and the palm-leaf screen was replaced behind them.

(Continued on next page.)



# 32

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## SAVED from the CANNIBALS!

(Continued from previous page.)

Bunter blinked round him through his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Keep quiet, Bunter!" said Harry.

"Speak low!"

"Look here—"

"Don't shout, idiot!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Billy Bunter blinked round him in amazement and alarm at the sight of Tofoloko bound and gagged, and Bubu with his arms tied, and the Nabob of Bhanipur guarding him with the club.

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, in bewilderment. "I—I say, wharrer you up to here?"

"You can see for yourself, now you're here," said Nugent. "We've got that black brute Tofoloko safe, and we're going to make a break."

"You—you idiot!" gasped Bunter.

His fat knees knocked together as he caught the ferocious glare of King Tofoloko.

"There was nothing else to be done, Bunter," said Harry. "It's neck or nothing now for all of us."

"You dummy!" gasped Bunter. "We shall all be murdered now."

"Quiet, ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"You—you—you've collared that black beast—and he can have all your heads cut off if he likes!" panted Bunter. "You're a lot of mad idiots! Look here, I'm not going to have a hand in it!"

"Listen to me—"

"I won't!" howled Bunter. "I'm not going to be killed to please you, and I can jolly well tell you so! I'm going out of this! You can be jolly well beheaded if you like, but I'm having nothing to do with it! You silly lot of dummies, you can get on with it without me."

"Stop the fat idiot!"

Two pairs of hands pinned Bunter, in time to prevent him from making a rush from the hut.

"Leggo!" gasped Bunter. "I tell you—"

"Quiet, you duffer!" breathed Wharton. "If the soldiers hear anything the game's up for all of us."

"Serve you jolly well right! You've no right to drag me into this! All very well for you fellows—slaves, kicked and cuffed all day long by a nigger. I'm not going to have a hand in it. You can't expect me to."

The juniors gazed silently at Bunter.

It was for the fat Owl's sake, to save him, if they could, from the cooking-pots that they were setting their lives on a cast. Their own lives had not been threatened; and they could have endured slavery with a hope of ultimate rescue in their hearts. It was Bunter's intended fate that had brought matters to this fearful climax.

Perhaps, they wondered, at that moment, whether the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove was worth it.

Bunter bristled with indignation.

His own view was that he was a sort of favourite of Tofoloko; that he was selected for special distinction while the other fellows were enslaved. That was the only explanation that could occur to his fat mind of his very special treatment since he had been in Tofoloko's city.

Fellows who were enslaved could kick if they liked; but they weren't going to drag a fellow whose position

was very different into a desperate and hopeless attempt at escape. That was how Bunter looked at it.

He glared at them through his big spectacles.

"Leave me out of this!" he went on. "See? I'm having nothing to do with it—nothing at all! You can't get away, and you jolly well know you can't! I'm not going to have my head cut off to please you fellows! Check, I call it."

"Isn't he a beauty?" murmured Bob Cherry. "It's worth while to run this risk for him, isn't it?"

"Kick him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Better tell him, I think," said Harry.

It had not been the juniors' intention to tell the fat Owl the terrible truth. But Bunter's peculiar point of view made it necessary for him to be enlightened.

The chance of escape was slim enough, with all the fellows pulling together; and Bunter, evidently, was determined to join in no such attempt. His belief was that he was better off where he was; and that, of course, was all that concerned Bunter.

"You needn't tell me anything!" he snorted. "You can just let go, and let me get out of this! And if you don't jolly well let me go I'll call out to the niggers and chance it."

"We're doing this for your sake, you fat ass!" said Harry. "We should not have taken such a chance on our own account."

"Gammon!"

"Can't you understand, you dummy, why the niggers have been fattening you?" hissed Johnny Bull. "You've been fattened for a feast."

Bunter jumped.

"Wha-a-at?" he gurgled.

"And the feast takes place at the full moon—and that's to-night," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh crikey!"

"We only found it out to-day," said Harry. "Now do you understand?"

Billy Bunter's eyes almost bulged through his spectacles.

He understood at last.

Vague and uneasy doubts had crossed his fat mind before, though he had never been anywhere near guessing the truth.

But he understood now.

His fat knees knocked together, and a shudder ran through his fat frame from head to foot.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped. "The—the awful beasts! Oh dear! I—I say, you fellows, get me out of this! I—I say—"

"We're going to do our best," said Harry. "Pull yourself together, Bunter—we want all our nerve now."

But it was not easy for Bunter to pull himself together. His eyes were glassy with terror behind his spectacles. He would have collapsed on the floor of the hut but for Bob Cherry's supporting arm.

"Oh crikey!" he breathed. "Oh, you rotters, to get me into this! This is what you call a holiday, is it? Getting a fellow to come with you for the vac, and landing me in this! Oh crumbs!"

"We're all in the same boat now, Bunter," said Wharton patiently.

"Keep a stiff upper lip."

"Beast!"

There was a sound of voices from without. Wharton made a sign to Bunter to be silent, and peered from the doorway.

A black man, with a necklace of

human bones, was approaching the hut, the soldiers saluting him, with evident fear. It was the witch-doctor who had been appointed in the place of M'toko.

The usual time for King Tofoloko's afternoon sleep had expired now, and no doubt the witch-doctor was coming to consult his majesty concerning the feast of the full moon.

Wharton turned to Bubu.

"Someone is coming," he said, in a whisper. "Call to him to go away, as the king does not wish to be disturbed."

"Me no dare!" murmured Bubu.

"You'd better! You're a dead man if he enters this hut!"

Wharton's eyes gleamed with menace as he lifted the spear.

Death hung over the juniors, and Bubu's life was only a pawn in the game. The black prime minister comprehended that very clearly. The juniors led him to the door, and he put his head out, the rest of him hidden from sight by the palm-leaf screen.

He called to the approaching witch-doctor in his own tongue.

What he said the juniors could not understand, but the blade of the spear was pricking Bubu's plump ribs, and had the wretch outside come on to the hut, the thrust would have been delivered. In the circumstances, they had little doubt that Bubu was carrying out his instructions.

Such proved to be the case, for the witch-doctor halted at a dozen paces from the door.

He answered in his own tongue, with a discontented look; but it was clear that he had no remote suspicion that Bubu was doing anything but carrying out the royal instructions.

Bubu replied volubly; and the witch-doctor at last turned away, with a rattling of bones, and stalked off the way he had come.

"He's gone!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Him go back," said Bubu, with the sweat of fear thick on his brow. "Him no come any more till moon come. Me tell um Tofoloko order."

"Good!"

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter, through his chattering teeth—"I say, let's cut!"

"Fathead!"

"Look here—"

"Leave it to us, Bunter," said Harry.

"Beast!"

"And shut up!" snapped Johnny Bull.

And Bunter shut up, shivering with terror, while the Famous Five consulted in whispers.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Slave-Trader's Escape!

**L**UDWIG KRANTZ leaned back against the rock to which he was bound, his eyes glinting in the gloom.

The askaris were camped in the rocky gorge in the hills, through which lay the route to Tofoloko's country.

Night had fallen when Captain McCann halted in the gorge; but he would have halted there in any case, for he was now on the border of the enemy's country; and further advance had to be made with the greatest caution. Beyond the gorge lay the descent into the valley of the Moteli, where hundreds of enemies might start up at every step.

The askaris were sleeping; save for the man on sentry duty, who stood, rifle in hand, watching.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had thrown himself down to rest, weary from the march in the rocky defiles, though he was not sleeping.



Captain McCann had gone forward alone, to scout under cover of darkness. The man-tracker of Uganda seemed tireless.

Ludwig Krantz had watched him go, glad that the keen eyes of the man-tracker were no longer on him.

At every halt, since he had fallen into the hands of the askaris, the slave-trader had been bound to a tree. He had marched with bound hands, freed only for meals.

Escape seemed hopeless, but he had counted on help from the Moteli when McCann came into conflict with them.

That hope had sustained him as he marched, a prisoner, under the burning sun. But that hope had left him now, for he had learned that McCann intended to leave him in the hills, in the charge of a single askari, when he marched on from the gorge.

In the rocky gorge there were no trees, and the slave-trader had been bound to a rock

For long hours he had sprawled there, sleepless, while the askaris slept, and Mr. Vernon-Smith lay in his blankets in fatigue and uneasy meditation; and the man-tracker was absent.

But he had not been idle.

As darkness deepened in the gorge he was hidden by shadow, barely discernible to the eyes of the sentry, if the man had glanced towards him.

The rope had been passed round him under his armpits, and knotted behind the rock. Escape seemed impossible.

His hands were free, but they could not reach within a yard of the knot.

But desperation spurred on the captured slave-trader.

To escape, to creep away in the darkness, to bring down a swarm of the Moteli on the camp and wipe out Captain McCann and his command to the last man—such were the thoughts and hopes of the outcast half-breed.

And fortune seemed to favour him.

In one spot, where the rope passed round the rock, there was a sharp edge of granite on which it pressed; and as soon as the darkness was deep enough to conceal his action, the slave-trader attempted to fray the rope on that sharp edge.

By persistent straining, he loosed the rope sufficiently to allow it play; by twisting up his right arm, he was able to hold it, and for long hours he had worked, silently, savagely, indomitably, and strand after strand of the rope parted under the incessant fraying.

With aching bones, exhausted by his efforts, streaming with sweat, the desperado worked on, till he knew at length the rope would part if he exerted his strength on it.

Then he lay quiescent for a time to recover his strength for the effort.



As Vernon-Smith peered through the foliage of the tall cedar he gave a violent start. "It's Krantz!" he gasped. "Kumbe!" breathed Kikolobo. "This wicked man will not live to see a new day!"

All was silent and still about him.

The askaris slept; Captain McCann was still absent.

At last the slave-trader stirred, and, with straining muscles and gritted teeth, exerted his strength on the frayed rope.

It parted with a slight sound, which sent a throb of terror to his heart lest the sentry should hear it.

But the sentry was a dozen paces from him, and he did not turn his head.

Krantz lay against the rock, breathing hard and deep, for many long minutes, before he stirred again.

But he stirred at length, and as silently as a leopard, crept behind the rock to which he had been bound.

No sound came from the desperado man as he crept away, from rock to rock, from boulder to boulder, along the gorge that led into the valley of the Moteli.

The askaris still slept, Mr. Vernon-Smith had dropped, at last, into a troubled slumber; the sentry was not even aware that the prisoner was gone.

For a hundred yards from the camp Krantz crept on hands and knees without a sound. Then he rose to his feet and strode on, with exulting heart.

He was free—free to give the alarm in the valley, to bring swarms of savage fighting-men to overwhelm the little party from Uganda.

A faint footfall startled him, and he dodged behind a rugged boulder.

He lay, suppressing his breathing, as a bronze-faced man passed, going back towards the camp. It was Captain McCann, returning from scouting on the Moteli side of the hills.

In the glimmer of the moon Krantz

had a glimpse of the little, wiry figure and bronzed face of the man-tracker. He scarcely breathed.

But McCann passed on, unsuspecting, and disappeared in the direction of the camp.

The slave-trader panted with relief when he was gone.

He emerged from his cover, and ran. He had no time to waste now; for he had no doubt that McCann would discover his escape as soon as he reached the camp. As fast as his weary limbs could carry him, the ruffian fled, and from the gorge he panted on down the sloping hillsides, and through the forest paths into the valley of the Moteli.

Little dreaming that he had passed the escaping slave-trader, McCann strode on to the camp. Mr. Vernon-Smith awoke at once at his footsteps. He rose wearily from his blankets.

"We go on?" he said.

Captain McCann nodded.

"We go on at dawn," he said. "So far as I have been able to discover, the way is clear. There is no alarm—no expectation of an enemy. But—"

He paused.

"You need not tell me that we take our lives in our hands," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "I know that."

"Quite! Open attack, of course, is impossible to us, but we have a chance of getting through by strategy. We shall keep in cover in the forests; keep out of sight of the natives, and get as near as we can to the city of Tofoloko undiscovered. We may get hold of some native and get information from him; possibly rescue the prisoners by a sudden

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raid after dark. Our plans will have to be formed as we proceed; but it is no use disguising the fact that all the chances are against us, and that instead of saving the boys we may only share their fate."

"Better that than deserting them," said the millionaire quietly.

"I agree! But from this point we must be doubly cautious—once our presence becomes known, the game is up. I shall leave Krantz hidden in the hills with one man in charge, who will have instructions to get him back to Uganda if we do not return—or to shoot him out of hand if that should be impossible. Now for a little sleep."

It was from the mere habit of caution that McCann gave the prisoner a look, to make sure that he was safe, before turning into his blanket.

But when he stepped to the rock to which Ludwig Krantz had been bound, his bronzed face changed colour. In the deep shadow lay only a broken rope.

"Holy mackerel!" he whispered.

"What—?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Krantz is gone," said the captain quietly.

"Gone!"

"He has escaped!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith groaned. He knew in an instant all that that implied.

Quietly Captain McCann examined the rope. He soon discovered how the prisoner had succeeded in getting loose. His teeth came together hard.

"He cannot have been long gone," he said quietly. "There may be a chance of getting him yet. I shall try. If he gets away, it is no longer a question of rescuing the prisoners—we shall be wiped out by the Moteli in a few hours. But—there may be a ghost of a chance yet."

Not a moment was lost.

In little more than a minute after the escape of the prisoner had been discovered, the whole party were pushing on through the gorge, hunting him, well knowing that if Ludwig Krantz was not recaptured before dawn, every life in the safari was forfeit.

But when the dawn flushed in the east nothing had been seen of Ludwig Krantz.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Last of Ludwig Krantz!

"**B**WANA!" whispered Kikolobo. "My ears hear the feet of an enemy."

Herbert Vernon-Smith wakened instantly.

He awakened with all his wits about him.

The Bounder and the Kikuyu hunter were in deep cover.

For a great distance round the city of Tofoloko the black soldiers in hundreds were hunting for the white boy who had escaped the tortures of M'toko, and for the unknown enemy who had slain the witch-doctor. And only the wily cunning of the Kikuyu had saved Smithy from recapture.

The Kikuyu, probably, would have been willing to leave the kingdom of Tofoloko, without an hour's delay, now that he had saved "Bwana-wangu." But the will of the "Bwana" was law to him, and the Bounder did not think for a moment of deserting his comrades.

But to remain in the valley, while hundreds of savage enemies hunted for them, without discovery, taxed all the cunning resources of the Kenya hunter.

Vernon-Smith was determined that they should not cross the border of

Tofoloko's kingdom without his friends. But for the rest, he wisely left everything in the hands of the Kikuyu.

By hidden forest paths, sometimes travelling in the branches of trees, they had covered a good distance from the city; and the Kikuyu had found a hiding-place at last on the slopes of the hills.

On the edge of the forest a gigantic cedar-tree shadowed the path that ran up to the gorge, and in the branches of the cedar the Kikuyu and the school-boy found a refuge.

Where the great branches joined over the trunk there was ample space for half a dozen to camp, and after placing the Bounder in safety there, the Kikuyu had carefully obliterated all traces of their trail—so cunningly that he believed that the keenest hunter of the Moteli would have been baffled in searching for sign. And there a night and a day had passed.

In selecting that hiding-place the Kikuyu had a motive he did not communicate to his "Bwana."

So long as the Bounder was determined not to go, the faithful Kikuyu was prepared to remain with him; but if the hunt became too close and pressing, there would be no choice in the matter, and in that case the way through the gorge lay open to the fugitives.

But a long day had passed without alarm, and now, in the hours of darkness, the Bounder slept the sleep of weariness.

The Kikuyu did not sleep. By day and night his eyes had hardly closed.

He had taken every measure that a wily hunter could take; but he knew what the fury of Tofoloko would be like, and he knew that hundreds of fierce enemies would be hunting incessantly for "Bwana-wangu." Sleepless, the Kikuyu watched and listened in the dark branches of the cedar, his eyes on the path below, faintly visible in the glimmering stars.

And at the sound of a footstep he awakened "Bwana-wangu."

At that hour, when all the country slept, it could only be the footstep of an enemy that he heard; the step of some of the soldiers hunting for the escaped victim of the witch-doctor—or so it seemed to the Kikuyu.

"Can you see—" whispered the Bounder.

He peered down through the foliage.

"My eyes see nothing, Bwana; but my ears hear," said the Kikuyu, in the low murmur that was barely audible. "Let your ears listen, Bwana-wangu."

Vernon-Smith listened intently.

Faintly through the deep silence of the night came a sound from the direction of the gorge in the hills.

It was the sound of footfalls, as yet faint and afar.

The Bounder's heart throbbed.

Loyalty to his comrades kept him from flight, so long as they were prisoners. But he well knew that it was little better than asking for recapture and death.

"Well, if they find us, we're game!" he said between his teeth, and his grasp closed on the spear he had brought with him from M'toko's den. "We'll make some of them howl before we go under, Kicky."

"Many of the Moteli shall fall under my spear, Bwana, for it is well known in all the land of Kenya and Uganda that I, Kikolobo, am a great warrior," said the Kikuyu simply. "Yet let us give no alarm, for he who comes in the night may know nothing of us."

"Whoever it is, he's coming from the hills!" whispered the Bounder. "It

may not be one of the soldiers hunting for us."

"Soon our eyes will see, Bwana, for he comes by the path that passes beneath this great tree."

In silence they waited and listened.

The footfalls on the forest path grew nearer and clearer, and the Bounder could distinguish that they were the swift footfalls of a running man.

From the distance he heard the sound of panting breath, as the unseen runner drew nearer.

A figure appeared at a little distance along the forest path, clear in the shining light of the moon.

The Bounder's eyes fixed on it, from an opening in the foliage of the tall cedar.

He gave a violent start. The moonlight glimmered on a well-known face. He recognised the burly figure, the coppery face with its glinting, light blue eyes.

"Krantz!" he breathed.

He heard the grating of the Kikuyu's teeth.

"Kumba!" breathed Kikolobo. "It is the evil Mzungu who sold my Bwana into slavery; and he comes back to the land of the Moteli, alone! It is in my thoughts that this wicked man will not live to see a new day."

The next moment the Kikuyu had disappeared from the branches beside the Bounder.

He had dropped from the tree, screened by the trunk from the sight of the man panting up the forest path in the moonlight.

Vernon-Smith set his lips.

Krantz was coming on; in a few moments more he would be passing under the branches of the cedar that overhung the path, under the schoolboy watching from above.

But the Kikuyu, spear in hand, was waiting, screened by the great trunk of the tree; and Vernon-Smith knew that the slave-trader would never pass the cedar alive.

How Krantz came to be there, returning alone to the Moteli country, running like a fugitive, was a mystery to Vernon-Smith. But he knew that Ludwig Krantz was hastening to the end of his long career of crime and wickedness.

Krantz reached the spot where the cedar cast its shadow.

He ran on without a pause: only another half-mile and he would have reached the first village of the Moteli, and the alarm would have been given which would have set the whole country in motion to deal with the safari from Uganda. Only another half-mile; but the slave-trader was fated not to take one more step.

A figure in striped monkey-skins glided from black shadow, and a spear glimmered as a sinewy arm drove it home.

"Give me good word in the land of the ghosts, O my enemy!" said Kikolobo—and they were the last words that the slave-trader ever heard; and with those words in his ears he died at the feet of the Kikuyu.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### From the City of Death!

**H**ARRY WHARTON wiped the perspiration from his brow.

The endless, endless day was ending.

To the juniors in the king's hut it seemed as if that terrible day would never draw to a close.

But an end comes to all things; and at long last the sun dipped, and shadows rolled over the teeming African city.

In the thickening dusk, the chums of Greyfriars peered at one another, wondering to find themselves still alive.

On the sleeping-mat—bound and gagged, exhausted with impotent fury—lay Tofoloko, King of the Moteli, the savage whose mere nod had meant life or death to all men in the kingdom. The power was gone from his merciless hands now.

Indeed, it was the terror of Tofoloko that had saved the schoolboy slaves, the terror in which he was held by his subjects.

The boldest man among the Moteli dared not enter the king's presence, when Tofoloko did not care to be disturbed.

During that terrible afternoon more than one had come to the king's hut, after the witch-doctor had been turned away. Chiefs from outlying villages had come, captains of the bands of soldiers who were hunting for the Bounder, and others.

To each Bubu gave speech from the screened doorway; and, with the fear of death in the very marrow of his bones, Bubu did as he was bid. With the keen point of a spear to his bare black ribs, Bubu had to think first of saving his own life.

And each comer was turned away by the statement that Tofoloko was not to be disturbed. The Moteli, accustomed to the arbitrary dictates of the black monarch, accustomed to receive his orders from the lips of Bubu, had no suspicion.

Black man after black man came and went; slaves of the king came and were turned away in the same manner.

Why the king chose to remain in his hut, with his prime minister and the foreign slaves, the Moteli did not know—and did not care. It was the will of Tofoloko, and that was enough for them.

The iron band with which Tofoloko ruled was his undoing now, and it saved the schoolboys. Not a man in the city dreamed of controverting his supposed commands.

The black potentate heard all that was said—unable to stir, unable to speak; almost bursting with maddened fury. The looks he gave Bubu and the schoolboys told plainly enough what would happen to them if, and when, Tofoloko had the upper hand again.

But for the present, at least, the king's power had broken like a reed in his hands.

The longed-for dusk came at night; the brief tropical twilight faded into darkness.

"We're still alive!" muttered Bob Cherry, voicing the thought that was in the minds of all.

"Blessed if I expected to be!" murmured Nugent.

"Bunter's asleep!" said Johnny Bull, with a faint grin.

There was a snore from a shadowy corner of the hut.

Billy Bunter had fallen asleep; the only fellow there who was likely to do so. How even Bunter could sleep was a mystery to the other fellows. But he slept.

Through the gloom the burning eyes of Tofoloko shone like a leopard's. The black tyrant's rage was beyond words, even if he could have spoken.

"You lib for die, all lib for die!" mumbled Bubu wretchedly. "Tofoloko kill, torture, one-time! You see um

(Continued on next page.)

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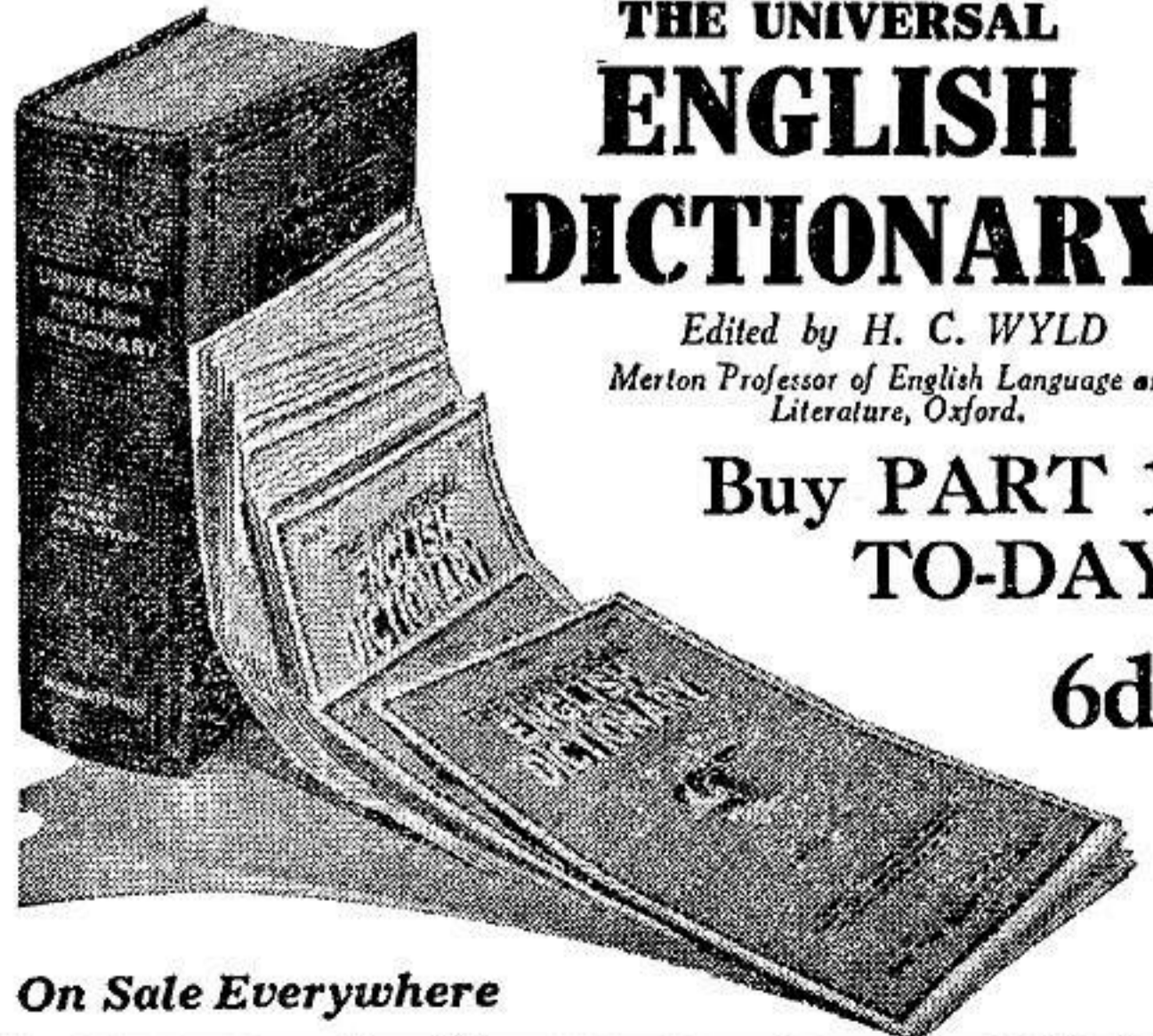
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**SAVED from the CANNIBALS!***(Continued from previous page.)*

look at me! He torture you, torture me same time! Me dead man, blow my topsails!"

"You're not dead yet, old black bean!" said Bob. "We're getting out of this somehow, after dark. You're coming, too, till we've finished with you. If you're afraid of Tofoloko you can bunk while you've got the chance."

"Tofoloko send soldier, find, kill, one-time!" groaned Bubu.

"You'll take your chance with us," said Harry. "If you kick you won't live long enough for Tofoloko to hurt you."

"Me sabbey!" groaned Bubu.

The hapless Bubu was, in fact, between the devil and the deep sea.

He dared not, for his life, disobey the orders of those who had him in their hands. But in obeying them, and thus helping them keep the upper hand, he had roused the bitterest fury of Tofoloko; and he shuddered to think of what would be his fate if the king ever had him at his mercy. Flight from the land of the Moteli was now Bubu's only hope, as well as that of the juniors. He was already thinking with longing of the Gold Coast and white men's government.

So far as their desperate situation allowed the juniors had laid their plans well. Only by making use of Bubu had they had the faintest chance of pulling through; and they had succeeded in getting him into their hands and making use of him.

Now the night had come, and the most desperate step of all remained to be taken.

Under cover of night, if at all, they would escape—with an infinity of chances against them. Almost miraculously, as it seemed, they had succeeded so far. But round them was still the swarming city, and the boma guarded by many soldiers.

But the attempt had to be made. If another day found them in the city of Tofoloko all was over.

The moon rose over the city; the full moon that was the time of the cannibal feast in which Billy Bunter was to have figured.

In the moonlight the witch-doctor came again; and Bubu, sweating with fear, gave him speech from the doorway.

This time the man lingered; not exactly suspicious, but obviously surprised and discontented.

For long, long minutes he stood and talked, and the hearts of the juniors were in their mouths as they listened to his talk and Bubu's answers. The wretch departed at last, angry and discontented, but too terrified of Tofoloko's wrath to persist longer.

Bubu almost groaned with fear.

The juniors still waited.

The hour grew late; the city slept, save for the soldiers at the gateways of the boma, and the king's guard loafing in the square opposite the royal huts.

"Time!" said Harry Wharton, at last.

"We're ready!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook Bunter into wakefulness.

"Beast! Lemme alone!" mumbled Bunter. "Oh! I—I say, you fellows! Oh crikey!"

Bunter remembered.

"Get up, old chap!" said Wharton gently. "We're going to try it on now, and we may pull through."

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"Pull yourself together, kid!" said Bob Cherry.

Bunter was trembling in every fat limb. It was not much use telling him to pull himself together; that was beyond Bunter's powers.

Wharton touched Bubu's arm.

"Get rid of the guard outside!" he said.

"No can!" mumbled Bubu.

"Tell them it is Tofoloko's order for them to go to their huts—tell them anything you like, but get shut of them. We're going—and you're going with us. You know what will happen to you after this, if they get hold of you, Bubu! You'd better see us through if you can."

The hapless Bubu understood that only too well.

It was hardly necessary now to guard him or threaten him. His own fate was bound up with that of the schoolboy slaves, now that he had incurred the deadly enmity of Tofoloko.

From the doorway of the king's hut he called to the soldiers.

The juniors could see the black faces clearly in the moonlight that fell into the square, and they saw that the guards were surprised by the order Bubu gave them.

But they knew that Tofoloko was in the hut, and never dreamed that his confidential minister was giving them orders not dictated by the black monarch.

Once more the unquestioning obedience of the Moteli to their tyrant's will was the salvation of the schoolboy slaves.

The soldiers, surprised as they were, were probably glad enough to go to their huts and be relieved of night duty. They departed, some of them staring back as they went, with bewildered faces.

The square before the king's hut was deserted.

"Now's the time!" said Harry. "If we've got a chance now, it's the only one we shall ever have!"

He untied Bubu's arms.

"Bubu, you're coming with us. You'll talk to the guard at the gateway, and get them to let us through. You've got to stick to us now for your own sake. But, listen to this. If we escape, and you with us, we'll make you a rich man. After we're out of the city you can stick to us or leave us, as you choose; but until we're out, you've got to help us. A spear will be close behind you all the time, and you fall dead if you try to betray us."

Bubu made a grimace.

"Me lib for stay this place, Tofoloko torture, kill," he said. "Me sabbey what him mean, look in him eye. Me run one-time. S'pose me get away, me lib for Gold Coast."

"Come, then!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry walked on either side of Bubu, as they left the king's hut.

Behind him walked Johnny Bull, with the king's spear in his hand, ready to run the broad blade through Bubu at the first sign of betrayal.

Nugent and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh brought up the rear, with Bunter between them, helping the faltering steps of the Owl of the Remove.

The juniors' hearts throbbed as they emerged into the bright moonlight of the square.

Death lurked in every shadow, and yet the very boldness and audacity of the attempt helped it to success.

The whole city slept, the king's guard, in their huts, as soundly as the rest.

Quietly, but swiftly, the juniors passed down the long, tree-shaded street towards the gateway in the boma.

Not a native was to be seen, though from many huts they heard the sound of deep breathing and snoring.

They reached the gateway in the boma—the high thorn wall that surrounded the city. Across the opening in the wall poles were laid in place, and against them loafed and lounged a dozen black soldiers, the guard on duty for the night.

There was a jabber of amazement from the soldiers at the sight of the white slaves and Bubu.

The juniors breathed hard. Bunter almost fainted with fear. Nugent and Hurree Singh supported him by his fat arms.

Bubu spoke to the soldiers volubly. If he had failed, then nothing remained but to attempt a rush through the gateway and the guard; an attempt that would have been so desperate as to be almost hopeless.

But Bubu did not fail. It was not fear of the spear behind him that kept him up to the mark. It was the knowledge that, if he did not himself escape from the city, he was a lost man. Yet once more the ferocity of Tofoloko was the salvation of the schoolboy slaves. Dread of his fearful vengeance drove Bubu to do his best.

The soldiers were evidently surprised and uneasy. But they were accustomed to obeying the orders of Bubu, who was second in power only to the king in the African city.

With deep relief, the juniors saw them begin removing the poles from the gateway.

"What have you told them?" whispered Wharton.

"Me tell um Tofoloko order," mumbled Bubu. "All obey Tofoloko order. Nigger no savvy, but obey Tofoloko order. Blow my topsails! Me plenty glad when me get away from this place!"

The soldiers stared curiously and uneasily at the party, as they followed Bubu through the gateway.

The open country lay beyond.

Scarcely daring to believe in their good luck, the schoolboy slaves—slaves no longer—hurried along a path through the maize fields. They headed in the direction of the distant hills, which they had crossed by the gorge when they came to the land of Tofoloko, prisoners in the hands of Ludwig Krantz. Even Billy Bunter exerted himself to trot.

The city was lost in the dimness behind them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry suddenly. "That nigger's hooking it."

"Bubu!" called Wharton.

There was no answer. A mile from the city Bubu had dodged away by a winding path in the maize fields, and vanished.

Bubu's own plan was to get to the river, get hold of a canoe, and paddle down to the Congo before he was hunted for and caught. And his view was that he would be safer alone, which was no doubt the case. The juniors had seen the last of the black prime minister of King Tofoloko of the Moteli.

But they cared little. Now that they were finished with him, Bubu was free to do as he liked. They were well aware that he dared not return to the city and face the wrath of Tofoloko. They had nothing to fear from him, and they hoped that he would succeed in making his escape from the country.

They hurried on.

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter. "I say, I'm tired!"

"Sit down and rest!" suggested Johnny Bull.



With deep relief, Harry Wharton & Co. heard Tofoloko's confidential minister order the black soldiers to remove the barrage from the gateway. In a few moments now the Greyfriars juniors would be free!

"Think we've got time?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, no! We're going on. But rest as long as you like. Tofoloko's sure to be glad to see you again."

"Beast!"

And Billy Bunter hurried on with the rest—tired as he was! Not for a moment did the fugitives halt during the remainder of the night, and when dawn came they were still hurrying on by a forest path.

Dawn glimmered over the hills and over the city of Tofoloko, and with the new day, they were well aware, Tofoloko would be found and released, and there would be immediate and fierce pursuit.

Weary and footsore, but indomitably determined, the escaping slaves tramped on by the forest path, guided by glimpses now and again of the gorge that rived the line of hills—the way of escape from the land of the cannibals.

But as they tramped up the path, up the lower slopes of the hills, they heard far behind them the droning of African drums, and they knew that it told of alarm and pursuit.

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Drums!

"O BWANA, my eyes see you!" Captain McCann started violently.

It was a familiar voice that fell upon his ears.

Dawn had come, and was long past, and of the slave-trader whom he sought, the man-tracker had seen nothing—unless the bones, clean-picked by jackals, lying at his feet, were those of Ludwig Krantz.

Desperately, knowing that all depended on recapturing Krantz before he could give the alarm to the Moteli,

McCann had followed on, down the path winding down the hills into the valley.

Under the great cedar that shadowed the path, where it entered the forest, lay the bones as the jackals had left them, and McCann and the askaris halted.

"Krantz?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith, staring with a shudder at the grisly relics.

"Possibly," said the captain, "and, if so, we've a chance yet! But—"

He broke off, as a voice came from the branches of the cedar above his head, in utter amazement.

"Kikolobo!" he gasped.

A figure in monkey-skins dropped from the tree. The askaris grasped their rifles; but McCann made them a sign.

The Kikuyu saluted him gravely.

"O Bwana McCann, my eyes are glad to see your handsome face," he said, "and if you seek the evil Mzungu, Krantz, he lies before you, for I, Kikolobo, slew him on this spot with my spear!"

"Holy mackerel!" ejaculated the captain.

Mr. Vernon-Smith started forward, and grasped the Kikuyu by his arm.

"My son?" he said huskily. "Where is my son?"

"Father!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith dropped from the cedar.

"Holy mackerel!" repeated Captain McCann, in blank astonishment.

"Herbert!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith stared at his son, as he might have stared at one come back from the dead.

"Herbert!" he repeated faintly.

"It's little me, dad!" said the Bounder. "Surprised to see me, what? Not so surprised as I am to see you—here. I thought Captain McCann might come; but I never dreamed—"

"Herbert!" muttered the millionaire.

"Safe and sound, father," said the Bounder softly. "Kicky saved me—and here I am, jolly glad to see you."

"And the others?" asked Captain McCann.

"Still prisoners in Tofoloko's city," answered the Bounder. "Kicky and I were hanging on, to do what we could for them—now you've come, sir, we'll get them out of the hands of those black brutes somehow."

The man-tracker drew a deep breath.

"We're in luck," he said. "I begin to think we shall pull it off. Krantz never gave the alarm—and he will never give it now. Kikolobo has saved all our lives. If Krantz had got clear, all would have been lost."

"It was written that the evil Mzungu should fall under the spear of a Kikuyu, O Bwana!" said Kikolobo.

Captain McCann smiled.

"He has fallen, at all events, and you have found your son, Mr. Vernon-Smith. And the others—Harsh!"

The man-tracker broke off, his eyes glinting, his teeth setting hard. From the silence of the valley came a distant, dull, droning sound.

The askaris exchanged alarmed glances. Kikolobo stiffened and listened, like a leopard in the jungle at the sound of a hunter's footfall.

"Holy mackerel!" murmured the captain.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith, puzzled. "It sounds like distant thunder—"

"It is the lokali—the African drum!" said the captain tersely. "The drums are beating in Tofoloko's city."

"What does it mean?"

The captain did not answer; but he listened intently. Every dull droning note had a meaning for his ear.

"Speak, O Kikolobo!" he said at last.

"What is the meaning of the talk of the lokali?"

"O Bwana, the lokali is telling all the people of the Moteli that prisoners have escaped from the city of Tofoloko, and calling on all the tribes and villages to join in the search," answered the Kikuyu.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the millionaire.

"The lokali is the telephone of Central Africa," said McCann. "Kikolobo knows its language better than I. What more does it say, Kikolobo?"

"O Bwana," said the Kikuyu, "the lokali says that there are six white prisoners who have escaped, and also a black man upon whom Tofoloko seeks vengeance."

"Great pip!" exclaimed the Bounder. "That's a tip for us! Six prisoners—that's Wharton and the rest." His eyes danced.

"It can mean nothing else!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith, looking at the man-tracker.

Captain McCann nodded.

"They are outside the city, and the Moteli have not yet recaptured them," he said. "I cannot imagine how they have done it; but that is the fact; the lokali tells us so. This is a chance I never dreamed of. Forward!"

The dull droning of the drums continued without intermission.

With the sound in their ears, Captain McCann and his askaris pressed on by the forest path, led now by the tall Kikuyu in monkey-skins, Vernon-Smith following with his father.

Suddenly, from the tangled forest ahead of them, came a fierce outburst

of yelling. McCann and his men pressed on. From the distant city came the ceaseless drone of the lokali.

## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Homeward Bound!

"I SAY, you fellows!"  
"Buck up, Bunter!"  
"I—I say, I'm tired."  
"Fathead!"

"I'm dropping!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, can't you carry me?"  
"Get a move on, idiot!"

Sinking with fatigue themselves, the Famous Five were not likely to be able to carry Billy Bunter.

They tramped wearily on up the path through the forest, on the lower slopes of the hills.

Bunter tottered and gasped and stumbled and groaned. The terrible fate behind him spurred him on to unheard-of efforts.

"Oh dear!" groaned the fat Owl.  
"Oh crikey! Oh crumbs!"

"Buck up, old chap!"  
"Beast! Oh dear! I wish I was back at Greyfriars! Ow!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I—I can't go on! I—I'm done!"

Bunter plumped down.  
"Oh, my hat!" gasped Nugent.  
"For goodness' sake, Bunter——" urged Harry Wharton.

"I can't go on!" groaned Bunter. The juniors halted, in desperation.  
"Look!" yelled Johnny Bull.

He pointed back along the forest path.  
From an opening in the forest a score

of blacks appeared, not a hundred yards behind the juniors. That they had seen the party was plain. The call of the lokali had warned them, and they were hunting for the fugitives, and they had found them.

"The game's up!" muttered Bob.

"Bunter——"

"Oh crikey!"

At the sight of the blacks, Bunter found that he could make one more effort. He scrambled up, and ran, and the juniors ran with him. From behind them came a fierce outburst of yells.

"Put it on!" panted Bob.

The juniors "put it on." But they knew now that there was no hope. Behind them a score of yelling savages were racing, spear in hand; and the weary schoolboys had no chance in the race.

Desperately they ran; but at every stride the yelling blacks gained on them.

Suddenly, in the forest path before them, a figure appeared. In sheer desperation they ran at it; but the next moment they recognised a dark face and a tall figure, clad in the skin of the striped colobus monkey.

"Kicky!" panted Wharton.

"O Bwana, my eyes see you!" said the Kikuyu gravely.

"Kicky!" gasped Bob. "Oh, bless you, Kicky, old man!"

Kikolobo was not alone. Like fellows in a dream, Harry Wharton & Co. saw Captain McCann, and the askaris, and the Bounder, and Mr. Vernon-Smith. They heard the crackle of rifle-fire as the Moteli came rushing on; they heard the surprised and dismayed yells of the savages as the bullets tore through and through them.

Right and left the pursuing blacks reeled under the hot fire from the askaris. What were left of them turned and ran.

"Smithy!" gasped Wharton. The Bounder was gripping his hand. "Smithy! Is this a jolly old dream, or what?"

"The dreamfulness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurrea Jamset Ram Singh. "It is the esteemed Smithy, and the ridiculous Mr. Vernon-Smith, and the absurd McCann! The gladfulness is preposterous!"

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, good luck!" said the Bounder, grinning with glee. "Isn't it topping, you men? We had about a chance in a thousand of getting you away from Tofoloko—and here you are! Britons never shall be slaves! Hurrah!"

"Blessed if I can believe it yet!" said Frank Nugent.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Cherio, Bunter!" roared Bob. "They're not going to gobble you, after all, old man! You're not going to give Tofoloko indigestion."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"Come!" said Captain McCann. "We have driven off the Moteli; but there will be hundreds here soon. Not a moment is to be lost! Come!"

The weary juniors were lifted on the brawny shoulders of the askaris, and the retreat up to the gorge was rapid. Fortune had favoured the rescuers; but there was no time to lose.

Under the burning sun, as it rose higher in cloudless blue, the hurried retreat went on, and the hills were left behind.

But not till another night came on, and they were many a long mile from the borders of Tofoloko's country, was a halt called.

(Continued on page 28.)



**N**OW here we have a highwayman.  
A thief of courage bold;  
The man of Dicky's heart  
Would be ready to depart  
With his purse and all his gold;  
And if young Dicky should resist,  
The thief would mount his nag,  
And with barkers on his hip,  
Wouldn't stand for any lip  
From a Second Form Greyfriars sag,  
Not he!  
No lip from a Greyfriars sag.

Dick Turpin is the bandit's name;  
His horse's name is Bess;  
And, "Waiting on the Path,  
Just Beside the Road to Bath,"  
Is the highwayman's address;  
And all who chance to see him there  
Will falter and go pale;  
While, if Dick has time to spare,  
He will rob them then and there  
While he's waiting for the Bristol  
Mail,

Ha, ha!

Dick's waiting for the Bristol Mail,

And if the Bow Street men appear,  
They won't get Dick at bay,  
For Bess is fleet of foot,  
And before the tecs can shoot  
She'll be fourteen miles away;

## GREYFRIARS HEROES.

No. 6.

This week the Greyfriars Rhymester reveals the hero worshipped by DICKY NUGENT, and in consequence he has written his contribution in the dashing verse of the highwayman of old.

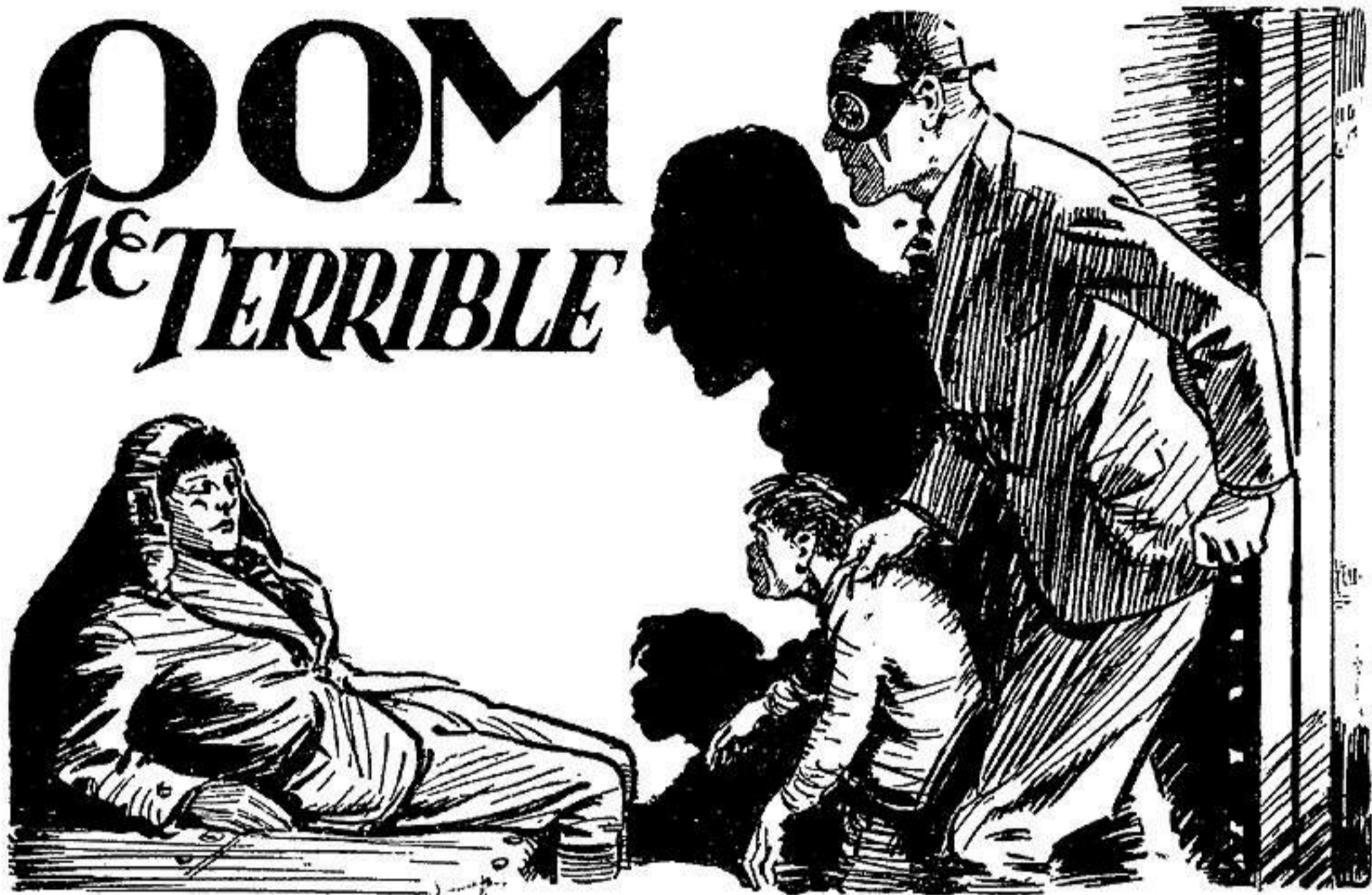
Oh, they can with their fastest steeds  
About our hero press;  
They soon will understand  
That no horses in the land  
Can catch the swift Black Bess,  
Not they!  
No horse can catch Black Bess.

To copy Turpin, Dicky says,  
At present is his plan;  
"I'll do the same," he states,  
But—alas!—the prison waits  
For the reckless highwayman;  
No longer is the Bristol Road  
The haunt of bandits bold,  
For Dicky will find out  
That he cannot roam about  
As they did in the days of old,  
No fear!  
Quite gone are the days of old.



# OOM

## THE TERRIBLE



### A Criminal Genius!

**T**OM DARE had not been asleep, to his own mind, for many seconds when he heard a sound, sensed something dangerous, and shot upright in his bed with all his senses alert. He listened for a while.

There was a queer droning sound. It might be the wind over the lake, the great lake of Titicaca, twelve thousand feet above sea level, on the borders of Peru and Bolivia. Dare was accustomed to weird sounds coming from the lake, and in the ordinary way he did not pay much attention to them, but—this was different—it sounded inside the room.

A peculiar sucking sound and a distinct movement.

Then he saw a dark shape move against the silhouette of the open french window.

With a bound, Dare was out of bed with his hand outstretched for his automatic—and met disaster!

The dark shape—a small thing, not more than three feet high—seemed to direct a splay-faced nozzle at him, like the elongated face of a vacuum cleaner, and instantly Dare's fourteen stone of sturdy muscle and bone was drawn to the nozzle and held—held as fast as a feather to a carpet sweeper!

Tom grabbed the bedrail, and in a flash he and the bed were dragged across the floor. The bedrail was too big to be drawn out of the window, and Tom found himself grasping the broken brass rail and kicking like a newly landed fish as he was hauled upwards.

With a mighty effort he regained his sense, his reason; knew that this was no nightmare, no illusion of his dreaming senses, that he was up against it good and definite, and he let out a yell.

Twenty feet below him, as he was slowly hauled upwards. Tom could see his young brother, Rick, whom he was training as his assistant in the Merger Engineering Co. on that island. He could see that sixteen-year-old

youngster's face gazing horror-stricken upwards, and he knew he must leave a message, a message that might puzzle the kid, but would be useful afterwards.

He took as deep a breath as he could, with that tremendous suction apparatus nearly breaking his ribs, and yelled at the pitch of his lungs:

"Rick—Oom—Oom, the Terrible!"

Then he saw the house, the lake, his brother's face, all fade as some pungent gas took his breath away, and he was swung up farther into darkness.

Rick himself had been awakened by that curious "gluck-gluck-gluck" of the immense vacuum suction pipe, and by the time he had realised something was wrong and had sprung to the door

---

**His ambition is to become Master of the World; and with reckless defiance Oom, the Terrible, gives civilisation a sample of his extraordinary powers!**

---

which divided his own and his brother's room it was too late to be of any assistance—if it had ever been of any use!

For Oom, Oom, the Terrible had got Tom, and what that world-wide-known terror took—he kept!

Only the day before, Tom Dare and his brother had read some newspaper accounts of the exploits of the mysterious being who was known as the "World Air Pirate." How "Oom, the Terrible," as he flamboyantly heralded himself, had raided London, Paris, Rome, Milan, Moscow, Constantinople, back across the Atlantic to New York, then down to Rio, all in so short a time that it was incredible that one man and his gang of desperadoes could

have done such a distance in so short a time.

Yet everywhere he left his trademark, the defiant message that the "job" had been done by Oom and no other, and the police of each capital had to acknowledge that each and every robbery bore the same marks of criminal genius.

The impossible had happened. One man, one outstanding criminal, with all the resources of science at his fingertips, apparently ruled the world, held it at his mercy!

For not only did Oom steal the world's wealth—its gold, its jewels, its surplus treasure—but he stole what could never be replaced—the world's best brains!

There had been mysterious disappearances, mysterious for a few days, of scientists, inventors, engineers, each unique in his own department, the cream of each country's brains. Then a day or two after the disappearance there would come a message to reassure relatives and friends—but where from, no one knew!

Only that morning Tom Dare had received a message from an old friend in the Secret Service.

"... Don't breathe a word, of course, but we have almost certain proof that this Oom person is the Mad Ace, whom you remember as Baron von Aumsteufel, the German big noise who disappeared.

"You remember that what he did not know about flying and up-to-the-minute gadgets for planes was not worth knowing. Well, I believe he has hit upon some method of keeping his big machine up in the air continuously without refuelling, and he is using all the latest gadgets as they come out—including your own, old bean! Is it any wonder that he can pop down where and how he likes, and take toll of us poor ordinary mortals and get away with it?

"All the same, old chap, there is a  
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clue! We believe that Oom has a stronghold somewhere on the South American continent. In fact, it's almost a cert. So, you being on the spot and having a certain amount of brains—oh, boy!—keep your eyes skinned!"

This had flashed through young Rick's brain almost as he saw his brother's form disappear into upper air and had heard his last shout.

Like Tom Dare, he was cool-headed and on the jump for any emergency. He wasted not a moment in vain peering up into the darkness from whence came the very faint hum of an aeroplane engine, the hum that his ears, attuned to every aerial sound, told him that the big machine was using the "Dare Stabilising Helicopter," Tom's latest invention. With the hum still in his ears he bolted down the stairs of the Island House, and next moment was thundering at the door of a room in the basement, the room occupied by one, Alf Higgs, the Cockney mechanic and right-hand man of his brother.

### At the Mercy of Oom I

**W**HAT the—how the—whassa-matter? Is that you, Rick? Go 'way an' lemme sleep! 'Tain't time to gerrup yet, yer long stroak o' blackin'! Take a long runnin' jump at yerself an' lemme go to—"

"Alf, Alf, wake up quick and help me get the plane out!" yelled Rick. "Tom's been kidnapped!"

"Kid wot? 'Oo d'yer think yer kiddin'?" sleepily asked the Cockney; but all the same he was out of bed and appeared at the door in a suit of loud-striped pyjamas. "You, Mister Rick! Whassup?"

As Rick gasped out the information Alf Higgs was getting into trousers and coat, and he let out a yelp that effectually aroused the individual who had been making stertorous snoring sounds from the inner room.

This was six feet seven of black ebony, in the person of Ham, the negro servant of the Dare boys' father, now their own henchman. Simple as a child, brave as two lions, he was devoted to the Dare boys and would face anything on two legs or four that threatened their safety. He had caught but a few words of Rick's announcement, but already he had shed his pyjamas and grabbed a fur-lined flying-suit, into which he was ramming his huge body whilst he let out a flow of curious language.

"I knoo thar was somethin' stirrin' to-night, somethin' out o' th' ordnery; I knoo it!" he chanted, as he thrust his great limbs into the overalls. "Says I when I falls asleep—dis am one ob de gr-r-r-r-reatest nights ob my life—by gummy, by golly, by gob, it are!"

Alf Higgs and Rick raced for the lake, where Tom's very latest hydroplane was lying. Alf was first in, and in two seconds he had switched on the power; then he waited whilst Ham lumbered down towards the flyer with his great arms full.

"Late as usual!" grumbled the Cockney. "Stoppin' behind to pick up th' cookin' utensils?"

"Suah pop!" replied the big nigger cheerfully, as he swung his armful into the cockpit. "Some li'l u-utensils to cook th' goose thet's taken Massa Tom away. Jump to it, yuh big stiff! Yuh was goin' wi'out a gun of any sort, or a

pistol, even! What d'yuh think we're goin' after—water babies?"

"Good lad, Ham!" agreed Rick, seizing a repeating-rifle and shoving an automatic pistol into the belt of his trousers. "You never know your luck, though I doubt if Oom will ever allow us to get close enough to his plane to use these. From what we've heard of it the bus is a wonder for speed."

"So's this!" said Alf stoutly, as he switched on the engine. "This is the boss' speshul, an' if it ain't somethin' faster than any wot's ever flew before, you can bite me 'ead off!"

"Fast it may be," murmured Ham, as he squeezed his great body into the tiny cockpit; "but, oh, boy, dere ain't much room for a full-sized coloured gemman. Yuh'll suh hab to git me out wid a corkscrew an' a shoe-horn! I'm sittin' on de business end ob dis 'ere arsenal!"

Rick took the controls. There was a quick whirr of the propellers, and the tiny hydroplane sped across the water, leaving a white wake behind, until he depressed the levers, and she rose into the air—the effect of the Dare helicopter apparatus.

Rick swung her right round into the teeth of the wind, to follow the course westward, which he thought the other machine had taken.

He could not be sure that he was going in the right direction, as he had only his ears to depend upon. The giant engine had throbbled above his head in the howling gale which nightly swept across Titicaca at that high altitude.

Young Dare "nursed" his engines for a while, and then allowed them to creep up all out, until he watched the gauge mount from one hundred to a hundred and fifty, then to two, two-fifty, and at last touch three hundred miles per hour. Yet there was hardly a tremor through the sturdy little machine, her streamlining being so perfect that she hurtled through the air like a bullet, with just the thrumming sound in her wires the sole indication of the tremendous speed.

"By golly, it am a good t'ing dat my dentist dunno I'm hyar; I hab on'y paid two instalments on mah teeth, an' they suah look like bein' blowed down mah froat!" grumbled Ham through the telephone to Alf.

"Shurrup, yer black mess!" was the response. "Park yer fat carkiss lower dahn an' keep yer mouth shut. Ain't there draught enuff as 'tis?"

Rick took the machine higher and higher in an endeavour to get out of the tearing wind which was holding the little hydroplane back from her full speed. At a couple of thousand feet he found a quieter strata, and, to his joy, saw the finger of the dial mount again.

He glanced down through the peep-shaft which showed what was passing underneath them, and saw that they were crossing the peninsular which almost cuts the great lake in halves.

He heard a croaking cry from Alf Higgs, who pointed upwards and ahead of them through a thick cloudbank that scudded past, now illuminated by the moon that the thicker lower clouds had hitherto hidden.

"Look 'ere, Mister Rick—no, more to th' right, atween them clouds. See? Ain't that a plane?"

It was difficult to see in that smother of moon-flecked cloud and at the tremendous speed they were going, but suddenly the flying body was focussed against the white moon, and the lad

caught the outline of the speeding flyer. But so wonderfully was she camouflaged with some semi-luminous paint that it was only at intervals she could be detected from the surrounding clouds.

She was evidently hitting heavy weather in the higher strata her pilots had chosen, for she bucked and dived against an opposing wind of overwhelming power.

"Keep 'er as she is, Mister Rick!" yelled Alf. "We've got the legs of 'er dahn 'ero, but there's a tidy ol' blow 'igher hup, an', my colonial, she can shift some!"

Through a rift in the clouds Rick could now make out the bird-like shape of the mighty flier which had caused such a sensation throughout the civilised world. He could not but admire the graceful lines of her hull, with the single wings jutting out on either side, containing the mighty engines which could drive her almost noiselessly through the air at such tremendous speed.

For mile after mile they kept on, Rick keeping immediately below the giant plane, thinking that they might not be observed in that curious light, or might even be mistaken for the shadow of the Oom plane itself.

He could see the forest shores of the lake some six or seven miles ahead, with the snow-covered peaks of the Andes beyond.

Then something seemed to happen, and the hydroplane dipped her nose and dived like a duck.

Thinking he had struck an air-pocket, Rick quickly righted her, and climbed into position again, but she seemed to have difficulty in answering to her helm or the joystick.

Down she swooped again, almost standing on her head, with her tail cocked up in the air, and a squeak of alarm came from Ham.

"Golly, Godfrey Dan'll, what am dat?"

A long, snake-like tube whipped down from above to the side of the little flier, hovered for a second, then darted a malignant head at the propeller. There was a shrieking, sucking noise, and first the auto-gyro, and then the propeller fell to pieces.

Rick, however, succeeded in preventing the plane from actually nose-diving, but they lost height with every second, and in a little while had dropped into that tearing gale again, when the little machine was whirled along like a leaf at the mercy of the elements.

It was not the first time Rick had been in a crash, however, and he kept his head, staring down the peep-shaft to see what chance there was of making a decent landing. He knew that if they fell into the lake with the present gale raging they would stand no chance at all.

He had been used to gliding with an engineless plane, and had acquired the knack of taking advantage of every current, adverse or not, and now his knowledge stood him in good stead. Watching the indicator, he took advantage of every gust, swinging the tail of the machine round so that she took a further impulse each time, bringing her nearer and nearer to a headland where he thought he might make a safe landing.

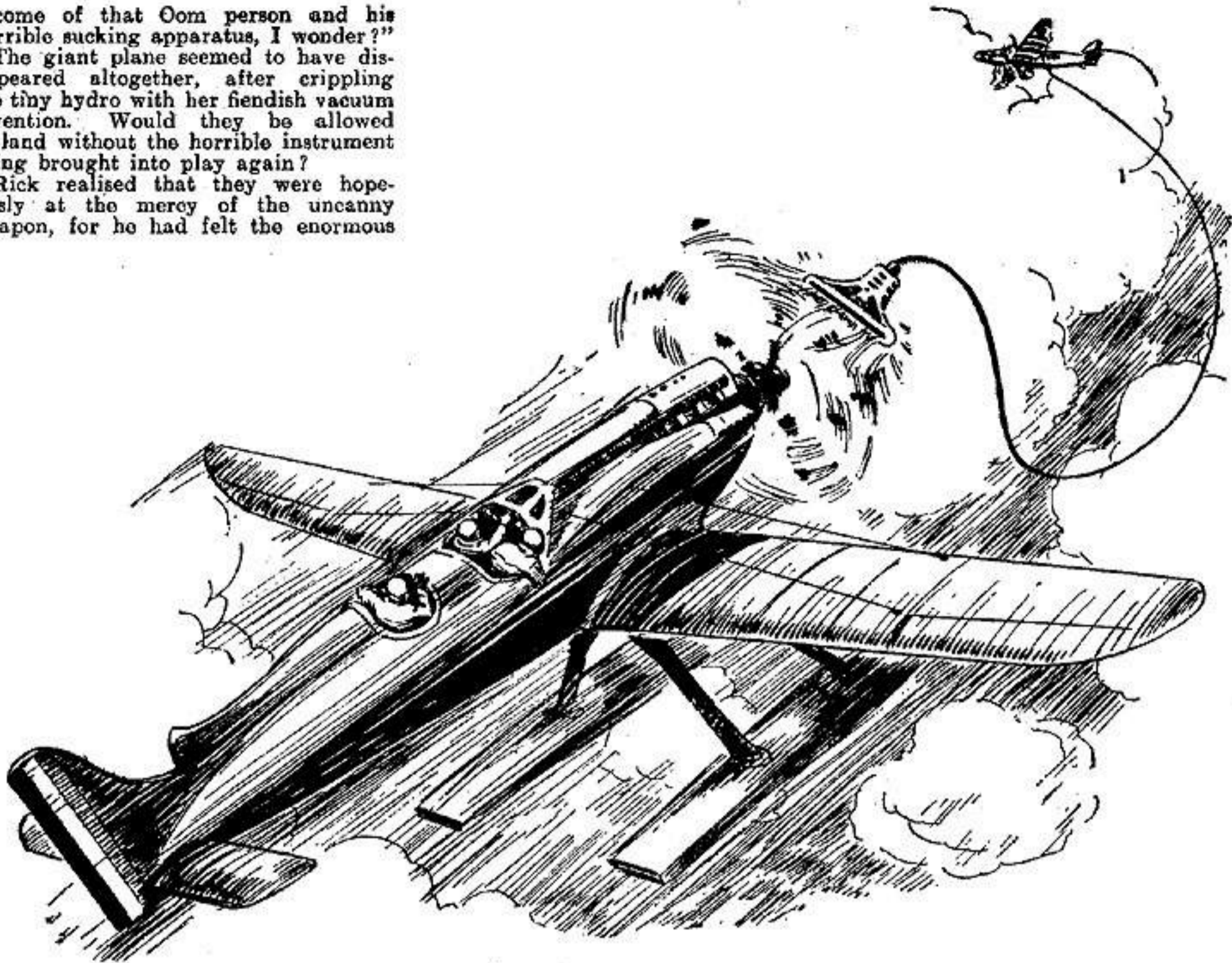
"I hope we can make it!" he muttered. "If poor old Tom's up there and he's watching us, it'd be just awful for him to see us crash! What's



become of that Oom person and his horrible sucking apparatus, I wonder?"

The giant plane seemed to have disappeared altogether, after crippling the tiny hydro with her fiendish vacuum invention. Would they be allowed to land without the horrible instrument being brought into play again?

Rick realised that they were hopelessly at the mercy of the uncanny weapon, for he had felt the enormous



The long, snake-like tube hovered over the little plane, then followed a shrieking, sucking noise, and the propeller fell to pieces!

power as the propellers were wrenched off, almost sufficient to drag the hydro upwards as his brother had been dragged.

Zoop!

The tiny plane fluttered in the wind like a leaf, then there came an abrupt ripping sound from beneath, and she lurched violently as the whole structure of her floats was carried away. Rick endeavoured to swing her into the wind, but the maimed machine fell on its side, spilling them out on to the turf-clad cliff top.

For a second they lay there in a heap, half-stunned, then a brilliant light from above focused on them, whilst something like the flicking head of a gigantic snake came swiftly down. In a flash Ham was dragged upwards, yelling at the pitch of his lungs. But his shouts of dismay were choked almost as soon as they were uttered, and he disappeared into the darkness.

"Jumpin' Jee-roosalem, wot's 'appened to pore old 'Am?" yelled Alf Higgs, staring upwards with horrified eyes, "why—'ere—'elp!"

Again that weird thing picked up its prey, like a chameleon licking up a fly.

Rick stood staring, too astounded to move. In any case it would have been madness to attempt to run with that dazzling beam of intense white light shining in his eyes, and the edge of the narrow cliff within a few feet of him, with the raging waves of the lake below!

But the youngster had not long to make up his mind, for again that long tube flickered down, and in a second he was in its soft, yet powerful grip. At the same time something seemed to breathe a warm odorous puff into his

face, and his senses left him as he was hauled upwards.

#### A Citadel in the Mountains!

**W**HEN Rick came to himself he opened his eyes in utter darkness for a few moments. He felt to right and left and touched walls on either side. Evidently he was in some very confined space in the great plane, for he could feel the vibration as the immensely powerful engines thrust her great bulk through the tearing wind.

Then a panel slid aside, and he saw a tall, tremendously broad figure standing looking down at him through enormous goggles that acted as a sort of half-mask. Peeping between the legs of the Colossus was a shrivelled, imp-like figure, a tiny dwarf with puckered monkey face, cunning and malevolent.

Just beyond was a spacious, brilliantly lighted saloon, and to Rick's relief he saw his brother standing there, now clothed in a neat serge suit in place of the pyjamas he had been wearing when whisked away from the island. Rick had sense enough not to move or open his eyes too wide as the huge Oom stood gazing at him.

The flying bandit then said something in a language the lad did not understand, and again the panel slid back into place, and his view was cut off. For some time Rick heard the murmur of voices, including Tom's, then all was silence.

Rising to his feet dizzily, he groped his way to the sliding panel. He had a knife slung to his belt, though his automatic and electric-torch had been taken from him.

After a bit of fumbling he found the catch, and manipulating the little screw-driver in the knife he managed to send back the catch and open the panel.

Tom was seated at a table tucking into a well-served meal, and for a few seconds he did not observe his brother. When he did, however, he sprang to his feet with an exclamation of astonishment, and wrung the youngster's hands.

"Rick!" he cried. "Dear old boy—how on earth did you get here?"

"From off the earth, Commander Dare!" came in sardonic tones from behind them, and again Rick saw the goggled eyes glaring blackly at them, and the thin lips curled in a derisive smile. "I thought you might be lonely all by yourself, so I fetch your broder to bear you companee. Thoughtful, am I not? Nein?"

"I came after you, Tom, in the hydro. But this—this fiend smashed us up with his blinkin' vacuum cleaner and brought Ham and Alf and me up into the plane. What he's going to do with us now he's got us, goodness only knows. If he's thinkin' about a ransom—well, we're neither of us stinkin' with wealth, eh?"

"Ah, zat is vere you make ze mistake that so many make," said the man quietly, with but the faintest accent. "Oom is not a common robber. He takes what he wants, certainlee, but for br-r-rains, he pay, and pay vell. Commander Dare, I have a use for you and your broder, too. Listen! My planes are goot, ver-ree goot, but wiz your help they can be made mooch battaire.

"Dis, for instance, is ze only plane in ze world that can fly for as long as I  
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please vizout refuelling! I have flown round ze world without a pint of petrol or other fuel. I have solved the problem of wireless control, ze power comes from my secret stronghold; my citadel vich can only be reach from ze air. Look!"

He touched a lever and six feet of the flooring rolled back. Beneath it were thick squares of plate glass through which they could plainly see the landscape gliding past beneath as the first rays of the rising sun illumined the mountain peaks.

For miles there was nothing but mountains, rugged and rocky, that seemed to be whirling round beneath them as the great machine circled. Clearing a high range, the great plane hovered over a basin-like formation which was entirely surrounded by precipitous hills. It looked as if it might be some extinct volcano, long dead, but for the fact that it was dotted with buildings, corrals, and sheds at the end of which a tall factory chimney reared skywards.

It was a curious sight to look down on this crowded, tiny town, away up there in the very midst of the desolate, high ranges of the Andes. In one corner was a long building which the flying men could plainly see was a hangar! The great machine hovered with the Dare Stabiliser whirring in its turret casing.

Oom nodded with a grin at Tom.

"Ye-es, you see I am using your invention, Commander Dare; I allways choose ze best on ze mar-r-cket. Now I have choose ze inventor heemself to come to my citadel in ze mountains and help me in my work of pr-r-ogress. Here you vill find all ze latest appliances at your disposal. Here you may experiment to your heart's content, and your ree-ward shall be twice as gr-r-reat as in the ungrateful world outside!"

"What? D'you think I'd place my inventive faculties at your disposal to serve your rotten ends? You dastardly robber and kidnapper!" Tom cried, his eyes flashing with scorn. "I'd sooner die!"

Oom shrugged his massive shoulders, and his thin lips curled in a derisive smile.

"Pah! Death, vat is death?" he said scornfully. "We have faced it too often, you and I, Commander, to care a snap of ze fingers for zat bogey. But leesten vell! Vat of years and years of a young life spent in a State prison, lingering, rotting, vithout hope of escape, guilty of a crime for vich ze

whole civilised world would hold one in detestation?"

"What are you gassing about?" gasped Tom. "Crime? I'm not guilty of any crime, and I'll take precious good care not to be, either, and you can't fasten one on to me, so that dog don't fight, Baron von Aumsteufel!"

The man gave a slight start as Tom called him by his proper name, and for a second his black eyes flashed fire behind the goggles.

"As, so you know me? Perhaps zat is as vell, for you vill know zat I am implacable, I allways get vat I go out for, and so I vill in zis case. You say you are not guilty of a crime. Zo! But I oan make it appear that your so-loved broder is! I will take heem upon my next expedition—a coup zat I have long contemplate, and I vill accomplish vithin a month. He shall be left, viz every every evidencé of guilt in a certain country vere ze authorities are only too anxious to capture any member of my gang. How like you zat picture, Commander Dare?"

*(Tom Dare's certainly in a quandary! Will he stand by his brother, or will he fall in with the wishes of Oom, the Terrible? Boys, you'll get all the thrills you want when you read the next instalment of this gripping new serial. Be sure you order your MAGNET well in advance!)*

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**SAVED from the CANNIBALS**

*(Continued on page 24.)*

Many days of hard travel followed before Harry Wharton & Co. saw again the shining waters of Lake Albert, and crossed into Uganda, where they rested at the bungalow of the hospitable Mr. Jarram.

For a week they remained there, recovering from their fatigues and hardships; while Mr. Vernon-Smith completed the business that had brought him to Uganda.

Then they trekked back to Entebbe, and took the steamer across Lake Victoria Nyanza to Kenya; and the railway bore them to Nairobi, and then down to Mombasa.

The trip to East Africa was over; and from Mombasa they sailed homeward.

The change from the brilliant sunshine of Africa to the cold of an English winter, was not, in itself, grateful or comforting. But it was a change that more than satisfied the schoolboys who had been slaves to a black king in the heart of the Dark Continent.

All they regretted, when they left Africa, was parting with the brave and faithful Kikolobo, and the Bounder felt it most of all. But he told the Kikuyu at parting that some day he would return to Kenya, and the Kikuyu gravely replied that his eyes would be glad to see him.

The juniors were late for the term at Greyfriars School.

Mr. Quelch gave them rather grim looks when they presented themselves so late in the term.

But the grimmest expression on Mr. Quelch's grim face was positively benevolent compared with the most amiable look they had ever seen on the face of King Tofoloko of the Moteli.

Quelch, grim as he looked, was undoubtedly a change for the better!

And as they walked in the old quad of Greyfriars, with a keen north wind biting them, Bob Cherry remarked:

"Foreign parts are all very well for a trip, you men! I'm not sorry we went to Africa. But for a place to live in, you can't beat jolly Old England!"

And his chums agreed that you couldn't!

THE END.

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