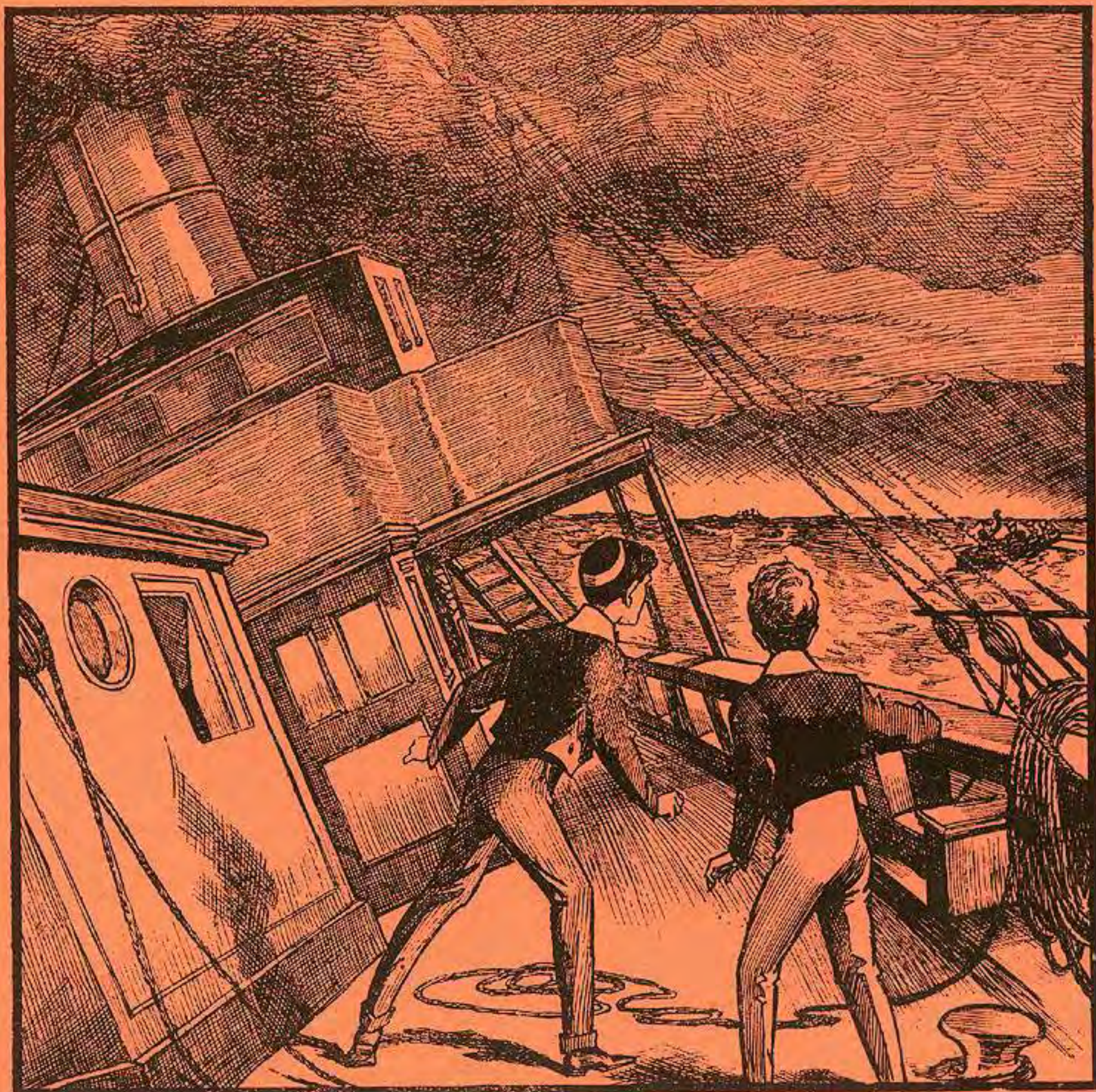


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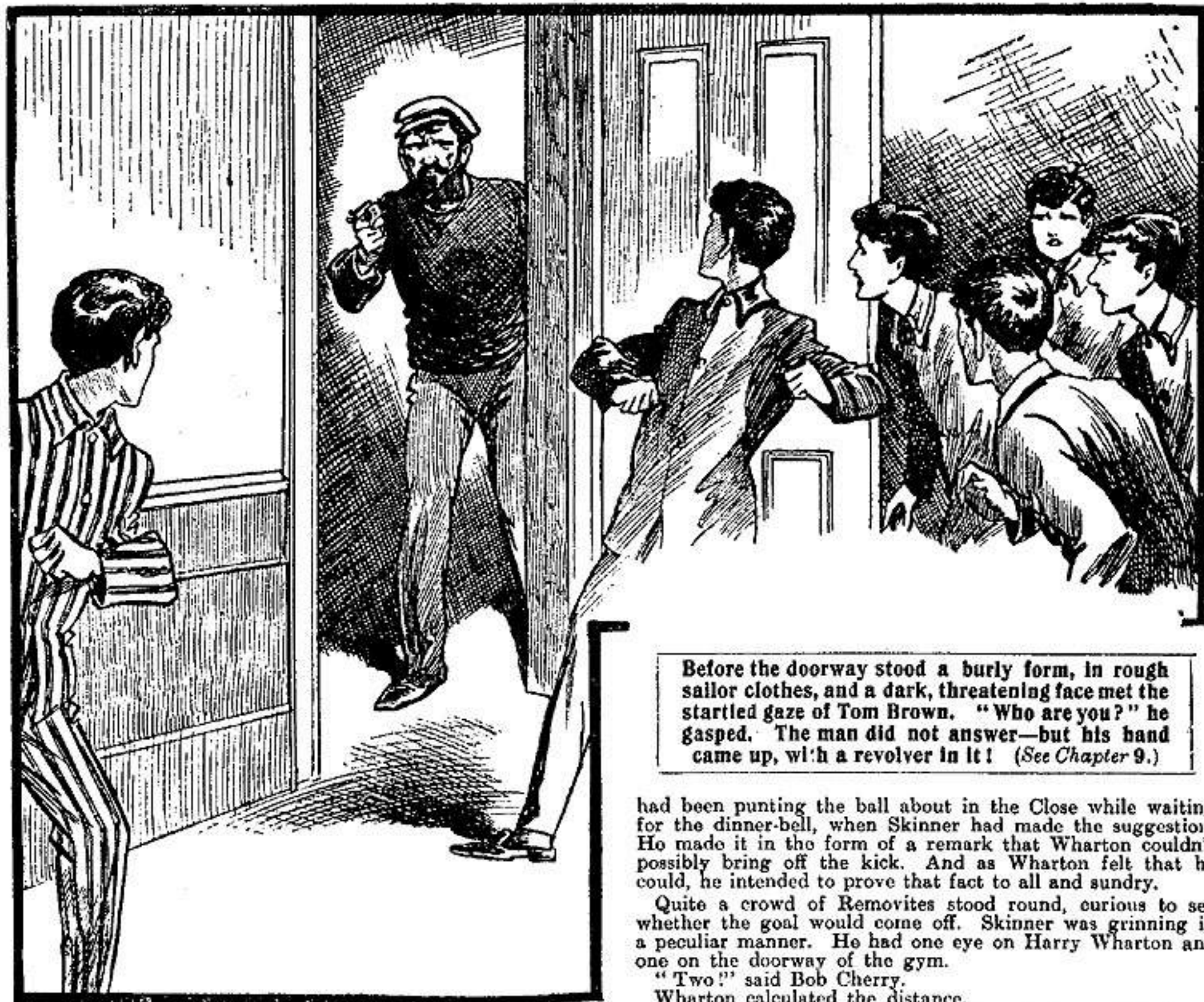


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Before the doorway stood a burly form, in rough sailor clothes, and a dark, threatening face met the startled gaze of Tom Brown. "Who are you?" he gasped. The man did not answer—but his hand came up, with a revolver in it! (See Chapter 9.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Goal!

"ONE!" said Bob Cherry.

The crowd of juniors stood round expectantly. They were just opposite the doorway of the gymnasium at Greyfriars, at a distance of ten yards.

Frank Nugent had placed a footer carefully in position. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, was preparing to kick.

It was certainly not usual for the Remove fellows to practise shooting for goal, with the doorway of the gym. as an object. It was due to Skinner. The chums of the Remove

had been punting the ball about in the Close while waiting for the dinner-bell, when Skinner had made the suggestion. He made it in the form of a remark that Wharton couldn't possibly bring off the kick. And as Wharton felt that he could, he intended to prove that fact to all and sundry.

Quite a crowd of Removites stood round, curious to see whether the goal would come off. Skinner was grinning in a peculiar manner. He had one eye on Harry Wharton and one on the doorway of the gym.

"Two!" said Bob Cherry.

Wharton calculated the distance.

It was not an easy kick, but he thought he could bring it off; and he wondered a little at the grin on Skinner's face. It was a matter of no great moment to Harry Wharton, but Skinner seemed to be tremendously interested in that kick. Skinner of the Remove was a humorist, with somewhat peculiar ideas of humour; but Wharton did not see where the joke came in, in challenging him to bring off that kick.

Bob Cherry held up his hand.

"Three!"

Wharton kicked for goal.

Just as his toe smote the leather there was a sudden yell of warning from Frank Nugent.

"Hold on! Look out!"

But the warning came too late!
The footer was whizzing through the air.
Wharton gave a gasp.

Right in the doorway of the gym. appeared the form of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. He was chatting with Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, and both were coming out of the gym.

Mr. Quelch heard the shout, and glanced round towards the juniors; and as he did so the whizzing leather reached him.

Wharton had intended it to whiz right through the doorway of the gym. But Mr. Quelch's portly form was filling up the doorway just then. The footer caught Mr. Quelch full upon the chest, and there was a startled cry from the Remove-master. He was utterly unprepared for the shock. He staggered backwards, and sat down in the doorway, with a gasp like air escaping from a puncture.

"Oh!" stammered all the juniors at once.

Mr. Quelch sat in the doorway, dazed, his gown and his face splashed with mud. That footer had been punted about the Close for some time, where there were puddles left by late rain. It was not clean. Mr. Quelch's mortar-board fell off, and he sat, bare-headed, panting for breath.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bob Cherry. "You've been and gone and done it now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter, you asses!"

"I—I didn't know Quelch was there!" gasped Wharton. Then he swung round furiously on Skinner. "But you did, you rotter! You knew Quelch was there. You knew he was just coming out. You wanted me to catch him with the footer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner.

He was doubled up with merriment. His little joke had come off even better than he could have hoped.

But his yell of laughter changed suddenly to a yell of anguish. Wharton rushed at him, and got his head into chancery, and pommelled away furiously. He knew what he had to expect for bowling his Form-master over with a muddy football, and his idea was to make the humorist of the Remove pay for it in advance.

"Yow—ow—ow!" roared Skinner. "Leggo! It was only a j-j-joke! Yarrah!"

"Thump! Thump! Thump!"

"Wharton!"

"Ye-e-e-s, sir."

Harry Wharton released Skinner at Mr. Quelch's sharp voice. The Form-master was on his feet again now, striding towards the juniors, bare-headed, mud-splashed, and furious.

Skinner staggered away, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. It needed it.

"Wharton, was it you kicked that football at me?"

"I—I kicked it, sir. I didn't mean it for you."

"What?"

"I—I was only trying to get a goal in the gym. doorway, sir."

Mr. Quelch's brow was like thunder. His dignity as a Form-master had been very much upset, and the bump on the ground had jarred him. The Removites had seldom seen him so angry.

"Whether you knew I was there or not makes no difference, Wharton!" he rapped out. "Anybody might have been coming out of the gymnasium—the Head himself."

"I—I didn't think, sir—"

"You are old enough to think. You must learn to think, Wharton!" thundered the Remove-master.

"Ye-es, sir," said Wharton meekly. "I—I'll try, sir."

It was an attempt at the soft answer which turneth away wrath. But Mr. Quelch's wrath was not to be turned away.

"Follow me to my study, Wharton."

"Ye-e-s, sir."

Wingate picked up Mr. Quelch's mortar-board and handed it to him. The Remove-master strode away rustling towards the School House, and Harry followed him reluctantly. He knew what was going to happen in Mr. Quelch's study, and

he wetted his palms in anticipation. Mr. Quelch had great muscular powers with the cane.

Wharton followed him into his study. Mr. Quelch wiped the mud from his face before the looking-glass, the junior waiting with unenviable feelings.

Then the Remove-master turned to Wharton.

"I think that a severe punishment may teach you to think before acting on another occasion, Wharton!" he rapped out. "Hold out your hand!"

He picked up a cane.

Thwack! thwack! thwack! thwack!

Two on each hand—and they were "twisters"! Harry Wharton bore the infliction like a hero. He set his lips hard together, and made no sound.

"You will be detained until four o'clock this afternoon," said Mr. Quelch. "The loss of your half-holiday will give you an ample opportunity for thinking."

Wharton's face lengthened.

The caning had been severe enough, but he would rather have had it doubled than have had his half-holiday confiscated. The Famous Five had planned a little excursion for that afternoon, and Wharton did not want to be left out. The Cliff House girls were expecting them, and—

"If you please, sir—"

"You may go, Wharton."

"If—if you wouldn't mind caning me again, sir, and letting me off for this afternoon—" ventured Harry.

Mr. Quelch pointed to the door with his cane.

"If you do not go at once, Wharton, and without another word, I shall certainly cane you again. But under no circumstances shall I let you off for this afternoon! Go!"

There was no more to be said. Mr. Quelch was not a gentleman to be argued with. Harry Wharton left the study in silence.

The dinner-bell was ringing, and Wharton's face was very glum as he took his place at the Remove table with his comrades.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Companions in Misfortune!

"WELL, this is rotten!"

Bob Cherry offered that opinion with a lugubrious expression. And the other members of the Co. echoed his remark. It was indeed rotten.

As it was a half-holiday that afternoon, the chums of the Remove had planned a little outing, which, of course, would not be complete without their leader. They were to call at Cliff House School for Marjorie Hazeldene and Miss Clara, and, after a ramble along the cliffs, they were to have tea in the smuggler's cave. The supplies had been purchased, and Johnny Bull had his cooking apparatus all ready packed. And the afternoon was to have been most enjoyable—but for that unlucky goal in the doorway of the gym.

In the Remove footer matches Wharton had sometimes saved the situation by a goal in the nick of time; but on the present occasion that goal was a goal too many.

Wharton was detained until four o'clock—that is, till the early wintry dusk was setting in. The afternoon was simply "mucked up" for him, as Bob Cherry expressed it with more emphasis than elegance.

"And for us, too," added Bob dolefully. "We sha'n't enjoy the afternoon, knowing that you are stuck here writing out verbs!"

"Well, it can't be helped," said Harry, with a forced cheerfulness. "After all, it was my own fault. I ought to have guessed that Skinner was up to something. Confound him!"

"I'll look for him and punch his nose, if you like," offered Johnny Bull.

Wharton laughed.

"I've done that once, and it wouldn't improve matters, anyway—to say nothing of Skinner's nose. You fellows get off at the time arranged—I can stand it. I've got to, anyway!"

"Good mind not to go!" said Nugent.

"Must! Marjorie and Clara are expecting us. You can tell them I can't come, that's all. But I'll give you a look in later," added Wharton. "I can get out at four, and get to the cave by half-past, so I can walk back to Cliff House with you."

"Good egg!"

The party was to have consisted of six juniors—Wharton, Nugent, Bob, Johnny Bull, Hurree Janset Ram Singh, and Hazeldene—Marjorie's brother. The five who were at liberty made their preparations for starting, and Harry Wharton went into the Form-room. He was feeling a little down-hearted, but really he realised that he could not expect Mr. Quelch to overlook that goal. As he sat in the Form-room and opened his Latin grammar Skinner looked in. Skinner's nose was swollen, but he was grinning.

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Bob Cherry sprang on the rolling man, tore the knife from his hand, and plucked it into the sea. Then he planted his knee on the ruffian. "Got you, my beauty!" (See Chapter 15.)

"I hear you can't go with the little party," he remarked.

"No," growled Wharton.

"Sorry! Shall I go in your place?"

"No!" snapped Harry.

"Well, I only wanted to be obliging," grinned Skinner; "and I'm really sorry you caught Quelch with the footer. I had a bet with Smithy whether you'd catch Quelch or Wingate, and it turned out to be Quelch, so I won a bob!"

"Rotter!" said Wharton.

"Rats!" said Skinner.

And he walked away chuckling.

A few minutes later Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, glanced into the big, desolate Form-room, empty save for the detained junior sitting at his desk.

Wharton gave him a cold glance. He remembered Skinner's statement about the bet, and he was not feeling amiable towards the Bounder just then.

"Sorry you're detained!" said Vernon-Smith politely.

"I suppose you can't get off?"

"No, I can't."

"Pity to spoil the party, though," the Bounder suggested. "I'll tell you what—I'll go with the fellows instead of you, Wharton. I should like to."

"You can go and eat coke!" said Harry crossly. "I shouldn't be detained here if you hadn't made a silly, idiotic bet with Skinner!"

"Well, I'd like to join the party in your place——"

"Ask the other fellows, then, and be blowed!"

The Bounder sniffed and walked away. As a matter of fact, he had already given Bob Cherry & Co. a hint on the subject, and he had not found them at all anxious for his company in their excursion.

Wharton settled down to his verbs again, but his interruptions were not yet over. There were other fellows who liked the idea of joining the party with Marjorie Hazeldene in its number.

Coker, of the Fifth, came into the Remove-room, and gave the detained junior a nod of unusual affability. "I hear you can't go on a little excursion you were planning," Coker remarked. "I'll tell you what, Wharton—I'll go in your place, and—and look after Miss Hazeldene."

"Go and eat coke!" was Wharton's reply. "Now, look here, Wharton," said Coker persuasively, "I've spoken to Cherry, and he was cheeky about it. You just say that you want me to go in your place——"

"But I don't!" "If you are looking for a thick ear——" began Horace Coker wrathfully.

Wharton disengaged the inkpot from its receptacle in his desk, and waited for Coker.

Coker was striding towards him. But he seemed to change his mind then; and, with a frown, he stalked out of the Form-room.

Wharton grinned, and went on with his verbs. He wondered who would be the next substitute to offer himself.

It turned out to be Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove. Bunter rolled in, his fat face very red, and his little round eyes blinking with indignation behind his big spectacles.

"I say, Wharton—— Look here—— I'm going with that

party! As you're left out, of course, somebody will be wanted in your place. I'm going!"

"Shurrup!"

"You know jolly well that Marjorie Hazeldene would like me to come!" howled Bunter. "Bob Cherry knows it, and that's why the beast kicked me when I said I was coming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at. I'm jolly well going," said Bunter. "Marjorie won't enjoy the afternoon if I'm not there. You know that—you all know it! I despise this personal jealousy you fellows are always showing. A chap can't help being good-looking, and if the girls run after him a bit—why—Yah! Oh!"

Biff!

Wharton's Latin grammar caught Billy Bunter upon his ample chest, and the Owl of the Remove gave a sudden yelp like a dog whose tail is trodden upon, and disappeared from the open doorway. There was the sound of a bump as he sat down in the passage.

"Ow! Ow! Beast!"

"Come in again!" said Wharton invitingly. "I've got the dictionary ready!"

But Billy Bunter did not accept that kind invitation. He didn't want the dictionary; the grammar was quite enough.

A quarter of an hour later there was a tramp of feet in the passage, and the little party came to say good-bye to Wharton. Bob Cherry was carrying a basket, and Johnny Bull a cricket-bag packed full of supplies.

"Well, we're just off," said Bob Cherry. "It's beastly leaving you here, Harry!"

"The beastfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Wharton, as cheerfully as he could. "I'll look in in time to walk back to Cliff House with you. So-long!"

"I was wondering if we could speak to Quelch," said Bob meditatively. "He is really an old sport, you know, at bottom, and if he knew he was spoiling a nice afternoon—"

"He might see reason," suggested Nugent.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No go; he's too ratty! Better get off, and I'll join you as soon as I can."

"Oh, it's really beastly!" said Bob. "I really think old Quelch might have chosen some other time for bringing his hoof down. He's a troublesome old bounder, and—Why, what are you making that face for, Wharton?"

Wharton's face had become suddenly transfixed.

Bob knew the reason the next moment.

"Cherry!"

Bob swung round in dismay.

Framed in the doorway was the majestic figure of the Remove-master, his eyes scintillating with anger.

Bob's jaw dropped.

It was only too evident that Mr. Quelch had overheard his incautious words, and equally clear that there was trouble to come.

"I—I—I—didn't—didn't—didn't see you, sir!" stammered Bob.

Mr. Quelch smiled sarcastically.

"Probably not!" he agreed. "You would hardly have referred to me in such exceedingly disrespectful terms, Cherry, if you had known that I was within hearing!"

"N-n-n-unno, sir!"

"I came here," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "to see whether you were usefully occupied. Wharton. I find Cherry speaking of his Form-master in exceedingly disrespectful terms. Cherry, you will kindly take your place at your desk! You will write out Latin conjugations for the remainder of the afternoon! You are detained for the same length of time as Wharton!"

"O-o-oh, sir!"

"You others may go! You are not allowed to speak to boys under detention, as you know very well."

"I—I say, sir—" stammered Bob.

"Not a word!"

Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh and Hazel left the Form-room in silence. Bob Cherry, with a lugubrious look, sat down at his desk. And Mr. Quelch, with a final frown at the two companions in misfortune, left them to their uncongenial tasks.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Tea-Party.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE and Clara Trevlyn were waiting at the gate of Cliff House garden when the four juniors arrived there. Nugent was carrying the cricket-bag and Johnny Bull the basket.

"Where is Harry?" asked Marjorie.

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"And Bob?" asked Miss Clara.

"Detained!" said Nugent lugubriously. "Rotten, isn't it? They're coming to the cave later—as soon as they can get away."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" said Marjorie.

And Miss Clara, who was more emphatic in her expressions, said:

"Rotten!"

And they started.

It was a clear, sunshiny winter's afternoon. Pegg Bay lay stretched, a great sheet of blue, at the bottom of the cliffs, and beyond were the broad rolling waters of the German Ocean. On the shore, backed by big grey cliffs, clustered the little fishing village of Pegg. Out on the bay several boats with brown patched sails were to be seen, and a small steamer lay at anchor.

As they rambled along the cliff-path, the party paused to look down on the bright scene spread beneath their feet.

"Ripping, ain't it?" said Johnny Bull.

Frank Nugent's eyes were upon the steamer. The vessel looked a common cargo tramp, not at all cleanly or handsome to the view. There were half a dozen men lounging on her deck, smoking. They were very small in the distance, but Frank could make out that they were foreigners.

"That ship came in yesterday," said Marjorie, following Nugent's glance. "We can see it from the windows of Cliff House. Someone said they have had an accident to their engines, and have put in here for repair before going on to the Thames."

"They don't seem very busy, though," Nugent remarked.

Marjorie shook her head.

"No; nothing seems to have been done while she has been here. I saw the captain come ashore when we were out with Miss Primrose this morning. I think he is a Russian."

Nugent whistled.

"She looks like a cargo tramp," he remarked. "I wonder what a Russian cargo tramp is doing in these parts. Hallo, they're lowering a boat!"

A boat dropped from the steamer, with two men at the oars, and a man who looked like a mate sitting in the stern. The boat pulled shoreward, but not towards the village. A jutting cliff hid it from the sight of the party on the high path.

They pursued their way along the cliff path, and the steamer was blotted from their sight by the rugged cliffs. It passed from their minds also, and they forgot the rough-looking vessel and the dark-faced seamen clustering on her deck. Little did they think at that moment what the visit of that cargo tramp to Pegg Bay meant for them.

The smuggler's cave was amid the great rocks of the Shoulder. In olden time the great cave had been used by smugglers running contraband cargoes; and there were stories told by old fishermen in Pegg of fierce fights in those dark recesses between Revenue men and desperate smugglers. But the cave was lonely and deserted now, save when it was explored by schoolboys, or by the "trippers," who came down to Pegg in the summer months.

Cool and shady was the interior of the great cave, as the party reached it. It had been a long and rugged walk from Cliff House, and they had taken their time, so they were ready for a rest when they reached the cave.

"We'll get tea ready, and have it all ready for Harry and Bob when they come," Marjorie suggested.

"Good egg!" said Nugent. "We've got a couple of bike lanterns here, in case it's dark in the cave. Outside it's light enough to get home."

And the bag and the basket were unpacked.

They expected Wharton and Bob Cherry to arrive by half-past four, and it was nearly four o'clock already. And getting tea in the cave was likely to take some time. Johnny Bull set up the spirit-stove, and filled the kettle from the bottle of water, and then looked round in rather a dubious way.

"Did you bring the methylated, Nugent?" he asked.

Nugent shook his head.

"No; you put it in the bag."

"Ahem! I can't see it in the bag."

"Perhaps it's in the basket?" suggested Hazel hopefully.

They searched through the basket, but the methylated spirit was not to be found.

"It must be there somewhere," growled Johnny Bull.

"How on earth are we going to make tea or cook eggs without it?"

"Well, you must be an ass, Johnny! I thought you put it in the bag."

Johnny Bull grunted.

"I thought you put it in the basket."

Marjorie smiled.

"Then we sha'n't be able to make tea," she remarked.

"Naver mind; there is the milk. We can do without the tea."

"Well, Nugent is an ass all the same!"

"You mean you are a duffer!" said Nugent warmly.

"Now, look here——"

"Look here——"

The argument was getting warm; but it was stopped by an exclamation from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who was unfastening a packet of sandwiches.

"The smellfulness of these sandwiches is somewhat terrific," he ejaculated. "My worthy chums, you have been spilling methylated spirit over them."

"I haven't," growled Johnny Bull.

"And I haven't," said Hazel.

"Must be that ass, Nugent!"

"Look here——"

"Why, here's the methylated spirit!" howled Johnny Bull, dragging a shiny tin can from amid the smelly sandwiches. "Some silly chump wrapped it up in the newspaper along with the sandwiches. Oh, my hat! No wonder they smell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was Bob, of course," grinned Nugent. "He wrapped up the sandwiches. Better chuck them into the sea. They ruff!"

"Lucky we've got something else to eat!" growled Johnny Bull. "Lucky we've found the spirit, too, or we shouldn't have been able to cook the tea and make the eggs—I mean, make the tea and cook the eggs. Where's the frying-pan?"

"The—the what?"

"Now you remember my telling you to put the frying-pan in——"

"Did you?" said Nugent vaguely.

Another snort from Johnny Bull.

"Well, of all the asses——"

"Of all the chumps——" said Nugent.

"The assfulness and the chumpfulness are equally terrific," grinned Hurree Singh. "The fryfulness of the esteemed eggs will now be impossible."

"Well, I can poach them," grunted Johnny Bull. "Lucky we've got a saucepan, and lucky I'm a good cook. I hope you haven't broken the eggs, Nugent."

"Only four," grinned Hazeldene. "There are eight left."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Never mind; there's a loaf and lots of butter," smiled Marjorie; "and there is the cheese."

"Lucky Bob didn't put that in with the methylated spirits, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The preparations for tea went on. Accidents will happen, and did happen. But tea was ready at last, and it was well past half-past four by that time. Frank Nugent looked from the mouth of the cave in search of Wharton and Bob Cherry. But they were not in sight. The great rugged cliffs, rising in wild confusion from the sea, shut off the view for more than a very short distance. Frank knew that the juniors would come over the cliffs from Greyfriars, and he scanned the great rocks for them, but in vain. He shouted, but only the echo of his voice from the hollow rocks answered him. He turned back into the cave. Tea was quite ready, and all the party were hungry.

"They're not in sight," said Frank. "It's nearly five now. I think we'd better have tea. No good waiting any longer."

"Just what I was thinking," said Johnny Bull.

"We must be back at Cliff House by a quarter to six," said Marjorie, with a glance at her little watch. "I suppose we cannot wait any longer."

And they had tea.

But by the time tea was finished, there was no sign of Wharton or Bob. It was very dusky in the cave now, and the bike lanterns were lighted. The juniors looked out over the rocky shore, and shouted; but still there was no sign of the two they expected.

"They must have been detained longer," said Johnny Bull at last. "They can't be coming. Better pack up the things. Quelch may have come down on them again, and forbidden them to come out."

"Rotten!" said Miss Clara.

The things were packed up, and they left the cave. Dusk was thickening along the shore. Marjorie and Clara were looking a little anxious. It was necessary to hurry if they were not to be late at Cliff House, and they did not want to displease Miss Primrose. Once more the juniors scanned the lonely shore.

"They can't be coming," said Johnny Bull at last. "Let's clear."

"I—I suppose nothing can have happened to them?" said Marjorie uneasily.

"Why, what could happen?" said Nugent. "They know the way over the cliffs well enough. I suppose it's some more trouble with Quelch, that's all. Let's buck up, or you'll get a ragging from Miss Primrose."

And the picnickers hurried along the cliff path. The two girls were late in at Cliff House, but Miss Penelope Primrose listened to their explanation amiably. And then the four

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juniors tramped away towards Greyfriars in the deep dusk, wondering what had happened to keep Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry from joining the party.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Sudden Attack!

IN the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars two lugubrious juniors had slogged at Latin verbs while the sunny afternoon passed.

Wharton and his chum could not help feeling a little downhearted.

Outside they could hear the shouts on the football-ground. The Greyfriars first eleven was playing a visiting team from Redclyffe School. It was a fine afternoon, and all the fellows were out of doors, with the exception of the two detained juniors. They wrote out Latin conjugations, and grunted and growled.

"Jolly good mind to dodge out and chance Quelch!" Bob Cherry exclaimed at last desperately.

"No good!" said Wharton.

"Quelch's gone out, I believe."

"Then he's told off a beastly prefect to keep an eye on us," said Harry. "Loder or Walker would like that."

Bob groaned.

"I suppose it's no good. What's the time?"

"Half-past three."

"Another half hour!" grunted Bob. "Oh, blow! I wish Cicero and Horace and all the rest of them had been drowned at birth! Br-r-r-r!"

And the pens scratched on again.

But an end comes to everything, and the period of detention was over at last. The moment four sounded from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, the two juniors jumped up as if moved by electric shocks. They shoved away their books, and hurried out of the Form-room, free at last.

"Now for a run over the cliffs," said Bob, as he snatched his cap, and stuck it on the back of his curly head.

"I say, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter ran after the chums of the Remove as they made for the gates. Bunter had not quite given up his hope of joining the party, and taking the lion's share of the feed. But the juniors did not stop for him; and though Billy Bunter's little fat legs went like clockwork, they were out of sight down the lane by the time he reached the gates.

"Beasts!" growled Bunter.

Wharton and Bob Cherry lost no time.

They sprinted down the lane at a good speed, and turned into the path to the shore, and were soon scrambling over the rocks.

The sea, lit by the setting sun, burst upon their view—the broad bay, with the little steamer lying at anchor. They slackened down, gasping for breath. Their way lay now along the beach, backed by great cliffs—and ten minutes more of scrambling would have brought them to the smugglers' cave.

Bob Cherry glanced at his watch.

"Just twenty past! We shall be in right time."

"Good egg!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I wonder what those chaps want!" Bob exclaimed.

The path at this point narrowed down to a mere strip between the sea and the cliffs.

A boat lay on the beach, and three men were lounging near her. All three of them looked like foreigners, and one wore a mate's cap. At sight of the two juniors, the seamen had moved across the narrow path as if to intercept them.

Their intention was so evident that the juniors halted.

They were surprised, and a little alarmed. The seamen looked like pretty rough customers. It was possible that they had been drinking at the Anchor, and were ripe for a row.

As the juniors stopped, the three men came towards them.

The man in the mate's cap, who had a cigar sticking out of the corner of his mouth, eyed the juniors scrutinisingly.

"Excuse me," he said, speaking in good English, with some trace of an accent, "I think you young gentlemen belong to Greyfriars School?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Will you come with me?"

"What! Why?"

"We have picked up a boy belonging to your school, who was overturned in a boat," said the man, speaking slowly and distinctly, as if he had some difficulty with the language.

"He was taken on our ship. Will you come to see him?"

"By Jove!" said Harry Wharton. "What is his name?"

The mate shook his head.

"I do not know. He is in a serious condition. Captain Markoff wishes to send word to the headmaster so that he may be removed."

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The juniors exchanged doubtful glances.

There was no reason to doubt the man's story—they could not guess why he should lie to them. He could have no conceivable motive for getting them aboard his ship, so far as they could see, unless his tale was true. And yet there was something in his look and manner that made them distrust him. The two seamen, too, seemed to have posted themselves to cut off the escape of the juniors if they refused. One was standing behind the mate, and the other had dropped behind the juniors, interposing between them and the way they had come.

"I—I don't know," said Wharton hesitatingly. "Why can't your captain send word up to the school?"

"He cannot spare a man to take a message."

"But any of the longshoremen would take a message," said Bob Cherry. "Besides, we're going to keep an appointment."

"I'm sorry—we can't come," said Harry.

He did not believe the man's tale—and he thought that his refusal would prove whether it was the truth or not. It did!

But it was in a manner somewhat surprising to the two juniors. The mate made a sudden sign with his hand, and then the three men rushed upon them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What's the little game? Buck up, Harry!"

The two juniors struggled fiercely in the grasp of the seamen and the mate. But they were two boys against three grown men, and they had no chance at all. Heavy hands were clapped over their mouths as they strove to shout for help, and they were lifted bodily and dragged into the boat.

"You—you scoundrels!" gasped Wharton, as he was tossed in. "You—you—"

"Silence!" said the mate.

He threw a sheet of canvas over the two juniors, as they lay, gasping, in the bottom of the boat. The two seamen pushed off with the oars. Wharton and Bob Cherry struggled under the enveloping canvas. They knew that the boat would be pulling out to the anchored steamer, in full sight of the shore, and if they could attract attention from the beach their rescue would not take long.

But Wharton, as he struggled, felt a cold metal rim pressed to his neck. And Bob Cherry suddenly ceased to struggle as a keen edge touched his face.

"Keep quiet!" said the mate grimly. "You are prisoners. You are coming aboard our ship. Do not be afraid—no one is going to hurt you. But if you make a noise, you will be silenced."

Wharton stared up at the man in blank amazement. The mate held a pistol in his hand, and his face was dark and threatening.

"What does this mean?" Wharton panted. "Are you kidnapers?"

"Kidnapers! No!"

"Then what do you want with us?"

"You will see as soon as you are on board the steamer."

"Look here—" growled Bob Cherry.

"Silence! If you move again under the canvas, a knife will be plunged through. Take warning!"

The canvas was thrown over the juniors again. The mate spoke to the seaman in some foreign tongue, which the juniors did not recognise. They knew that it was not French or German, that was all.

They lay under the canvas, breathless from their struggle, and overwhelmed with amazement. They were not kidnapped—then what were they wanted on the tramp-steamer for? What did it mean? The dark, savage threatening of the mate's face had told them that he was in earnest—their lives were in danger if they resisted. They heard the regular splash of the oars as the seamen pulled for the steamer.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry murmured. "This is a go, Harry!"

"I can't understand it."

The boat pulled round the steamer to the seaward side, and then the canvas was pulled off the juniors. A dark-faced, heavily-bearded man looked down on them from the bridge, and gave a rapid order in that strange tongue that was mysterious to the ears of the juniors. Harry Wharton and Bob were passed quickly up the side, and hurried down into the cabin—and the bearded captain followed them down.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Lawless Hands!

HARRY WHARTON and Bob Cherry stood with flushed faces and sparkling eyes. They were very excited and very angry.

"What does this mean?" Wharton exclaimed, as the captain regarded him. "How dare you bring us on board your ship in this way?"

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The bearded man smiled slightly.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "You will not be hurt."

"We're not afraid," said Bob Cherry. "It's not that. But what's the little game? Our friends are waiting for us along the beach."

"I fear that they will have to wait some little time, young gentlemen," said the foreign captain. "You may sit down."

The juniors remained standing.

Captain Markoff opened a cigar-case, drew out a big, black cigar, and lighted it with a leisurely air. He was very calm, and very cool, and perfectly civil; but there was a gleam in his black eyes that the juniors did not like. It reminded them of a tiger. It was easy to guess that this was no ordinary tramp-steamer, and Captain Markoff was no ordinary trading skipper. The juniors guessed that he was a Russian, from his name, and they therefore concluded that the language they had heard spoken was Russian. But the vessel was probably not from Russia. They had seen the name as they came up the side. It was the *Seamew*.

"You are surprised, I suppose?" said the captain, with an amused glance at the flushed and excited faces of the juniors.

"Yes, certainly! You have no right to seize us in this way!" exclaimed Wharton hotly. "Besides, what is your motive? What do you want?"

"I will explain what I want—and I assure you that to-morrow you will be set at liberty, unhurt," said the Russian.

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Bob, aghast. "We've got to get back to Greyfriars by half-past six."

"We can't miss calling-over," said Wharton.

The Russian smiled again.

"I think you can," he replied. "I think you must! You are on board my ship, and I have twenty men at my orders."

"Twenty men!" echoed Wharton. "Twenty men on a little steamer like this!"

"Precisely."

"Then you're not a cargo-tramp," said Harry Wharton.

The captain laughed.

"No; I do not deal in cargo—my business is quite different. I hope to have some cargo on board when I leave this bay—but a very small cargo—small, but valuable." He laughed again, and showed his white teeth, glistening through his dark, thick beard. "To-morrow morning I shall be gone, and you will be safe back in your school—if you have sense enough to obey orders."

"I do not understand you."

"You do not know why you are aboard my steamer?"

"No!"

"It is because you are Greyfriars boys."

The two juniors stared.

"But—but why—"

"I am going to visit Greyfriars to-night."

"You are going to visit Greyfriars!" stammered Wharton.

"To-night! Why? I don't understand you!"

"You have not guessed my business yet?"

"N-no!"

A strange and dark suspicion had come into the startled minds of the juniors. The rough-looking steamer, that looked like a cargo tramp, but was nothing of the kind—the swarming crew for so small a vessel—the weapons they had seen displayed—all pointed to one conclusion. But it was impossible—wildly impossible. In the twentieth century, it was outside the realms of possibility. And yet—

"Ah, you are beginning to guess!" said the captain, with an agreeable smile. "Yes, you are right. I am going to rob Greyfriars."

"Rob Greyfriars?"

"Exactly."

"Then you are a—a—a—" Wharton hesitated.

"A burglar—a cracksmen—you would call me, if I were on land," assented the captain. "But on the sea I hardly know what I should be called. But that is my business. Cheap and ugly as my steamer looks, I have first-class engines and a good speed. Within a few hours of cleaning out a mansion on the coast, I can be safe beyond the reach of pursuit. My plans are carefully laid. A week ago, I landed and cleared out a mansion on the French coast. To-day, I am here. Next week, perhaps, on the coast of America—who knows? I am a cosmopolitan—all countries are the same to me, since I was chased from my own for plotting against the Czar. In your school there is a rich prize. I have agents on shore, and my information is accurate. The school silver is worth three thousand pounds or more, and there are other valuables. Altogether, it will be a great haul, and easy—quite easy. But instead of robbing by stealth, as cracksmen do, I shall rob by force, if necessary. That is the difference. Within an hour, I shall be speeding over the North Sea. Now you understand what I want!"



Mr. Quelch sat in the doorway of the gym, dazed; his gown and face were splashed with mud. The footer that Harry Wharton had kicked, with the doorway of the gym, for goal, was muddy, too. "Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bob Cherry. "You've been and gone and done it now!" (See Chapter 1.)

"You want ten years in Portland Prison!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Perhaps in time!" smiled the captain. "Now I want your assistance."

"Our assistance!" echoed Wharton.

"Exactly."

"Our assistance—in what?"

Wharton could scarcely believe that even this unscrupulous rascal meant to demand his assistance in robbing the school. But that was evidently the intention of the Russian adventurer; and the reason why the juniors had been seized was now clear. It was not for their own sakes specially; any Greyfriars fellows who had come along the beach that afternoon would have served Markoff's purpose equally well. It was chance that had thrown Wharton and Bob Cherry into the hands of the sea-thief.

"I have told you that I have information," said Mr. Markoff coolly. "That is, I know that there is valuable loot in Greyfriars, an old and rich school with many valuables. But I do not know how or where they are kept. The school silver, for example—where is that? I cannot waste time searching for it and other things. But you would be able to tell me, *ma foi*."

"I shouldn't do anything of the sort."

"But you could?"

The juniors were silent.

"The school, I suppose, is on the telephone—with more than one receiver, naturally," said the captain. "Is it not so?"

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"That is true."

"As I thought. While we are busy in one place, someone may be telephoning to the police from another room where we cannot see him, and the alarm will be given."

"Most likely."

"Therefore, there will be no time to waste. The school will be surrounded—entered by armed men—and the matter must be over in ten minutes. For that I must have accurate information. You have, at least, a rough idea where the valuables are kept. You are to tell me what you know."

"Never!"

"I repeat, you must!"

"You can repeat it till you're pink in the chivvy, but we won't!" said Bob Cherry. "Do you think we're going to help you rob our own school?"

"That is why you are here."

"Then you may as well set us ashore again!" said Wharton savagely. "You'll get nothing out of us."

The cool, smiling face of the adventurer changed its expression. His heavy brows contracted over his eyes. The gleam in his eyes now was savage and threatening.

"Listen!" he said. "I shall not bandy words with you. You are in my power, and must do as I demand. I shall not be resisted by a pair of schoolboys. You are now to take pencil and paper, and draw me, as well as you can, a plan of the school, with the passages marked, the rooms of the masters, and so on, and indicate where the valuables are kept."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

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"I will not!"

"Same here!" said Bob Cherry.

The adventurer's eyes glittered at them savagely. His hand went into his pocket, and for a moment the juniors thought that he was about to produce a weapon. If so, he changed his mind, and, turning to the open door, called out something in his own language, incomprehensible to the ears of the juniors.

Two seamen entered the cabin, and grasped the schoolboys by the arms.

"What are you going to do?" said Wharton, between his teeth.

"You have some time to consider," said the captain coolly. "I shall not require your services for some hours. When I want you, I will send for you. Meanwhile, you will be thrown into the hold, amid the bilge-water and the rats; and perhaps it will help you to change your minds. When you have changed your minds, and decided to obey my orders, you may call out!"

"You villain!" shouted Bob Cherry, struggling in the grasp of the man who had seized him. "I—"

"You will be punished for this, you scoundrel!" panted Wharton.

Another word or two in Russian, and the two juniors were dragged struggling from the cabin, and a minute later they were flung, panting, into the foul and noisome hold of the tramp steamer. The hatch closed down, and they were in darkness. And in the dark, little glittering points of light appeared, and moved, and there was a sound of stealthy scampering.

"There are rats here!" gasped Bob Cherry, almost sick with disgust as something slimy slid over his wrist in the dark.

"Oh, the scoundrel!"

"We're in for it, Harry!"

"We'll never do what that villain has asked, though."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

But his voice sounded very grim and lugubrious in the noisome depths of the hold.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Missing From School!

"WHERE'S Wharton?"

"Didn't you meet him?" asked Tom Brown of the Remove.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Nugent. "Then he came, after all!"

The New Zealand junior nodded.

"Yes, I saw them both scudding across the Close about four o'clock."

"Then why the dickens didn't they get to the cave in time?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "We waited till long after five for them."

"Must have missed us somehow," said Nugent, puzzled. "I can't quite understand it. Well, I suppose they'll be back to calling-over."

But Frank's supposition was not well-founded.

When the hour for calling-over came, and the Remove took their places in Big Hall for the roll to be called, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were missing from their ranks.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was calling the names, and he paused over the name of Cherry, and repeated it. There was no answer, and Mr. Prout marked Bob Cherry down as absent. The same thing happened when he came to Harry Wharton's name.

The chums of the Remove were somewhat disturbed in their minds as they left the hall.

"What the dickens has become of them?" Johnny Bull exclaimed. "If they left here at four, they couldn't have lost their way in the daylight."

"It's a giddy mystery."

"The mysteryfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Quelch will get his honourable rag out over this."

"Yes, specially as they've been in trouble once to-day," said Nugent. "Quelch will think they are staying out of gates on purpose."

Mr. Quelch perhaps did think so. He looked in at Nugent's study, No. 1, in the Remove, a little later. Nugent was doing his preparation alone there. He rose to his feet as the Form-master appeared in the doorway.

"Wharton has not returned yet?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir."

"Nor Cherry?"

"I think not, sir."

"Do you know where they are gone?"

Nugent explained, as much as he knew. Mr. Quelch was puzzled.

"It is very odd that they do not return," he said. "If they are not back by bed-time, I shall telephone to the police. I am anxious about them."

"They wouldn't stay out on purpose, sir," said Nugent. "Something must have happened, though I can't possibly guess what. I don't see how there can have been any accident, but I can't understand it."

Mr. Quelch nodded and left the study.

When Wingate of the Sixth shepherded the Removites off to their dormitory at half-past nine, Wharton and Bob Cherry had not returned.

By this time the Removites were in a buzz of excitement, which was shared to some degree by fellows in the other Forms.

It seemed impossible that the two juniors would remain out of gates until bed-time, and past, of their own accord. Some mischance had, therefore, happened, and the anxiety of the Co. was deep and keen.

And yet they could not think what accident could have happened. The two juniors were not likely to have missed their footing on the cliffs in the daytime. At night they might have done so; but why should they have remained there after dark when they had ample time to get home?

Mr. Quelch had been busy with the telephone. At Cliff House they were unable to tell him anything of the missing juniors; and at Friardale and Courtfield police-stations they had no news of any accident. The two Removites seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went very unwillingly to the Remove dormitory. They were keenly anxious about their chums. It was impossible to imagine what was keeping Wharton and Bob Cherry away, but they were assured that it was a mischance of some kind.

"There will be a search for them in the morning, you kids," said Wingate, noticing the anxious looks of the juniors. "Nothing can be done to-night!"

But the chums of the Remove had their own ideas about that.

Wingate put out the light in the Remove dormitory, and retired. There was a buzz of talk following the departure of the prefect.

"I'm jolly well not going to sleep till I know what's become of them!" said Johnny Bull determinedly. "There will be a moon to-night, you chaps. What price getting out and looking for them?"

"Just what I was thinking," said Frank.

"The thoughtfulness of my esteemed self was the same," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The sleepfulness would be impossible under the esteemed circumstances!"

"You'll be getting into a row," said Vernon-Smith. "The Head's pretty ratty already about Wharton and Cherry staying out!"

"Can't be helped; we're going!"

"They must be staying out," said Skinner. "There can't have been an accident. Something would have been heard of it before this."

"Something's happened," said Frank Nugent quietly.

"But what?" asked Peter Todd.

"I can't guess; but we're going to find out, if possible!"

The three juniors had made up their minds about that. They waited till half-past ten, when the seniors went to bed, and there was little danger of being "spotted" by the prefects. Then they turned out, and dressed themselves quietly in the dark.

The moon was glimmering through banks of clouds, over the old Close of Greyfriars.

Frank looked out of the dormitory window. Outside, all was silent and still.

With hardly a sound, the three comrades left the Remove dormitory. The rest of the Lower Fourth were asleep by that time.

A light glimmered under Mr. Quelch's door, as they saw down the passage; but they carefully avoided passing that door. They went in the other direction, and reached the box-room, from the window of which they had more than once descended to the ground.

One after another they clambered from the window to the roof of the outhouse below, and dropped in turn to the ground.

Without a word they glided round the School House, and cut across the Close towards the wall that bordered the high-road.

Looking back towards the house, they saw the light in Mr. Quelch's window, and another in the study window of Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars. All the other windows were dark.

ANSWERS

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Eleven o'clock sounded from the tower, and then Mr. Quelch's light went out.

"Not much danger of our being missed," Johnny Bull remarked.

"Unless Quelch smells a mouse, and goes to look in the dorm," said Nugent. "He knows we are anxious about Wharton and Bob."

"If he does, there'll be a row when we get back. Can't be helped."

"Let's get out."

They clambered over the stone wall, and dropped into the road.

The moon was emerging from the clouds, and a silvery light fell upon the long white road, bordered by dark trees.

The juniors stood for some moments in doubt, keeping in the shadow of the wall.

"I suppose we'd better make for the cliffs," said Frank dubiously. "That's the way Wharton and Bob must have gone. They certainly started for the cave."

"Come on, then!"

They started down the lane. There was a short cut through the wood towards the cliffs, and by that short cut, they knew, Wharton and Bob Cherry must have gone in the afternoon on their way to the cave. The three juniors plunged into the shadows of the wood without hesitation. They did not expect to meet anyone on the footpath. Even in the daytime it was a lonely place, and at night it was always totally deserted. But as they tramped on through the fallen leaves that were strewn thickly on the ground Nugent gave a sudden whispered warning. His quick ear had caught the sound of footsteps in the fallen leaves ahead.

"Hold on!" he muttered. "Somebody's coming! We don't want to be seen!"

That was the last thing that they wanted. If they had chanced upon Police-constable Tozer on his rounds, he would certainly have marched them back to Greyfriars, or at least have given information there that they were out of bounds. The three Removites drew back into the dense shadow of the trees beside the path.

As they stood quite still, listening and watching, the sound of footsteps in the rustling leaves came nearer. There was more than one person coming, that was evident; and as the footsteps came closer, the juniors realised that a numerous party was approaching them.

They were puzzled and curious. There were at least a dozen men, as they could tell by the rustling footsteps, and what a dozen men could be doing on that lonely path at night was a mystery.

They remained close in cover as the unseen party approached them.

Through the leafless branches overhead the moon was glimmering, and the rays fell upon the footpath.

Peering through the thickets in which they had taken cover, the Greyfriars juniors watched the party as it passed.

There were a dozen men or more, and they were in seamen's clothes—evidently sailormen from Pegg. As there was only one vessel lying in the bay, it was clear that they belonged to the tramp steamer.

The juniors in wonder watched them pass.

They tramped on without a word, in grim silence, save for the rustling their footsteps made in the dead leaves.

There was something weird and uncanny in that silent passage of the shadowy party.

The rustling footsteps died away in the distance—towards Greyfriars.

Then the juniors came out of their cover.

"Blessed if I understand that!" said Johnny Bull. "Where can those seamen be going at this time of night?"

Nugent was staring along the moonlit footpath after the party. In the distance he could see that they had halted where the footpath joined the lane. Two or three of them were scanning the road, as if in search of some indication of the route.

"They don't know their way," Nugent said, in a whisper, "and there isn't a signpost for half a mile. I wonder—"

"I don't like their looks; they looked an awful set of ruffians," said Johnny Bull. "We'd better keep clear of them, anyway!"

"They must be off the steamer in the bay," said Nugent. "But what on earth are they doing here at this time? It's nearly half-past eleven!"

"I give it up!"

"There's something jolly queer about it!" Nugent's brows were wrinkled in thought. "I wonder—is it possible that Wharton and Bob—?" A vague suspicion had come into his mind. The disappearance of his chums was so unaccountable that he was ready to catch at any straw for a clue. "I say, you chaps, let's keep an eye on those fellows for a bit. One thing's jolly certain—they're up to no good!"

"There may be trouble if they drop on us, then!"

"That's what I was thinking. Wharton and Bob may have fallen foul of them in some way, and that may be why—"

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Johnny Bull whistled softly.

"We'll see where they go, at all events," he said.

The three juniors, keeping in the thickets, retraced their steps towards the lane. The mysterious party were still halted there, and two of them, who appeared to be leaders, were consulting in low tones. In the silence of the night their voices came to the keen ears of the juniors; but the latter could not understand the words spoken. The two men were speaking in some unknown foreign tongue.

One of them, a man with a heavy beard, made a sudden gesture.

He spoke again, and in the foreign tongue that was incomprehensible to the juniors they distinguished one word they knew:

"Greyfriars!"

The party moved on again, quietly as before, taking the turning of the lane that led towards the school.

The three juniors exchanged glances of amazement and consternation.

"Did you hear?" muttered Frank.

"The hearfulness was terrific. They are going to Greyfriars!"

"That chap said 'Greyfriars' distinctly," muttered Nugent, in tones of suppressed excitement. "They're going to the school. What for?"

"For no good!" said Johnny Bull.

"A dozen men from the steamer in the bay, going to Greyfriars close on midnight," said Nugent. "What on earth can it mean? There's going to be trouble, that's jolly certain. They must be a gang of thieves!"

"Keep them in sight!"

The juniors, their hearts beating hard with excitement, followed on the track of the silent party. Keeping in the shadow of the trees, they followed the shadowy forms of the seamen on the road, and ere long they had proof that their suspicion was correct, and that Greyfriars was the destination of the unknown party.

The grey old tower of the school rose into view in the moonlight, and they saw the bearded man raise his hand and point, with an exclamation of satisfaction. There was a halt.

"That settles it," muttered Nugent. "They're bound for Greyfriars; but what for? There can only be one reason!"

"They are thieves!" said Johnny Bull.

"Yes; and we—"

"We're going to give the alarm!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoners!

HOURS—it seemed like days or weeks—had passed, and Harry Wharton and his chum still remained in the no some darkness of the hold.

There was no glimmer of light in their prison, and they did not know how the time passed.

Round them was a noisome smell of bilge-water and the scampering of rats.

Once they mounted the ladder; but the hatch above was fastened, and there was no possibility of escape.

They resigned themselves to wait.

Bob Cherry fumbled in his pockets for matches, and presently discovered a loose vesta.

He struck it, and the juniors surveyed their prison.

The match went out.

"I've got two more," said Bob, feeling in his pockets. "We'll keep them in case they're needed. I say, Harry, this is an awful scrape!"

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Those rotters shall pay for it!" he said. "Anyway, they won't get anything out of us! That's settled!"

"Blessed if I've heard anything like it!" said Bob. "There were burglars at the school once, but they were common or garden burglars. I'm blessed if I ever thought of anything like this! But it's a cute dodge, all the same. If they clear out the school, they can get away in this steamer without leaving a trace. I wish they'd picked on Highcliffe instead!"

"Highcliffe's further inland, and wouldn't be so easy to get at, or to get away from," said Harry. "There is a big haul for them, too, at Greyfriars if they can manage it. But I can't think they'll succeed."

Bob rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I don't know. There's a whole gang of them, and they looked tough customers. If they choose to use force, who's to stop them—a dozen men with weapons in their hands—if they're determined? Police-constable Tozer wouldn't have much chance, and he's all the police force there is nearer than Courtfield."

Wharton laughed a little.

"It's possible, Bob, if they have the nerve. That fellow Markoff says he has done the thing before on the French coast."

"I shouldn't wonder. It only needs nerve, if they're rascals enough. They seem to be the same kind of chaps as the Houndsditch murderers and those chaps in Sidney Street," said Bob. "Blessed foreign Anarchists, very likely, with the police looking for them in half the countries in the world. If they get a good haul at Greyfriars, they can clear right off across the water——"

"But this steamer will be hunted for!"

"If they made a big haul, it would pay them to run it ashore, and clear off on land somewhere. Or they could repaint it and change the name, or perhaps sell it and get a new craft," said Bob. "Piracy on the giddy high seas is played out in these days; but burglary is still profitable, I suppose. We're in a bad box, Harry. That man Markoff doesn't look as if he will stick at much."

"All the same, we're not going to help him."

"No fear!" said Bob promptly.

The hours passed.

The juniors remained standing, moving about restlessly. When they remained still, the rats scampered about them and over their feet, and the horrible contact filled them with loathing.

They began to long for the hatch to be opened, even if it was only to see the threatening face of Captain Markoff, and to face whatever he had in store for them.

The hatch was opened at last.

The light of the lantern streamed down upon the white faces of the juniors as they looked up.

Captain Markoff descended, followed by the mate, who was bearing the lantern.

The dark, bearded face of the Russian Anarchist was very grim. His eyes glittered as they were fixed upon the Greyfriars juniors.

"It is time!" he said abruptly.

Wharton set his lips.

"Time for what?" he asked.

"Time for you to do what I have asked. You have been here five hours. It is time that you should have come to your senses," said the Russian harshly.

The juniors were silent.

"I can do without your aid," said Markoff, "but you could make my work easier. I ask you again, will you do as I have demanded?"

"No!"

The Russian gritted his teeth.

"You understand that you are wholly in my power here. If you were dropped into the sea, to be taken out by the tide, who would be the wiser?"

The juniors did not speak.

The mate, scowling savagely, whispered to the captain in harsh Russian. Markoff seemed to hesitate.

The juniors knew that the mate was urging him to adopt stern measures, and they waited anxiously.

They were utterly at the mercy of this gang of sea-thieves. The only restraint upon the rascals was the fear of punishment that might follow a desperate deed. And that fear evidently weighed lightly upon the mate. He half drew a revolver from his pocket, and the lantern-light glimmered upon the metal. But Markoff shook his head.

"Listen to me," he said at last. "You are obstinate, and your lives are in my hands if I choose to take them."

"There is a law in England to punish murderers," said Harry, as calmly as he could.

The captain made a gesture.

"To-morrow morning I shall be far from England. But no matter! Do as I have asked, and you shall have your liberty within a few hours, safe and sound."

The juniors did not answer.

"Refuse, and I take you to sea when I go, and I shall land you on some desolate shore to get rid of you," said Markoff. "You can take your choice."

"We have taken it," said Bob. "We can't help you to commit a robbery. We hope that you will be caught."

"Mind, I mean what I say! If I leave you here, you will never see the light of day again till you are taken out to be marooned on some rock in the Atlantic."

He waited for a reply.

The faces of the juniors were very pale. But their minds were made up. They made no reply, and the Russian, with a gesture of impatience and rage, turned away.

The two men left the hold, and the hatch was closed again. Bob Cherry grunted.

"That's a cheery prospect, Harry!"

"Better than helping a gang of thieves," said Wharton.

"Yes, I suppose so; but how on earth are we going to get out of this scrape?"

"Goodness knows!"

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"And we can't stop them," said Bob. "With or without our help, they're going to Greyfriars to-night, Harry, and ——"

Wharton clenched his fists.

"Oh, if we could only get out, to give a warning——"

"But we can't!"

"Let's try!" said Harry desperately. "There may be some way out—it's possible. Anyway, it's no good doing nothing."

"Right-ho!"

Stumbling in the darkness, the two juniors commenced the search for an outlet from the hold; but the hours passed, and their search was in vain, and at last they gave it up in sheer fatigue and despair. And while they were seeking vainly in the hold of the tramp steamer for an avenue of escape, their thoughts were at the old school. What was happening at Greyfriars?

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Dead of Night!

GOSLING, the porter, woke suddenly.

Knock!

Gosling sat up in bed and yawned.

Knock!

The porter rubbed his eyes in amazement. If he had heard a ring at the bell at that time of night, he would have turned over and gone to sleep again. But this was a knock at the door of his own lodge—within the walls of Greyfriars.

Gosling grunted and turned out of bed.

"Somebody ill!" he growled. "Wot I says is this 'ere: I don't see why they can't send Trotter for a doctor, if that's wot's wanted! That's what I says! Huh!"

And he pushed up his window, and put his head out, and blinked down into the darkness beneath.

"Wot's the matter?" he demanded.

"Come down!" said the voice in the shadows below—a voice Gosling had never heard before.

"Who are you?" demanded the porter, in surprise. "'Ow did you git in 'ere?"

"The house is on fire!" said the voice hurriedly.

"Quick!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Gosling jumped into his trousers, jammed his boots on without lacing them, and ran downstairs. He opened the door of the lodge, and dashed into the Close, his glance going at once in the direction of the School House. All was dark and quiet there, and there was no trace of a fire.

"Why, what," ejaculated Gosling—"what the—— Oh! Leggo! I—— Groogh!"

Two pairs of hands had closed upon his arms, and another hand was jammed over his mouth as he opened it to utter a startled yell. The yell died away in a gurgle. Then it seemed to Gosling as if his blood had turned to ice, as a round metal rim was pressed to his temple.

"Silence!" said a deep, threatening voice.

"Groogh!"

"One cry, and you are a dead man!"

"Oh, lor'!"

Dark and shadowy forms had started up from the gloom round him. The school porter was surrounded.

A heavily-bearded man held the revolver pressed to his temple, while two others of the gang grasped him in a grip of iron.

"Silence! Do you understand?"

"Groogh!"

The hand was removed from Gosling's mouth, but he no longer thought of shouting for help. The revolver muzzle at his temple was enough for him. He did not intend to risk the trigger being pulled.

He blinked at his captors with startled, terrified eyes.

There seemed to be quite a crowd of them, and the school porter gazed in terror at the dark, threatening faces and glistening eyes round him.

"Who—who—who are you?" he panted.

"We are burglars!" said the bearded man calmly. "We have come here to rob the school."

"Oh, lor'!"

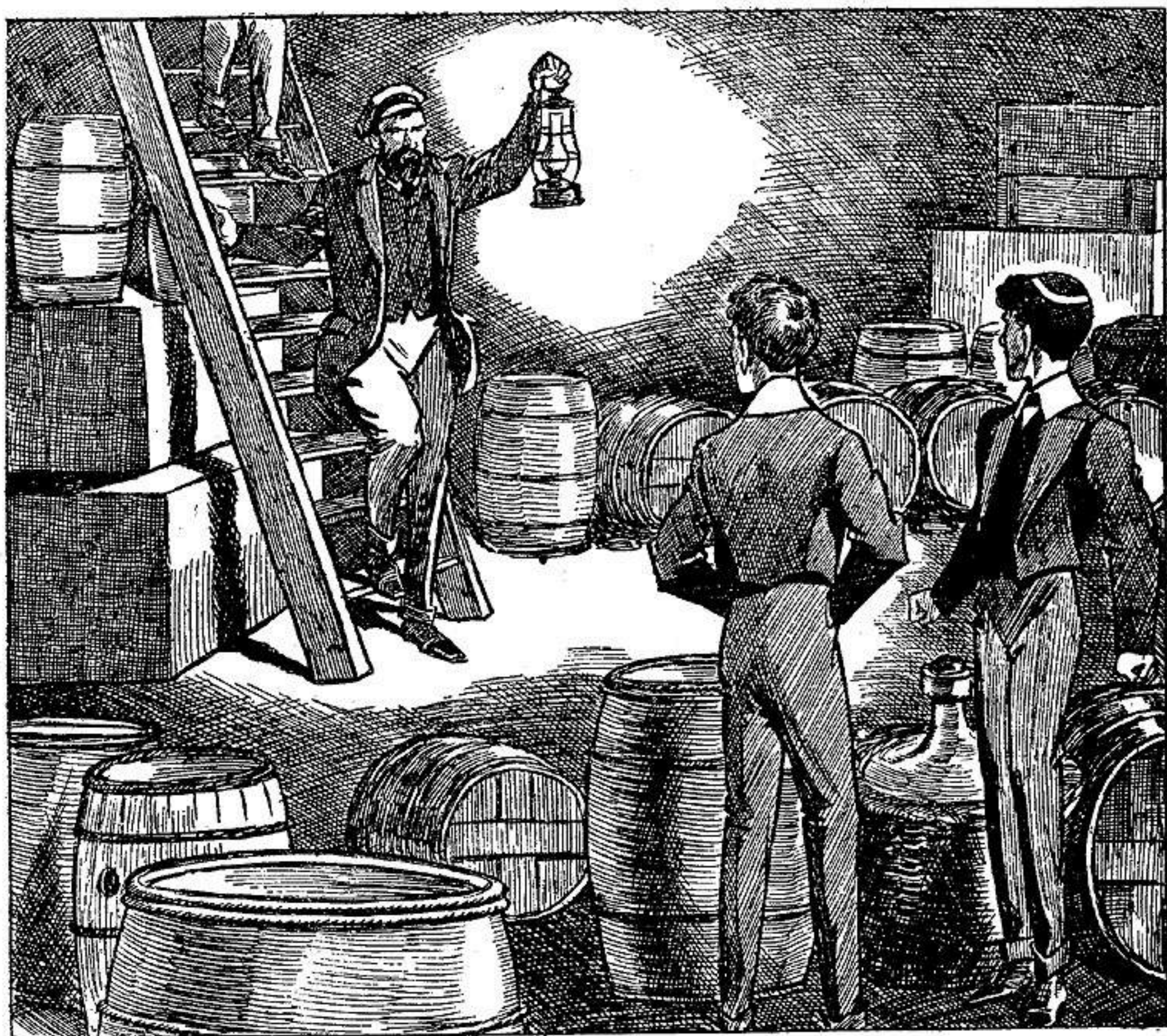
"If you give us any trouble, you will be killed like a dog! We are desperate men."

"I—I ain't goin' to give no trouble," gasped Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—I'm paid for openin' and shettin' that bloomin' gate, and not for fightin' burglars, at my time of life! That's wot I says."

"Good!"

An order was muttered in Russian, and Gosling's hands were secured behind his back. The porter made no resistance.

"Now," said Captain Markoff, "we want to get into the



The light of the lantern streamed down upon the white faces of the juniors as Captain Markoff descended. "It is time!" he said abruptly. "Are you going to give me a plan of Greyfriars or not?" Wharton and Cherry's answer came at once. "No!" (See Chapter 7.)

house—do you understand?—without any alarm being given. Come!"

"But I says—"

"You are to let us in."

"I—I ain't got no keys to the School 'Ouse," stammered Gosling. "You'll have to call down somebody. 'Sides, the door's chained inside."

"Very good. You must call down someone to open the door."

"Wot I says—"

"I shall keep you covered with my revolver. If you attempt to betray us, I shall fire instantly!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Come!"

Gosling was marched across the Close towards the School House. The last light had been extinguished in the great building now. All was dark and silent.

The porter wondered whether he was dreaming.

A burglary in the ordinary way would not have surprised him, but to be roused out of his bed by a gang of armed ruffians—that was quite flabbergasting, as he would have called it. He almost wondered whether he was on his head or his heels as he was marched across the Close, with a hard grip on either arm. But he had his wits about him sufficiently to know that he had better not resist. The revolver had been removed now, but Gosling could still feel

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the cold contact of the metal rim on his temple. He was not likely to forget that sensation in a hurry.

"Whom will you call?" asked Markoff, as they halted before the School House.

"I—I—I—"

"Take care that there is no alarm, that is all! Your life is at stake."

"Oh, you awful villain!" gasped Gosling. "I—I mean, all right, sir. I s'pose I'd better call Mr. Quelch."

"Make haste, then."

"Throw somethin' up at the winder," said Gosling. "'E won't 'ear me if I call from 'ere. Throw up a stone."

"Which window?"

Gosling indicated the window of the Remove-master's room.

Clink!

A pebble struck the pane of glass with a loud sound.

The rascals were crouching out of sight in the deep shadow of the wall. Captain Markoff stood close to the trunk of a big elm, the revolver in his hand.

Gosling was left alone in the moonlight under the window. He gave one glance round, and caught a glimmer of a revolver-barrel under the tree, and resigned himself to his fate. The revolver was levelled, and he had no doubt whatever that the thief would keep his word.

The window above was pushed up. The clink of the stone on the glass had awakened the Remove-master.

FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE RIGHT SORT!"

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Mr. Quelch looked out, the moonlight glimmering upon his surprised face.

"Gosling! Is that you, Gosling?"

"Yessir!" stuttered Gosling.

"What is the matter?"

"The—the matter, sir!"

"Yes. Why have you awakened me?"

The Remove-master peered down suspiciously, the thought crossing his mind that Gosling was intoxicated. Gosling was devoted to the cup that cheers, and sometimes he imbibed not wisely, but too well.

"I—I— Will you come down a minute, sir?" said Gosling helplessly.

He heard a faint click under the tree close at hand, and his very heart turned sick with fear.

"For what reason?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sharply.

"There—there's something wrong, sir."

"What! Have you received some news of Wharton or Cherry?"

Gosling caught at the pretext.

"That's jest it, sir. There—there's been an accident. Will you come down, sir, and I'll explain?"

"One moment!" said the Remove-master

He disappeared from the window.

A second later a light gleamed out. The Remove-master dressed himself hurriedly.

Gosling waited in palpitating anxiety. He had no doubt that if the door were not opened, he would feel a bullet searing its way through his body. And Gosling's personal safety was of much more consequence to him than the safety of the school. Perhaps that was not unnatural.

A light glimmered in the hall. Mr. Quelch had turned on the electric light, and Gosling heard him moving the chain inside the door.

"E—e's coming!" he panted.

"Silence!"

Captain Markoff and the mate moved quickly into the shadowy porch.

The door swung open, and a blaze of light came out into the shadows. Mr. Quelch came hurriedly from the house.

"Now, Gosling, why—what—"

In an instant the Remove-master was seized.

He glared in astonishment and anger at the two men whose iron grasp had fallen upon him. He jerked back his head involuntarily as he felt the touch of a cold barrel.

"What does this mean?" he panted.

"Skuse me, sir," said Gosling. "They 'ad a pistol at my 'ead, sir. I couldn't go for to refuse, sir. I 'ad to call you, sir—"

Gosling had no time to say more. He was seized, his feet were tied, and he was tossed to the ground, a helpless prisoner. And as Mr. Quelch, surprised and enraged, would have struggled, his hands were drawn behind him and fastened.

"What does this mean?" he shouted. "Who are you?"

"It means that you are a prisoner," said Markoff coolly.

"Are you the headmaster?"

"I am not! I—"

"Then you are useless!"

And Mr. Quelch was bound, and left on the School House steps. Gosling was dragged into the lighted hall.

"Where is the headmaster's room—quick?" said Markoff, in a low tone of menace.

"I—I— Wot I says is this 'ere—"

Markoff jammed the revolver to his head.

"Answer me, or—"

"Old on!" stuttered Gosling. "I'll—I'll show you where it is. I'll tell you at once, I will. Wot I says is—"

"The headmaster's room—and quick, you fool!"

"The headmaster is here!" said a deep, quiet voice.

Markoff swung round.

Dr. Locke, in dressing-gown and slippers, stood before him.

The Head had been alarmed already, and he had come down, little dreaming of what he was to find.

Markoff levelled his revolver.

"You are the headmaster?"

"Yes."

"Then you are the man I want. I am here for all the valuables the school contains, and you must show me where they are. Do you comprehend?"

The good old doctor stood firmly, facing the rascal. His face was pale, but he did not flinch from the threatening weapon of the Russian Anarchist.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" he said quietly and steadily.

"Do you value your life?" said the Russian harshly.

Dr. Locke folded his arms.

"There is no time to waste," said the Russian savagely. "Listen to me. We are desperate men. If there is resistance, blood will be shed!"

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"I shall not raise a finger to help you," said the doctor, his voice trembling with anger. "I cannot resist you, but that is all. Do your worst, you scoundrel!"

The rascal's eye gleamed along the revolver, but he did not fire. He rapped out a hasty order to his men, and the Head was seized. In a minute more the desperadoes were spreading over the house.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Raiders!

"GREAT Scott! What's that row?"

Vernon-Smith sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory.

The other fellows were mostly awake, too.

From below came sounds of hurried footsteps, of voices—cries of alarm.

Light gleamed under the door of the dormitory. The electric light had been turned on in the passage.

Then suddenly came a more terrible sound—that awoke every echo of the old school.

Crack!

It was the report of a revolver!

A loud and agonised yelp followed—the cry of a stricken animal.

"That's Gosling's mastiff!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Somebody has shot him!"

"My hat!"

The Removites tumbled out of bed in hot haste.

Something extraordinary was evidently proceeding downstairs, and they intended to know what it was.

Tom Brown was the first to reach the door, and he tore it open, and the electric light from the passage streamed into the room.

But Tom Brown did not rush out as he had intended.

Before the doorway stood a burly form in rough sailor clothes, and a dark, threatening face met the startled gaze of the New Zealand junior.

Tom Brown started back, staring at the man in bewilderment.

"Who are you?" he gasped.

The man did not speak, but his right hand came up, with a revolver in it, and he made a threatening gesture with the weapon.

His action was enough. He was evidently posted there to see that the occupants of the dormitory did not get out.

Tom Brown cast a glimpse along the passage, and saw another man, weapon in hand, at the door of the Fourth Form dormitory. He caught a glimpse of the white face of Temple, of the Fourth, at that doorway.

"What is it?"

"What's the row?"

"What does it mean?"

"Great Scott!"

"Sure, it's a drame intirely!"

Vernon-Smith hurried to the door. The Bounder of Greyfriars was quite cool—the only fellow there who was cool just then. He looked at the foreign seaman inquiringly.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The man made a threatening gesture with his weapon, but did not speak.

"He's a foreigner," said Vernon-Smith. "Can you speak English?"

A shake of the head.

Have the giddy Germans landed at last, and started on Greyfriars?" said Peter Todd.

"This chap isn't a German. It must be a burglary that's going on, but they're making plenty of row about it," said Vernon-Smith.

"Well, we can't get out," said Russell.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Not without arguing with this chap's pistol," he said; "and I don't care to do that. We'd better stop here."

"They must be robbing the school!" said Penfold excitedly.

"I don't suppose they've come here for fun, certainly!"

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "This beats the band, my dear fellows! Suppose we rush this chap, and go to the rescue?"

"He's got a revolver, fathead!"

"And there's a gang of them," said Peter Todd. "Shut up, Mauly, you ass! We can't do anything!"

That was only too clear. With an armed ruffian stationed at the door of the dormitory, the juniors certainly could not interfere in what was going on below. Gosling's mastiff had evidently tackled the invaders, with terrible results to himself.

Some of the juniors, looking from the dormitory window in the moonlight, saw a still form lying in the Close—the body of the dog.

The other dormitories were seething with excitement. In each of them, the fellows as they turned out at the alarm had discovered an armed man on guard at the door.

Coker, of the Fifth, proposed a rush, as Lord Mauleverer had done; but the grim brow and grimmer weapon of the man on guard over the Fifth Form dormitory deterred them. There was, as Potter remarked sagely, no use in getting shot, and the rotter looked as if he meant business.

The alarm was terrific at first, but it calmed down somewhat when the fellows realised that no harm was to be done to them, so long as they remained quietly in their quarters.

In the Sixth Form passage there was great excitement. The Sixth Form had rooms to themselves, instead of a dormitory, so it was impossible to set a single man to keep guard over them. But as the seniors, alarmed by the disturbance, came pouring, half-dressed, out of their rooms, they found the passage guarded by four men, two at either end.

Wingate demanded hotly who they were, and what they were doing.

"You keep quiet—so!" said one of the ruffians, in broken English. "You do nozzings, you shall be safe; you trouble, and you shall be shot!"

"Why, you dashed rascal——" began the captain of Greyfriars indignantly.

The muzzle of a revolver, pressed upon his chest, stopped him.

"Go back to room!"

And Wingate had to go.

"Well, this beats cock-fighting!" said Loder, of the Sixth. "It's a regular raid! But there's no arguing with six-shooters—and they mean business. I'm going to be as quiet as a lamb, for one!"

"And I, for another!" grinned Walker.

Wingate was chafing furiously in his room. But, as Loder had truly said, there was no arguing with pistols. And the enemy were in force. A pitched battle, with deadly weapons on one side and bare fists on the other, was out of the question. The Greyfriars fellows could do nothing.

Meanwhile, Markoff was not losing time.

While most of his men were securing the masters, and locking them in their rooms, or watching the boys, Markoff and two or three more were searching the House for the valuables.

Gosling was forced to guide them to the Head's study, and the Head's keys being found, the safe was opened.

In three minutes the historic silver of Greyfriars School was transferred to a sack. Money and other valuables were added. The Head's desk was rifled, each of the masters' rooms was gone through. Money, banknotes, even watches were taken—all was grist that came to the mill of the raiders.

It was a big haul—if the rascals succeeded in getting away safely with it.

And what was to stop them?

There was no building close to Greyfriars, and the raiders had taken care that no one should get away to give the alarm. Markoff's plans had been laid with the greatest care. Since the raiders entered the precincts of Greyfriars no one had got out of the school.

But in the Remove dormitory the wakeful and excited fellows noticed the absence of Nugent and Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull. But the raiders, of course, knew nothing of that, and they proceeded with their work of spoliation and looting, unconscious of the fact that the alarm had already been given.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Flight of the Raiders!

FRANK NUGENT and his companions had not been idle.

They had followed the raiders to the school, and had seen them climb the wall, and through the bars of the gate they had seen the seizure of Gosling.

That was enough for them.

That it was a raid on the school—a bold and unheard-of robbery by force of arms—they realised only too clearly.

They drew back into the shadow of the trees beside the road, and held a hurried consultation.

"We can't do anything here!" Nugent whispered. "Those rascals are too strong for anybody in the school. We've got to get help."

"Friardale's no good," said Johnny Bull. "There's only two bobbies there——"

"We must get help from Courtfield."

"But the time——"

"Nothing else to be done. Look here, I'll cut over to Courtfield as fast as I can go with Inky, and you go down to Pegg and rouse up the fishermen and the Coastguards. These rotters have come off the steamer in the bay. If they get away from the school, they may be stopped as they go back to their ship."

"That's a good idea!"

"Buzz off, then!"

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FOR NEXT **"THE RIGHT SORT!"**

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It was evidently the best thing to be done.

Johnny Bull started for Pegg, and Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh ran as hard as they could go for Courtfield.

It was a good distance to the town, but they ran as they had never run on the cinder-path in their lives.

Breathless and excited, they burst into the police-station at Courtfield.

Inspector Grimes was there, and the juniors knew him personally; but the inspector stared blankly at the story they had to tell.

He made them repeat what they had seen, and stared more than ever; but the juniors were evidently telling the truth. And when Mr. Grimes realised how matters were at the school, he took his measures promptly.

Nugent and Inky started back to Greyfriars, assured that help would come as quickly as the inspector could contrive it. They were anxious to know what was going on at the school. They reached the gates of Greyfriars, and found them open.

The raid was over.

Captain Markoff and his men were retreating, several of them laden with sacks and bundles containing their loot.

The raid had been a complete success—the school had been looted; and it only remained for the raiders to reach the shore and get back to their steamer. Steam was up already on board the *Seamew*, and it would not take long for the raiders to get to sea. In a very short time the darkness of the North Sea would have swallowed them up and baffled pursuit.

"They're finished, the rotters!" exclaimed Nugent, with a quick backward glance up the Courtfield road. "When will the police be here?"

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

"Here they come!"

It was the beat of a horse's hoofs on the hard road.

A mounted constable came in sight, riding fast. Behind him came five or six more. The raiders looked in alarm along the road.

Captain Markoff gritted his teeth.

It was evident that the alarm had been given. He did not know how. But the police were upon him.

He shouted to his men, and the raiders broke into a run, and disappeared in the direction of the wood.

The horseman drew rein outside the school gates. Nugent sprang out of the shadow of the trees.

"They're gone!" he shouted.

"Which way?" called out Inspector Grimes.

"They're heading for the wood. They want to get to the shore."

"Right!"

The mounted constables dashed in pursuit.

In the road the juniors stood, looking after them anxiously. The horsemen vanished into the shadows of the trees.

From the distance came a hoarse shout, and a yell of defiance. Then came the rapid detonations of a revolver.

"They're firing!" exclaimed Nugent, white to the lips.

"The scoundrels!"

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

It seemed like a horrible dream to the juniors as they stood there, with thumping hearts, listening.

A riderless horse came dashing back along the road, frantic, with stirrups swinging loose. Where was his rider?

The juniors ran down the road.

In the moonlight a dark form lay, and stirred and groaned. Nugent bent over him. It was the inspector.

"I've got it in the arm!" muttered Mr. Grimes. "The scoundrels! They'll get away!"

It looked like it.

The raiders had disappeared into the wood, and the mounted constables had lost track of them.

With desperate haste the rascals were pressing on towards the shore.

They came out on the beach, but the village of Pegg was wide awake now. Johnny Bull had alarmed the place.

A crowd of fishermen and longshoremen were on the shore, and lanterns were gleaming, voices calling.

Markoff halted, with the surf whitening round his boots, and gave a signal whistle.

From the darkness of the sea a boat glided into view, and bumped on the shingle.

In hot haste the raiders crowded into it.

There was a yell along the beach.

"There they are!"

"After them!"

Footsteps ground the shingle.

But the boat was pushing off now, and Markoff stood upright, revolver in hand, and a savage gleam in his eyes.

It would have gone hard with any of the pursuers who had reached the boat in time to lay hands upon it.

But the raiders were too quick. The crowded boat danced away upon the water, and the crowd stopped knee-deep in the surf, baffled and shouting.

Markoff rapped out a sharp order. The foreign seamen pulled as if for their lives, and the boat fairly flew over the water towards the steamer out in the bay. On board the *Seamew* the engines were already throbbing.

The boat bumped against the side of the steamer.

The raiders scrambled on board with their loot. The boat was swung hastily up, the anchor was cut away.

Lights were blazing all along the shore; the hoofs of horses trampled up the sand. Boats were being run down into the water, and manned. But it was too late.

The tramp steamer was already in motion.

With engines throbbing, the *Seamew* glided away over the bay, as a dozen boats pulled out from the beach, crowded with fishermen, policemen, and Coastguards.

Markoff stood on the bridge, a sarcastic smile on his lips.

He had succeeded.

But he knew that the telegraph was already at work, that a description of the tramp steamer was already flashing along the wires; that in an hour, or less, the vessel would be hunted for all along the coast.

But for the moment, at all events, he was safe.

The steamer glided out of the bay, out into the glimmering, moonlit sea, leaving the straining boats far behind.

And deep down in the hold of the rocking, throbbing steamer two schoolboys heard the noise, the confusion, the trampling of feet, the pulsing of the engines, and knew that they were being carried out to sea—whither?

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

After the Raid!

GREYFRIARS was ablaze with lights, humming and throbbing with excitement.

The departure of the raiders had been the signal for a wild commotion.

All the fellows had crowded down from their dormitories.

Masters and boys were in utter confusion. The happening was so utterly unexpected, so unprecedented, that it seemed like a dream. Even yet they could hardly realise that it had really happened.

Gosling was found, and released from his bonds. He was dazed and speechless. Dr. Locke seemed stunned.

The school had been looted; but, fortunately, beside the breaking of locks and the looting of valuables, no further harm had been done. Dr. Locke, fearful for the safety of the boys under his charge, had sternly commanded that there was to be no resistance. It would have been a hopeless struggle. In the Close lay the dead body of the mastiff, shot by one of the raiders.

"Well, this beats the band!" said Coker of the Fifth for about the twentieth time. "Who'd have thought it?"

Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came into the crowded quad. They were carrying Mr. Grimes.

They met the Head as they were bringing the wounded inspector in.

"Good heavens! What is this?" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "You boys, where have you been?"

"We gave the alarm at Courtfield, sir," said Nugent. "Mr. Grimes is hurt."

"Bless my soul!"

"Bull's gone for the doctor, sir."

"Quite right—quite right! Bring Mr. Grimes in. Wingate, help them, please. Put him into a bed at once."

"Bring him into my room," said Wingate.

The inspector, who had fainted, was placed in Wingate's bed. Johnny Bull arrived with the doctor from Friardale.

Fortunately, the inspector's wound was not serious; but he had to remain in bed. Mr. Quelch, who was much cooler than the Head, set about the difficult task of restoring order in the school. The prefects backed him up, and the juniors were herded back to their dormitories.

But there was, of course, no more sleep that night.

Greyfriars was buzzing like a hive of bees.

Dr. Locke did not return to bed that night.

A mounted policeman arrived from Pegg, with the news that the raiders had escaped, and had put to sea in a steamer.

There was no more news.

When morning came the school was still buzzing with excitement.

As a matter of fact, the juniors were not exactly displeased at what had happened. The unprecedented happening had furnished them with enough excitement to last the rest of the term.

"And they are bound to be caught," said Vernon-Smith, with conviction.

"They can't possibly get away. There'll be gunboats looking for them all over the North Sea and the Channel before this."

"But where's Wharton and Bob?" said Nugent gloomily.

The Bounder nodded.

"This explains what's become of them," he said. "They must have fallen foul of this gang somehow; perhaps found out that they were going to raid the school."

"Yes; and—" Nugent paused, not caring to put the black thought into words. But the Bounder shook his head.

"They wouldn't hurt them if they could help it, I should say. They don't want to put ropes round their necks."

"They fired on the police," said Johnny Bull.

"Yes; the inspector got it in the arm, and they've killed a horse and Gosling's dog. But no worse than that."

"We'll search for Wharton and Bob to-day, anyway."

"You'll have to get to sea, then," said the Bounder. "If they've fallen into the hands of those rotters they'd be on the steamer."

It was only too probable. No one at Greyfriars had a doubt that the raiders were responsible for the disappearance of the two juniors, which had seemed so mysterious the night before.

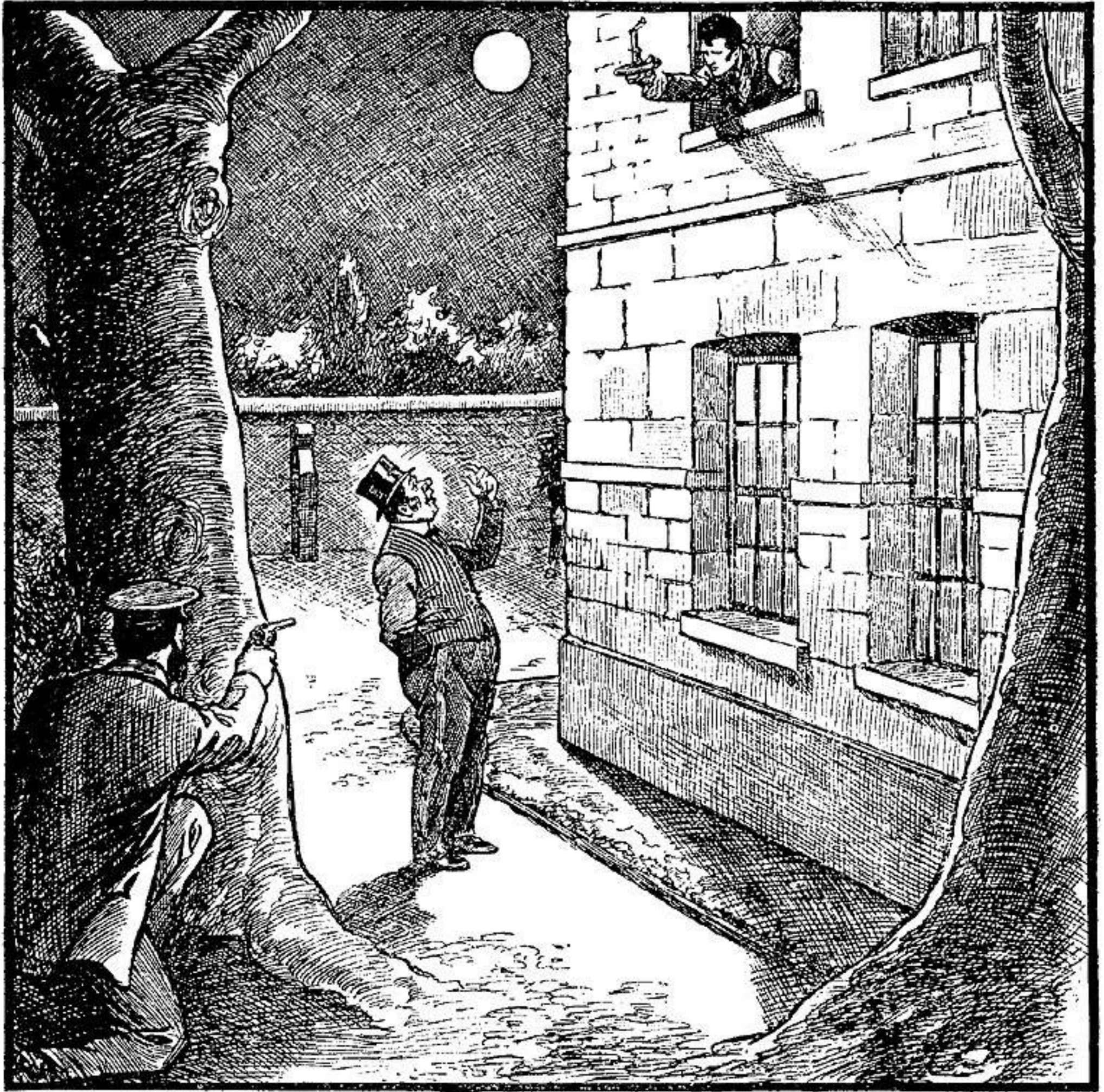
But there was nothing to be done.

Pursuit of the steamer had been taken up actively, but there was nothing the Greyfriars fellows could do to help in that direction. Lessons were impossible that morning in the wild excitement that prevailed, and the Head gave the juniors

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A Magnetite, being stopped by a lady, very respectfully raises his cap and directs her to the street she has been vainly looking for.



The window was pushed up, and Mr. Quelch looked out. "What is the matter?" he asked. "Will you come down a minute, sir? There's something wrong!" said Gosling, his heart turning sick with fear as he heard the click of the trigger behind him. (See Chapter 8.)

permission to spend the morning in searching for Wharton and Bob Cherry.

But nothing, of course, was discovered.

The search had no other result than to prove that the two missing juniors were no longer on shore.

It was certain—as certain as could be—that they had somehow fallen into the hands of the raiders, and that they had been carried off in the fleeing steamer.

And all Greyfriars waited eagerly for news of the Seamew. The Head was constantly at the telephone. Telegrams arrived incessantly, but the news was vague.

In the afternoon something like order was restored, and Greyfriars settled down to lessons. But little work was done.

In the Remove-room there were gloomy faces.

Nugent and Johnny Bull and Inky were intensely anxious about their chums, and feverishly eager for news of them.

But there was no news of them.

Even Billy Bunter was looking serious.

"I've had a jolly narrow escape," he confided to his study.

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mate, Peter Todd, when the Removites came out of their Form-room.

Peter sniffed.

"You!" he said. "Rats!"

"Yes. It was jolly lucky. You know, I was going out with Wharton and Bob Cherry yesterday afternoon, and they gave me the slip. I thought they were beasts at the time. But it was jolly lucky I didn't go with them," said Bunter. "Whatever's happened to them would have happened to me, wouldn't it? I call that a jolly narrow escape. Lucky it was them, and not me—eh?"

Peter snorted.

"I don't see where the luck comes in," he remarked. "The other way about would have been much more lucky. Who'd have missed you?"

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Peter.

"If Wharton doesn't come back—"

"What!"

"Well, you know," said Billy Bunter argumentatively,

"very likely he won't come back. Those chaps were desperate villains, you know. If they've got him on that steamer, I think very likely they'll throw him overboard. They won't want to be bothered with him. And they're desperate enough for anything. If he doesn't come back, I'm going to ask his uncle to let me have his bicycle."

"What-a-at!"

"I'm on pretty good terms with his uncle, you know," said Bunter. "He rather likes me. He knows I was Harry's best chum."

"You fat toad! He couldn't stand you!"

"Look here, Toddy, you're jolly well not going to have that bike!" said Billy Bunter suspiciously. "I'm going to ask Colonel Wharton for it, so there, if Harry doesn't come back. And I don't really suppose he will."

"You fat beast!" said Peter, in measured tones. "So you think Wharton won't come back, and all you can think of in that case is having his bike. You—you ought to be suffocated!"

"Oh, really, you know——"

"And, anyway, I'll give you a licking!" roared Peter.

"Oh, I say! What's the matter? Ow—ow—ow—yaroo!" roared Bunter.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter; and he tore himself away from the indignant Peter, and fled yelling down the passage.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you?" growled Coker of the Fifth, as Billy Bunter bumped into him in his wild flight.

"Yow-ow! That beast Todd—ow!—he pitched into me!" howled Bunter. "He doesn't want me to have Wharton's bike if Wharton doesn't come back!"

"What!" roared Coker.

"But I'm jolly well going to have it! And—and—— Coker, you beast—ow-ow!—leggo my car! Yaroo!" shrieked Bunter.

"Tako that!" growled Coker. "You fat rotter! And that! Also that!"

"Ow! Help!"

And Bunter fled.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

At Sea!

"W E'RE at sea, Harry!"

"Sounds like it."

The engines were throbbing, and the steamer heaving in the waters.

The hatch had not been removed; the two juniors were still in the dark and noisome hold of the tramp steamer. They were faint with hunger by this time. Overcome by sleep, they had sunk down on the planks and slept—how long they did not know. They awoke to find rats scampering over them.

"I say, I'm frightfully hungry!" Bob muttered.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"The brutes can't mean to leave us to starve here, Bob."

"I fancy they've forgotten all about us. The raid's come off, Harry, and they've put to sea. By Jove! I should like to know what's happened."

"I wonder what the time is? Blessed if I know whether it's night or day! How many matches have you got?"

"Two."

"Let's see the time, then. I've kept my watch going."

Bob Cherry struck one of the vestas. The light glimmered on the watch. Wharton had wound it before going to sleep, and it was still ticking. The glimmering match caught the shining eyes of the rats in the darkness, making them gleam like diamonds.

"Three o'clock," said Harry.

"Morning or afternoon?" said Bob, with a grunt, as the match went out. "There's no telling. Is it to-day or to-morrow, old man?"

"Blessed if I know!"

Whether it was the night, or whether a new day had come, the juniors could not tell. They did not know how long they had slept.

"I fancy it's three, Thursday afternoon," said Bob. "I shouldn't be so jolly hungry as I am if it were only three in the morning. I could eat one of those blessed rats, I think, if I could catch one!"

"I wonder what they're thinking about us at Greyfriars?"

"I wonder."

The juniors fell silent again. The raiders were at sea now—how far from the land the prisoners in the hold had no means of guessing. They had evidently forgotten the two schoolboys below-hatches. Or did they intend to leave them to starve there? The pangs of hunger were gnawing the two juniors bitterly.

"And to think that we were going to a giddy picnic when

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they collared us!" said Bob. "I wish I'd put some of the grub in my pockets instead of the basket!"

"By Jove! Yes."

"Not even a bit of chocolate!" groaned Bob, going through his pockets for the hundredth time at least. "My hat! I wish I had even some of that toffee I made the other day—the toffee Herr Gans sat in! I could tackle even that now!"

"I think I could," said Harry. "I say, Bob, if they don't come, suppose we rap on the hatch? If they've forgotten us, that will remind them, anyway!"

"Well, it won't do any harm," said Bob.

They groped their way to the ladder in the darkness, and hammered on the closed hatch above with their fists. Whether the hammering was heard above they could not tell; but there came no reply, and the hatch was not opened. They desisted at last, in sheer weariness and despair.

"The beasts are going to let us starve!" said Bob.

"It looks like it."

"We shall have to start on our boots soon," said Bob, with a doleful sort of cheerfulness. "Oh, dear! Think of that feed Mauleverer gave the other day——"

"Oh, don't!"

"They've slacked down speed," said Bob, after a pause. He had been listening to the throb of the engines. "They're not going as they were. I'd give a term's pocket-money for the beasts to be caught! Oh, crumbs, I'm hungry!"

There was a sound above their heads, and they looked up joyfully. It was the hatch being opened at last.

Light streamed upon them—but it was not clear light. A murky, yellow fog hung above them; but it was evidently daytime. It was the afternoon.

The mate of the Scamew looked down upon them with a scowl.

"Come up?" he said.

The juniors were not slow to obey.

Thick and foggy as the air was, they were glad to breathe deep draughts of it, after the noisome atmosphere of the hold.

Captain Markoff was on the bridge. He was peering anxiously into the mist. The steamer was going at half-speed.

He looked down at the two wan-faced juniors with a grim smile.

"I had forgotten you," he said.

"Can we have something to eat?" said Harry quietly.

"We are starved."

"You must be. You have only yourselves to blame," said Markoff, with a shrug of the shoulders. "It would be no more than you deserve for your obstinacy if I left you to perish there. But"—he paused—"I have succeeded without your assistance, you see!"

"You have raided the school?" exclaimed Bob.

Markoff nodded.

"And—and you have robbed Greyfriars?" asked Harry.

"What you call robbed," assented the adventurer. "What I and my comrades call a re-distribution of wealth!"

"And was there—was there——"

Wharton's voice faltered. He wished to know whether there had been bloodshed at the school, but he hardly dared to put the question in words. But the adventurer understood.

"They were wise," he said. "There was no resistance. I winged a fool of a policeman who was close upon me, that was all; but I was careful. I do not wish to put my neck into a noose if I can help it. If there had been any deaths, my lad, your own would follow. I would toss you into the sea with as little compunction as I would a dog. But I am too wise a man to bring an unnecessary risk upon myself. If my capture meant my death, I should order you to be thrown overboard now. I should be all the safer for it. But, so far, it has not come to that."

Wharton drew a deep breath of relief.

Both the juniors understood. Their lives even now hung upon a thread. The savage look of the mate showed that he would have hesitated at nothing. But Captain Markoff had his wits about him. So far, he had risked penal servitude by his raid; but if he had a life to answer for, his punishment would have been more terrible in case of capture, and then he would have stopped at nothing. But now, to do the juniors harm would simply be to add to his own peril in case of capture, without serving any purpose. Their lives were therefore safe, though how long they would remain safe was a question.

"Get into the galley, and the cook will give you food," said Captain Markoff. "Make yourselves useful to him. No one eats the bread of idleness on board my ship. And keep out of the way of my men. They are not well-disposed towards you. We had a narrow escape last night, and time would have been saved if you had done as I demanded. Go!"

"But—"
"Go, I say!"

The two juniors went. The mate ascended to the bridge, and he and the captain remained peering into the mist that enveloped the North Sea, and muttering in low tones in their own language. They were evidently in a state of anxiety, and their anxiety was shared by the seamen, as could be seen by their looks. The raiders had intended to flee at the full power of their engines after the raid; but the thick mist had fallen upon them, and, for safety's sake, they had to slacken speed. And in the fog it was next to impossible to tell their position. The most skilful navigator at sea is baffled by a fog that shuts off the horizon on all sides. And the juniors, as they realised that, blessed the fog. It added to the chance of the steamer being captured, and the capture of the raiders meant liberty for themselves.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hunted!

HARRY WHARTON and Bob Cherry found their way into the cook's galley.

The cook greeted them with a scowl. He was a squat, low-browed ruffian, with a hooked nose, and a face reddened and eyes bleared by drink. The juniors had already observed that not all the ruffians were of the same nationality. Markoff and the mate were Russians, and several more of the crew were of that race; but there were Frenchmen and Germans among them. Captain Markoff seemed to have collected his crew from the scum of half the seaports in Europe.

"Vat you want—eh?" demanded the cook, as the juniors came in.

"Food," said Bob.

"We're hungry," said Wharton. "Captain Markoff says—"

"I trow you overboard if I was captain!" growled the cook. "If you will eat, you sall work! You clean dem pans before I give you nozzing!"

The juniors were faint with hunger, but there was nothing for it but to obey. The galley was in a filthy condition, like the rest of the vessel. The sea-thieves were evidently not of cleanly habits. But the cook, though he did not care to take the trouble to keep things clean himself, apparently had no objection to having the work done for him, and he set the juniors to work at once. And they cleaned and scoured pannikins and saucepans and dishes for two long hours before he would give them food. When it was given it was a scanty ration of half-mouldy ship's biscuit; but they were glad of even that. They had been long without food, and the sea air made them almost ravenous.

They devoured the biscuit eagerly, under the scowling eyes of the cook. They were not allowed long to eat, and then the rascal set them to work again, finding tasks for them apparently from sheer malice. The juniors noted that the seamen who came into the galley bullied and browbeat the squat cook, and evidently he was glad to have an opportunity of passing on the ill-usage he received to the boys, who were in his power.

"Lovely set of brutes, ain't they?" growled Bob Cherry, as he scoured out a filthy saucepan. "Cooky seems about the choicest of the bunch. Do you think the other brutes would int'fere if we gave him a hiding, Harry?"

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"I was just thinking," he replied. "He seems to be the drudge of the ship. He lifted his hand to me just now. If he hits me, I shall hit back, and chance it."

"Same here."

The cook had been out of the galley for a few minutes, taking hot coffee to the captain and mate in the chart-house. The mate had cursed him loudly, probably more on account of the fog than the coffee, and the juniors had heard his raucous voice in the galley. Cooky was scowling savagely as he came in, and his evil eye turned upon the schoolboys.

"Ach! You talk and leave your work, isn't it?" he exclaimed. "I soon teach you dat you work and not talk in my galley!"

And he struck Bob Cherry a sounding cuff on the ear.

Bob staggered across the galley.

The ruffian grinned at him, but his grin vanished the next moment. Bob was springing at him like a tiger.

Biff, biff!

Right and left the sturdy junior's fists came crashing into the evil face, and the cook reeled back, staggered out of the galley, and went with a crash on the deck.

He lay where he fell, roaring.

Bob stood over him with blazing eyes.

"Good man!" said Wharton.

The cook sat up, still yelling. Two or three of the seamen came along, and they stood grinning at the cook. The latter scrambled to his feet, and sprang at Bob Cherry and closed with him.

Squat and ill-formed as he was, the ruffian was muscular.

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PENNY.

His arms closed like a vice upon the junior, and he dragged him towards the rail. His intention was evident, and Bob Cherry fought for his life. Wharton made a spring to his assistance, but one of the seamen caught him roughly by the shoulder and dragged him back.

"Stay dere!" he growled.

"Let me go!" shouted Wharton, struggling furiously.

But the ruffian's grip fastened upon him more tightly. The seaman was a hulking giant of six feet, and Wharton was like a child in his grasp. Vainly struggling, he watched Bob with horror. In spite of the junior's resistance, the cook was dragging him closer and closer to the side.

The seamen looked on, grinning. They had grinned at the cook's discomfiture, and they would have watched Bob hurled into the sea with an equally savage amusement.

But a sharp voice rapped out from the bridge:

"Cooky!"

The ferocity in the cook's face vanished at once. From a murderous ruffian he seemed to become suddenly a cringing, sneaking poltroon. He stopped.

"Release that boy, cooky!"

"Ach! Gott! He have hit me, captain!"

"You hear me?"

The cook released Bob Cherry.

Bob stood panting on the deck. He was close to the rail, and close to him the grey sea heaved under the grey fog.

The cook went back sullenly into the galley.

The two juniors did not enter the galley again. They moved away on the deck, in the mist, panting after their struggle. Bob Cherry was very white.

"That was a close shave, Harry!" he whispered.

Wharton panted.

"I tried to help you, Bob—"

"I know you did, old chap. I should have been a goner if the captain hadn't chipped in," Bob shuddered. "And it wasn't for my sake, I know that. He wants to keep his own rotten neck out of a noose, where it ought to be. That's all."

"That's all!" said Harry.

"Oh, the brutes! I'd like to get a fair chance at some of them!" said Bob, between his teeth. "But I say, Harry"—he lowered his voice—"this looks as if Markoff knows that he's in danger of being caught!"

"I think he does."

"By Jove! What wouldn't I give for a sight of a giddy gunboat now!" muttered Bob Cherry, peering through the fog. "They must be looking for these villains all along the coast now, Harry. But there's not much chance of finding them in this fog."

"But the fog prevents them from getting away," said Harry. "They daren't keep on full steam. And I don't see how they can know where they are. They can't possibly keep on a true course in this mist."

The juniors scanned the sea anxiously. The same anxiety was visible in the faces of all the raiders. There was danger of collision so long as the Seamew kept in motion in the fog. Even half-speed was dangerous, and Captain Markoff was evidently feeling his way along cautiously, doubtful of the position of his ship.

The fog enveloped the steamer like a blanket. The sky and the sea were shut out from view, and another vessel might have passed within a biscuit's throw without being seen.

Suddenly, from the depths of the mist, came a sound. Wharton grasped Bob by the arm.

"That's another steamer, Bob!"

The throb of engines could be heard. Captain Markoff had evidently heard it, too. Dim and indistinct, lights glimmered through the fog, and the captain was staring away anxiously towards them. The steamer fell off a little from her course. A long, moving arm of light came through the mist, and Wharton uttered a suppressed exclamation:

"Searchlight!"

"By Jove!"

The juniors' eyes gleamed. They knew what that meant. It was some ship of war that was close to the tramp steamer, hidden by the fog save for that searching bar of light.

There was a muttering in strange tongues among the cosmopolitan crew of the Seamew. They all knew what the searchlight meant.

The Seamew had been heard, if not seen. Through the fog came looming a dark shape, looming up into dim sight, and gliding past the counter of the Seamew. A deep voice hailed through a megaphone:

"What ship is that?"

"Osprey, Plymouth to Hull!" Captain Markoff answered through his megaphone, with instant coolness.

He had signalled "full speed ahead" to the engine-room, and the steamer was gathering speed. Another hail came from the unseen ship, but it was indistinct in the fog and the

growing distance. It was repeated more faintly still. The dim shape was lost in the mist again. But, though the hail could not be distinguished in words, its import was plain enough. It was an order to lay to—an order which Captain Markoff had not the slightest intention of obeying.

The fog wrapped the steamer again like a blanket. Faintly from out of the unseen came the throbbing sound of engines. The searchlight could still be seen, moving blindly like a ray of light lost in the fog. Then suddenly there came a heavy, booming sound, that filled the fog-blanket with booming echoes.

Boom!

Bob Cherry caught his breath.

"That's a gun!"

Boom!

But the Seamew was tearing through the water now. The glimmer of the searchlight died away, and all sounds were swallowed up in the fog. Reckless of danger, the tramp steamer rushed on at full speed over the hidden sea.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Neck or Nothing!

It had been a moment of intense anxiety for the raiders. Equal was the anxiety of the juniors, though from a different cause. They were anxious for the steamer to be captured, while Markoff and his men were thinking only of escape.

It had been a narrow escape: but for the fog on the North Sea, capture would have been inevitable.

Even now the steamer was easily within range of a gun, if she could have been seen by the vessel that was seeking her.

The excitement on board the tramp steamer died down; but the anxiety remained, heavy and wearing, in every face.

The danger of going at full speed ahead through a foggy sea was terrible, but it was no worse to the raiders than the danger they were leaving behind. At any moment they might crash into some vessel hidden by the fog; but if they paused, they might be overhauled by the gunboat they had so narrowly eluded.

There was danger for them either way; they had taken their lives in their hands now.

"That was a gunboat—a patrol on the North Sea!" Bob Cherry said, in a whisper. "It's pretty plain that this ship is being hunted for high and low, Harry!"

"Yes. They've had the wireless telegraphy at work, I should say. There'll be a description of this steamer known in every corner of the world by this time," said Harry. "When the fog clears, I don't see how they are to get away!"

"Unless they run ashore somewhere, and take to their heels," Bob remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"That may be their game, of course; but they may run ashore without wanting to, if they keep on like this. It's simply madness! Captain Markoff can't know what's ahead of him; there may be a crash any minute!"

"Neck or nothing!" said Bob, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I suppose they'd rather risk going to Davy Jones than to Portland Prison!"

"And we've got to take the same risk," said Wharton grimly.

"That's our rotten luck!"

Darkness had descended upon the sea now, making the fog thicker and blacker. There was no sight or sound of the gunboat now, and again Captain Markoff slackened to half-speed.

He peered into the fog anxiously from the bridge; but he knew no more than the juniors what lay ahead of him behind those heavy, yellow-black banks. For all he could tell, he might be miles out of the course he intended to follow.

The look-out in the bows could not see a cable's length ahead. If a collision should come, it would come so suddenly that there could be no guarding against it. Some of the crew had placed lifebelts in readiness, showing that they realised how imminent the danger was.

Not that lifebelts were likely to be of much use if a collision came. A plunge into the icy water, and all would be over. In the heavy, overwhelming fog, swimmers were not likely to be seen and picked up.

"It's touch-and-go!" said Bob, as he peered into the fog. "If we meet anybody, it's all up, Harry!"

There was a sudden yell from the bows.

Black and grim, a great shape loomed up out of the fog, and twinkling lights danced in the mist.

It was a ship—a huge steamer—and it glided by so closely that Wharton could have tossed a biscuit across the rail.

There was a wild hooting of a siren in the fog, but the danger was past as soon as it had arisen.

The big steamer glided by, and vanished.

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Every face on the Seamew was white as chalk.

The whole crew had been within six feet of destruction. The two steamers had almost touched as they glided past one another in the fog.

Bob Cherry drew a gasping breath.

"Oh, that was a close thing!"

"A bit more to starboard, and they'd have been into us!" said Wharton, through his set lips. "How long is this going to last?"

The shadow of death had passed by them. The Seamew glided on.

"That was a passenger steamer, making for the Thames, I should say," Bob Cherry remarked, after a long pause.

Wharton nodded.

"We're not so very far away from home, in that case. My hat! I wish the fog would lift, whatever happens!"

As if answering the junior's wish, the steamer glided out of the fog a few minutes later. The mist became less thick, and then rolled away, and the tramp steamer emerged into a clear sea, with a steely sky sparkling with stars overhead.

"Like getting out of a blanket," said Bob, with a breath of relief.

It was, indeed, like it. Behind them they could see the bank of fog, close down on the sea, grim and heavy, waves of it curling like smoke away over the waters; but where the steamer now throbbed the sea was clear.

Ahead of them, a mile or more away, the fog reappeared, heavy and dense, waiting to engulf them. It was like a lane that opened through the heart of the sea fog.

The juniors eagerly scanned the sea.

If the steamer was sighted now by the vessel that was in search of her, Captain Markoff's escape would be extremely doubtful.

Markoff evidently realised it, for he was scanning the sea anxiously. Away in the distance lights twinkled over the water—a long, dark shape loomed up. From above it came a blinding, sudden glare of light, turning slowly round upon the sea.

It was the searchlight again.

Bob clutched his companion's arm.

"They're close on us, Harry!"

Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"This time they'll have us!" he muttered. "Good luck!"

There was a wild commotion on the deck of the Seamew. The searching gunboat, as if by fate, had emerged from the fog-bank within half a mile of the fleeing tramp; and the searchlight, turning like a long white arm over the sea, fell full upon the tramp steamer, showing up every line of her. The ghostly, white light lit up every face on board, and every face was haggard and desperate in the white glare.

Boom!

It was a gun again.

The juniors saw the projectile strike the water within a hundred feet of the tramp steamer, and ricochet from the waves, and plunge in again under the rail.

"One shot in the engines," muttered Bob—"that would be the finish!"

The Seamew was leaping forward like a wild thing in full flight. The shot was a stern signal to heave to; but the raiders had no intention of obeying. The steamer headed for the fog-bank, less than a mile ahead. Once in the enveloping fog again, she would be safe. But could she reach it? The gunboat was steaming full speed in pursuit.

With throbbing engines, that shook the vessel at every pulsation, the Seamew raced across the lane between the heavy fog-banks.

Like a tiger the gunboat came racing in pursuit.

The juniors almost held their breath with the excitement of the chase.

Nearer and nearer loomed the fog-bank, like a great, yellow wall rising from the sea. Already the mist was floating in curling waves like smoke round the Seamew. Another couple of minutes, and she would be swallowed up from pursuit.

But the pursuer was very close now.

Throb! Throb! Throb!

The throbbing of the engines was echoed in the hearts of the raiders and of the two prisoners on the Seamew.

Wharton and Bob Cherry watched with a tense gaze the gunboat growing larger and clearer in pursuit, gaining at every revolution of the engines.

But the fog-bank was close now.

Right into it the Seamew dashed; and, as if blotted out under a heavy blanket, sea and sky and gunboat disappeared from view.

Thick fog swallowed up the tramp steamer, shutting off even the captain on the bridge from the eyes of the juniors.

They looked back with haggard eyes. Fog—nothing but fog—the gunboat had vanished. A triumphant smile lit up for a moment the dark and savage face of Captain Markoff.

Once more he had eluded his pursuer. There was a gasp of relief from the raiders. The fog had saved them, and the gunboat, thrown hopelessly off the track in the mist, was feeling her way to and fro, searching for them in vain.

The Seamew throbbed on.

"What rotten luck!" groaned Bob Cherry. "That was the last chance, Harry. What's going to happen now?"

"A collision, if we keep on like this!" said Wharton grimly.

"That rascal has amazing luck!"

Crash, crash, crash!

Bob Cherry broke off with a yell.

"It's come!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Abandoned!

CRASH!

The tramp steamer shook and trembled from stem to stern with the shock of the concussion.

It had come at last!

Captain Markoff had trusted too much to his luck.

Dimly through the fog the shape of a ship was seen—the racing tramp steamer had struck her almost amidships.

Grinding against the vessel's side, the Seamew scraped on, and passed, and the stranger disappeared like a spectre in the fog.

The Seamew shut off steam immediately.

The vessel was reeling drunkenly from the shock. From all the cosmopolitan crew had risen a yell of alarm in many languages.

"Mein Gott!"

"Cospetto!"

"Sapristi!"

"Tout est perdu!"

The juniors held on the rail as the steamer rocked and reeled. There was a sound of bubbling water below. It was evident at once and to all that the collision had terribly damaged the Seamew below water-mark.

In the midst of the confusion, Captain Markoff remained cool and steady, though his face was white.

He muttered a few words to the mate, who dashed down from the bridge and disappeared below. He came back in a few minutes, his face ghastly.

The juniors were watching him, but they could not understand what he said. But his face told them that his report was serious.

The Seamew, with steam shut off, lay like a log on the sea; and ever from below came that ominous sound of bubbling water.

Whole plates must have been ripped off by the crash on the strange vessel; and the water was streaming into the gash.

All was lost!

There was no doubt on that point. Even if the Seamew floated, there was no possibility of escape. She could not keep the sea in her present condition. The luck of the raiders had abandoned them. All had succeeded so far; but the fog on the sea had been their undoing. The collision was the finish.

The juniors understood that clearly enough, and their own anxiety was keen and intense. If the raiders took to the boats, what was to become of them? It was more than likely that they would be left on the sinking ship. In a flight in the boats, the rascals were not likely to burden themselves with two prisoners.

"We've got to look after ourselves, Bob!" Harry Wharton said, between his teeth.

Bob nodded.

"It looks bad, old man; but while there's life there's hope."

"They're getting the boats ready now. They're going to leave the ship."

"And we—"

"They won't take us."

"The rotters! I'm afraid not."

Captain Markoff's stern voice, rapping out orders, had calmed the wild confusion on board the Seamew that had followed the collision.

The seamen set to work rapidly. There were two boats on the steamer, and both were hurriedly prepared to take the sea. Provisions were handed up and stacked away, and two or three large chests were brought up from below and placed in the larger boat. The juniors knew what those chests contained—the plunder from Greyfriars. Captain Markoff did not intend to abandon his loot.

The falls were loosed, and one of the boats swung down into the water. The steamer was already deep down by the head. The water could be heard washing to and fro in the hold, as it poured in through the gap below.

The second boat plumped into the water. Captain Markoff, with perfect coolness, saw the men into the boats before he prepared to leave the sinking ship. The juniors ran towards him.

Markoff started as they came up; he had evidently for-

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FOR NEXT **"THE RIGHT SORT!"**

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ONE
PENNY.

gotten them. A grim and deadly smile came over his bearded face.

"You?" he exclaimed.

"You do not mean to leave us here?" exclaimed Wharton hotly. "The ship is sinking. It will not float a quarter of an hour. You do not want to murder us."

Markoff shrugged his shoulders.

"Why should I burden myself with you in the boat?" he said coldly. "If you had done as I demanded of you, this might not have happened. I should have saved time, and escaped sooner. I might have been safe at a distance before this accursed fog came on to ruin me. Stay where you are!"

"It is murder!" said Bob Cherry, between his teeth.

"Take your chance! The Seamew may not sink!" said the adventurer ironically. "Bah! I cannot take you in the boats. If we are picked up, we have to tell some tale—not the truth, you understand, or we shall be arrested instantly. Do you think I can take you with me to contradict what tale I tell?"

The juniors understood, and they were silent.

It was impossible that they should go in the boats.

Their lives had been spared so far, because it was for the safety of the adventurer to spare them; but now their presence would constitute a deadly danger for him. If the boats were picked up at sea, the rascals would have to invent some falsehood to satisfy their rescuers; and the juniors, of course, would have disproved it at once. They could not go in the boats, and the ship was sinking under their feet.

"But—but it is murder!" Wharton muttered.

The Russian shrugged his shoulders.

"I am sorry for you," he said. "You may not believe it, but it is true. I am sorry. I would have spared you if I could. But even if I allowed you to step into the boats, my men understand what is for their safety, and they would throw you instantly into the sea. You may put it to the proof if you like."

But the juniors knew that it was true. They drew back.

The mate shouted from the boat rocking below. Captain Markoff started.

"One man on board!" he muttered. "The fool. Let him stay, then." Then he shouted: "Cook! Cook! To the boats!"

There was no reply. With a shrug of the shoulders, and without another glance at the Greyfriars juniors, Captain Markoff descended into the boat. The oars were shoved out, and the seamen pulled; and Wharton and Bob, with despair in their hearts, watched the boats disappear into the blanket of fog.

There was a long silence between the two juniors.

They had no hope left.

Louder and more threatening the bubbling of the water sounded below; the steamer was settling down heavily by the bows.

At any minute almost might come the final plunge; and they would be dragged down to death in the depths of the North Sea.

The boats had disappeared. The raiders were in haste to escape from the vortex that would be made by the sinking ship.

"Oh, the rotters!" said Bob Cherry at last. "To leave us here like this!"

"They've left one of their own fellows, too," said Harry bitterly. "You heard what Markoff said. Cooky is still on board."

"He was guzzling rum when I looked into the galley," said Bob. "The poor wretch was scared out of his wits. He's drunk, I suppose!"

"It's all up with us, Bob."

Bob cast a wild glance over the sloping, reeling deck.

"We might be able to make a raft or something!" he muttered.

"We can try; it's a bare chance. After all, the gunboat can't be many miles away; and the fog may lift in the morning."

"Buck up, then!" said Bob briskly.

It was with little hope that they set to work. But there was a bare chance, and that chance was better than resigning themselves to despair. They ran into the galley for axes, and almost stumbled over the cook. He was lying on the floor, a rum bottle rolling by his side with the motion of the ship. The miserable wretch had evidently drunk himself into a state of insensibility. And in that state he had been abandoned by his comrades. It was every man for himself with the sea-thieves.

Axe in hand, the juniors hurried out of the galley, and started to work. They ripped and hacked at the woodwork to get the materials for a raft. On the slanting deck the raft grew under their hands, the fragments lashed or nailed together. In the hurry and excitement of the work, upon

which they felt that their lives depended, they did not notice the passage of time. They were only anxious to have the raft solid enough to support them when the ship should sink away under their feet.

A hoarse, husky voice broke in upon them, and they turned, and saw the cook staggering towards them, lurching heavily as he came. His face was inflamed, and his eyes bleared and blinking.

"Vat is all dat? Vere are de ozzers?" he muttered thickly. "They're gone," said Bob Cherry curtly; "and they've taken the boats!"

"Ach!" The half-sobered ruffian gazed round him blankly. The grey light of dawn was glimmering through the heavy fog.

Bob Cherry noted it for the first time, and he gave a sudden cry.

"Harry! It's the dawn, and the ship's still floating!" Wharton started up.

It was true enough. They had not noted the passage of time in their hot haste, but hours had passed since the steamer was abandoned by the crew, and she still floated.

Deep as the Seamew had settled in the water, she had settled no deeper for some hours. For some unexplained reason, the water had ceased to pour in below. The Seamew was water-logged, but she floated still.

The juniors' faces lighted up. "The leak's stopped somehow, Bob. Perhaps some of the cargo has shifted and stopped it. Goodness knows——"

Bob grinned gleefully. "It's ripping good luck! 'Tain't an uncommon thing. They often find a derelict floating, weeks after it's been deserted by the crew in a sinking state. Why, the giddy old tub may float for days—or weeks! Hurray!"

"So long as the sea's calm, very likely," said Wharton, wonderfully cheered up by the discovery. "We're in luck! So long as she keeps afloat, I'd rather be here than in the boats with those scoundrels."

"Yes, rather!" "We'll have time for the raft—and for brekker now. I'm famished."

"Same here," said Bob. "And we've got the run of the captain's stores, if we like. What price hot coffee—eh?"

And the juniors, greatly cheered by the knowledge that the Seamew was in no immediate danger of sinking, went into the galley to prepare a meal.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

THE cook was in the galley, with a tin pannikin in his hand, and a fresh bottle of rum open. He turned his bleared eyes savagely on the juniors.

"You get out of my galley, you hear?" he muttered.

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily. "The other rascals have all gone," he said quietly. "We're two to one, cooky, if you give us any trouble. We are not going to stand any nonsense. If you trouble us in any way we'll tie you up, and have done with you."

The half-intoxicated ruffian staggered to his feet, and the rum-bottle went with a crash to the floor, and smashed there. The cook snatched up a saucepan by the handle, and started towards the juniors.

Wharton and Bob backed away, keeping their eyes warily upon him. The ruffian meant mischief, but they felt themselves a match for him.

He made a savage blow at Wharton with the saucepan, and missed, and lurching forward heavily, and fell on his knees, the saucepan clattering on the deck.

Before he could rise, Wharton's fist caught him full in the face, and he rolled over, yelling.

"Collar him, Bob!" "You bet!"

The two juniors piled on the cook instantly. The rascal struggled furiously and broke loose, and rolled out of the galley, and leaped to his feet. He clutched at his clasp-knife, and dragged it open, and faced the juniors again, panting.

"Ach! I'll kill you!" he hissed between his teeth. "Look out!"

Bob Cherry made a rush for the axe he had been using in making the raft. Harry Wharton caught up the saucepan the cook had dropped.

The cook was dashing after Bob, the clasp-knife gripped in his hand, and murderous fury in his eyes.

Bob seized the axe, and swung round, facing him. Heedless of the axe, the ruffian sprang at him, the knife rising in his hand.

Whiz! The heavy iron saucepan flew through the air, and it

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caught the cook in the small of the back as he sprang upon Bob.

He gave a yell of agony, and pitched forward, and rolled at Bob's feet.

"Good egg!" roared Bob.

He sprang at the rolling man, caught at the knife, tore it away, and pitched it into the sea. Then he planted his knee on the ruffian.

"Got you, you beauty!"

"Ach! I—I——"

"Get a rope, Harry!"

The cook was struggling furiously, but Bob had him down, and kept him there. Wharton ran up with the rope, and a noose was slipped over the ruffian's arms, and they were drawn together, and Harry knotted the rope fast.

The man was pouring out savage curses, but they did not heed. Another turn of the rope was taken about his legs, and then he lay on the deck, helpless.

"Finished with that merchant," panted Bob, as he staggered up. "I don't fancy he will give us any more trouble."

"It would serve the brute right to pitch him over the side," growled Wharton.

Bob chuckled.

"Yes; but we won't do it. He'll keep. If we get picked up, there's a prison waiting for that johnny. Now for brekker."

And they returned to the galley. They were masters of the situation now. The only one of their foes who remained on board was a bound prisoner, and they had taken care that he should not get loose again.

The juniors' hopes were rising.

With the dawn, the fog showed signs of clearing off, and the water-logged ship had settled no deeper in the sea. The steamer lay rolling heavily in the waves, at the mercy of wind and tide, but there seemed no immediate danger of its sinking.

In the galley, the juniors brewed hot coffee, and it put new life into them as they swallowed it. They were ravenously hungry; but the ship's stores were at their command, and they helped themselves to what they wanted.

"This is something like," said Bob Cherry, with his mouth full of salt beef. "I don't know that I'm sorry, after all, that we came on this giddy voyage."

"We're not out of the wood yet," said Harry.

"We shall be picked up," said Bob confidently. "The fog's clearing. There are plenty of ships in this sea. I don't know where we are, but we're in the North Sea somewhere—I'm sure of that. And even if this old tub goes down, we shall have time to finish the raft." He looked at his watch. "It's rising-bell at Greyfriars now. The fellows are just turning out. I wonder if they guess what's become of us?"

"Not likely. But if we get back——"

"Oh, we'll get back all right!" said Bob cheerily. "I tell you, the luck's turning. Now let's get to work on the raft again."

The mist was rising as they came out of the galley. Already they could see to a distance of a hundred yards from the rolling derelict. The sun-rays glimmered down through the fog with a cheering warmth.

The cook still lay on the deck where they had left him, watching them with baleful eyes.

The juniors did not heed him.

The recommenced work upon the raft. Bob had found the carpenter's chest, and they nailed together the planks and doors of which they were making the raft, and it grew rapidly under their hands.

Higher rose the sun, and the mist grew clearer and clearer.

The juniors worked away cheerfully.

Every few minutes they scanned the sea in search of a sail or the smoke of a steamer. But the morning passed, and nothing came in sight. The disabled steamer was drifting slowly, rolling helplessly in the trough of the sea, they did not know whither.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob suddenly, as he looked out over the sea. "Look at that, Harry! Isn't that a sail?"

Wharton sprang to his feet.

In the clearing mist a patch on the sea was visible, and it was coming nearer. It was a sail, but it was close down on the water, and was evidently not a ship.

"It's a boat!" said Harry at last.

"May be a fishing-smack," said Bob hopefully. "We may be near the land for all we know."

"Possibly. But——" Wharton's face had grown dark and anxious—"but——"

"But what?"

"Suppose it should be those rotters again?"

"Oh, my hat! But they must be far from here by this time."

"I don't know. It looks to me——"

"There's the binoculars on the bridge," said Bob.

He ran up to the bridge, and turned the glasses upon the sail. Instantly the boat rushed into view.

It was the boat of the *Seamew*—one of them. Only one could be seen; evidently the two boats had parted company in the fog. With the glasses, Bob could recognise Captain Markoff and the mate.

Wharton was looking up anxiously towards him.

"Well, Bob?"

"It's Markoff's boat!"

"I was afraid so," said Wharton, setting his teeth. "And as we've seen them, they must have seen us, Bob."

Bob came down from the bridge. His face was pale now. "They're making for us," he said. "They've seen us, and they know the *Seamew* hasn't gone down, as they expected."

"The ship's no good to them now," said Harry. "They couldn't think of getting her to any port in this state—even if they dared to go into port."

"They're not coming back for that, Harry."

The juniors' eyes met. They knew very well what Captain Markoff was making for the derelict for. By sheer ill-luck the boat and the disabled steamer, drifting in the fog, had come into neighbourhood again, and the raiders had discovered that the *Seamew* was still afloat, and knew, therefore, that the two juniors were still living on board her.

"They daren't let us live to tell about them!" Wharton said, in a low voice. "They intend to tell some tale of shipwreck when they're picked up, and if we are picked up, too, they'll have no chance. We can give descriptions of all of them, and——"

"I know!" said Bob gloomily. "If they get on board——"

"We're done for! If they had thought for a moment that the ship would float, they wouldn't have left us alive here!"

"They're not going to get on board," said Bob desperately; "we've got to keep the villains off somehow!"

"We've got to try," said Harry.

"I'm game!" said Bob. "We'll do our best, anyway. What rotten luck that the scoundrels should come in sight of the ship again! And I was thinking all was clear now. It's rotten luck!"

The juniors anxiously watched the approaching boat.

With the sail drawing, it drew quickly nearer the derelict rolling in the trough of the sea. The mist was clearing off fast in the morning sunshine. As the boat drew closer, the juniors could see a dozen dark and savage faces glaring towards them from the boat.

Captain Markoff was standing up, and there was a revolver in his hand. His eyes were fixed upon the ship.

Harry Wharton held on to the rail, and waved his hand to the boat. A grim smile came over Markoff's face as he saw him.

"Keep your distance!" shouted Wharton.

The adventurer made no reply, but he raised the revolver, and took aim.

Crack!

Wharton sprang back as the bullet sang through the air, and it pinged upon the charthouse door.

"That shows what they mean!" said Harry hoarsely. "We've got to fight for our lives, Bob! And—and there's no help!"

Bob turned a despairing glance round over the waste of misty waters.

Then his eyes gleamed, and he caught Wharton's arm almost convulsively.

"Look!"

He raised his hand, and pointed.

In the opposite direction from the boat, on the other side of the rolling derelict, a black trail of smoke blotted the mist.

Wharton uttered a cry.

"It's the gunboat!"

"Good luck! They've seen the derelict—they're heading this way!" panted Bob. "If they get here in time——"

"If!" said Harry, between his teeth.

The boat was very close now. The ruffians had evidently not seen the smoke beyond the steamer. They were so close to the derelict now that the mass of the *Seamew* shut out from their sight what was beyond.

The sail was dropped, and the rascals were using their oars to bring the boat alongside. The juniors' hearts were beating fast. They had little chance of keeping the rascals from boarding, but they meant to do their best.

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Captain Markoff was still standing up in the boat, looking for a chance to use his revolver.

As the boat glided up Bob Cherry took aim with a heavy billet of wood, and hurled it with all the strength of his arm.

Whiz!

The missile crashed fairly upon Markoff's chest, and, with a yell, he fell heavily back into the boat.

The boat rocked on the water, and a moment or two later bumped against the side of the derelict steamer.

The *Seamew* was low in the water, but it was not easy to climb the side, and the juniors had already taken care that there was nothing left to aid the rascals in boarding.

The mate made a spring, and caught hold of the rail, and hung there, climbing on board. Wharton struck at him with the axe fiercely, and the rascal let go just in time to escape the blow, and dropped back, missing the boat and plunging into the sea.

He disappeared from the juniors' sight, but they heard him yelling to his comrades to help him into the boat.

Markoff had scrambled to his feet, his face dark with rage. He groped in the boat for the revolver he had dropped.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

The juniors, with desperate hurry, hurled into the boat every missile that came to their hands—billetts of wood, utensils from the galley, axes, and tools. And the missiles were not without effect. There were yells of pain from the rascals in the boat rocking below as the missiles came crashing among them.

Crack, crack, crack!

But the juniors were careful to keep back from the line of fire.

"We'll keep them off yet!" panted Bob.

"I can hear the gunboat now!" muttered Harry, as the throbbing of the engines came across the misty water to his ear. "They're very close!"

A head rose by the rail again, and Wharton hurled a hammer. He saw it crash into the dark, bearded face, and the climber disappeared.

But the gunboat was close now. The throbbing of the engines must have reached the ears of the raiders, though the derelict hid the oncoming vessel from their sight. And the dark smoke rising above the derelict told of the coming of a steamer.

The juniors heard a hubbub of voices in the boat, and the attack was not renewed. They were in momentary expectation of a rush—and a rush would have overwhelmed them—but it did not come. The raiders had seen the gunboat at last. The sail glanced up on the sea, and the boat glided away from the side of the derelict, in a wild effort to escape.

"They're running!" yelled Bob.

Wharton waved his hand to the gunboat.

"Help! Help!"

"They're passing us; they're after the boat!" grinned Bob. "It's all serene! We can wait! They'll have the boat, Harry! Good luck to them!"

The boat was fleeing fast. There was a keen breeze behind the sail, and the raiders were making desperately for the fog-bank in the distance. But they had no chance. Like a beast of prey, the gunboat was swooping down after them, and they were still in plain sight of the juniors on the derelict when the pursuer ran them down.

Bob Cherry waved his hands in wild excitement, and cheered.

"Hurray! They've got them!"

"Hurray!" yelled Wharton, wild with delight.

With dancing eyes they watched Bluejackets springing into the boat, and saw the whole gang of rascals secured. Markoff and his men did not resist; they knew it was useless. And then, with the captured boat in tow, the gunboat came swooping back towards the derelict.

The chums of Greyfriars were saved.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Home Again!

"THANK Heaven!"

Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, uttered that exclamation.

He had a telegram in his hand, just opened. Mr. Quelch, who was equally eager for the news contained in the telegram, gave him a quick, inquiring look.

"Good news, sir?" he asked.

The good old doctor's face beamed.

"The best!" he said. "The rascals have been captured—the whole gang of them! It appears that their ship was disabled in a collision."

"And is there news of Wharton and Cherry?"

"Indeed there is! They were found on board, and have been rescued."

Mr. Quelch's face lighted up.

"That is indeed good news!" he exclaimed.

"They are safe!" said the Head. "This will be very good news for Colonel Wharton. I will send him a telegram at once, and another to Major Cherry. Their anxiety has probably been keener than ours."

"And the boys are returning?"

"Yes; they have been landed at Dover, and they will be here this evening."

"Excellent!"

"Tell their friends, by all means," added the Head.

Mr. Quelch returned to the Remove Form-room, where the Lower Fourth were at lessons. He had quitted the Form-room when the telegram arrived, eager for news.

The Remove were in their places, and some of them turned eager looks upon the Form-master as he came in. Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were showing only too plainly the traces of the anxiety they had been through. Ever since the raid on Greyfriars, the dread had lain heavy upon their hearts that they would never see their chums again in life.

But they caught the glad expression of the Remove-master's face, and their own lighted up.

"Is their news, sir?" asked Johnny Bull quickly.

Mr. Quelch nodded with a smile.

"The best news!" he said.

"Wharton and Bob—"

"They will be here this evening," said Mr. Quelch.

"They're safe, sir?"

"Quite safe!"

"Hurrah!" roared Johnny Bull.

And all the Removites took up the cheer. In the sudden relief to their anxiety, they forgot that they were in the Form-room, and they cheered and cheered again, till the Remove-room rang with it.

Mr. Quelch did not interrupt that exuberant outburst. The cheers of the juniors found an echo in his own breast.

But he held up his hand for silence at last.

"Now we will resume," he said good-naturedly. "Our surmise that Wharton and Cherry had been taken by those rascals was correct. The whole party have been arrested, and Wharton and Cherry are quite safe. It is very good news indeed!"

"Oh, ripping!" said Nugent.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with tears in his eyes, said that the rippingfulness was terrific.

The chums of the Remove paid little heed to lessons for the remainder of that afternoon. Their thoughts were with their comrades, who were returning from the midst of deadly perils; but Mr. Quelch was very easy with them.

"Isn't it ripping?" exclaimed Nugent, as the Remove came out of their Form-room at last. "Blessed if it doesn't make me feel ten years younger!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter Todd. "You won't have Wharton's bike, after all, Bunter!"

"Ahem! I—I was going to say—"

"Did you ask Wharton's uncle for it?" chuckled Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, blow Wharton's uncle!" growled the fat junior. "I was going to say that, as the chaps are coming back again, we ought to have a bit of a celebration. I felt all along, you know, that they would come back all right—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter Todd.

"You remember I said so to you, Peter—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now they're coming home, I really think they ought to be stood a first-class feed. I'm going to stand it!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Good egg!" said Nugent. "Have you had a postal-order?"

"I'm expecting one," explained Bunter. "It can't be later than the six o'clock post. It's from a titled relation of mine, and I expect it will be something rather substantial. If it shouldn't come in time—"

"If!" grinned Skinner.

"Well, you know, there's sometimes a delay in the post; a chap can't help that. If it shouldn't come in time, I'm sure Mauly will lend me a couple of quid, and take the postal-order when it comes—won't you, Mauly? You know it's all right, don't you?"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"I suppose you could make it five quid if you liked?" said Bunter, encouraged by the grin. "Could you, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Good egg! I'll have the five, then. Mind, I'm going to hand over the postal-order in settlement immediately it—comes. That's understood?"

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"Yaas."

"Have you got a fiver about you, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Well, hand it over, then, and I'll get the feed ready," said Billy Bunter eagerly. "I want to have it all ready for my old pals. Do you hear me, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Hand me over the fiver, then."

"Rats!"

"What!" yelled Bunter. "Look here, you said you could make it five quid—"

Lord Mauleverer nodded, with a cheerful smile.

"So I could!" he said. "But I'm not going to!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you beast!" yelled Bunter. "Look here, Mauly, I—I sha'n't want it if my postal-order comes in time; but in case it doesn't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begad," said Lord Mauleverer, "it's a jolly good idea to stand a feed to welcome the chaps home, you know! Luckily, I've got plenty of tin. We'll have the biggest celebration of the term—in the Rag—and everybody can come who likes! What?"

"Hear, hear!"

"All serene!" said Bunter. "I'll do your shopping for you. If you'll hand over the fiver, Mauly—"

"Rats!"

And Lord Mauleverer walked away. Bunter blinked after him through his spectacles, and murmured "Beast!" But the Owl of the Remove was a little consoled by the prospect of the great feed. He intended to distinguish himself there to the very best of his ability.

All Greyfriars seemed to be joyful over the news of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry's safe return. Coker of the Fifth said that he was jolly glad; even Loder, the prefect, said it was good news. Wharton's chums were in a state of exuberant delight. The Head's kind old face was beaming. He had had other good news, too. All the loot taken from Greyfriars by the raiders had been recovered when they were captured, and ere long it would be on its way back to the school.

And the raiders, who had carried out so bold and desperate a venture, were booked for long terms in prison, which would keep their peculiar activities in check for a very long time to come.

Quite a little army of juniors marched down to the station to meet the train by which Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were to arrive.

When the train came in, the platform in Friardale Station was crammed with Greyfriars fellows, cheering.

As soon as Wharton and Bob descended from the train there was a rush for them, and they were seized by their enthusiastic chums and carried away shoulder-high, out of the station and into the street.

"Here we are again!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Glad to see you! Lovely to behold your snowball countenance again, old man!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur grinned gleefully.

"The rippingfulness is simply terrific, my worthy chum!"

"Hurrah!"

And a merry party started from Greyfriars, and on the way Wharton had to relate, with much amplitude, their adventures in the hands of the raiders.

Arrived at the school, they were called in at once to the Head, to whom the tale had to be repeated.

"You have had a very, very fortunate escape!" said the Head, as he shook hands with the juniors with emotion. "Thank Providence that you have returned safely! Now you may go; your friends are waiting for you!"

They were! As soon as Wharton and Bob came out of the Head's study they were seized and rushed off to the Rag, where a gorgeous feast was spread. Wharton and Bob were the heroes of the hour, and they enjoyed themselves exceedingly.

"By Jove! It's jolly good to be back again!" said Harry Wharton. "I'm jolly glad to see you all again—even Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And thus cheerfully closed the exciting adventure of the great raid on Greyfriars!

THE END.

(Another grand, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday, entitled, "THE RIGHT SORT," by Frank Richards. Please order your copy in advance.)

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Another important fact elicited is that the hair papilla (feeding centre) whence the hair-root starts, practically never dies, and that the hair may have disappeared years ago and yet be regrown if the papilla receives the proper stimulation and nourishment.

Now, Mr. Edwards' main idea was to find out if his discovery, "Harlene," supplied this nourishment and stimulation. For this reason he selected animals in all the various stages of hair ill-health, and, during the treatment of each, watched developments closely through the microscope.

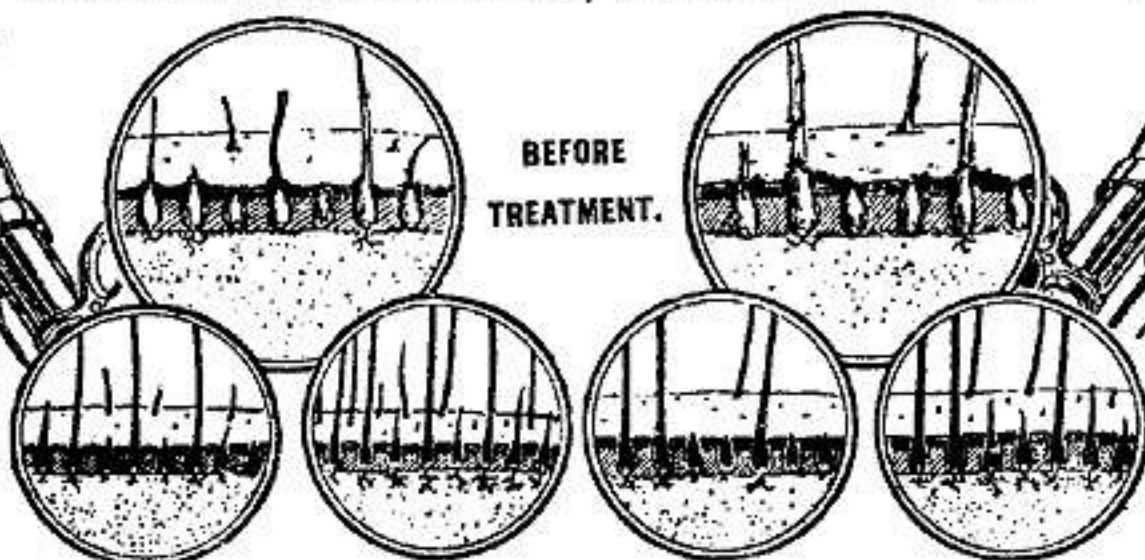
In cases where there was a total lack of hair, where it was falling or becoming thin, and where it was fading and growing out of condition, the result of "Harlene Hair-Drill" treatment was the same—with no will effort on the part of the subject treated, healthy, luxuriant and abundant hair was regrown.

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FACTS ABOUT "HARLENE HAIR-DRILL."

The effect is noticeable after almost the first application, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 302.



In the enlarged drawings above are seen on the right, horse's hair, and on the left, human hair as revealed by the microscope. Note the similar conditions before the treatment with "Hair-Drill," the bare patches with choked-up hair follicles, the excessive accumulation of scurf. Note also the immediate effect of this wonderful method and the result of consistent use.

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Our Grand Serial Story!

MYSTERIA

By **SIDNEY DREW**, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.~~~~~
READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Reoney, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and as they are steaming along one day a bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. Before sunrise the next morning a move is made to explore Mysteria. The landing-party find the island to be an evil-smelling swamp, with little sign of life. They catch a glimpse of a terrifying monster which inhabits a black lake, and then Barry creates a diversion by falling down a deep tunnel, and injuring his head. Shortly after this adventure, Jimson, the parrot, is found croaking over a huge bush, and when Prout advances to catch his pet, he stumbles over the body of a man whom they have never seen before. The castaway is found to be alive, and is taken aboard the submarine—when Ferrers Lord, the millionaire, and Rupert Thurston amuse themselves by playing billiards. Suddenly they are interrupted. Red Nob, a former enemy of theirs, leading a party of ruffianly men, succeeds in boarding the submarine and gains possession of the upper deck. Ferrers Lord has an infallible method of getting rid of unwelcome guests, however, and prepares to charge the whole ship from end to end with electricity. The men are fitted with rubber gloves and boots, but the millionaire, accompanied by Rupert Thurston and Barry O'Reoney, retire to the saloon, where a screen, showing all that is happening on the deck, is fixed. The electricity causes Red Nob and his men to retire in confusion, hastened by Ching-Lung, Prout & Co., who arm themselves with ropes'-ends. Suddenly the light goes out.

(Now continue this fine story.)

Ching-Lung Receives a Deputation.

Presently the lamp was flooding its dazzling beam through the glass again. A long native canoe was being paddled frantically over the sluggish sea.

"Then up I came with my little lot," sang the voice of Ching-Lung. "What did I tell you? Strike a match quick somebody, and see what I've found. Behold!"

There was a roar of laughter, and Ching-Lung bowed low. In his hand he held Julius Faber's red tam-o'-shanter.

There was usually a good deal of merriment on board the Lord of the Deep, and sometimes there was some considerable quantity of grief and pain. To-night the hilarity was boundless. Every man wore an expansive grin that seemed to have come to stay. Burly seamen were discovered bent double in corners, claspng their ribs with powerful hands, and emitting hoarse sounds that might have been the result either of violent internal pain or suppressed hilarity. To the end of their lives they would remember the visit of the cinnabar hunters, and above all, their undignified departure.

"There'll be a row to-night," said Thurston, to the millionaire. "I could see mischief in Ching-Lung's wicked little eye."

"Well, what does it matter, Rupert?" answered the millionaire, with a hearty laugh. It was seldom that he laughed so boyishly. "I hardly think our friends will pay another call. But they are plucky dogs—very plucky. And Ching has got his tam-o'-shanter. It has been an evening of surprises—for our friend the enemy."

"Listen! They're beginning already."

The rasping bellow of a coach-horn, or some other unmusical instrument, was heard from the fore-castle. It grew louder and more hideous.

"Drop the curtain, Rupert, and let us keep out as much of the din as possible," said Ferrers Lord. "I suppose we

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had better not interfere with that madman from China to-night, unless he becomes impossible."

A procession advanced along the corridor. First came Herr Schwartz, the chef, pompously bearing a large pewter meat-dish, on which reposed the famous tam-o'-shanter. Behind him waddled Gan-Waga, with red face and bursting cheeks, blowing notes of agony out of a bent and battered coach-horn. They were followed by various members of the crew and a cloud of smoke—for cigars had been distributed lavishly. Maddock walked backwards, beating time with a rolling-pin.

"Alt, souse me!" he cried.

He opened the door of the billiard-room. Ching-Lung was on the billiard-table reposing on a heap of cushions. The coach-horn shrieked itself into a series of violent fits.

"Alt! 'Eave to, you wi' the penny squeaker!" yelled the bo'sun.

As Gan appeared neither to hear nor heed, he was struck over the head with a bolster, and the horn violently taken from him. Had he kept it much longer he would in all probability have blown himself clean away. The procession formed round the table in a half-circle, and bowed to the ground.

"Have you dropped anything?" inquired Ching-Lung.

"No, your Hoighness," said Barry O'Reoney. "We are here, bedad, to make your Hoighness a prisintation in the name of the crew of the vissil—a prisintation which we beg yez graciously to accipt. May Oi have the plishure to in-throjuce ycz to my honoured friend Misther Shorts, who will do the thrick."

The chef handed the meat-dish to Barry. A meat-cover had been put over the tam-o'-shanter. Herr Schwartz smote his chest and struck an attitude.

"Der sossidge vas ein snached von und him vag ids leedle dail," suggested one of the sailors.

"Shaf! Vait ein momend," said the chef, clutching his

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curly black locks. "I haf forgod, is id? Ach, nein! I haf nod forgodded—I vas rememper, bosd illustrious und bosd glorious Brince Jing-Lung!"

"Bosd illustrious und bosd glorious Brince Jing-Lung!" repeated twenty voices.

"Bay your shadow nefer grow less," went on the cook. "Your vace id vas as peautiful as ein vater-melon, und der eyes of you dey vas sbarke like ein muffin. Ja, ja! Dey sbarke like ein muffin. Ja, ja, ja, ja!"

"Ja, ja, ja, ja, ja-ah!" chanted the chorus.

"Und zo," continued Herr Schwartz, "ve lofe you mooch. Ve lofe you almosdt ass mooch ass ve lofe boiled pork—boiled pork and pears. Und dot vas goot, is ud? Ja, ja, ja, ja!"

"Ja, ja, ja, ja, ja-ah!"

"Und zo dot der prains of you shall nod vall oudt ven you shake der headt of you ve haf pring you dis hat."

He raised the cover, displaying Julius Faber's famous tam-o'-shanter, which he gravely presented to Ching-Lung.

The cheering was tremendous as Ching-Lung rose.

"Men of the Lord of the Deep and similar reptiles," said Ching-Lung, "my heart is almost too full to speak. The sight of this notable and historic headgear—which, I trust, you have washed—reminds me of many things in colour. For instance, it reminds me of the steersman's nose, and as it is empty, it reminds me of O'Rooney's head. But still I prize it. I have coveted this red rag for some time.

"I beg to thank you for this presentation, and for the eloquent speech made by our gifted friend Mr. Schwartz. If his pies were only as good as his speeches, there'd be less indigestion on this ship. To conclude, I may remark that you're an ugly-looking lot to take in the lump. There will be boiled ham, boiled haricot beans and potatoes done in their jackets, for supper. (Cheers.) And, if you are very good, I may give you that recitation that has made all the crowned heads of Europe ache, entitled 'The Dying Dustman's Dream; or the Mystery of the Mouldy Marmalade Jar.' There will also be a collection for the home for lost traction-engines."

Ching-Lung did not appear, but they enjoyed their supper nevertheless. All was as merry as a marriage-bell until Gan-Waga expressed a desire to sing, and set up a warble. They threw him out on the cold, cold plates, and Gan-Waga turned mournfully away.

"In the wars again, Eskimoses?" asked Ching-Lung, as Gan waddled dolefully into the saloon. "Been fired, hunk?"

"Gots chuckd out, Chingy. De bad 'nough chaps slings me out, Chingy."

"You've been eating canary seed again and trying to sing," said the prince. "I could hear your tuneful chirp all this way off. It's unkind of you, Wagtail. Give other people a chance to live as well as your beautiful self, or you'll come to three or four bad ends. Sit down, child, and dry those tears before you spoil the carpet with 'em!"

"Dey waiting fo' yo' to precites, Chingy."

"Then they can wait and keep waiting. I can't recite 'The Dying Dustman's Dream; or, the Mystery of the Mouldy Marmalade Jar' to-night. I feel more like going to roost on my little perch. What did I want to tell you? Oh, about the splend'ed way you're getting to speak English."

"Do I speaks her butterfuls, Chingy?" said Gan, blushing with pride.

"Marvellously. If you can say 'She stealeth the sheik's sixth steed' three times, I'll give you a bag of candles."

Gan-Waga shook his head sorrowfully, and gave it up as hopeless. Ching-Lung decided to smoke a cigar on deck before turning in. The mist had thinned, and the lights on the hill shone murkily through it. Ferrers Lord was also on deck strolling lazily up and down. The booming sound as the sluggish waves rolled against the island was less pronounced, but the shrivelled weeds were crackling and popping incessantly.

"Well, have you finished your absurd frivolities, Ching?" asked Thurston. "Are you fairly sane once more?"

"Never saner. Was I so balmy when I borrowed Red Nob's red nob? My word, that was joy! They used to say there was nothing like leather, but give me rubber and—rope. There's the little bit of rope. If the great and illustrious Red Nob has a square inch of skin on him that isn't as full of aches as the sea is full of water, then I'm a case for the doctor, for all my muscles are worn out and flabby. That's what I did it with."

Both men laughed as Ching-Lung displayed the knotted rope.

"You're a most revengeful little beast, Ching," said Rupert.

"M'yes," said the prince; "possibly. You didn't owe Red Nob much, but I owed him a big cheque. Something tells me that I didn't go bankrupt, either, but paid up in full and with a bit of interest. It may be stale news to you, but I don't like Red Nob. They all got it very fine and large except Stumpy. Once he got on his pins he made for

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ONE
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the boat like a nimble kangaroo with a spear behind it. He dodged the electricity somewhat, the pig!"

"Wood is not a good conductor," explained Ferrers Lord.

"But Maddock is—of rope," chuckled his Highness of Kwai-Hal. "He seems death on the fellow. I saw the mighty Benjamin hanging over the rail using a rope, and the squeals that arose were the squeals of Stumpy every time Maddock got the knotted part home. I wonder if they'll bring us up for assault and battery—assault and electric battery, that is. I feel happy this blessed evening. It feels like my birthday."

A howl of wrath brought them round, and they looked towards the conning-tower. It was Prout's first visit since the retreat of the foe. The conning-tower was the apple of the steersman's eye and the pride of his heart. He polished and scrubbed it unceasingly, until every bit of brasswork winked and the glass shone like polished silver. And now the floor was covered with broken glass, broken pipes, tobacco juice, tobacco dust, and spilled rum, and it smelt like a fortieth-rate public-house after a busy Saturday night.

Furious indeed was the wrath of Prout as he bellowed for hot water, swabs, soap, and metal polish.

"Poor Tom might be the proprietor of the place," said Thurston. "It might be his private property."

"All the better that he should think so, Rupert. Those are the men we want. It is amusing, but it is pleasant. He usually describes it as 'my conning-tower,' and invariably as 'my launch.' And, to all intents and purposes, both are his. It reminds you of the coachman's child who, when asked who a certain gentleman was, described him as the man who rides 'in my father's carriage and pair.' I wonder how Hal Honour is progressing?"

The lights on the hill were very dim, for the mist had grown thicker.

"There's no need to ask that, sonny," said Ching-Lung. "He always progresses, so don't worry. I like tobacco as much as most people, but when I have to smoke and don't want to, it tires me. Just now I'm merely smoking to kill the delightful aroma of your wretched island. Let's get out and have some fresh air."

He put his hands to his mouth and shouted to Prout, who was scrubbing on hands and knees.

"When you've finished that charwoman's job, push her out to sea."

"Ay, ay, sir! Get 'old of 'er, Ben," growled Prout.

Maddock took the wheel, and the Lord of the Deep swept westward. Ching-Lung promptly flung his cigar overboard.

"That's something like it!" he said, sucking in the fresh air in great gulps. "There aren't any microbes in this, thank goodness!"

"There's some salt in that, though," laughed Thurston, as a mass of spray drenched the prince.

Ferrers Lord waved his hand, and the watchful Maddock signalled half-speed and brought the submarine round.

"Is this little five-knot run all we're going to have, Lord?" protested Ching-Lung.

"All for to-night."

"Why? I've not got rid of the microbes yet. Are you getting mean in your old age? Push her along again."

"No," said Ferrers Lord.

"Oh, don't be so niggardly. Well, I'm hanged! What have I done now?"

To his astonishment, the millionaire spun abruptly on his heel, and walked into the wheelhouse. Thurston was no less astonished.

"That takes the biscuit," said Ching-Lung, with a long whistle. "Did I say anything to offend? Oh, that's too absurd! I couldn't offend him in fifty lifetimes. Th's needs inquiring into, Ru."

Ferrers Lord had taken the wheel.

"The scrubbing can wait for half an hour, Prout," he said. "You may both go below."

The millionaire saw the look of mystification on Ching-Lung's face.

"Don't laugh," he said, "however preposterous it seems. After what we have seen and what we know, it must seem preposterous and absurd. How can we tell what tricks she might play?"

"What are you talking about, old chap?"

"About Mysteria. I'm afraid of losing it."

"Seriously?"

"As sure as I live, Ching, and it holds some precious things," answered the millionaire. "I am almost serious."

He sent the searchlight flashing over the water, and the vessel churned on. Suddenly the engines stopped and she glided forward with her own momentum.

"Listen for the booming," said Ferrers Lord. "We ought to be close to her."

FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"THE RIGHT SORT!"**

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They strained their ears and their eyes, but heard nothing, saw nothing. In all directions the searchlight found only water. The Lord of the Deep crept to and fro, east and west, north and south. But there was no sound, no sign. "We must wait for the dawn," said Ferrers Lord, his lips strangely tight. "We can do no more."

In the Balance—"Mysteria Must Take Her Chance!"

The fog had settled down so densely that it was the safer and wiser plan to wait for daylight. Thurston and Ching-Lung could not but share the millionaire's misgivings; for experience had taught them that he was seldom mistaken in anything. And they were not very anxious. Mysteria was a mere freak of Nature, and it was governed by natural laws.

Unless something extraordinary and unlooked-for had taken place during the past few hours, the island was still afloat, and she would be afloat for weeks, if not for months.

"I don't think there's much to worry about," said Rupert hopefully. "We shall make her out at sunrise. She may have drifted considerably, but that's all. She's too healthy to sink just yet."

"Just what I think, sonny," said Ching-Lung.

"And I ought to think the same," put in Ferrers Lord. "Perhaps my dinner has not agreed with me. I hardly see what could happen to her, but she has had so many jokes at our expense that I am almost uneasy when she is not within touch."

Prout put his big hand to his ear, and leaned out of the conning-tower.

"She's over there to starboard, by hokey," he called, "or else my 'earring's gone smash."

"By jove, so she is!" cried the millionaire, with great relief. "That's certainly her music."

The booming was merely a faint buzz, but there was no mistaking the sound. For once Ferrers Lord's fears had been groundless. Mysteria had played no tricks this time. The vessel crawled nearer, and the sound increased in volume.

"Keep a good watch, Prout, in case the island swings," said Ferrers Lord. "She seems pretty rotten at the narrow end, and if anything broke away, it might hammer a hole in us before we knew it."

"Pouf!" ejaculated Ching-Lung. "I smell the old familiar niff of violets and lavender. Where are the smelling salts?"

"I caught a glimpse of the lights," said the millionaire, "when the fog broke a little. There is nothing wrong, I am pleased to say."

"Well, I'll go and write up the log," said Thurston, "and then off to bed. Good-night, all!"

In the morning, Mysteria lay about a mile from the Lord of the Deep; but the island had spun completely round during the night, or else the submarine had gone completely round Mysteria. It was still too misty to make out the summit of the hill. As the sea was quiet, many of the men took a refreshing swim.

Joe, the very useful member of the crew, had carefully washed, dried, and darned Julius Faber's tam-o'-shanter at the prince's request, and the laughter and cheers were loud and long as Ching-Lung appeared on deck wearing that famous article.

"Is ut a fog-signal, or is ut a walking letther-box?" asked Barry, walking round his Highness and examining the headgear from various points of view. "Bedad, p'r'aps ut's a pickled-cabbage. Is ut a pickled-cabbage, sir?"

"It suits him, any'ow, souse me!" remarked the bo'sun. "Old Jimson, the parrot, wears a 'at like that."

"Oh, yes, show your envy and ignorance!" said Ching-Lung. "It's a lovely hat, isn't it, Gan-Wagtail? I'm going to be married in it. Look at the fit, almost a convulsion! You don't see a head-warmer like this every day."

"And that's a blissid marcy," said Barry. "O'i'm mighty glad we don't, sir! Why don't yez sthick a feather in ut and putend yez are a cock-robin. Bedad, wouldn't O'i be the sparrer wid my bow-and-arrer! O'i'd kill cock-robin! Who saw him doie?"

"I says de flies wid my little eyes, I saws de bad 'nough rascals dies!" gurgled the Eskimo. "'Who hears him squeals? I says the eels, I hears him squeals.' Butterfuls 'nough, hunk? I makes dats parts up."

"And if you try makin' up any more parts like it, souse me," roared the bo'sun, fixing a wrathful eye upon the poet. "I'll leave some of your parts about as'll want sweep-ing hup! Nice thing afore breakfast, ain't it? 'Butterful 'nough!' It's a long sight too butterful, Blubberbiter! One goat-whiskered idiot trying to make hup poetry is more'n plenty on this ship. Don't try that game again, souse me, or there'll be a funeral!"

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Gan put his thumb to his snub nose, and spread out his fingers disdainfully.

"Yo' a silly, 'tankerous oles jossers," he said, with elegant politeness. "Yo' say any morer sillinesses to me, and I fetches my butterfuls spears. Yo' not 'fraids of dats spears, hunk? Ho, ho, ho, hoo! Yo' nots runs away from him, hunk? He, he, he, hee-e-ee! Oh, yo' braves, ugly funny-faces cowards! Yo' nots frightened's, hunk? Oh, ho-o-oo! Ha, ha, ha, hee-e-ee!"

Maddock had certainly not displayed sufficient courage in the presence of Gan-Waga's spear to win him a Victoria Cross. But a wrathful Eskimo, with a razor-edged spear in his hand, is not a lovable person at any time. After promising to wring Gan's neck at the first favourable opportunity which presented itself, Ben Maddock put on his coat, squeezed the salt-water out of his hair, and went sullenly away.

Sunlight was streaming into the saloon when Ching-Lung entered it. He had almost forgotten the existence of the castaway. The man, pale and woefully thin, sat in an easy-chair. He looked at the prince with his dull, deep-sunken eyes. Ferrers Lord, who was tapping the pane lazily with a pencil, nodded and smiled a good-morning.

"Well, old chap, are you better?" asked Ching-Lung kindly.

There was no reply. The eyes rolled wildly, and the thin fingers twitched.

"You will do no good, Ching," said the millionaire. "His mind seems a perfect blank."

"And his body?"

"That will get better. He was talking almost rationally yesterday, but now I cannot get a word out of him. If we only knew what he had gone through, we might not be astonished. Of course, his memory may return at any moment, or he may remain as he is now for months—years even."

"Poor beggar, I hope not!" said Ching-Lung. "In any case, if he doesn't recover, it won't be for want of attention. Have you mapped out the bill of fare for the day, old warrior?"

"We shall give Honour a call, and see how he is getting on, of course. Thurston intends to stay at home and work, for he has been getting a little behindhand with his log, the lazy rascal!"

"Do you refer to me?" asked Rupert. "If so, much thanks! The lazy rascal in question is as hungry as a cannibal."

"And so is dis laziness, rascals Ruperts," put in the voice of Gan-Waga. "I hungrys as two cannibals. We eats de lots, hunk? O-oh! Butterfuls bacon-fat! I likes him! Ho, ho, hoo!"

Ferrers Lord shrugged his shoulders as he consulted the weather-glass. The mercury was steadily creeping up. Every hour of hot sunshine was an hour taken from the life of Mysteria, and the glass promised a day of baking heat.

"We'll leave the scribe to his book," said the millionaire, rising from his table. "Write the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, Rupert. Don't give rein to your airy imagination."

"Bosh!" grinned Ching-Lung. "He hasn't got any—except in the way he spells the long words. Art coming, Gan the Wagtail? Wilt come and hunt the greedy glob-snatch upon yon airy isle?"

Gan-Waga emphatically declined to set foot upon Mysteria, and nothing could tempt him to alter his mind.

"Not like him, Chingy," he said. "Hims too hots and nastiness. I stops wid Ruperts, and tell him how to spells de long words. 'Steria bad 'nough nasty. Nots likes hims nohows, nots likes hims, Chingy."

Maddock was left behind in charge, and Ching-Lung invited Herr Schwartz to join the party. The little German's beady eyes twinkled with delight as he tore off his cap and apron.

"I was ready in ein leedle minute," he said. "Ven I haf der poots of me pud on. Ach, dot was glorious! I haf long mooch der see der islandt, is ud? Id vill do dem goot do gook deir own tinner for vonce alretty! Ach, dot vos pcautiful! Dunder, it vas greadt—yes!"

They went ashore in the launch. Hal Honour sent a heliograph message from the hill, telling them all was well.

Landing was more difficult than usual, for Mysteria was rotting away rapidly at the edges, and the decay would soon spread inwards in all directions like the fibres of a cancer.

"Hello, by hokey! What's blowed you 'ere, cooky?" asked Prout. "Why ain't you at 'ome toastin' cheese?"

"I vos nod ad home because I vas oudt mit der bardy," said the chef. "Der brince he invide me do gome, and I gome. Dot vos nod of Domas Broudt der pizness."

"Well, you needn't snap my 'ead off for axin' a simple question, old skewers and rollin'-pins!" said the steersman. "You're welcome, ain't you? You put on as much side as

if you was about the only man alive who could make a pudding."

"Dunder! Id would pe doo beautiful for vords if I could make ein budding of you!" retorted the chef.

"Hear, hear!" grinned Barry O'Rooney. "Bedad, O'd like to hilt yez wid the job, Shorts. He'd make a scrumptious pudding, the ould haythin, but it 'ud choke an ostrich to thry to ate it."

The path, now well-marked, was no trouble to follow, but they soon began to peel off their coats, for the forest was as hot as a furnace. Even the little cook, accustomed to warm latitudes in the galley, began to mop his heated brow.

On reaching the place where the ascent began, they found immediate proofs of Hal Honour's energy. Iron bars had been driven into the rock, and looped together by means of ropes to aid the climbers.

"Good old Hal!" said Ching-Lung. "He doesn't forget much. Why, this is as easy as a staircase, and as safe as a lift. And—hurroo!—there's a ghost of a breeze!"

Up they went swiftly, heartily thankful for the clear light and the comparatively fresh air. The roof of the forest gleamed in the sunshine. Probably a heavy man could have walked across it without any risk of falling through.

"Hal, ahoy!"

The engineer stepped down the slope to meet them, shook hands with Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung, and nodded to the men.

"What news, old Stick-hard-at-it?" cried the prince.

"Bad!"

"In what way, Harold?"

The man of silence found the explanation too much to give in words.

"There," he said, and walking back to his workmen, sat down and began to smoke.

Ferrers Lord looked at the paper with puckered brows. The limestone was thirteen feet thick and very hard. Above it were three feet of vegetable ivory. At once Ferrers Lord grasped the difficulty. A charge that would displace such a thickness of rock might bring the whole vast cavern down in one terrific ruin, and hurl back Mysteria, shattered and broken, to her ocean home. A series of small charges would involve a long and tedious process, while to excavate and quarry, was a scheme that the brief time at their disposal rendered utterly impossible.

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ONE
PENNY.

"What's the dread and awful secret, old chap? You don't look altogether happy. Has he had the sauce to send in his bill?"

The millionaire-inventor laughed.

"It is nothing to shed tears over, Ching," he said. "The boring is sixteen feet, and Harold has an idea that if we fire a charge, we shall in all probability fire Mysteria off the map of the earth at the same time."

"Good job too," said Ching-Lung. "A jolly good job."

"I don't mean to contradict you on that point, but still I wish to explore the cavern."

"But you don't get me taking on that trip—not if I know it. Knock the head off the place, and let some sunlight in, then I may think it over. But I'm not going down that tunnel any more. I'm a non-runner in that race."

Ferrers Lord stepped forward to see what had been done. In five places the rock had been bored, and a circular trench had been dug out. Without further orders, the engineer had been unable to do any more.

"If we had time," said Ferrers Lord, "I'd take it away piecemeal."

"The island shook and trembled during the night," said Honour.

"Seabirds—nothing more."

Ferrers Lord hesitated and took a few swift strides up and down. What awful monsters had their lair in the dark hollowness beneath his feet? Such a chance of viewing the creatures who live in the depths of gloom and silence in the lowest abyss of the ocean might not occur to mortal man again. If he entered the cavern, he must go alone. He knew that Ching-Lung would insist on accompanying him, and for that reason he must steal off secretly if he made the attempt. Was it worth the while?

They were all watching him. They knew that the fate of Mysteria hung in the balance. He turned round.

"We'll risk it, lads," he said. "Mysteria must take her chance. Put in the charges."

(This grand serial will be continued next Monday.
Order early.)

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ARTHUR MELROSE. The villain. "He is his father's spy!"

MAD MAX. The agitator.

THE REVEREND PETER WHITE. A man who knows and loves the poor. A peacemaker.

See TUESDAY'S

Boy's Journal

ONE PENNY

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 309.

FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"THE RIGHT SORT!"**

OUR WINTER EVENING PROBLEM CORNER

Owing to great pressure on space this feature has been held over this week. Next Monday, however, there will be another interesting Problem set for "Magnet" readers.

When correctly deciphered, this is how last week's Problem should read:

THE EDITOR OF
THE MAGNET LIB-
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A BRIGHT AND
PROSPEROUS
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No. 12 Problem Next Monday.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of
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My Readers' Page

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 his chums,
 at home or
 abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE RIGHT SORT!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next grand, complete tale of Greyfriars School a new boy comes into the Remove Form, who proves a welcome addition to the ranks of the Lower Fourth heroes. Harry Wharton & Co. are especially cordial to the new-comer, for Algy Darrell seems to be a fellow after their own hearts. Great is the astonishment of the Form, then, when it comes out that Darrell is regularly supplying Billy Bunter—the Paul Pry of the Remove—with ample funds by way of "hush-money"! It soon becomes clear that Darrell has a secret, which is known by Bunter; and it is not long, of course, before Bunter lets that secret out, though by so doing he effectually kills the goose that lays the golden eggs. Darrell faces the music manfully, and though he leaves Greyfriars in the end, it is without a stain on his character, and he leaves behind him the reputation of being one of

"THE RIGHT SORT!"

NEARER AND NEARER!

Now that we are well into the New Year, the date that we have all been looking forward to for so long—the date of the publication of our

New Halfpenny Companion Paper

—is getting rapidly nearer, and excitement is growing accordingly. In a week will see

No. 1 of "CHUCKLES!"

actually in your hands, and you will know the best! For good value, as well as intrinsic merit, the first issue of "Chuckles!" will easily beat any other paper ever published. Every copy will contain a special "surprise-packet"—a free gift in the most popular form. Our New Companion Paper is the fruit of my reader-chums' own suggestions and ideas, and I have done my best to make it a record-breaker. It only remains for my chums themselves to take this, their own paper, in hand directly it appears, and do their best to make it a record-breaker, too! Then its success is instantly assured. It is because I know that I can rely upon my chums to do this that I have consented to bring this New Companion Paper out. As a matter of fact, I look upon Frank Richards' complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Trumper & Co. of Courtfield, entitled

"THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST!"

as a passport to success with all my chums who love a good school story. This is one of the grand tales contained in the first number of "Chuckles!" which will be out next week.

And when I state that the other stories in our New Companion Paper are of an equally high standard of merit, I think I have said all that is necessary for the present. So look out for

No. 1 of "CHUCKLES!"

HOW TO ENTER A BANK.

By a Bank Manager.

The occupation of a bank clerk has always been considered one of the most dignified of commercial employments. Competition for these posts was at one time keen, and it was difficult for a youth to enter the service of a reputable bank without a certain amount of extraneous "influence," such as

a personal acquaintance with a partner or a director. "Influence" is still valuable, but it is not now essential. It is a fact not generally known that most large joint-stock banks have for some years experienced considerable difficulty in filling up vacancies, and are only too glad to consider suitable applications.

Many applications are still received, of course, but in the majority of cases are from candidates considered, for various reasons, unsuitable, though the qualifications are by no means exacting. The applicant must be fairly well educated, presentable in appearance, of good address, and of fair social position.

Applicants are eligible in most banks at sixteen or seventeen years of age. A notable exception is the Bank of England where the age limit is fixed at from eighteen to twenty-five years. But this article is not concerned with the Bank of England, appointments in which can be obtained only by nomination of a director, no one personally unknown to a director having the slightest chance of securing such a nomination.

Making an Application.

Except in special cases, an application for an appointment should not be sent direct to the head office of a bank. To write to the secretary, having no personal acquaintance with him, will merely result in receiving the stereotyped reply regretting that the list of candidates for appointments is full. As a preliminary step, the parent or guardian of the boy should interview the manager of the local branch, who, unless there are obvious objections, will forward the application to his general managers. A local manager's recommendation is usually a sufficient passport. Of course, if the support of a director, a bank official of good standing, or a large customer can be secured, the candidate will find such "backing" extremely useful.

The parent or guardian will be required to answer certain questions on forms supplied for the purpose, and these replies being satisfactory, the applicant will be requested to present himself at the head office of the bank, where he will have to undergo a preliminary examination. The word "examination," however, need alarm nobody. Its requirements are by no means exacting—indeed, it is mere child's play to a boy who has reached the Sixth Form at an average school. Should the applicant already hold an Oxford or Cambridge Local Senior Certificate, or one of the certificates granted by the London Chamber of Commerce, this examination will in most cases be dispensed with. The usual subjects are mathematics—particularly arithmetic—English composition, book-keeping, and a foreign language, preferably French.

Good Handwriting Essential.

Good handwriting is considered essential. The writing of a boy is of necessity unformed and immature, and the applicant need not fear too severe criticism on this point. Many indifferent, and, indeed, execrably bad writers, are to be found in banks, and complaints from clients as to undecipherable entries in pass-books are by no means rare. This may seem surprising, in view of the importance attached to good handwriting by all banks, but, of course, it is impossible to award appointments on the strength of this qualification alone.

In one large bank the writer knows of, ominous circulars are sent round at intervals, threatening that unless the numerous bad writers on the staff mend their ways their promotion will be stopped, progress on the salary list retarded, etc., etc. The next circular sent out will probably state that Mr. Blank—a notoriously illegible writer—has been promoted to the managership of a certain branch in succession to Mr. Dash, retired. These circulars are typewritten, and are signed at the foot with an unreadable splodge which resembles nothing so much as the track of an inebriated spider; but which, as a matter of fact, is the signature of the general manager!

(Another of these splendid articles next week.)

NOTE!

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— Paper —

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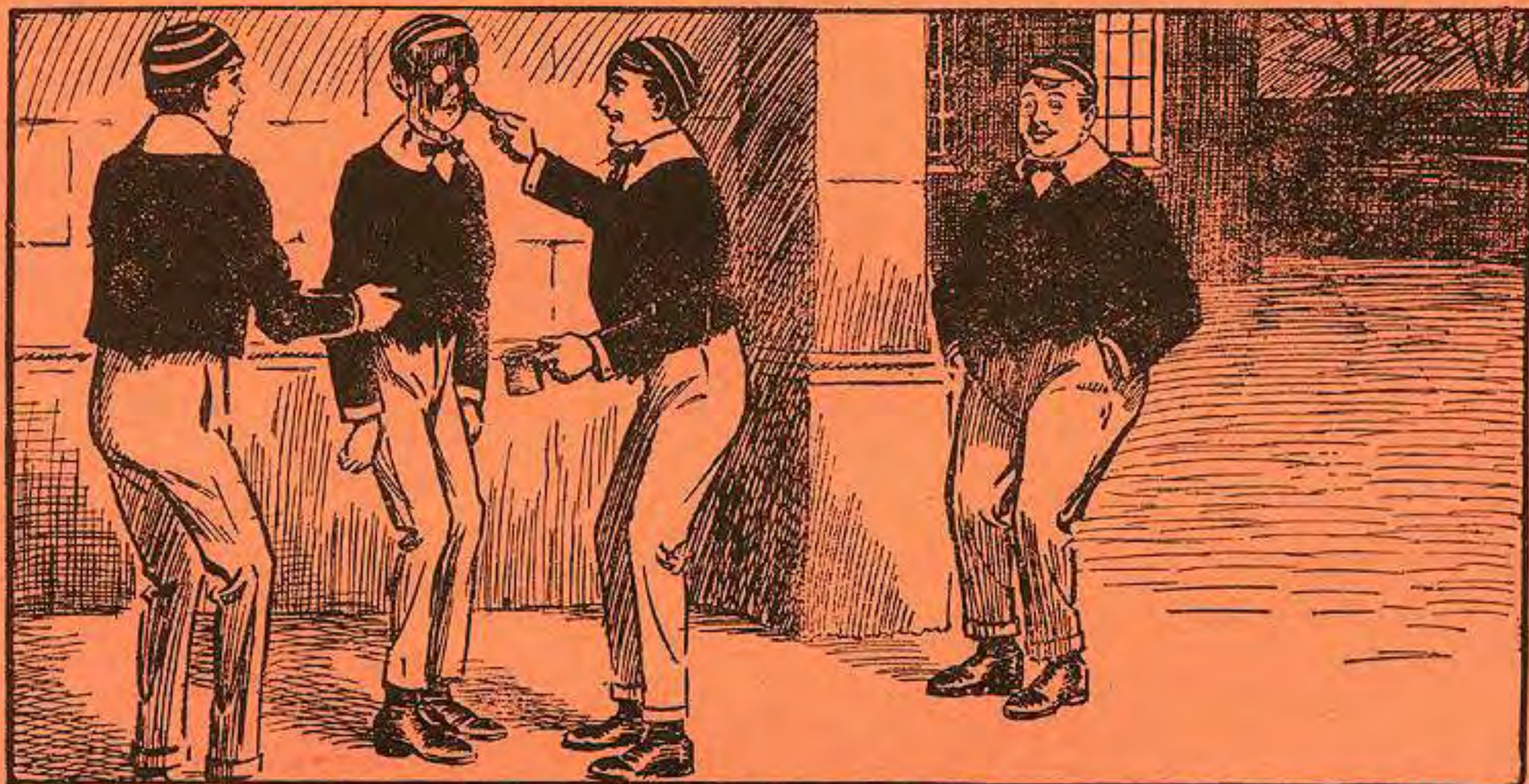
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